

MEDIA RELEASE

07.03. 21.06.2026

Brian Dawn Chalkley

Angels Suffer Too

In cooperation with Fumetto Comic Festival Lucerne

“Being Dawn doesn’t carry the same art-historical baggage,” Brian says of their female Alter Ego. The interplay between Brian and Dawn has been an important stimulus for Chalkley’s (*1948) artistic work since 1996. Prior to that, Brian was a college teacher and modernist painter in his public life, a cross-dresser in his private life, i.e., he dressed in a typically female manner, plus makeup, when he visited London’s night clubs. The persona Dawn works unencumbered by the art-historical conventions that Brian had internalised as a Fine Art Senior Lecturer at the Chelsea College of Art in London. This facilitates an «amateurish, un-artistic approach», as Chalkley puts it. Brian Dawn Chalkley deliberately chooses ordinary working materials, such as watercolours, felt pens, sewing thread or cushion covers, and uses domestic techniques such as embroidery. As a result, over the past 30 years a work complex has emerged that, by means of narrative and costume, plays with personalities and roles that are constructed and likewise de-constructed.

The portraits, painted swiftly using a soft brush, are not of real persons but of types that radiate sadness and melancholy and are memories of nightlife recalled in the light of day. The fluid colours mirror Chalkley’s examination of the themes of growth and decay, the volatility of moments and of identities.

The textile works are full of stories. Recurring motifs such as abandoned seaside resorts, desolate parks, isolated human beings, birds, dogs or horses, are expressive both of happy moments and of isolation and violence. The texts taken are from Chalkley’s own collection, which is being constantly intermingled with thoughts, things heard and things read. The simple depictions seem almost naïve, the abandonment of perspective recalling folk art and Art brut. Through this pictorial idiom Chalkley unites his two spheres of life and his two personas, the art teacher (Brian) and the cross-dresser (Dawn). Like in “Wimmelbildern” (picture puzzles), their images contain different scenes that do not, however, make up a coherent narrative. Instead, like the threads, they condense into balls, only to then end up as loosely hanging strands again.

Chalkley’s works allude to the ambiguity of roles and identities, to dissonances and contradictions. In this way, the artist confronts the complexity and absurdity of the world with melancholy as well as black humour.

curated by Eveline Suter

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DATES

Media Preview

Friday, 06.03., 10.15 am

Opening

Saturday, 07.03., from 11 am

Greeting and introduction

Lea Willimann, Artistic Director, Fumetto Comic Festival Luzern

Eveline Suter, Curator

Talk in the Exhibition

Sunday, 08.03., 11 am

Guided tour with the artist Brian Dawn Chalkley and the curator Eveline Suter

The Curator as Guide

Wednesday, 15.04., 6 pm

Guided tour with Eveline Suter

Art and Architecture

Sunday, 12.04., 11 am

Tour of the exhibition and the KKL Lucerne, price CHF 25.-

Public Tours

Wednesday 6 pm and Sundays 11 am according to website

Schools

Various offers for all levels

Opening hours during Fumetto (07.-15.03.)

Mon-Sun, 10 am-8 pm, Sun, 15.03., 10 am-8 pm