

# Flash Art

AT THE GALLERIES

BERLIN

## John Bock

John Bock took the visitors of his spectacular rock opera for quite a ride at the dark storage space of the State Opera House, turning it into a gothic multilevel arena with the audience behind railings on narrow landings, a view into the deep pit showed a large police van hanging in it, bottoms up. It was flanked by popular German Indie rock band Blackmail plus supporting house orchestra string section on one side, and a gigantic video screen on the other with live coverage from inside the vehicle. The video projection invested the bizarre scenario with cinematic proportions: Anne Tismer and Thomas Loibl, both well-known theater actors took over the roles of captain and first mate, a.k.a a farmer and his wife, both hysterically out of control, and assisted by the artist as "Minnege-sangssmutje," climbing around the outside of the large dangling van in scary heights, delivering commenting monologues, performing with the band, manipulating the vehicle, and producing additional prop-sculptures.

The inspiration for the piece came from the circumstances of the sinking of the French frigate Medusa on the African coast in 1816, the accounts of mutiny and cannibalism, and the famous painting by Géricault, that rendered the whole incident symbolic for the



**John Bock, Medusa im Tam Tam Club, 2006. Courtesy Klosterfelde, Berlin and Anton Kern, New York. Photo: Jan Windszus.**

moral decay of post-revolutionary France. The sinking frigate turns into a contemporary police van, hovering eight meters above ground and most of the action into a bizarre prolonged moment just before the disaster, just before intense last minute action allows the protagonists a narrow escape into the bowels of the building.

What appeared to some as improvisational was in fact carefully scripted — four notebooks available at the entrance detailed every aspect of the performance in John Bock's sketches, scripts and plans. If in the performance the artist was secured both by a security line and a net, in his notebooks he allows complete access. Complemented by a fifth volume with documentation of the actual performance and an informed essay, due on bookshop shelves soon, this will allow for the most radical insight into his artistic thoughts and visions.

—Detlev von Jouanne