BERLIN — When people say they ran out of an exhibition in terror, they usually don’t mean it literally. Some may these days in Berlin, however, thanks to John Bock’s new show, “Knick-Falte in der Schädeldecke” (“Kink-folds in the Cranium”), running through April 12 at Sprueth Magers Gallery. Bock goes so far as to let a life-size puppet resembling the sleepwalker from the expressionist classic “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari” unexpectedly exit the screen and step into the dark room, where the jittery audience is watching “Der magische Krug” (“The Magic Jug”), a creepy slapstick flick with silent-film-era aesthetics.

John Bock’s work, rooted in Dadaism, combines discourse, campaigns, installations, and evermore films. “Unzone Eierloch” (“Unzone Egghole”) is another example presented at Sprueth Magers. And there’s a lot to stomach here, too: zombie-esque rape scenes, razor blades in flabby humanlike blobs, and slime-vomiting actors. Bock runs the full gamut of the grotesque in what seems his way of trying to free his stunted contemporaries from their media-consumption-induced trance. The sleepwalker scene is a perfect example of his artistic practice. Very much like Katharina Grosse, who transgresses the boundaries of the canvas by flooding its environment with color, Bock transgresses the screen by arranging objects from the film in a gigantic assemblage. Six screens feature “Visionen” (“Visions”), additional scenes from “Unzone Eierloch.” Somehow, it all comes together in what Bock calls “Summenmutation” or, roughly, “aggregate mutation.”

In a third room, drawings that resemble storyboards are arranged in a row on a wall. With pencil and pen, Bock has drawn figures and made notes, tacked on food packages and newspaper cuttings, left behind coffee stains. Rather than something produced in an artist’s studio, these works look like they were made at Bock’s own kitchen table. A nearby assemblage features a can of ravioli, egg detritus, and children’s tights. Behind a shower curtain one finds the bulky, deformed body of a puppet resembling a character abused in the film. Almost like a psychoanalyst, Bock brings the dreadfulness that is tucked away in the most private spheres within ourselves and our homes out into the open.

“Pole Poppenspäler,” a figure crafted from buckets and brightly painted sticks, awaits in front of the drawings — with more drawings in its belly. The work’s title refers to a novel by German author Theodor Storm about a family of puppeteers and the tensions between the lifestyle of the artist and that of bourgeois society. Playing out the bourgeoisie and the bohemian against each other was a specialty of the Surrealists, whose aesthetics Bock’s “Kink-folds in the Cranium” is obviously indebted to, as is his passion for wordplay that manifests itself in dialogues, notes, and titles. Like an exquisite corpse, words weave into sentences, scenes into films, works into exhibitions.

Artists like Christoph Schlingensief and Paul McCarthy established their reputations with splatter attacks on the bourgeoisie. Bock is about to acquire a similar status. He was invited to Documenta 11 and presented at the Venice Bienale several times. Perhaps he himself feels controlled from above like a puppet by the art market — his audiences, whose emotions Bock so deftly manipulates, certainly do by his art. “Recipient falls backwards into worldly/limited abstraction,” one drawing reads. Either that or he takes to his heels and runs as fast as he can.

A still from John Bock’s “Unzone Eirlock.” © John Bock/Courtesy Sprueth Magers