

**Kesang Lamdark**  
***Lhasa Dreams***

17 April – 30 May 2015

Opening hours:

Wednesday – Friday 11h00 – 18h00

Saturday 11h00 – 17h00

and by prior arrangement

**Grieder Contemporary is delighted to present new works by Zurich-based artist Kesang Lamdark. Brought up in Switzerland, the works by the son of a Rimpoche (reincarnated Lama) explore issues surrounding identity and self-placement between East and West and in the Tibetan situation, as well as in European values and globalised pop culture. Influenced by Pop Art and Dadaism as well as by traditional Tibetan imagery, he approaches weighty topics with a sense of seriousness, but also with playful irony.**

The exhibition presents six wall pieces and a sculpture that demonstrate the two sides of the artist – Tibet and Switzerland – and their numerous superimpositions. The light boxes consist of LED panels, which Lamdark uses to feature selected motifs sourced from Tibetan culture and history, combined with found image material from Western contemporary culture worked with a delicate needle technique. The exterior of these light boxes consists of fused layers of transparent PVC film. The glaring, luminescent colours emblemise the "plastification and meaningless preservation" (Lamdark) of Tibet by China and the West since the 1950s.

*Mao Butts* consists of a portrait of the former Chinese head of state, Mao Zedong, under a layer of cigarette butts sealed in melted neon-hued PVC film – an allusion to Mao's heavy smoking habit. *13 H. H.* shows His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama, who had foreseen the advancing hegemony of the Chinese and the threat it posed for Tibet. For *Guru Lama*, Lamdark worked on the hologram of a Buddha illustration, whose kitschy, illusional character threatens to outshine the devotional contents.

*Kiss World* finds the Tibetan oracle Dorge Drakkten juxtaposed with a portrait of Gene Simmons from rock band Kiss, both with characteristically sticking out tongues – for Buddhists a gesture of respect and of truth-telling. In the background of the picture, the spectator leaning back in a chair in a Fabriktheater poster is a metaphor for the way the rest of the world has stood by in the face of aggression.

*Broken Aristocrats* represents the flight of many Tibetans, a consequence of the incursion by the Chinese – and others. The photograph of the aristocrats stems from the time of the British Expedition to Tibet in 1903/04 – a de facto invasion.

*Poison Water* features a superimposition of historical moments: the discussions held between the Panchen Lama, the highest ranking lama after the Dalai Lama, with Mao Zedong about the future of Tibet; the current situation, "poisoned water" (dead insects encased in molten water-blue plastic film), the denial of livelihoods – and the 130-plus cases of self-immolation by Tibetans as a sign of the non-violent opposition to Chinese oppression.

The sculpture *Lhasa Dreams* consists of the plastic cast of a mattress that Lamdark found when moving into his studio in the Rote Fabrik cultural centre in Zurich in 2000. It was a relict of his successors, who were Christoph Herzog as well as Dieter Meier and Boris Blank. Arranged on the mattress are 46 empty cans of Tibetan Lhasa Beer, their bases pierced with a variety of motifs. The piercings reveal a wild panorama of Western and Asian imagery: They show Tibetan saints, Western stars such as Dieter Meier, John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd but also self-immolations and pornographic depictions.

**Kesang Lamdark (\*1963) studied at Parsons The New School for Design in New York City and at Columbia University. He has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions worldwide, including at the Queens Museum, New York; ShugoArts, Tokyo; Nam June Paik Arts Centre, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea, and the 3rd Guangzhou Triennial, Guangzhou, China. His work is represented in private and public collections in Europe, Australia and the USA. Kesang Lamdark lives and works in Zurich.**