

Text for press release

Gregor Hildebrandt
«Weiße Nacht hängt an den Bergen»

August 28 – October 30, 2009

Opening hours:
Tuesday - Friday 2 – 6 p.m.
and by appointment

Grieder Contemporary is delighted to announce the first ever solo exhibition featuring Gregor Hildebrandt at a Swiss gallery. By incorporating everyday elements including music cassettes, gramophone records, audio and video tapes with titles referencing lyrics from the post-punk and new wave era, Berlin-based Hildebrandt creates shimmering works of sombre monochrome. In doing so he uncovers a modern form of Romanticism that fuses the ephemeral glamour of film and music with the rather colourless ambience of the present.

Gregor Hildebrandt has been working since the late 1990s on his concept to achieve unity between music and art. He does this by recording specific songs on a cassette then fixing the audio tape inside the cassette to the canvas. This finds him adopting the stylistic idiom both of Abstract Expressionism and Minimal Art, while his choice of objects remains resolutely wed to Pop Art. The music the artist has thus hushed comes back to life only via the memory associations ignited in the observer by the title of the work. The artist's choice of songs is revelatory of the romantic, rather melancholic perspective he has on life.

For an example of Hildebrandt's technique incorporating tape take a look at his three Vertrauen (Trust) canvases, with their allusion to the song of that name by The Cure. The work – in which the middle canvas is mirrored to its left and its right – has had tape applied to it to achieve a black-and-white negative-positive-negative effect. Likewise, the title of the work Per Aspera Ad Astra (Trinklied (E. N.)) (2009) calls to mind the so-called drinking song by German avant-garde band Einstürzende Neubauten. It features plump Astra beer bottles attached at regular intervals along the side of the canvas thus forming a kind of Baroque holy wreath. In another work the artist deploys his collection of empty audio cassette cases in Kassettensetzkasten (2008) to create the seriality of Minimal Art, simultaneously turning them into a large mosaic.

As for the garden of the gallery, it contains a slab of granite engraved with the portrait of the German poet Gottfried Benn, who died in Berlin in 1956. Inspired by the latter's work, Hildebrandt portrays him with deep-set eyes, his face marked with deep furrows. This memento mori is one of a series of such depictions, including that of film icon Marlene Dietrich, which question the public image of artists and the way they are represented.

Gregor Hildebrandt (*1974 in Bad Homburg) lives and works in Berlin. He currently has a solo exhibition running at the Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, marking the 16th Vattenfall Europe Mining & Generation Prize for Painting and Works on Paper; it closes on 31 August 2009. Accompanying the exhibition is a catalogue published by argobooks. Works of Hildebrandt are also to be seen at XVI Rohkunstbau, Potsdam, Germany, until 13 September, and at Art Biesenthal, Germany, until 27 September 2009.