

VON
LISA ZEITZ

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Seit Jahren arbeitet Tobias Rehberger, Jahrgang 1966, mit einer großen Vielfalt an Medien und sprengt die Grenzen zwischen Kunst und Design. Zu seinen Projekten zählt der Skulpturenweg »24 Stops« zwischen dem Vitra Campus und der Fondation Beyeler bei Basel, eine Brückenskulptur über den Rhein-Herne-Kanal in Oberhausen und Uhrenobjekte für die Berliner Staatsbibliothek. Hier spricht er über seine Anfänge in Frankfurt, seine Selbstporträts als Clown und seine jüngste Installation in Schwerin.

WELTKUNST Sie haben den Goldenen Löwen der Biennale in Venedig gewonnen und sind Professor für Bildhauerei an der Städelschule in Frankfurt. Man kann sagen, Sie sind arriviert. Können Sie sich noch an eine Zeit erinnern, als Sie noch kein Künstler waren? Wann wussten Sie, dass Sie die Künstlerlaufbahn einschlagen würden?

Tobias Rehberger Relativ spät. Es gibt viele Künstler, die sagen, sie wussten schon im Kindergarten, dass sie Künstler werden wollten. Das war bei mir nicht so, es war für mich etwas, das weit weg war. Mit 15 oder 16 Jahren dachte ich: irgendetwas mit Grafikdesign oder Mode oder... keine Ahnung. Ich habe Kunst immer sehr bewundert, aber mir war nicht klar, dass man auch selbst Künstler werden kann. Erst ungefähr im Al-

ter von 19 habe ich es kapiert und dachte, klar, das will ich. Ich hatte mich ja schon immer damit beschäftigt.

WK In welcher Weise?

TR Gezeichnet, ein bisschen gemalt. Mein Vater war Hobbykünstler, also gab es bei uns Ölfarben im Haus. Als ich endlich begriffen habe, dass man als normaler Mensch Künstler werden kann, habe ich es ernsthafter betrieben, eine Mappe gemacht, mich bei verschiedenen Kunsthochschulen beworben. Gelandet bin ich in Frankfurt, nicht wegen der Kunsthochschule, sondern wegen einer Frau, die ich beim Skifahren kennengelernt hatte. Ich habe beim Bürgertelefon angerufen und gefragt, ob man in Frankfurt Kunst studieren könnte, und die haben gemeint, ja, sie hätten hier diese berühmte Städelschule. Die war mir damals noch nicht geläufig. Ich komme aus einem Dorf in Schwaben, kannte Berlin und Düsseldorf, da hatte ich mich zuerst beworben, aber dann schließlich auch in Frankfurt.

WK Sie haben bei Martin Kippenberger und bei Thomas Bayrle studiert, zwei Legenden. Wie würden Sie Ihre eigene Studienzeit beschreiben, und was war damals anders als heute?

TR Der Unterschied ist gar nicht so wahnsinnig groß. Nur hat man in letzter Zeit manchmal das Gefühl, die fröhlichen Wissenschaften gehen verloren. Es gibt eine stärkere Idee davon, etwas richtig machen zu müssen. Das war natürlich gerade bei Bayrle und Kippenberger überhaupt nicht das Thema. Da ging es eher um das Falschmachen.

WK Sie bringen Ihren Studierenden also auch bei, mal etwas falsch zu machen?

TR Ich versuche ihnen zu erklären, dass sie im Studium einen Freiraum von fünf Jahren geschenkt bekommen. Da können sie sich ausprobieren und möglichst viel falsch machen... Das ist natürlich im Moment schwierig, weil ein Druck herrscht, bestimmte Grenzen nicht zu überschreiten. Dabei besteht meiner Ansicht nach die Kunst genau daraus! So versuche ich den Studierenden klarzumachen, dass sie jetzt die richtigen Fehler und möglichst viel Quatsch machen sollen, damit sie herausfinden, was sie eigentlich wirklich wollen. Wenn man sich nach draußen begibt, ist das etwas anderes, als wenn man in einem geschützten Raum untereinander heiß diskutiert – das ist eigentlich der einzige Sinn so einer Hochschule. Lehren kann ich sie nichts. Sie müssen etwas machen, was ich mir selbst noch gar nicht vorstellen kann. Ich kann ihnen aber helfen dorthinzukommen.

WK Sie haben den Begriff der fröhlichen Wissenschaften genannt. War es in Martin Kippenbergers Unterricht fröhlich?



Die Lampeninstallation »I do if I don't« war 2022 im Kunstmuseum Stuttgart ausgestellt, das monumentale Selbstbildnis als Clown, re. Seite, vor wenigen Monaten bei Neugerriemschneider in Berlin. Vor. Doppelseite: Blick auf das Schweriner Schloss und der Künstler 2019 im von ihm gestalteten Shop des Juweliers Hiersun in Peking

Bild links: Wolfgang Günzel; rechts: Jens Ziehe, Berlin

Was sieht man – und was nicht?
Weltkunst, November 2025
Lisa Zeitz



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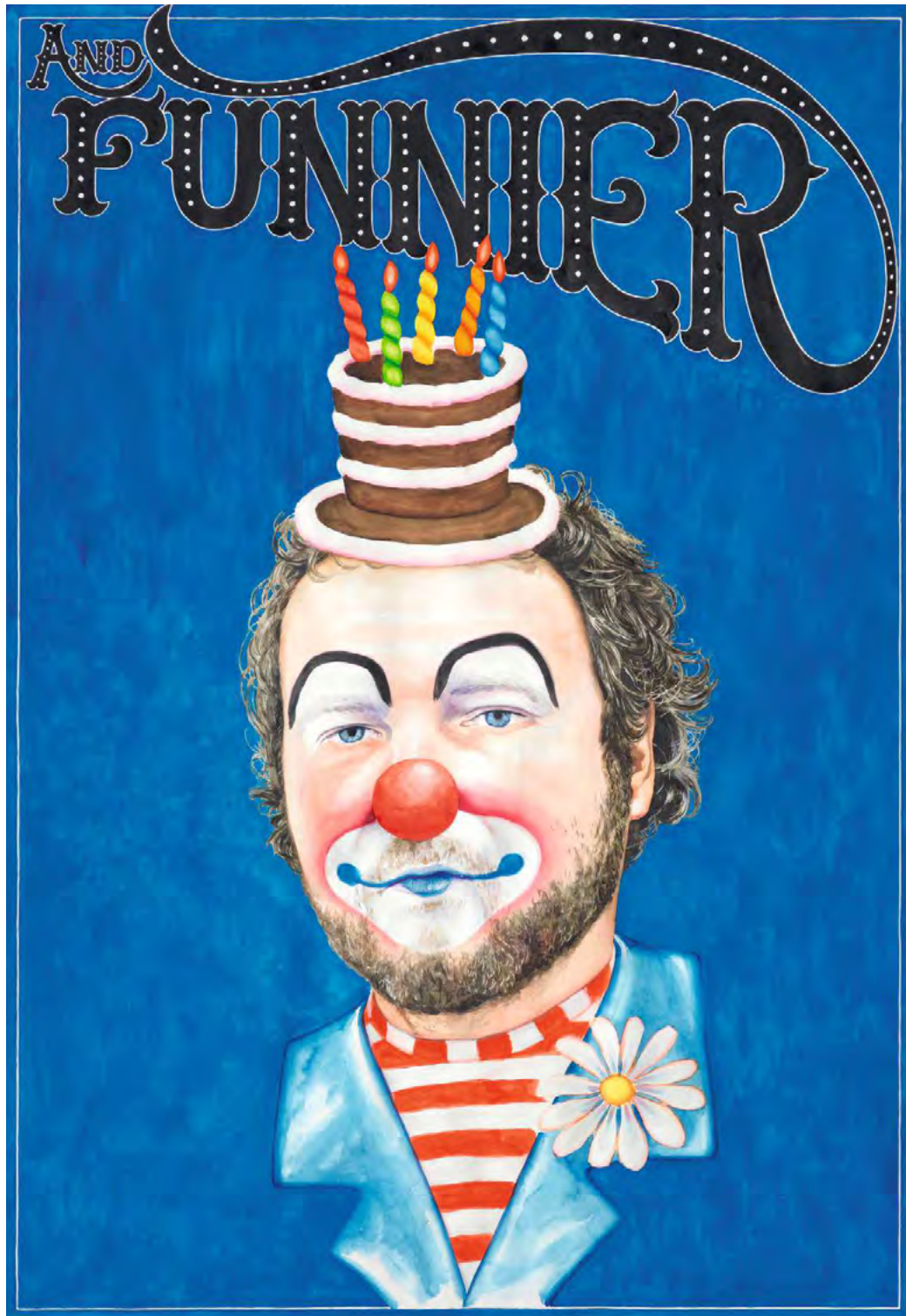
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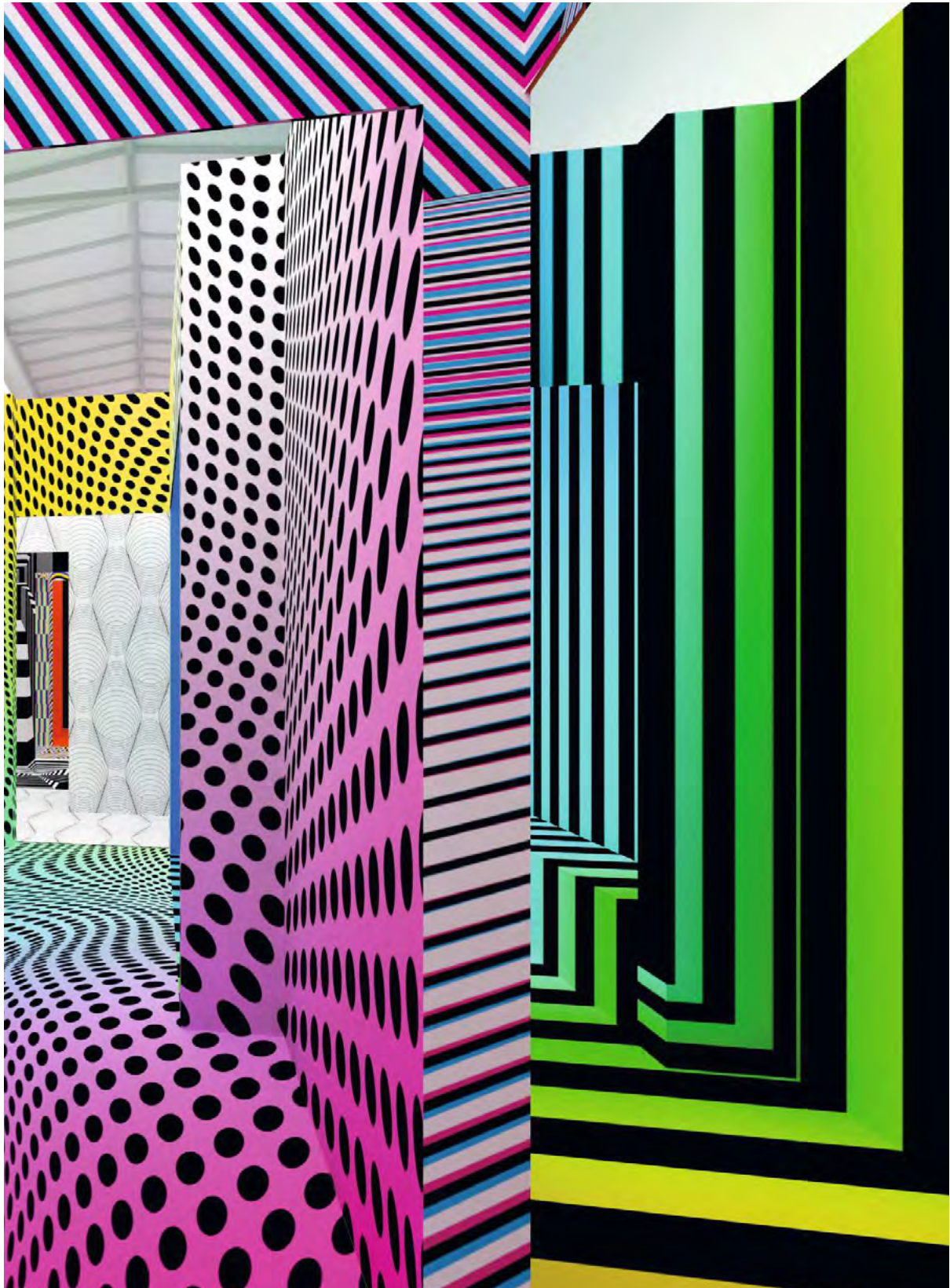
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Für das Café der Biennale in Venedig (ganz o.) gewann Tobias Rehberger 2009 den Goldenen Löwen. Das Staatliche Museum Schwerin zeigt nun nach der Sanierung wieder Marcel Duchamps »Corolles« (Mitte, 1934) und Jean-Baptiste Oudrys »Nashorn Clara« von 1749 – sowie Rehbergers psychedelische Installation »We are generally overconfident in our opinions and our impressions and judgement« (vor. Doppelseite: digitales Modell)

TR An der Kunsthochschule gibt es keinen Unterricht, wie man sich das so als Unistudent oder Schüler vorstellt. Bei Martin war es noch mal ganz anders. Der war ein großer Hassler der Kunsthochschule. Er war, glaube ich, überhaupt nur zweimal da. Man musste sich irgendwo treffen, entweder bei ihm in der Wohnung oder in der Kneipe oder im Restaurant oder sonst irgendwo. Er war eher schwierig als Lehrer, weil er sehr bestimmend war. Man musste aufpassen, dass man bei sich selbst bleibt, und doch hat man sich manchmal dabei erwisch, so zu denken wie er. Das war, für mich zumindest, ein großer Kampf. Einige sind dabei untergegangen, weil er sehr rigoros und teilweise unfair war, überhaupt nicht didaktisch. Er war stocksauer, wenn man nicht sofort bei Fuß stand, wenn er in die Stadt kam. Da sind einige künstlerisch und teilweise auch ein bisschen menschlich vor die Hunde gegangen. Da war Bayrle ganz anders, er hat sich immer für seine Studierenden und ihre Arbeit interessiert. Auf der anderen Seite aber war Martin natürlich ein großartiger Lehrer.

WK Sie verwenden viele verschiedene Medien und Technologien in Ihrer Kunst, von Aquarell über Keramik bis zu Neon und LED. Mit was experimentieren Sie aktuell? Und wie handhaben Sie die künstliche Intelligenz?

TR In meiner letzten Ausstellung bei Neugerriemschneider in Berlin vor ein paar Monaten habe ich einen Brunnen gezeigt, das war für mich neu. Es ist keine komplett »neue Technologie«, die Brunnenpumpe ist, glaube ich, vom Baumarkt, und der Brunnen kommt aus einem 3D-Drucker. Im Studio habe ich einen ganzen Raum voll von diesen Druckern. Was KI angeht, haben wir ein interessantes Programm, das zweidimensionale Bilder in dreidimensionale Objekte verwandeln kann. Es ist lustig und etwas beängstigend, wenn das Programm die nicht sichtbare Rückseite in 3D umsetzt und berechnet, wie das wahrscheinlich hinten aussieht. Da passieren interessante Fehler und teilweise komische Sachen, auch manchmal vorne, weil etwas falsch interpretiert wird. Diese Idee beschäftigt mich ohnehin die ganze Zeit. Was sieht man – und was sieht man nicht? Warum sieht das so und so aus? Und was für einen Inhalt hat das dann? Vielleicht sieht es genauso aus, hat aber trotz gleichen Aussehens einen anderen Inhalt. Und warum das dann? Vielleicht kauft jemand ein verwischtes Bild von Richter, weil es so gut über das Sofa passt, aber das Motiv könnte seinen Ursprung in seinen grauen Bildern haben, in denen er sich mit Konzentrationslagern auseinandersetzt. Was ist dahinter?

WK Die Frage »Was ist dahinter?« war auch ein Thema bei der Biennale in Venedig 1997, als Sie Unterwäsche entworfen haben, die das Aufsichtspersonal unter der Kleidung trug.

TR Man hat es nicht gesehen, man musste es glauben. Es gab natürlich ein Schild mit der Bezeichnung des Werks, so wie man das eben hat, »Öl auf Leinwand, 2017, 1,80 auf 1,40 Meter«. Nur war das eben die Beschreibung der Unterwäsche. Manche Wärter haben ihre Unterwäsche auch gezeigt. Egal, ob sie sie trugen oder nicht, gab es diese Projektion, das Wissen, jemand hat diese Wäsche vielleicht an... So eine ähnliche Arbeit hatte ich auch einmal auf der Berlin Biennale mit Bauchketten für die Wärterinnen und Wärter. Ich glaube, das ist das zentrale Thema meiner Arbeit. Ich habe nur lange gebraucht, das herauszufinden. Gerhard Richter hat gesagt, »Meine Werke sind intelligenter als ich«, da ist was dran.

Bilder: Wolfgang Günzel: SSOK M-V/Association Marcel Duchamp/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025; SSOK M-V

TOBIAS REHBERGER

- WK Sie haben kürzlich eine ganze Serie von monumentalen Selbstporträts als Clown geschaffen.
- TR Ja, sie umfasst meine ganze Künstlerlaufbahn, von dem Moment mit 19 oder 20, als ich mich als Künstler gesehen habe.
- WK Auf dem ersten Bild, da sind Sie noch ein ganz junger Mann, steht »funny«, dann steht auf dem zweiten »funnier« und auf jedem weiteren »and funnier« – spielen Sie auf den Druck an, der auf Ihnen als Künstler lastet, immer noch etwas Tollereres zu produzieren? Ist die Serie in dieser Hinsicht ein Kommentar auf das Künstlerdasein?
- TR Würde ich wahrscheinlich so annehmen, ja.
- WK Sind die Clownsmasken für Sie ein Versteckspiel?
- TR Die Maske ist ein Thema, wenn man sich für Oberflächen interessiert und was dahintersteckt. Für mich ist sie auch eine Metapher für Kunst überhaupt. Ich habe meine Zweifel, wenn Kunst herausschreit, was sie meint, oder wenn sie so düster und schwer daherkommt, damit man gleich bemerkt, wie bedeutungsvoll sie ist. Mich interessiert mehr, wie es dieses komische Verhältnis zwischen vorne und hinten gibt.
- WK Die Städtelschule ist nicht weit vom Städel am Frankfurter Museumsufer mit seinen berühmten Sammlungen. Schicken Sie Ihre Studierenden zu den alten Meistern und Meisterinnen?
- TR Ich schicke sie nicht hin, aber ich glaube, das machen alle. Es sind erstaunliche Kunstsammlungen. Es gibt ein sehr, sehr schlecht gemaltes Bild von August Macke, von Meerschweinchen – es ist wirklich so schlecht gemalt, dass man es kaum glauben kann –, das ist mein Lieblingsbild im Städel.
- WK Gerade läuft der Countdown für Ihre neue Installation, die am 30. Oktober im Staatlichen Museum Schwerin eröffnet, dort findet sich auch eine exquisite Sammlung mit Gemälden des Barocks und der Romantik...
- TR ...und eine der größten Duchamp-Sammlungen der Welt. Das Museum wurde gerade für drei Jahre umgebaut. Es ist ein spektakuläres Ensemble aus dem 19. Jahrhundert – Weltkulturerbe – und erinnert ein bisschen an Neuschwanstein, ein Schloss mit einem Theater und einem Museum. Ich wusste nicht, wie schön Schwerin ist!
- WK Welche Technologien kommen in Ihrer neuen Installation zum Tragen?
- TR Es wird eine Art Labyrinth. In meiner Arbeit habe ich schon einige Räume mit Mustern gemacht, in denen es um Verunklärung des Raums geht. Ich nenne es Kunst zum Weggucken, denn es geht eben nicht ums Hingucken, sondern ums Dasein und mehr oder weniger Nichtsehen. In gewisser Weise wird es eine kleine Retrospektive meiner Räume, die sich aber wieder auflösen.
- WK Also auch Elemente des Cafés in Venedig, für das Sie 2009 den Goldenen Löwen der Biennale gewonnen haben?
- TR Das wurde gerade abgebaut, weil der Pavillon jetzt komplett renoviert wird, es war sozusagen das natürliche Ende. Es war nie als permanente Installation geplant und sollte nach dem Ende der Biennale auch wieder verschwinden. Dann wollte die Biennale es aber behalten, was schon ungewöhnlich ist. Es waren immerhin 16 Jahre.
- WK Das Projekt in Schwerin ist ab jetzt Teil der Dauerausstellung im Museum, wie sind Sie mit dieser Voraussetzung umgegangen?
- TR Die Schwierigkeit mit diesen Räumen war der Funktionszusammenhang. Eine Bar in Venedig, eine Tankstelle, ein Supermarkt oder ein Büro hätte es auch sein können, ein Raum, in den man nicht wegen der Kunst geht, in dem man nicht dieses übliche konfrontative Verhältnis hat, »da ist etwas gegenüber, man starrt es an, und es glotzt zurück«. In den Arbeiten geht es eigentlich darum, dass es eben nicht so ist. Deswegen die komischen Tarnmuster, die auf der einen Seite sehr paradox, stark visuell sind, aber trotzdem dazu da, etwas nicht zu sehen. Jetzt ist die Funktion, auf einer Metaebene, das Museum. Es ist ja nicht so, dass ein Museum funktionslos wäre, aber es ist anders als eine Funktion aus dem alltäglichen Leben. Dafür musste ich etwas erfinden, so kam das Labyrinth ins Spiel, und diese sich auflösenden Räume. Wenn ich das jetzt so erzähle, kann man es sich nicht vorstellen. Wie bei aller Kunst reicht es nicht, wenn man es im Computer anguckt. Man muss es sehen, man muss es riechen.
- WK Wie lösen die Räume sich auf?
- TR Es sind rund 15 kleine Räume mit etwa 27 Wänden, die teilweise durch Rollos getrennt sind. Die Rollos öffnen und schließen sich automatisch nach dem Zufallsprinzip, durch Bewegungsmelder ausgelöst. Innerhalb dieser Räume gibt es Kabinette, in denen Objekte von mir hängen oder stehen, zum Beispiel Lampeninstallationen aus Glastropfen, eine blinkende Neonschrift mit zwei abwechselnden Botschaften, die sich durch Spiegelungen ins Unendliche verlängern, und in einem Kabinett eine comiceartige Atompilz-Skulptur, die aber so blendend hell leuchten wird, dass man sie kaum anschauen kann, außerdem kann man sie nur durch Schlitze in der Wand sehen. Es wird immer neue Blickachsen geben.
- WK Und gibt es einen Bezug zu Marcel Duchamp?
- TR Ich würde sagen, der »Nicht-Kunst-Charakter«, den ich gerade beschrieben habe...
- WK ...wie Duchamp, der einen Flaschentrockner oder ein Pissoir zur Kunst erklärt hat...
- TR ...dass man irgendwo hinget und eigentlich einen Kaffee trinken will und dann aus Versehen in der Kunst sitzt oder so. Das ist natürlich nicht genau die gleiche Stoßrichtung, aber es ist die Idee, dass Kunst aus ihrem Funktionszusammenhang herauskommt. Wer weiß, ob ich darauf gekommen wäre, wenn Duchamp das nicht schon mal so in die andere Richtung gemacht hätte. x



Hier geht es zum Podcast »Was macht die Kunst?«, auf dem das Interview basiert. Tobias Rehbergers Labyrinth ist ab 30. Oktober im Staatlichen Museum Schwerin zu sehen.



Tobias Rehberger

BLICK DES KÜNSTLERS AUF SICH SELBST

TOBIAS REHBERGERS BISHER PERSÖNLICHSTE AUSSTELLUNG IN KOPENHAGEN ZEIGT NEBEN SEINEN KUNSTWERKEN UND SCHNAPPSCHÜSSEN AUCH OBJEKTE, DIE ER ÜBER DIE JAHRE HINWEG „ANGEHÄUFT“ HAT, WIE ER SAGT. WARUM? DAS ERZÄHLT ER UNS IM INTERVIEW.

TEXT: BETTINA KRAUSE

Über zwei Etagen und bis auf den Vorplatz des Museums erstreckt sich Tobias Rehbergers große Retrospektive „through the back side of my eyes“ im Kunstforeningen GL Strand in Kopenhagen, die bis zum 14. Januar 2024 zu sehen ist. Der Künstler gilt als einer der einflussreichsten seiner Generation und erhielt 2009 den Goldenen Löwen auf der 53. Kunstbiennale in Venedig. Im Zentrum seines Interesses stehen das Spiel mit der Wahrnehmung und die Möglichkeit, Dinge neu und anders zu sehen, zu erfahren und zu interpretieren.

Was erwartet die BesucherInnen in Ihrer Ausstellung in Kopenhagen?

TR: Ich habe mich entschieden, Werke aus den letzten 30 Jahren zu zeigen, die zum Teil schon mal ausgestellt wurden, das sind alles Arbeiten, die ich für mich behalten hatte. Wenn man eine Serie mit mehreren Arbeiten macht, behält man ja das eine oder andere für sich selbst. Da die Ausstellung im großen ehrwürdigen Kunstforeningen GL Strand stattfindet, das früher privat genutzt wurde, gefiel mir die Idee, auch et-

The artist's view on himself

ADAM The Magazine, November 24, 2023

Bettina Krause

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48 PERSPECTIVE

was „Privates“ zu machen. Ich habe etwas recherchiert und keine anderen Künstler:innen gefunden, die vor mir eine Ausstellung dieser Art gemacht hätten: Es geht um den Blick des Künstlers auf sich selbst, wenn er bestimmte Arbeiten von sich aussucht. Darüber hinaus gibt es in der Ausstellung noch zwei weitere Ebenen. Zum einen zeige ich Dinge, die ich im Laufe der Zeit angesammelt habe, die keine Kunst sind – beispielsweise meine Kochbuch Sammlung, meine Teekannen Sammlung – wobei ich sagen muss, dass das keine kuratierten Sammlungen sind, sondern Objekte, die ich gut fand und deshalb angehäuft habe. Als Fußnote dazu sind Fotos von mir zu sehen, die nicht entstanden sind, um ausgestellt zu werden, sondern Schnappschüsse, wie sie andere auch machen.

Und die vierte Ebene der Ausstellung ist das Kunstwerk vor dem Museum?

Ja, draußen gibt es eine Fassadenarbeit, die im Gegensatz zum „Privaten“ im Innern mit dem Gegenteil zu tun, nämlich mit dem Öffentlichen. Im ersten Stock des Gebäudes sind Neonkästen in die Fenster eingebaut, wie man Leuchtreklamen vor Geschäften kennt. Sie sind mit einem Sockel auf dem Vorplatz des Museums verbunden, in den man das Handy einlegen und die eigene Musik abspielen kann. Das Licht der Neonkästen reagiert auf diese Musik und spielt gewisserma-

ßen die Musik und die Lichtversion des Musikstücks ab. Man kann mit dieser Arbeit also etwas Privates wie die eigene Musik öffentlich sichtbar und hörbar machen.

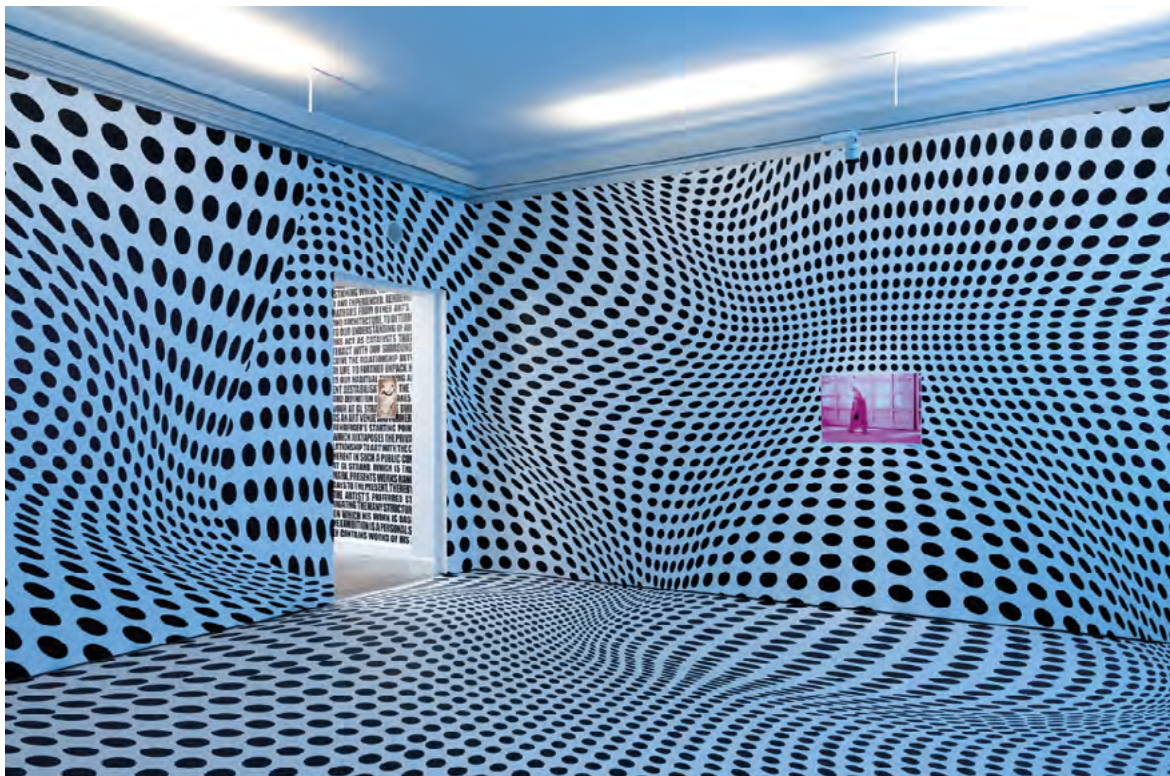
Was haben die Ausstellungsstücke gemeinsam, die Sie ausgewählt haben?

Es gibt die unterschiedlichsten Gründe, warum man eigene Werke behält. Mal sind es besonders gelungene Arbeiten oder man hat Mitleid mit einer Arbeit. Was sie alle zusammenhält ist, dass man sich als Künstler damit in gewisser Weise identifiziert – es können auch die etwas komischeren Arbeiten sein, die nicht so eingängig sind. Es gibt nicht für alle das gleiche Kriterium. Deshalb ist es ja auch so interessant – weil es eine so unklare Masse ist.

Wenn der Blick des Künstlers auf sich selbst gezeigt wird – was sehen Sie, wenn Sie die Ausstellung betrachten?

Eben genau diesen Blick. Was das ist, muss jeder und jede für sich selbst herausfinden. Aus diesem Grund mache ich es ja. Wenn ich es selber so genau wüsste, könnte ich es ja aufschreiben, dann wäre es eine langweilige Ausstellung. Es geht vielleicht auch um Dinge, die man selbst gar nicht so ganz genau wissen möchte. Es ist ja schon intim genug, dass ich Euch meinen Blick auf mich selbst zeige. (lacht)

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Das stimmt natürlich. Was hat es mit dem Titel der Ausstellung „through the back side of my eyes“ auf sich?

Es geht ja eben um diesen Blick auf sich selbst, der ein anderer ist, als der Blick nach vorn. Wenn man durch die Rückseite der Augen blickt schaut man sich ja auch selbst an. Es ist eine Art Selbstbespiegelung. Da ist eine gewisse Parallelität, denn weder sammle ich meine eigenen Arbeiten nach strategischen Gesichtspunkten, noch sammle ich meine Teekannen strategisch. Ich gehe also in dieser Ausstellung mit Kunst anders um, als ich sie sonst nach außen zeige. Nach außen kuratiere ich viel mehr als ich es nun getan habe. Das Kuratieren wäre die Vorderseite der Augen. Was ich hier zeige ist viel unstrategischer ausgewählt. Durch die Rückseite der Augen, die ja auch etwas blind ist, habe ich einen unbewussteren Zugriff.

Spannend! In Ihrer Arbeit vermischen sich Kunst, Architektur und Design – was fasziniert Sie an diesem Zusammenspiel?

Ich würde eher sagen, ich benutze Strategien aus anderen Feldern wie Design und Architektur aber nur, um dadurch etwas für die Kunst herauszufinden. Nur weil ich etwas mit einem Stuhl mache gibt es keine Überlappung mit dem Design – für mich geht es immer um die Frage, was das für die Kunst bedeutet. Mich bewegt zum Beispiel die Frage, warum ein

Stuhl keine Skulptur sein kann, warum man Kunst nicht mit geschlossenen Augen erleben kann,... Es gibt so viele Dinge, die einem erzählt werden und die ich mir auch selbst erzählt habe, von denen ich vermute, dass sie nicht immer richtig sind. Das interessiert mich. Und mein Leidensdruck ist groß genug, um jeden Morgen aufzustehen und an diesen Fragen herumzuschrauben.

Welche Idee oder welches Projekt hat sie zuletzt sehr begeistert?

Ein befreundeter Künstler Rirkrit Tiravanija erzählte mir, dass er eine Maschine bauen will, die eine japanische Teezeremonie vollzieht. Die Idee ist, dass man diese idealerweise absolut präzise, immer gleich ablaufende Zeremonie unmenschlich perfektioniert. Die Frage ist, ob in den winzigen Unterschieden der menschlichen Unpräzision nicht das eigentlich Interessante liegt. Man denkt ja immer, die Präzision und Perfektion wären das Ziel der Teezeremonie. Wenn man aber nun eine Maschine hat, die diese Präzision erreicht, dreht sich die Idee um. Das sind die besten Kunstwerke, die so etwas erreichen. Lustigerweise habe ich selbst vor vielen Jahren eine Arbeit gemacht, bei der es genau um diese Fragestellung ging, wahrscheinlich finde ich es deshalb so spannend. Auf die Arbeit freue ich mich schon sehr. ©

THE ARTIST'S VIEW ON HIMSELF

TOBIAS REHBERGER'S MOST PERSONAL EXHIBITION IN COPENHAGEN TO DATE SHOWS NOT ONLY HIS ARTWORKS AND SNAPSHOTS BUT ALSO OBJECTS WHICH HE HAS "AMASSED" OVER THE YEARS, AS HE SAYS. BUT WHY? HE UNRAVELS THIS MYSTERY TO US IN THE INTERVIEW.



Stretching over two floors and onto the forecourt of the museum, Tobias Rehberger's large retrospective "through the back side of my eyes" at Kunstforeningen GL Strand in Copenhagen is on view until 14 January 2024. The artist is considered one of the most influential of his generation and was awarded the Golden Lion at the 53rd Venice Art Biennale. At the centre of his interest is playing with perception and the possibility to see, experience and interpret things in a new and different way.

What can visitors expect to see at your exhibition in Copenhagen?

TR: I decided to exhibit works from the last 30 years. Some of them have been exhibited before, these are all works that I had kept to myself. When you make a series with several works, you keep one or the other for yourself. Since the exhibition is taking place in the large venerable Kunstforeningen GL Strand, which used to be privately used, I liked the idea of doing something "private"

as well. I did some research and found no other artists who had done an exhibition of this kind before me: This time, it is about the artist's view of himself when he selects certain works of his. There are also two other layers in the exhibition. On the one hand, I show things that I have amassed over time that do not constitute art – for example, my collection of cookbooks and my collection of teapots – although I have to say that these are not curated collections, but objects that I found good and therefore amassed. I might want to add that there are photos of me that were not taken to be exhibited, but snapshots just like the ones others take.

And the fourth layer of the exhibition is the artwork in front of the museum?

Yes, outside there is façade work that, in contrast to the "private" inside, has to do with the opposite, namely the public. On the first floor of the building, neon boxes are built into the windows, like neon signs in front of shops. They are connected

Photos Copyrights: Tobias Rehberger, through the back side of my eyes, GL STRAND, 2023. Photo by David Sjöerholm

to a pedestal on the forecourt of the museum where you can log your mobile phone in and play your own music. The light of the neon boxes reacts to this music and in a way plays the music and the light version of the piece of music. So this work lets you turn something private like your own music into something that is publicly visible and audible.

What do the exhibits you have chosen have in common?

TR: There are many different reasons why people keep their own works. Sometimes they are particularly successful works or one feels sorry for a work. What they all hold in common is that as an artist you identify with them in a way – it can also be the slightly weirder works that are not so catchy. There is not the same criterion for everyone. That is why it is so interesting – because it is such an ambiguous mass.

Speaking of the artist's view of himself that is shown – what do you see when you look at the exhibition?

TR: This very view. What that is, everyone has to find out for themselves. That is why I'm doing it. If I knew it so well myself, I could write it down, but then it would be a boring exhibition. It may also be about things that you don't really want to know yourself. It's intimate enough that I show you my view of myself. (laughs)

Seriously, that is true. What is the title of the exhibition "through the back side of my eyes" all about?

It is about this view of oneself, which is different from the view forward. When you look through the back of your eyes, you are also looking at yourself. It is a kind of self-reflection. There is a certain parallelism, because neither do I collect my own work strategically, nor do I collect my teapots strategically. So in this exhibition I deal with art in a different way than I usually show it to the outside

world. Outwardly, I curate much more than I have now. Curating would be the front of the eyes. What I show here is much more unstrategically selected. Through the back of the eyes, which is also somewhat blind, I have a more unconscious access.

Exciting! Your work brings art, architecture and design together – what fascinates you about this interplay?

I would rather say I use strategies from other fields like design and architecture but only to find out something for art. Just because I do something with a chair there is no overlap with design – for me it's always about what that means for the art. What motivates me, for example, is the question of why a chair cannot be a sculpture, why you cannot experience art with your eyes closed, ... There are so many things that you are told and that I have also told myself that I suspect are not always true. That is what gets me interested. And my suffering pressure is great enough to get up every morning and dive down into these questions.

Which idea or project has excited you most recently?

An artist friend of mine, Rirkrit Tiravanija, told me that he wants to build a machine that performs a Japanese tea ceremony. The idea is that you make this absolutely precise ceremony that ideally is the same over and over again really perfect in a way that is no longer human. The question is whether the tiny differences in human imprecision are not what is actually interesting. One always thinks that precision and perfection are the goal of the tea ceremony. But if you now have a machine that achieves this precision, the idea turns around. These are the best works of art that achieve something like this. Funnily enough, I created some piece of art myself many years ago that dealt with this very question, which is probably why I find it so exciting. I am really looking forward to the work. ☺





View of "Tobias Rehberger," 2019–2020. Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon. Photo: Bruno Lopez.
LISBON

Tobias Rehberger

GALERIA PEDRO CERA

Rua do Patrocínio, 67E

November 16, 2019–January 4, 2020

Working at the intersections between visual art, design, and architecture, Tobias Rehberger never forgets a dash of irony. For his third exhibition here, the German artist presents “mother without child,” 2019, a series of floor sculptures approximating huge empty vessels. Unlike his well-known “Portrait Vases” of the ‘90s, these new works bear no references to Rehberger’s artist friends and are not filled with flowers. Oversized, non-functional, and hollow, the “mother without child” sculptures are composed of what look like giant Easter eggs, rendered in fiberglass and epoxy and painted a variety of garish colors. The ovular forms, stacked and fixed together at curious angles, make seemingly precarious, human-scale totem poles. *Crooked, manly, short, chubby*: these are just some of the vases’ titular adjectives, all of which could also describe any ordinary person. Rehberger’s eerie sculptures look like aimless, wandering ghosts.

A large, flickering neon sign in shades of orange, purple, and red hangs in gallery’s window, reading: “After this point violators will be prosecuted.” As in Rehberger’s other

Critics' Picks: Alberta Romano on Tobias Rehberger

Artforum, December 17, 2019

Alberta Romano

neon works, the title of *AFTER THIS POINT VIOLATORS (FREE NOT AFRAID)*, 2016, contains conflicting perspectives, poking holes in our understanding of what it means to communicate. His sense of irony manifests in his use of bright, cheery hues to describe our truly desolate reality. Vases become functionless and gargantuan; a sparkling neon sign flashes threatening penal warnings. Rehberger knows that there is something broken in the system and has come to warn us of its looming presence.

— Alberta Romano

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Art, Advertising, and Aura

August 24, 2017

Words and Translation by: Joseph Möller
Photographs by: Killa Scheutze

FFM Magazin

In a world where Zara is being sued for stealing the work of artists and Adomo mugs are sold on Campus Westend for €8.95, Tobias Rehberger, his work, and Critical Theory help us to tackle the commodification of art.

To understand the art of Tobias Rehberger is also to struggle with the question where art begins and where it ends. Is art defined by the artist, the beholder, or the social discourse? Is an artwork still considered art when it's created to be mass-marketed? Is art only art when it's institutionalized: hung, installed, or performed within a museum's lavish white spaces, or a certain environment approved for art's consumption? Anyone would be hard-pressed to find a definitive answer to any of these questions. After all, the definition of art belongs to an aesthetic-philosophical dispute as old as, well, art itself.

Rehberger is one of Germany's leading contemporary artists. He is a Golden Lion winner, a two-time Venice Biennale artist, and professor of Sculpture at Städelschule Frankfurt. Rehberger works across media to create installations, sculptures, paintings, and genre-defying art experiences. Rehberger's eclectic work includes, among others, hijacked advertisement posters and a series of waypoints erected in the countryside between Swiss city of Riehen and the Vitra Museum in Weil am Rhein. Besides regularly breaching the boundaries of traditional art exhibitions, Rehberger also designed high-end bags for luxury brand MCM in a highly controversial collaboration. A simple, descriptive run-down of Rehberger's body of work, however, misses the opportunity to more deeply understand how his work interfaces with ideas of commodification. Instead, with an explicitly investigative lens, this essay explores how his self-understanding as an artist, his work, and the ideas of Critical theory reveal nuances about the intricacy of art and commodification.

ART AND CRITICAL THEORY

Critical Theory is a philosophical approach that emerged from the Frankfurt School in the 1920s. The theorists and thinkers that gravitated to Critical Theory were dissidents in a world dominated by capitalist, fascist, and communist thinking. Ultimately, they were curious about identifying a different course for social development, one that was self-reflective; even of its own possible dogmatic adherence to its own assumptions. Its success remains heavily debated by scholars today.

A central thinker to the conversation of art and Critical Theory is Theodor W. Adorno. In his highly influential work *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which he co-wrote with Max Horkheimer in 1944, Adorno introduces the notion of *Kulturindustrie*, or Culture Industry, which he elaborated on in a series of lectures on aesthetics he gave between 1958 and 1959, *Ästhetik* (2017). He scrutinizes how capitalism, by virtue of mass-producing cultural artifacts in order to gain a profit, renders culture and art mere commodities. Such a culture, therefore, he asserts, becomes *Kulturindustrie*, or Culture Industry. To use one local example of what Adorno may have characterized as *Kulturindustrie*, we can turn to a recent PR campaign for Schirn Museum's Magritte exhibition: In a play on words, the exhibition was marketed with pizza boxes reading "Pizza Magritte" in large letters hovering above one of Magritte's paintings in the background. The boxes ended up in the hands of customers who had ordered from selected pizzerias in Frankfurt. In this example, Magritte's art was deliberately used to create a spectacle, so that people are incentivized to buy tickets for the exhibition. His art, in short, was used to sell more tickets. In a Culture Industry, art becomes a readily consumable commodity (like a pizza, ironically) that can be slapped on a box.

To Adorno, utilizing art as a commodity is problematic. To understand why this is, it is important to note that according to Adorno, art is located in special realm of the human experience that is governed by the "reality principle" (Adorno, 80), i.e. of capitalist exploitation logic. He argues, it is the complete rationalization of our reality that art opposes by virtue of lacking immediate, practical use (ibid). To Adorno, this is art's demand: liberate us from the reality principle by dispensing itself from an immediate function. In Adorno's view, art that is conceived to be monetized can never be real art. Admittedly, this is a very strict definition of art. Tobias Rehberger's eclectic oeuvre contains several works that seem to collide with Adorno's view – as does the artist himself, who offers yet another context for art: "To me, anything can have a function when it makes sense. The most absurd things can make sense. Maybe it's stress relief, relaxation, or research. I don't think that art cannot have a function."

To Rehberger, an artwork can have a function without ceasing to be art. This pragmatic attitude is evident in many of his works. Completed in 2016, Rehberger created an installation named 24 Stops, a series of waypoints between the Swiss town of Riehen and the nearby Vitra Museum in Germany. Crossing the German-Swiss border, visitors can find their way from one point to the other by following a trail of colorful sculptures, wall paintings and installations. The functionality of 24 Stops can be found in both the pleasure of beholding the colorful waypoints, as well as in the guidance of visitors from Riehen to the Vitra Museum. The extension of art beyond the confines of galleries and museums is a recurring motif in Rehberger's work, and it sheds light on the artist's perception of art.

ART, ADVERTISEMENT, AND AURA

Art, according to Rehberger, should be "like a good pal you can hang around with." He asserts there is a bias that art has to be experienced in a certain, predetermined way, like in a museum. As a result, he sees museums become de facto consumer environments that promote a consumer's approach to art: "People go to a museum, look at a picture, and expect to immediately feel something. I think art should be handled less sacredly, and recipients should engage more naturally with art in their everyday lives. Why don't people go to a museum to hang out like they do at cafés or at parks? You don't have to stare at art all the time in order for it to have an effect on you."

Rehberger's attitude towards the status quo of art becomes palpable in his exhibition *flach* for which he created re-imaginings of popular advertisements. As a part of this exhibition, which was held at Museum für Angewandte Kunst in 2010, Rehberger used the logos of companies like Apple and Adidas to design posters that diverted from the original marketing message and placarded them around Frankfurt – without asking for permission from the respective brands. It's not a complete parody, however. "I only made use of things that I personally like," says Rehberger. "Technically, it's copyright infringement. But I wanted to problematize the common expectation that art has to be as authentic as possible. Advertisement, by default, is completely inauthentic, because all it wants to do is sell you something." As a result, in creating what is commonly supposed to be authentic (namely, art) out of what Rehberger perceives to be non-authenticity, the posters from *flach* function as art disguised as adverts. In turn, they provoke the recipient to reflect on the relationship of art and commerce. By merging the authentic with the inauthentic, the line between art and advertisement blurs. In addition, the posters correspond to Rehberger's fundamental assumption that literally any medium can be transformed into art, including adverts.

While Adorno would probably have his issues with creating art from advertisements, Walter Benjamin, another important thinker related closely to Frankfurt School, provides a more supportive view on Rehberger's poster art. Benjamin, in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, claims that a "painting or sculpture seen in the immediacy of 'its here and now'" (Macey, 22) possesses a distinct aura that is lost by means of mechanical reproduction (meaning photography, but extendable to copying, digitalization, etc.). While Benjamin has his gripes with the loss of aura, he also sees reproduction as a chance of liberation from "dependence on ritual" (ibid, 23). Indeed, this independence from the ritualistic presentation of art within an institutional context is what characterizes Rehberger's reproduced posters for *flach*. The exhibition was confined to museums or galleries and could be experienced outside of those traditional institutions.

In addition, 24 stops and flach actually possessed a distinct, irreproducible aura: the waypoints are gradually altered by weather conditions, and the flach posters were put on a building that was eventually demolished (and are thus irreproducible in their "here and now"). As a result, both exhibitions move away from art's alleged sacredness, or dependence on institutional ritual, and closer to what Rehberger expresses as a "good pal you can hang around with." But somehow, Rehberger's approach to the creation of art inversely raises the question: when does art end and advertising begin?

In order to map the difficult territory in which we are treading, it is helpful to assume the perspective of American writer David Foster Wallace. Renowned for highly influential works like *Infinite Jest*, Wallace has proven a keen sense for uncovering the absurdity of unreflecting consumerism. In his popular essay *Shipping Out: On the (nearly lethal) comforts of a luxury cruise*, which was first published in *Harper's* magazine in 1996, Wallace describes his experience aboard a luxury cruise ship. As Wallace waits on the pier for boarding to begin, brochures are handed out to the passengers by the cruise's operator, *Celebrity Cruises*. In the brochure, there is an essay by famous American writer Frank Conroy, praising the cruise experience. Wallace notes that *Celebrity Cruise* paid Conroy to fabricate a persuasive, graceful essay while nowhere indicating that it was created specifically for advertisement purposes. Thus, *Celebrity Cruises* disguised an ad as a work of art, prompting Wallace to assert:

In the case of Frank Conroy's 'essay,' *Celebrity Cruises* is trying to position an ad in such a way that we come to it with the lowered guard and leaning chin we reserve for coming to an essay, for something that is art (or that is at least trying to be art). An ad that pretends to be art is – at absolute best – like somebody who smiles at you because they want something from you. This is dishonest, but what's insidious is the cumulative effect that such dishonesty has on us: since it offers perfect a simulacrum of goodwill without goodwill's real substance, it messes with our heads and eventually starts upping our defenses even in cases of genuine smiles and real art and true goodwill. It makes us feel confused and lonely and angry and scared. It causes despair. (Wallace, 37)

Similarly, albeit less prosaic, Adorno issued a severe concern pertaining to the commodification of art. To paraphrase: if art is a means to combat complete rationalization by rejecting immediate functional utilization, then using it as a means to sell commodities is to destroy it (Adorno, 79). Compounding still, Adorno expressed concern that this process of "pretending" is especially devious since it makes art a collaborator of its own dissolution when giving itself away to commerce. Adorno further argues that the "petty bourgeois" longs for something authentic, something that fills their hearts with the "warmth" that has been obliterated by rationalization. In turn, capitalism cashes in on this longing and sells the longed-for authenticity in the form of art (*ibid*). Admittedly, this sounds rather terrifying. Can art even exist in a system that commodifies the desire for something authentic? Rehberger thinks it can.

AUTHENTICITY FOR SALE

In 2016, Rehberger did what would have been sacrilege to Adorno: he collaborated with luxury brand MCM to create a series of high-end bags. Rehberger explains, after prompted to explain the artistic merit of such an enterprise, that although he does not regard his designs for MCM as works of art, the general process of creating non-art as an artist belongs to his work as a whole:

"Basically, by designing bags for a luxury goods manufacturer, I pose the question where does art begin and end. I could make a sculpture that looks like a bag, for example. But I can also make bags that look artful but are, in fact, not art.

Defying the common expectation that everything artists create has to be art by default, Rehberger "used the bags to elaborate on the relationship of artist and their creation." Rehberger's self-aware creation is an example of how to reflect on the capitalist ideology that dominates most of our everyday lives. By rejecting common conceptions of the purposes and appropriate media of art, Rehberger removes himself from the governing notion that considers art as sacrosanct and confined to explicitly designated locations such as museums and galleries. Simultaneously, Rehberger promotes re-thinking the relationship of art and capitalism by subverting the common notions associated with both concepts. The result is a highly complex body of work that is also self-reflective.

At the beginning of this essay, three distinct questions were posed about where art begins and ends were identified. Rehberger addresses them by conceptualizing his work in a provocative manner that fuels discussion on what constitutes an artwork, by deliberately blurring the lines between art and advertisement by de-territorializing his art from museums, and by subsequently re-territorializing it into public spaces. Rehberger's oeuvre showcases that questions pertaining to the alleged nature of art, more often than not, are a matter of perspective - not only the recipient's, but the artist's, as well. By challenging one's predetermined perception of art, Rehberger continuously pushes the boundaries of what art can do.



Tobias Rehberger. Explorando la dimensión psicológica de la percepción visual

Dardo Magazine, 2015

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**CASI PARECIERA
QUE HUBIESE SIDO
FIEL ASISTENTE A
LOS TALLERES DE
JOHANNES ITTEN
EN LA BAUHAUS,
ESTUDIANDO
MINUCIOSAMENTE
COLORES,
RITMO, FORMAS
Y TEXTURAS
COMPLEJAS**

Existen creaciones artísticas que, analizándolas bien, serían susceptibles de incluir un prospecto de posibles efectos adversos o efectos secundarios, ya que sus características morfológicas y visuales afectan directamente al espectador de forma tal, que debería ser advertido antes de enfrentarse a ellas. Si esto fuese así, con seguridad veríamos indicaciones de carácter farmacológico en muchas piezas del artista Tobias Rehberger (Esslingen, Alemania, 1966).

En la búsqueda de nuevos significados de representación, la obra de este artista se descuelga de lo convencional para asentarse en los límites de lo ascético. Transciende lo estético para profundizar en lo psicológico. Por eso, su lectura debe hacerse de forma transversal, entendiendo la importancia que desempeñan la pintura, la escultura, la arquitectura, el diseño, el cine y la moda y, muy especialmente, el tratamiento del color. El color supera su valor óptico, para entrar en una fase cuasi mística de revelación absoluta.

Sus estudios sobre el color y la geometría no nos resultan extraños atendiendo a la propia tradición alemana en este campo. Anteriormente, Goethe ya había escrito su teoría de los colores, *Zur Farbenlehre* y paralelamente, Otto Runge había creado su *Farbenkugel* (esfera de color). Para ambos, el simbolismo del color, la forma y los números merecían estudio al considerarlos vías de expresión más elevada, conectando directamente con lo emocional. Y todo ello sin olvidarse de Josef Albers, el otro alemán clave en esta ecuación cromática, que además fue miembro indispensable de la escuela de la Bauhaus, de gran influencia también en la obra de Rehberger. Casi pareciera que hubiese sido fiel asistente a los talleres de Johannes Itten en la Bauhaus, estudiando minuciosamente colores, ritmo, formas y texturas complejas, que acaban siendo plasmadas en piezas que relucen con la pulcritud del PVC contemporáneo. Quizás no tengan la misma magia del diseño de Weimar pero sí la misma esencia.

La experiencia estética se vive en el trabajo de Rehberger, tanto en las obras creadas para el ámbito público como privado. En la cultura occidental, la percepción se mide por el conocimiento empírico, físico y psicológico del que se sabe atrapado por su tradición y memoria visual. No hay improvisación. El condicionamiento del espectador es inevitable. La interacción con este es fundamental y necesaria, lo que le exige al artista encontrar forzosamente un punto

Meiji III, 2015. MDF, pintura acrílica, sellador de juntas y memoria USB. 32,8 x 14,9 x 11,3 cm. Foto: Bruno Lopes. Cortesía: Galería Pedro Cera

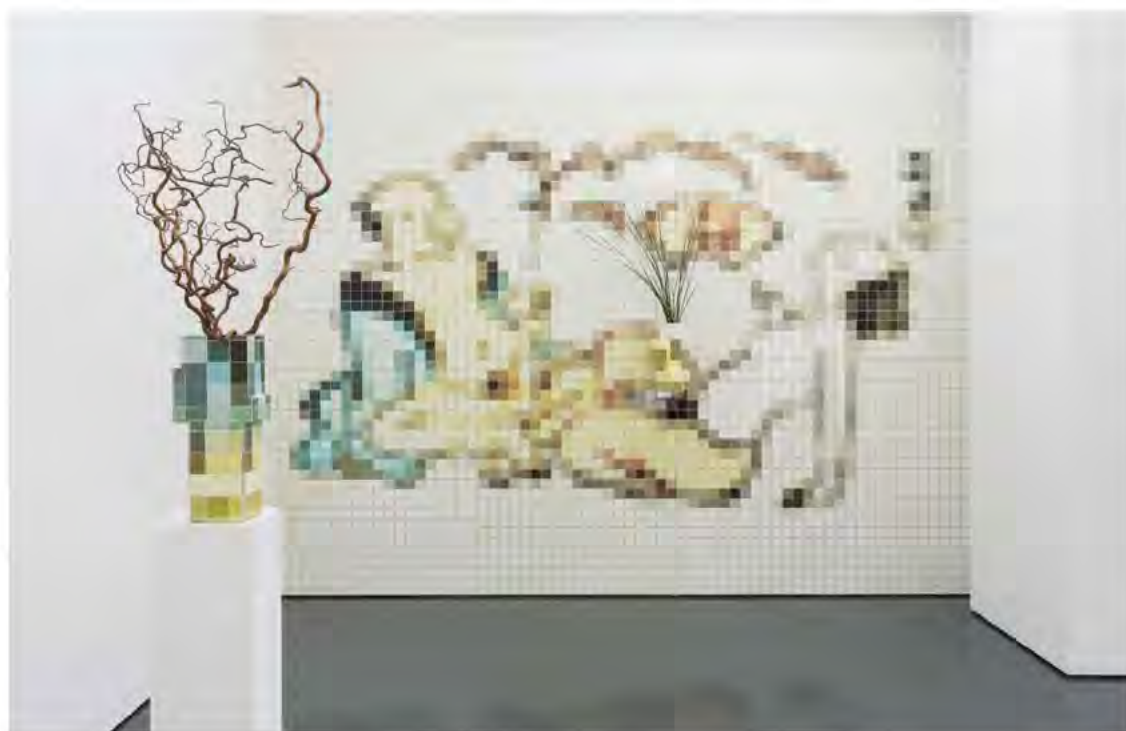
de encuentro entre él y el otro, pero este punto se expresa de forma nada ordinaria, requiriendo del visitante diferentes niveles de pensamiento.

Igualmente no olvidemos que la concepción del color es puramente cultural. Fuertemente condicionados por la tradición y el uso de los colores en nuestras respectivas culturas, nos desconocemos, en muchas ocasiones, siervos de esa base, el artista lo sabe y juega con ello. Es una completa manipulación de los objetos, del espacio y de quien los observa. Sin necesidad de recurrir a grandes alardes tecnológicos, con un simple giro de ciento ochenta grados a nuestra visión adaptada por milenios de evolución, pasando de ser cazadores a objetos de presa, por desubicación.

Atendiendo al tratamiento del espacio, se recurre a las tres formas básicas: el cuadrado, el triángulo, y el círculo, que están designadas por las cuatro direcciones diferentes del espacio. Así, el carácter del cuadrado es horizontal y vertical, el del triángulo es diagonal, y el del círculo es circular. Todo ello condiciona la representación, y es muy significativo en el trabajo de Rehberger. A veces, el natural efecto tridimensional se ve desmaterializado y reemplazado por la pintura plana. Sin embargo, la ilusión de profundidad espacial se mantiene gracias al estudiado uso de las diagonales, las intersecciones y la combinación exacta de luz y sombra. En otras ocasiones la luz se aplanan en superficies muy pulidas, pareciendo que el espectador esté ubicado en un espacio más

▼ Vista de la exposición *On Shunga* en la Galería Pedro Cera, 2015. Foto: Bruno Lopes. Cortesía: Galería Pedro Cera

► *Meiji II*, 2015. MDF, pintura acrílica, sellador de juntas y memoria USB. 48 x 20,6 x 20,4 cm. Foto: Bruno Lopes. Cortesía: Galería Pedro Cera



D104 / PROUN



bidimensional que tridimensional, como si fuese un personaje de comic circulando –o más bien flotando ingrávito– en el área de un desplegable, algún sofisticado *pop-up* de un libro ilustrado.

Tobias Rehberger se interesa por el encuentro entre las actitudes artísticas y las actividades sociales, también enraizadas en la filosofía de la Bauhaus, destacando el énfasis en la función, la experimentación, la subversión, y la creencia utópica en el arte como una fuerza para el cambio social positivo. Asimismo, para este artista el proceso de creación es esencial en su trabajo, sintiéndose parte íntima de él, lanza sus obras hacia la forma, más que darles forma en sí.

Por otra parte, Rehberger se aleja formalmente del trabajo de artistas de su generación, evolucionando de forma muy diversa, aunque sí acusa en cierta forma la influencia de Martin Kippenberger – especialmente en cuanto al color y a la

objetualidad se refiere– con quien estudió a principios de los años noventa.

Las obras más conocidas corresponden a instalaciones ambientales en las que se combina arte y diseño: buscando deliberadamente eliminar los puntos fijos de referencia para que lo que parece estable se convierta en mera apariencia. Mezcla pintura, muebles, escultura, objetos y elementos del paisaje para crear espacios con influencia del colorido diseño de los años sesenta y setenta. Ha tenido grandes exposiciones individuales en el Museum Ludwig, en Colonia; en el Stedelijk Museum de Amsterdam; en la Fondazione Prada, en Milán; en el Palacio de Cristal de Madrid (organizada por el Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía); en la Whitechapel Gallery de Londres; en el Museu de Serralves, en Oporto; en el Palais de Tokyo de París; en el Museum of Contemporary Art de Chicago; o en Moderna Museet de Estocolmo, entre otras muchas, contando aún con numerosas participaciones en exposiciones colectivas, entre las que destaca la participación en tres ediciones distintas de la Bienal de Venecia, 1997, 2003 y 2009, respectivamente.

La mayoría de sus proyectos son *site specific* y, en algunos casos funcionales, como la cafetería que realizó para el Palazzo delle Esposizioni, en la 53ª edición de la Bienal de Venecia (2009), en colaboración con Artek, la compañía finlandesa de mobiliario contemporáneo fundada en 1935 por Alvar Aalto. Por este trabajo le fue otorgado el León de Oro al mejor artista de dicha edición. Algo de menor envergadura, pero en una línea similar, fueron sus diseños espacio-cafetería encargados por la empresa Illycaffè, en lugares como Berlín, Estambul, Turín o Madrid, este último proyecto ubicado en la feria de ARCO 2011. Son espacios caracterizados por colores estridentes, camuflaje y efectos ópticos que difuminan la noción del espacio, y en los que también se interrelaciona la música y los olores como

elementos sensoriales. Igualmente, podríamos destacar como proyecto interesante, y totalmente diferente, el *Slinky Springs Bridge* (Oberhausen, Alemania), un puente sobre el Rin.

Por otra parte, el cine ofrece otras posibilidades de investigación creativa para Rehberger. De un lado, deconstruye radicalmente el proceso creativo que se encuentra detrás de una filmación, fragmentando totalmente el sistema típico de producción, analizando el cine como un fenómeno cultural codificado, y su transcendencia como medio narrativo contemporáneo. Lo vemos en su proyecto *On Otto* (Fondazione Prada, Milán, 2007), donde disecciona títulos, sonido, música, edición, así como estudia actores, escenografía, vestuario y es *storyboard* al completo. De otro, se abalanza sobre la idea de la imagen grabada en la retina, aquella que sopesa la posibilidad de crear o recrear una nueva situación en el presente basándose en el poso de algo que vimos en el pasado y que nos impactó por alguna razón, fijándose en nuestra memoria. El miedo, la muerte, la tensión, son conceptos que no escapan a la obra del artista alemán. Analizando películas como *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1974), en la que Rehberger se inspiró para titular una de sus instalaciones, entendemos que la tensión del argumento es indisociable de los escenarios donde se desenvuelve, y eso se traduce en códigos visuales muy potentes en nuestro cerebro. Kubrick utilizaba constantemente planos en perspectiva frontal, sutilmente geométricos, que potenciaban esa tensión, empujándonos a una constante huida hacia el abismo, ya que la vista nos guía irremediablemente hacia aquel lugar del que queremos escapar a toda costa, lo que también sucede en piezas de Rehberger. Colores primarios, fríos, ácidos.... La situación de tensión óptica resulta incómoda e inquietante, como si una brisa de desconocida procedencia nos rozase, erizando nuestro vello corporal, en un disparo directo a nuestro sistema límbico. Si bien, no todos los trabajos crean esa tensión, en ocasiones los colores cálidos, los blancos impolutos, las piezas translúcidas, y la fragilidad de algunas de ellas, evocan un estado de meditación y relajación, al menos visual.

Tampoco desmerecemos la influencia del cine expresionista alemán, en especial, la estética empleada por Robert Wiene en su película *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (*El gabinete del doctor Caligari*, 1920), y la producción audiovisual y fotográfica de László Moholy-Nagy, y sus juegos de luces, sombras y movimiento.

En otra dimensión de su trabajo, se encuentra un aspecto más terrenal de la cuestión artística: el rol social del arte,

**CASI COMO
SI FUESE LA
PUBLICIDAD DE
UN ESCAPARATE
LUMINOSO Y CON
MIL MaticES A LOS
QUE ATENDER. EL
VISITANTE CAE EN
UNA TELARANA
DE SENSACIONES
MIENTRAS PASEA
ENTRE LAS PIEZAS
Y LAS OBSERVA**

Vista de la exposición *On Shunga* en la
Galería Pedro Cera, 2015. Foto: Bruno
Lopes. Cortesía: Galería Pedro Cera

fruto quizás de las inquietudes propias de su generación, la de los noventa. Es interesante destacar que, para Tobias Rehberger, cuanto más se separa el arte de la vida cotidiana más se acerca a la gente. Entiende que puede parecer una contradicción, pero no lo es. De alguna manera el artista debe ser lo suficientemente hábil para reconocer aquello que está sucediendo en su entorno y transformarlo en una pieza, abriendo dimensiones de lectura que solo una obra de arte puede abrir. El artista ha manifestado que no ve como una ventaja para la sociedad el que las masas frecuenten las exposiciones, considerando más constructivo que el arte provoque discusiones vivas a un altísimo nivel, que probablemente pocas personas entiendan en un principio. Deben conocerse, pues, las reglas del juego, y que el espectador conozca la historia de las obras, para alcanzar un entendimiento pleno.

Y así, en ese equilibrio inestable entre una percepción elevada del arte, postulado

más propio de pensadores como Goethe y sus coetáneos del siglo XIX, y la practicidad contemporánea derivada de un consumo de masas invasivo y desprovisto de armas de conocimiento, pero ávido de experimentar, en cualquier momento uno puede verse inmerso en una situación impactante, distorsionada e incluso irónica.

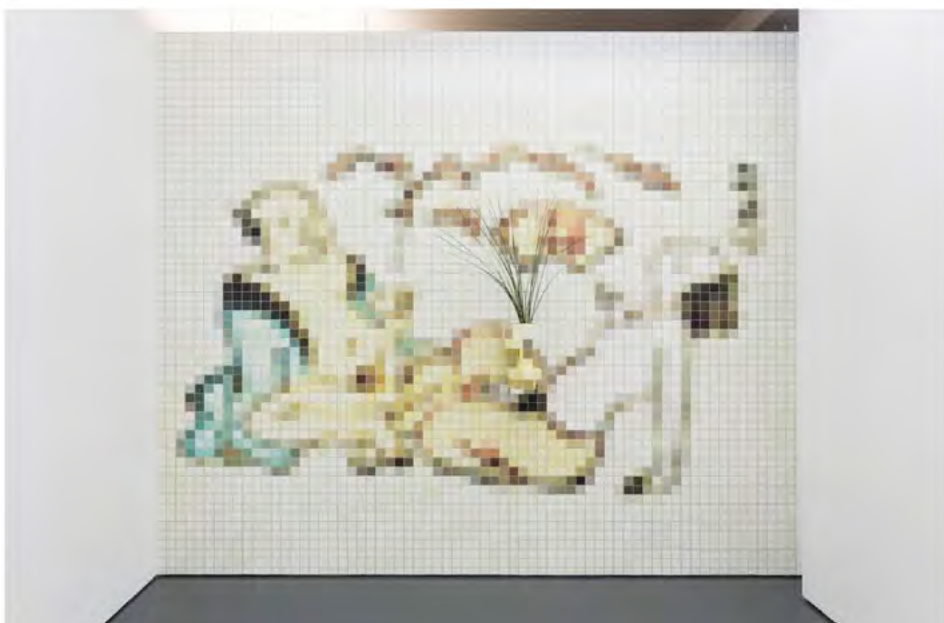
Como señalábamos, la interactividad del espectador con las obras de Rehberger es definitiva. Casi como si fuese la publicidad de un escaparate luminoso y con mil matices a los que atender, el visitante cae en una telaraña de sensaciones mientras pasea entre las piezas y las observa. Aquello que percibe le atrapa, sin saber muy bien cómo pero, sobre todo, sin saber muy bien para qué. De repente, quizás reviva una de esas resacas memorables, tirado en un sofá en dios sabe dónde, mientras resuenan en su cabeza ecos de *acid house* y psicodelia. Toda una experiencia. ¶



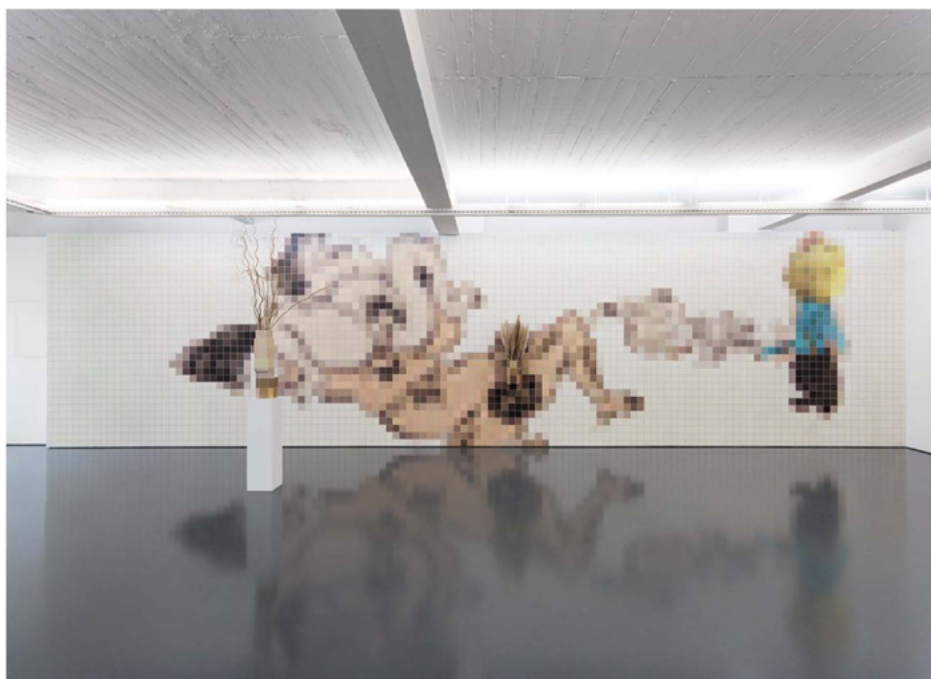
M Blogs 29 janvier 2015, par Lunettes Rouges **De l'utilité de la photographie**



C'est une exposition très paradoxale que celle des dernières créations de **Tobias Rehberger** (l'homme de la cafétéria vénitienne ...) à la galerie Pedro Cera 20 mars) car, d'abord, on n'y voit rien : les murs semblent couverts de petits carreaux monochromes, comme les pixels d'une photographie démesurément agrandies et qu'on ne parvient pas à distinguer. Ça et là, sur des piédestaux, ou accolés aux parois, des petits vases de fleurs, eux aussi couverts de ces carreaux, qui n'en sont pas : c'est en fait un papier peint qui les imite à la perfection.



On plisse les yeux, on tente vainement de déchiffrer l'image, on devine parfois une forme, une migraine s'installe, jusqu'à ce qu'une âme charitable vous conseille de regarder l'image à travers le viseur de votre appareil photo ou sur votre smartphone. Et alors, ô merveille, l'image apparaît, la compression optique de la lentille permet de distinguer les formes. La photographie, ou plutôt la lentille, est le seul moyen de voir la réalité, et les seules images que je peux vous montrer ici sont celles vues à travers la lentille, elles ne peuvent donc traduire la confusion visuelle de l'œil nu (j'ai suggéré au galeriste de faire réaliser des photographies au sténopé, car, ainsi, la compression optique ne devrait pas avoir lieu; on verra). Cette absolue nécessité de l'appareil photographique pour voir existe bien sûr en photographie scientifique, que ce soit de la microphotographie ou des images de l'espace, et elle a parfois donné lieu à des recherches artistiques comme avec Yves Trémorin. Mais, ici, c'est plutôt au mythe de *Blow Up* qu'on penserait, à cette révélation photographique d'une réalité l'œil nu.



Et bien sûr ces images ne sont pas innocentes, ce sont des Shunga*, des aquarelles ou estampes érotiques japonaises montrant diverses positions de pénétration de manière assez froide, voire pédagogique. Voyeurs face à ces images, nous ne savons trop à quelle distance nous placer : voyeur de près, le nez collé sur le détail ou voyeur de loin, à distance, de toute façon nous n'y voyons rien, nous sommes aveugles et infirmes tant que ne s'interpose pas entre nous et l'objet du désir un instrument, un dispositif, l'appareil photographique, une béquille visuelle en somme. Ce dispositif est en fait à la fois (comme souvent) un accélérateur du désir (je veux voir, je dois voir !) et un écran de pudeur (vous pouvez y emmener vos jeunes enfants sans crainte); cela évoque bien sûr le floutage des poils pubiens dans les vidéos érotiques japonaises, mais aussi, pour moi, les petites bandes de carton agrafées sur les photos dénudées à l'entrée des cinémas de mon enfance pour préserver l'innocence des passants.

Dans cet immense camouflage, on réalise aussi que les vases reprennent très exactement le motif du mur derrière eux : c'est plus une "magnification" (à la fois plus grand et magnifique), un rapprochement qu'une occultation. Et, parfois, les plumets de fleurs qui les ornent servent de substitut aux poils (pubiens, évidemment) dans la composition de l'image.

Ce travail est, en somme, une leçon sur la photographie, sur sa nécessité indispensable...

Photos courtoisie de la galerie (en attendant la camera obscura) : © Bruno Lopes.

* mot qui, en portugais, est devenu le péjoratif "chunga" (remerciements indirects à Julião Sarmento pour l'indication)



Tobias Rehberger, Meiji, On Shunga at
Galeria Pedro Cera - Exhibition View

ArtMag

by Deutsche Bank

This Unclear Status: Tobias Rehberger on Wrap It Up

Deutsche Bank and the MACRO are presenting WRAP IT UP, the first comprehensive exhibition of works on paper by Tobias Rehberger. With the show, Deutsche Bank is continuing its cooperation with the Rome museum, where exhibitions of "Artists of the Year" Yto Barrada and Imran Qureshi had already been on view.

Born in 1966, Tobias Rehberger is one of the most important proponents of international contemporary art. In 2009, he received the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale for his installation *Was du liebst, bring dich auch zum Weinen* (What you love will also make you cry). Many of his works are included in the Deutsche Bank Collection, and a whole floor of the bank's Frankfurt headquarters is devoted to him. WRAP IT UP unites works from the collection and numerous loans spanning more than three decades. They are illuminated by Rehberger's *Infections*, light objects made from colored Velcro strips. At the interface between the visual arts, popular culture, and design, he intervenes in myriad spheres of life. But what role do works on paper play in the oeuvre of the artist, who is primarily known for his installations and environments? Oliver Koerner von Gustorf met Tobias Rehberger in his studio in Frankfurt's Osthafen.

Oliver Koerner von Gustorf: You are presenting your very first exhibition of drawings at the MACRO museum in Rome.

Tobias Rehberger: That's right. My drawings and works on paper are scarcely known, although I've always drawn and painted with watercolors parallel to my other work. The most well-known drawings are probably the ones on view in the Deutsche Bank Towers. When the art department of Deutsche Bank approached me about an exhibition of my works on paper, I was immediately interested.

To better understand the role of drawing in your work, I'd like to talk first about the sculptures and installations you are known for. You were just honored in Frankfurt with a large show. The exhibition began and ended with a work in the rotunda in front of the museum entrance: a sculpture made of steel and light sources. It looks like a deconstructed advertising sign and casts a shadow on a white surface creating the word "regret." What should be regretted?

The viewers could decide themselves. I wanted them to regret something before they viewed the exhibition and not afterward.

And you said that people should not look at this exhibition, but away from it.

With the sculpture, I wanted to add something eye-catching, something blunt. The colors

alluded to the colors of the American flag. It was intentionally supposed to look wrecked, like a half-destroyed advertisement or a crashed satellite. I thought this “regret” was very appropriate, like a nice, blunt, almost obtuse balled-fist-in-the-pocket expression. For me, it is important that people don’t know what the actual work is: the steel sculpture or the shadow. That they don’t know where it begins and where it ends, who made it initially and how much the viewer adds. It’s not clear what is just a means to an end or a tool, and where you should actually look.

But the word “regret” is fraught with meaning and captures our feeling today.

Yes, but the sculpture on the ceiling is actually a cripple, a kind of model. On the one hand, it stands for itself. On the other, it’s a model of something else. It’s supposed to co-represent precisely what is not there. Of course, it’s often claimed in art that through an object or an image something arises or is conjured up that transcends what it actually is. The model is a synonym for this. For example, an architectural model. How, based on the model, can we find out whether it’s okay, say, to build the [European Central Bank](#)? At the same time, however, there are questions about the model itself. Does it look good? What style does it have? It’s like a hermaphrodite. It has its own identity, yet at the same time it has to be something else. That’s what fascinates me about models: this unclear status.

The “Infections” lights, which are a central element of the exhibition in MACRO, also have the character of models or prototypes.

Assuming that a watercolor is not an object, this installation is the only three-dimensional object in the exhibition. There are two reasons for this: on the one hand, because these objects “draw” themselves; they create a shadow, a strange chicken scratch on the wall. At the same time, though, they depict an interim moment in the artistic production. They are made in a very specific way; namely, they are made by employees who try to create these sculptures the way they think I would make them. A few years ago, I started working with Velcro, because the material can be reworked quickly. So I check what others project onto my works with my own projection and then reconstruct them. Sometimes to such an extent that the starting situation is no longer recognizable. But sometimes I don’t change anything at all. The most important thing is these two perspectives: someone else’s view of my work and my own view of my work, and how they mix.

You call yourself a sculptor. How can your drawings be viewed in conjunction with your sculptural work?

They are not three-dimensional structures, of course, but that makes no difference to me. Some drawings, including drawings in the bank’s [collection](#), are actually studies. They have a different status. Other works are conceived exactly like sculptures, in principle, as autonomous artworks. But there are also arbitrary drawings that are intentionally reworked and elevated. They look like studies and even display a certain genesis of the work. But they were made after the actual work and only seem to be studies. An example is the watercolor series with the vases.

This Unclear Status: Tobias Rehberger on Wrap It Up

ArtMag, 2014

Oliver Koerner von Gustorf

Your drawing "NO, NO, NO! Immer wieder Imperialismus" (NO, NO, NO! Imperialism Again and Again"), which you created after 2000, recalls [Martin Kippenberger](#).

Perhaps the title conveys a little of Kippenberger's humor. For the series, I asked my students to make political collages and then reworked them; abstracted them, you could say.

Is that a teacher saying NO, NO, NO!?

Exactly. That's how politics begins; first someone says "No, No, No!". And they always have their own logic, unlike with Kippenberger, who thinks of funny titles that are very original and artistic and taken out of nowhere. My titles have a lot to do with the genesis of my works. The process is always important: Where do the things come from? Why are they the way they are? They look like nice abstract collages, but in terms of their genesis they are something completely different. They speak on the one hand about why one starts making political art to begin with, and on the other about why one starts making abstract art and how political it is – and the titles are in keeping.

In your oeuvre of works on paper, there is not only political art, but also the opposite, completely undisguised advertising, isn't there?

Fifteen years ago, I started working on a series of advertising posters. I simply created posters for things I liked and put them up around the city.

Without anyone asking you.

(Laughs) That's right. I even made one for [Adidas](#). Without being commissioned. In Berlin for the meat store Fleischhauerei, for the clothing store Appartement, for [Grill Royal](#). Always only four or five copies that I put up around town. And in London I made one for my favorite fish 'n' chips place.

I find your "Applications" series really interesting. Many of the works look like abstract computer art for offices.

They're computer images produced using certain programs. Some are very simple works I made using Illustrator, but some were made in 3D programs. The quality of the latter is very poor, among other things, because that's the best I can do. I simply decided to make something with 361 clicks.

The number of steps had already been determined, as a conceptual framework for the drawing, so to speak?

Yes. There are simple images you can make with Illustrator. *20 Illustrator 8.0 Applications*. I specified twenty steps and then implemented them technically, so to speak. For example, a draft for a work consisting of adhesive tape and watercolors. After twenty steps, the motif was

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completed and it was subsequently executed with the colors and the tape.

Could we talk briefly about the "Kaputte Zwergenmutter" (Broken Mother Elf)? The term "mother" comes up again and again in your work.

Yes. *Mother* relates to this model. There are, for example, model garages that are almost as big as real garages. When you buy the certificates for these models, you buy the license to replicate them, so to speak. When I build one, it becomes a work of mine. You can buy a certificate for ten euros at the museum shop. Then you have to decide yourself how exactly to proceed. Everyone has to decide for himself whether to use exact dimensions for to reconstruct it from memory. When I send in a photo of the finished construction, I receive an archive number. The "garage" is then listed as one my works, is included in my list of works. I always call the original model "mother," because different people interpret it differently. It is preceded by a genetic code from the model, which is mixed with the father, the manufacturer...

...just like children...

...and all children are similar, but not the same.

I love your series of jewelry watercolors from the early 1990s.

There were three series: weapons, arts, and jewelry. I simply copied them from jewelry and weapons catalogs. I thought it was funny to painting something as stupid as a Rolex in watercolors.

It has something low-life about it: weapons, jewelry...

...and art too. But that's exactly the point. What is important is the "but-you-can't-do-that." I asked myself why you can do one thing but not another. In the 1990s, this included landscape paintings. You simply couldn't paint them back then.

How did you get the idea to go to Verdun and make plein air paintings there? You don't simply spontaneously decide to go to Verdun.

But that's what I did. I said, I'm going to Verdun. And not only to Verdun, but also to places on the Somme and Marne rivers. I went there with a friend to paint battlefields with watercolors. The reason was similar to why I marked crash sites on my mountain drawings with red circles. At issue is the fact that you're not allowed to paint this lovely mountain landscape. In the last fifty years, only Richter has been allowed to do so.

Artists have started painting them again.

Today. But this was disparaged in 1992. Only hobby painters from community colleges dealt with "landscape." But we wanted to do that too – and not just anywhere, but on battlefields.

In places where you can't see how bad things were because on the surface they are merely beautiful landscapes, but in reality they were the site of horrible battles in World War I.

It's interesting that in your work there are continual references to Modernism and to violence.

But I don't hit you over the head with it.

*Behind many of your designs are precipices. For example, in your cafeteria installation "The Things You Love Will Also Make You Cry," for which you won the Golden Lion at the 2009 Venice Biennale. The visitors sat in a psychedelic **dazzle pattern** originally used to camouflage battleships in World War I. What precipice is concealed behind the sweaters in the drawing series "B.F. (Are Hard to Find)"?*

The title stands for "Best Friends are hard to find." This series of sweater samples is based on studies for abstract wall paintings in an exhibition. The museum guards had to knit sweaters for my best friends based on the patterns of the finished wall paintings. I drew them for the series of drawings in the Deutsche Bank Collection, as a reverse study, so to speak.

When they were asked whether they were knitting sweaters based on the wall paintings, did the museum staff say they were.

Exactly. You could see they were because they were surrounded by the wall paintings.

And didn't you design underpants for museum staff?

Those were undergarments that museum staff wore at my first Biennale in Venice. Visitors could go to the supervisor and ask to see my design. Some employees showed their underpants, others didn't.

Speaking of clothing: About ten years ago you supposedly burned all of your clothes for "Großer Akt in Winterlandschaft" (Large Nude in Winter Landscape), a print commissioned by Deutsche Bank.

Not supposedly. I burned all my clothes except for one set: a T-shirt, a pair of underpants, a pair of socks, and a pair of trousers, so that I could go shopping.

To buy new clothes.

I needed one set, but I burnt all the others.

Is there something you can remember, perhaps a piece of clothing, that you regret burning?

Okay, a few of the T-shirts were nice. But I don't become attached to my clothes, though I wouldn't burn my wedding suit. Pigments were made from the ashes and they were used to create the winter landscape nude.

This Unclear Status: Tobias Rehberger on Wrap It Up
ArtMag, 2014
Oliver Koerner von Gustorf

It's an abstract form suspended in front of something resembling a landscape.

Those are fir trees.

How did you arrive at the form?

I wanted to make something absurd, something unpleasant and kitschy yet still magical. At my grandmother's house, there were photos that looked like calendar sheets with green adhesive fixed between two glass panels. I simply liked the idea of concrete things like clothing producing this nothingness, this abstract something, something between Henry Moore and a Marian apparition.

Yet it's a very symbolic act. They get undressed, burn their clothes, and the ashes are pigmented. In the end there is also a portrait.

You have to imagine it unpleasantly. Ultimately, they are molecules that come out of me and that you then have in your nose. It's about real things that I've sweated into. The bacteria are gone, but it's truly one to one. The material is transformed, as is done in art: you take something and turn it into something else.

Tobias Rehberger: Wrap it up

19/9/2014 – 11/1/2015

MACRO - Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma



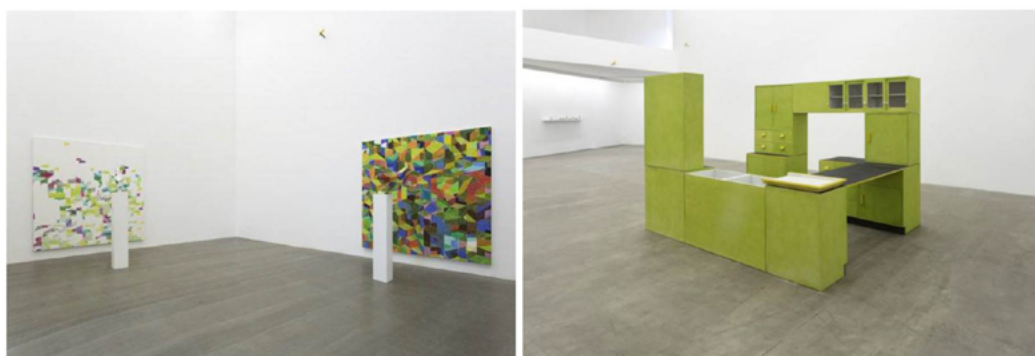
Das Kind muss raus 生 Tobias Rehberger

Galerie Urs Meile Beijing

3.5. – 6.7.2014

Opening: Saturday, May 3, 4-7pm, the artist will be present.

Opening Hours: Tuesday to Sunday: 11am - 6.30pm



Galerie Urs Meile is pleased to present Frankfurt-based artist Tobias Rehberger (*1966 in Esslingen, Germany) in his first solo show in China as well as with the gallery. One of the most important German artists of his generation, the 2009 Biennale di Venezia Golden Lion winner regularly straddles the lines between the realms of painting, sculpture, design, architecture, and conceptual art, shaping a body of work that is as dynamic as it is celebrated. These newest pieces, devised by Rehberger especially for Beijing and produced in Beijing and Jingdezhen, collectively act as a specially formulated continuation of his ongoing investigations into spatial awareness, matters of perception, and the everyday made extraordinary. Never one to be constrained by material limitations, Rehberger has added porcelain to his creative arsenal with these newest works.

First of several large-scale works in Das Kind muss raus生 is HOMEAWAY (Oppenheimer Drawings I)— Rehberger's second reconstruction of his hometown bar of choice for over twenty-five years. A closely related piece, HOMEAWAY (Oppenheimer Drawings II), will be shown in the Encounters sector of Art Basel Hong Kong—a curated selection of large-scale works and installations to take center stage at the show. Born from a gallerist's half-joking quip suggesting that Rehberger take his favorite local hangout with him as he travels, this specific iteration of Frankfurt's Bar Oppenheimer is made primarily from unglazed porcelain. As a result, this relatively porous surface remains, by design susceptible to stains, scratches, and

various other marks that Rehberger has affectionately dubbed “memory traces” that will result from this piece’s role as a fully operational bar. Featuring a brighter palette than the black, white, and orange dominating the bar’s installation in New York’s HôtelAmericano in 2013, HOMEAWAY (Oppenheimer Drawings I) retains the signature “dazzle” pattern—sets of bold stripes originally used on warships during World War I meant to prevent enemies from ascertaining a vessel’s type, speed, location, and heading. Realized in 1:1 scale to the original bar, HOMEAWAY (Oppenheimer Drawings I) creates exactly what its title promises—an artist’s home away from home. By both modifying the Frankfurt bar’s décor and by shifting its location, Rehberger renders the familiar unfamiliar and foregrounds the phenomenological to create not only a visual spectacle, but also an immersive environment. He attests that oftentimes art is not something to stare directly at, but rather something to be experienced—that something behind the viewer can be just as important as what is in front of him/her. In this work, artistry becomes part of the everyday and almost hidden, thus emulating the bold yet unexpectedly subtle dazzle-camouflaged ships not only aesthetically but also conceptually.

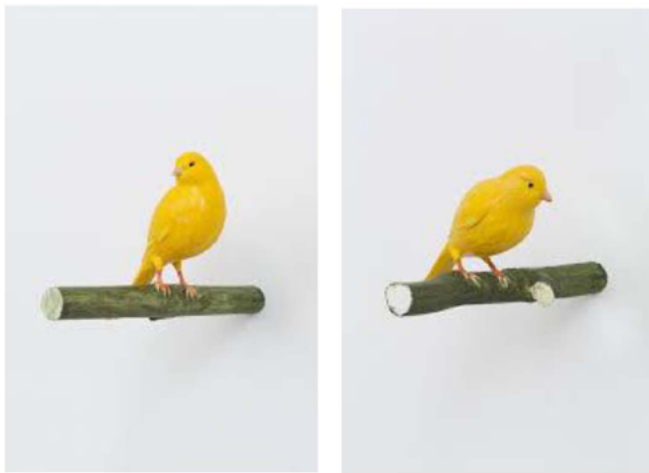
Rehberger supplements his visual inquiry into turning the bold invisible with three new pieces—Dazzle Sculptures Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter, Die Welt kurz vor Erfindung des Tiefen Tellers-世界在汤盘发明之前, and Go away. In both Dazzle Sculptures Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter, sculptures made from paper, and Go away, a lamp made from porcelain, the artist has strategically positioned these objects in front of geometric watercolor patterns. As the viewer moves through the gallery space, the objects, although spatially removed from their painted backdrops, fade in and out of visibility as they blend into their surroundings, thus nearly negating the works’ initial visual complexity. Die Welt kurz vor Erfindung des Tiefen Tellers - 世界在汤盘发明之前 functions on a similar basis. This room is covered from floor to ceiling in hand-painted pink and yellow watercolor panels arranged in an illusory tessellated pattern. Placed within the space are three stools and a table that are similarly adorned. Along with the chosen colors, this pattern creates the impression of constant gentle movement. Similarly to the sculptural pairings in Dazzle Sculptures Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter and Go away, the room’s furniture manages to camouflage with their environment.

Closely related to HOMEAWAY (Oppenheimer Drawings I) is HOMEAWAY (Schütte-Lihotzky Drawings)—Rehberger’s porcelain recreation of the iconic Frankfurt kitchen. Designed in 1926 by Viennese architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, this precursor to the modern-day fitted kitchen was created for implementation in low-cost apartments built to ease the Frankfurt housing shortage that had persisted since the end of World War I. Drawing on ideals championed by the Bauhaus and the Deutscher Werkbund, Schütte-Lihotzky held the principle of basic, function-over-form design in high esteem, making sure that ornamentation was virtually nonexistent in the kitchen. By recreating this innovative and revolutionary design, Rehberger, as in HOMEAWAY (Oppenheimer Drawings I), brings Frankfurt with him as he travels. HOMEAWAY (Schütte-Lihotzky Drawings) is painted relatively plainly in accordance with the original plans, showcasing Rehberger’s versatility with a departure from the bold visual statements that pervade the exhibition.

The remaining works in the exhibition deal with memory, its material translation, and its physical manifestation. The five porcelain pieces that comprise xing qi tian ren men bu gong

zuo are all replicas of a teapot owned by Rehberger's family during his childhood. Although the five pieces differ from one another, they are all based on the very same object. To create these slightly varying pieces, Rehberger himself, his mother, his father, his brother, and his daughter each drew the teapot from memory. These drawings were then sent to artisans in Jingdezhen who faithfully recreated them in three dimensions. This interest in memory and the transfer of information is nothing new for Rehberger. Rather it is one that has run through his oeuvre for over twenty years. In 1994, Rehberger created an untitled series of works in which Cameroonian craftsmen created iconic chairs according only to drawings that Rehberger made from memory.

Also dealing with memory are the eleven porcelain bird sculptures Zippy (1 Year) - Zippy (11 years) dotted throughout the exhibition. These small sculptures depict a canary that Rehberger received as a gift on his first birthday and lived for eleven years. Depicted in various poses, the unique figurines are based on still photos taken of the bird throughout its life.



A professor since 2001 at Frankfurt's Städelschule, the school he attended from 1987 to 1993 and one of Europe's most prestigious art schools, Rehberger took part in his first exhibition in 1992. Since then, he has had solo exhibitions at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands (2008); Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany (2008); Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy (2007); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain (2005); Whitechapel Gallery, London, England (2004); and Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2002). Most recently in 2014, the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt hosted an extensive exhibition of Rehberger's work that will go on to travel to Rome's MAXXI. He has also presented at the Gwangju Biennial, Gwangju, South Korea (2012); Manifesta 1 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands (1996) and 2, Luxembourg (1998); and the Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (1997, 2003 and 2009). In 2009, he was awarded the Golden Lion for best artist for his installation Was Du liebst, bringt dich auch zum weinen at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni at the Venice Biennale. Other awards include the Otto-Dix-Preis (2001) and the Hans-Thoma-Preis in 2009.

de design
magazine
zeen Tobias Rehberger. Home and Away and Outside



21 February – 11 May 2014, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt

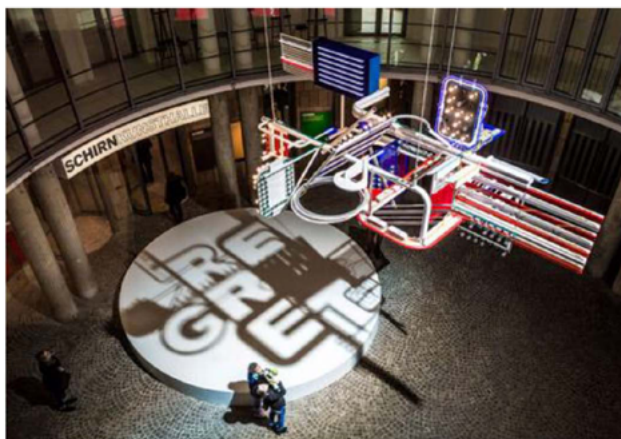
Tobias Rehberger. Home and Away and Outside at Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt is an exhibition in three parts by Tobias Rehberger (born 1966), one of the most influential German artists of his generation. An artist who defies categorisation, Rehberger creates objects, sculptures and environments as diverse in subject, media and context, as they are prolific. Drawing on a repertoire of ordinary, everyday items appropriated from mass culture, Rehberger translates, alters and expands upon familiar situations and objects causing the viewer to question their understanding and interpretation of art.

Tobias Rehberger. Home and Away and Outside is curated by Mathias Ulrich and narrates Rehberger's artistic development with works spanning 20 years. Divided into three thematic sections, the exhibition presents more than 60 works including sculptures, installations, and paintings that deal with a broad collection of themes incorporating optical illusions, identity games, and the notion of transience. Rehberger draws upon his own memories; takes inspiration from outdated production techniques; and challenges ideas of ownership, authorship and copyright – themes that are constantly present.

The exhibition starts with a continuation of the 2009 work that won Rehberger the Golden Lion for best artist at the 53rd Venice Biennial – Was du liebst, bringt dich auch zum Weinen. Rehberger has transformed the gallery space into artwork, covering it in a unique dazzle camouflage graphic artwork specifically created for the exhibition. Dazzle camouflage,

appropriated repeatedly by Rehberger in his work, was an optical technique originally used during World War I and mainly on ships, making them difficult to pinpoint as targets. Within this space, Rehberger has placed deliberately flawed sculptures that challenge notions of aesthetic perfection and other works that examine the subject of functionality and production of art.

In sharp contrast to this introductory visual statement, the second part of the exhibition is an all white, starkly minimalist landscape that blurs the architectural boundaries of the space. Here Rehberger has positioned sculptures with clearly functional qualities, such as furniture, lamps, and vases, which typify his sculptural work from the 1990s onwards. They pose the question of whether art can be permitted a function or whether it then transforms into a piece of design. Rehberger also presents work that studies issues of authorship, of the artist's control, and of the artist's genuine influence on their work if the production process is delegated to others. In one series, *We Never Work on Sundays* (1994), Rehberger sketched, from his own flawed memories, examples of iconic 20th century furniture designs and commissioned Cameroonian carpenters to recreate them as three-dimensional objects. Again Rehberger plays with notions of cultural codification as well as artistic ownership and authenticity.



For the third part of the exhibition, situated in the freely accessible Schirn Rotunda at the entrance of the Kunsthalle, Rehberger has created a large-scale shadow sculpture that will hang from the roof of the atrium. Created from new but appearing to be assembled from found neon tubes, lit advertising signs, and old fairground lights, a spotlight is placed above the

sculpture causing it to cast a shadow onto a large round central pedestal below which takes the form of a word.

Tobias Rehberger. Home and Away and Outside brings together the many strands of this internationally renowned artist's diverse practice, highlighting the numerous themes and influences that have become integral to his work. The exhibition marks Rehberger's first major exhibition in Frankfurt, the city in which he lives and works.



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Tobias Rehberger

In der Villa Merkel

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In his exhibition for the Villa Merkel Esslingen, Tobias Rehberger looks back, across a great expanse of time and space, at a city and a region that have been familiar to him since his childhood. He presents topographical way stations of his personal territory in new large-format watercolors. Architectural monstrosities (such the Stuttgart gas boiler) appear on an equal footing next to world cultural heritage monuments (the Weissenhof housing estates), peculiar urban features (the "Dreifarbenhaus") and structures with a historical significance (Stammheim).

A sculpture moves within the hall as if controlled by an invisible hand – providing another metaphor for the gulf, in terms of distance and of life lived, that separates the artist from this hometown. Newly designed lamp objects on the villa's ground story are lit up by remote control, in sync with household lights of selected houses elsewhere. For the duration of the exhibition, the Merkel family's former residence appears inhabited – at night, also.

All of these multifarious sculpted designs – plastic objects, shadow sculptures, installations and compositions that one can walk through, light-based artworks – explore the possibilities for interaction between the space and the viewers. These are shapes with an application aspect, which involve the building and users, but which ultimately remain abstract. The potential for appreciation through use is imminent in these artworks.

Tobias Rehberger was born in 1966 in Esslingen. He studied at the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Frankfurt, with Thomas Bayrle and Martin Kippenberger. Today, he lectures at this institution himself. He received the Golden Lion at the 2009 Venice Biennale.

Artist Tobias Rehberger docks his 'dazzle' warship on London's River Thames

Wallpaper, July 14, 2014

Ellen Himelfarb

Wallpaper*

Artist Tobias Rehberger docks his 'dazzle' warship on London's River Thames

Art / 14 Jul 2014 /

By Ellen Himelfarb



German artist Tobias Rehberger's latest project is the repainting of the 1918 warship HMS President, anchored at the city's Victoria Embankment

The idea that fine art could help protect our navy at war seems a relic of a bygone century. And yet it was a rare survivor of the First World War. The scientist John Graham Kerr first presented the principle of disruptive camouflage to Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, a century ago. The distorted pattern was proposed not to camouflage ships but rather to create an optical illusion that made it difficult for enemy U-boats to calculate their course and target accurately.

After relentless attacks by German subs, the practice of 'dazzle painting', recognisable by its jagged monochrome stripes, was invented by the marine painter Norman Wilkinson, who supervised the dazzle treatment on some 2,000 ships, with varying success. Though Wilkinson's execution might appear to owe a fair deal to cubism (Picasso, it was noted, was not impressed), dazzling remains in a school of its own. A lifetime later, the concept has been revived by the Frankfurt-based op-art artist Tobias Rehberger, who has given his old dazzle dazzle to bars, galleries and now a First World War ship.

Rehberger's 'Dazzle Ship London' - commissioned by the Chelsea College of Art and Design, Liverpool Biennial and Tate Liverpool - was launched today as part of the 14-18 NOW programme of cultural events to commemorate the First World War. The freshly painted 1918 HMS President, anchored off London's Victoria Embankment, gives depth to the old crude style with an energy that touches on early-20th century genres. It is, says programme director Jenny Waldman, 'very much a contemporary artwork - a reimagining', and not entirely typical of the original dazzle style.

It is no less stunning, if vaguely threatening. And if the groups huddled at the gangplank are anything to go by, it's proven a compelling addition to the peacetime Thames. On a stretch of riverfront better known for carbon-belching tourist coaches from Germany than anti-submarine warfare, Dazzle Ship is a reason to slow down and reacquaint ourselves with a once common sight now a mere curiosity. And contemplate what else has been left behind.

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Tobias Rehberger *Home and Away and Outside*

Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt 21 February – 11 May

This is an exhibition that demands close inspection. Even though the first thing Tobias Rehberger does is fuck up your eyes. Inspired by the dazzle painting that adorned Allied naval ships during the First World War, and that aimed to make it difficult for enemy vessels to calculate distance and movement when attempting to fire, the German artist – who studied and lives here in Frankfurt – has decorated the entire first room (walls and floor) with black-and-white geometrical patterns, and then placed within this hectic space a number of sculptures, some of which are similarly adorned. Mirrors, some cracked, complete the look. The blinding effects of all this razzle-dazzle presently become even more problematic for the unwary visitor, as the works in the rooms that follow have been installed within a series of ramps, steps and troughs – it's as if the artist wants to trip you up. Just in case you don't get the message from the works themselves, you'll know by now that Rehberger is a master manipulator.

Take the collection of vases he's selected, to which various of his artist friends – among them Rirkrit Tiravanija, Jorge Pardo and Sharon Lockhart – have been invited to add flowers, albeit without any knowledge of the receptacle into which they are to be placed. (Rehberger contributes blooms too.) These are presented as portraits, titled simply with the 'sitter's' name. The implication, presumably, is that the flowers tell us something about the character of the 'sitters' and that the vases tell us something about how Rehberger views his subjects.

You presume that there is some truth in these portraits, but what do a collection of white and dark violet lupins tell us about Olafur Eliasson? Other than his preferred colours, forms and scents? And yet people constantly communicate in this way. Someone who buys a Philippe Starck gnome stool wants to tell us that they have a fantastic (albeit childlike) sense of humour. Whether they have one or not. On the one hand we learn that objects tell a story; on the other how that story can be screwed around with, how an object can become something that it is not. See also the cacophony of metal tubing of more-or-less-functioning neon elements, suspended in the museum's entry rotunda and casting a shadow (sometimes, depending on the light and your positioning) that spells out the work's title, *Regret* (2014), on the white plinth below it. There's an implication that people project themselves similarly.

Some sense of 'personality' is inescapably present in many of the objects in this show. There are sculptures that smoke, drip (water) or feature flickering neon tubes, and one equipped with empty speech bubbles (are we supposed to fill them in? you wonder) and a giant cartoon fist. Others seem simply to have wandered away from their obvious supports. Rehberger calls these 'handicapped sculptures', and an interest in the prosthetic, or how a form might be extended, transformed or improved, also runs through the show. Literally in the *Prothese* series (2000), in which the artist has created prosthetic arms, legs, knees, fingers, etc (using his own bodily measurements), with each

plastic extremity adapted to give it an alternative function – the right arm ends in a ring (for lifting weights?), the right middle-finger in a bulbous growth (for pushing buttons?). Or in the atomised aspects of Michael Jackson throughout the show: a cuckoo clock that emits one of Jackson's trademark screams every 15 minutes (*Cuckoo M.J. IV*, 2012) and a timer in which measurements of minutes and hours are indicated by illuminated photographs of Jackson featuring the various looks he offered up during his career (*M.J. Timer*, 2010).

All this is a perfect reflection of the real world, in that it is geared to offer up an aesthetics and prosthetics for personality (the right clothes, the right phone; you could extend this to the projected personalities on Facebook and dating sites too). Not least in the final work of the exhibition, *Gu Mo Ni Ma Da* (2006), in which the artist Danh Võ (who studied under Rehberger) adapted sketches of the 11-metre-long yacht that his father built in order to enable his family to flee Vietnam in 1980, to provide the blueprints for a sculpture in the style of Rehberger. The boat, an angular mass that looks like it might manifest some kind of stealth technology, was built, but here it is presented as a photograph on the back wall. This is an essay in how objects express relationships – here that of father and son, student and teacher – but it's a twisted reflection of those relationships, like in a funfair's hall of mirrors, in which even the artist himself is in danger of being reduced to little more than a look. And it's this sense of daring that makes Rehberger's work stand out. *Mark Rappolt*



Home and Away and Outside, 2014 (installation view).
Photo: Norbert Miguletz. © Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt

theguardian

Michael Jackson cuckoo clocks and mayhem: Tobias Rehberger's art

With migraine-inducing blizzards of dots, rooms full of booby-traps and a Jacko soundtrack, the ever-provocative Tobias Rehberger's new installation in Frankfurt feels like modernism gone wonky



Blurred lines ... Tobias Rehberger's Home and Away and Outside installation. Photograph: Norbert Miguletz/Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt

I have a blinding migraine, the result of spending too much time lost in a blizzard of dots. I can't tell if they're printed on the mirror on the wall before me, or on the shiny metal sculpture on the plinth in front of that. The dots swarm like a flock of starlings, along with my reflection. It's like a 60s movie of an acid trip in here.

Tobias Rehberger
Home and Away and Outside

Schirn Kunsthalle,
Frankfurt

Until 11 May 2014
[Venue website](#)

All the mirrors on the walls seem to be cracked. The floor, walls and even benches in the first room of Tobias Rehberger's Home and Away and Outside, at the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt, are seasick with razzle-dazzle patterns, derived from first world war nautical camouflage. Jagged black-and-white splinters, stripes and optical distortions make looking difficult. You can't isolate

one work from another. The sculptures in this first, mad-house room of Rehberger's show hide in plain sight.

Maybe all this visual confusion is a metaphor. It certainly sharpens the eyesight and keeps you on your toes. Occasional bursts of orange and green claw at my retinas. One vaguely Picassoid form has smoke spilling from something like a nose. It has a kind of nonchalant insouciance. Here comes a great green fist, belonging to another sculpture that leans at a belligerent angle. The speech bubble above its head is empty of everything except a kind of cartoon violence. The visual noise in the room makes you want to shout to be heard. The paintings that double as cuckoo clocks don't help. It's like walking into the wrong bar on a bad night.

Tobias Rehberger is a sort of sculptor. In 2009, he gave the cafe in the former Italian pavilion at the Venice Biennale an aggressively op-art makeover, which won him a Golden Lion award. During the last Frieze art fair in New York he installed a fully functioning replica of his favourite Frankfurt watering-hole, Bar Oppenheimer, in the HotelAmericano. One might call this sort of thing social art. Personally, I prefer the anti-social kind.



Tobias Rehberger

... the artist installs himself in his own installation. Photograph: Gaby Gerster/Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt

I ended up with Rehberger in the original Oppenheimer bar, in Frankfurt, after his opening last week. It was like being stuck in a crowded ashtray. Recently, Rehberger wanted to buy the bar itself, rather than the usual round of drinks, but the owner declined. He also got enmeshed in a controversy and legal suit over his appropriation of Bridget Riley's 1961 *Movement in Squares*, for a work he installed at Berlin's national library. Rehberger could have saved himself a lot of bother and cash if he had acknowledged Riley in the title of his work. Maybe he should have bought her a drink. Or a bar.

Just like people, most of Rehberger's works have something wrong with them. There's always a mistake or small sign of damage. One sculpture is slightly incontinent, while another includes a little strip-light that keeps going on the blink. Even when there isn't anything discernably amiss with his sculptures, their wonky, vaguely cubist forms frequently feel like modernism gone wrong.

In 1994, Rehberger travelled to Cameroon, where he sketched, entirely from memory, a number of classic modernist pieces of furniture – chairs and stools by Donald Judd, Marcel Breuer, Alvar Aalto and Gerrit Rietveld. He had local carpenters remake the chairs from his drawings. This was modern design as Chinese whisper, and the approximations of these design classics not just were a comment on his own faulty memory, but also an exercise in translation. The same might be said of the Bridget Riley piece he copied. In any case, Rehberger told me, he has found lots of other examples of arrangements of squares similar to Riley's, some even pre-dating her own.

Art often develops by way of wilful misinterpretation and wild thinking, borrowing and theft. It is vanity to imagine any painting or sculpture that remains immune to the passing of fashion and the vagaries of time. Flies shit on them. They get old, they decay. They get beaten up, stabbed and shot. Those that manage to get through OK can still be deeply annoying, including the audio speaker here that functions as a Michael Jackson cuckoo clock. Every 15 minutes the bass-speaker membrane protrudes to the sound of a Jackson "oooh", a thud and one of those nasal yelps he did.

Michael Jackson cuckoo clocks and mayhem: Tobias Rehberger's art

The Guardian, February 28, 2014

Adrian Searle



Perilous ... a room in

Tobias Rehberger's Home and Away and Outside exhibition. Photograph: Norbert Miguletz/Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt

And now for some quiet. Vases of flowers line the shelves. There are portraits of Rehberger's artist friends, who were asked to bring along their favourite blooms (without being told why), and which Rehberger then arranged in vases he'd already selected. Wolfgang Tillmans bought pink roses; Jorge Pardo, tiger-lily orchids; Ólafur Eliasson, white and violet lupins. For his self-portrait, Rehberger chose red, fluorescent orange and pink gardenias along with a blue crystal vase. I kept thinking of Gertrude Stein's line: "Before the flowers of friendship faded, friendship faded." Fashions and tastes also fade, come back in new guises or are forgotten

The bouquets lull one into a false sense of security. The last, disconcertingly white rooms of Rehberger's show are full of traps, with sunken seating areas to fall into, steps to trip on, ramps to stumble up. This is a perilous place, even though the works here – a children's room in which the movie Kramer vs Kramer plays, bookshelves and seating arrangements and items of furniture remade from memory of the artist's own childhood – speak of a disturbed domestic calm. Even the tangles of Velcro ribbon that double as lampshades are called Infections. His art seems to thrive on flaws and

Michael Jackson cuckoo clocks and mayhem: Tobias Rehberger's art

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misrememberings.

Outside hangs a sculpture of neon and metal that looks like a mangled American flag. It's all shiny metal tubes and stripes and light bulbs, only some of which work. The sculpture casts a shadow on to a low circular disc on the ground. The shadow spells the word Regret. Regret what? It's too late now anyway. I think I need a bar.

this is tomorrow

Contemporary Art Magazine

Published on 24 January 2012

Tobias Rehberger review by Rebecca Newell

Tobias Rehberger has created a topsy-turvy world at Pilar Corrias. He has produced a new body of those slippery works that attract international acclaim and defy categorisation - those industrial monochrome sculptures and neon environment-cum-machines - and installed them at the Eastcastle Street gallery. All fluorescence, pattern and mechanism against the static, white walls, grey floor and open pipework of the gallery, the works transform the encounter in the art space.

The first meeting with this spongy, pulsating world is at once recognisable and abstract, expected and surprising. Ignoring the rather feeble work on paper that hangs in the window of the gallery (it's a red herring) the first untitled work looms, large and blobby, on entry into the street level space. It is retro, kitsch, familiar. The rotund yellow body of the work - made from foam, fibreglass, polyester, epoxy, plumb and paint - is vaguely humanly proportioned as it lords over us atop a white cuboid plinth, expansive, sumptuous and strange. Then, bright studio lights, wall mounted as though exhibits, allow the work to cast an eloquent word-shadow on the floor. 'SEX' it reads; the sculptural configuration of fleshy crests is necessary for this monosyllabic statement, which in turn lends itself to the title of the exhibition, 'Sex and Friends.'

Two more works in the upper gallery repeat this process of abstraction and familiarity, stasis and movement. Both untitled, their colourful, angular wooden structures encase motors, meaning that they, as well as the special lighting controls, gradually - imperceptibly - reposition to reveal something which is on first appearance hidden. In these cases, at regular but brief times of the day, the unstructured shadows cast by Rehberger's assemblies clarify, merge and distil to form legible shapes, letters and words.

Down the black, spiral staircase and the work acts upon us in the same way. A bench in one corner gives an ideal view: ahead a monochromatic chequered sculpture disappears into the painting behind it. To the right, an assemblage of wood, aluminium, foil and motor, and a second neon structure seamlessly and invisibly adjust to tell us something through more letters and shadow patterns.

Thus Pilar Corrias has been transformed, its disinterested walls enlivened. It is the visual trickery - the shadow words, the disappearance in space - that unifies the works in their site specificity, says something about the here and now of visual experience and forms the most altering aspect of the exhibition. The exhibition encounter reveals a non-linear sentence: it needs a reader for completion, interpretation and meaning.

Rehberger's practice poses questions that are answered in sensible dialogue with the viewer - what are the signifiers of purpose? What is the role of the visitor's durational exertion as well as dimensional space in the very conception of contemporary artworks? The role of the artist-creator is inverted, disrupted, turned upside-down. This interrogation of perception, authorship and temporality remains tightly at the core of this innovative exhibition, and indeed, allows Rehberger and his work to deftly sidestep the very mechanisms of traditional criticism.

Tobias Rehberger
this is tomorrow, January 24, 2012
Rebecca Newell



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TOBIAS REHBERGER junto à instalação "Holzgraben" na Galeria Pedro Cera

JOSÉ VENTURA

Agente provocador

TOBIAS REHBERGER, LEÃO DE OURO NA BIENAL DE VENEZA, VÊ-SE A SI MESMO COMO UM CATALIZADOR DE IDEIAS: O SEU TRABALHO RECENTE MOSTRA-SE NESTE MOMENTO EM LISBOA

TEXTO DE CELSO MARTINS

"NA MADRUGADA em que soube que tinha ganho o Leão de Ouro estava num barco, numa viagem entre duas festas. Nessa noite aconteceu-me tudo — comemorámos um pouco, perdi a carteira e o telemóvel e tinha de deixar o

apartamento na manhã seguinte. Às dez da manhã estava na Praça de São Marcos sem saber o que fazer e à tarde a receber o prémio". Apesar dos percalços, é um homem descontraído o alemão Tobias Rehberger (1966), que este ano arrecadou o prémio máximo da Bienal de Veneza e que, depois de uma mostra em Serralves (2002), expõe agora na Galeria Pedro Cera, em Lisboa. A obra que iniciou no princípio dos anos 90 faz transparecer um pouco esse estado de espírito. A peça criada para Veneza, numa cafeteria cujas paredes foram pintadas em estilo op/psicadélico de um modo que altera completamente a percepção do espaço, é muito sintomática: "A ideia foi camuflar o espaço, distorcer a perspectiva que as pessoas que iam ali para comer ou beber

tinham dele. A questão da perspectiva é essencial para mim. Se mudamos a perspectiva criamos diferença, e isso faz-nos ver".

Essa ideia de perspectiva sobre a qual se constrói um trabalho, do ponto de vista da autoria, da produção, das relações com as outras disciplinas artísticas, é o elemento distintivo do jogo artístico de Rehberger. Um trabalho como "On Otto", uma obra em que inverte a ordem temporal do processo de produção de um filme, começando no cartaz promocional e acabando no argumento, é um bom exemplo. "Eu estava muito interessado em tornar os processos de produção bastante evidentes, perceber como funcionam". Outro trabalho, foi o convite que fez a artesãos dos Camarões para refazerem algumas peças de mobiliário da Bauhaus, num exercício de descontextualização produtiva: "Eu prefiro chamar-lhe tradução. Os equívocos são das coisas mais produtivas que existem, mas só existem porque estamos constantemente a traduzir de linguagem para linguagem, de contexto para contexto". Este gosto por desarrumar as coisas induziu vários críticos a pensar que o artista persegue

LAYING BATTERY

Tobias Rehberger
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uma forma de arte interdisciplinar. Rehberger refuta esta hipótese: "O facto de eu usar estratégias que vêm da arquitectura, da ciência ou do *design* não significa que pretenda fazer fusões. Eu vejo as coisas da perspectiva de um artista, por isso aplico estas estratégias sempre dessa perspectiva. Estou é interessado em mudar o ângulo de visão das coisas. Por exemplo, porque nunca pensamos numa escultura como um designer pensa numa cadeira: se podemos sentar-nos nela, se é confortável, se nos faz doer o traseiro?"

A exposição que Rehberger traz a Lisboa coloca algumas dessas perguntas. Na primeira sala encontramos várias esculturas que primam pelo aspecto maciço (pode mesmo sentar-se nelas), enquanto outras se penduram no ar. Algumas estão amolgadas e têm um aspecto rude de quem levou uns bons pontapés, outras espalham sombras na parede numa intrincada reverberação lumínica. É um espaço para viver com os sentidos, ao qual o desenho de luz oferece uma segunda vida. Nestas e nas outras obras, a luz é uma ferramenta distintiva para Rehberger. "É muito interessante porque nos dá uma boa noção da relação ambígua que temos com os objectos. Nunca olhamos para uma luz de néon, mas ela tem enorme influência na forma como lidamos com os objectos que estão na sala. A luz é um muito útil objecto de tradução entre o que uma coisa é e a forma como nos chega. Lembra-me aquelas experiências dos anos 70, em que uns tipos punham um prato com um bife suculento à frente das pessoas e depois iluminavam-no com uma luz azul e as pessoas resistiam a comer". A luz que atravessa estruturas coloridas translúcidas — que, na verdade, reproduzem a luz das portas e janelas do seu ateliê a uma determinada hora do dia — formam um lugar intimista na segunda sala, enquanto no corredor volteiam as "Infections", uns candeeiros que foram construídos e iluminados pelos seus assistentes. O jogo era simples. Eles apresentavam os candeeiros e Rehberger ou os rejeitava, ou os aceitava, ou os corrigia. Mais do que a presença ou ausência da mão, aqui a delegação criativa é determinante: "As pessoas costumam pensar que o artista é um génio que controla todo o processo. Eu vejo-me a mim mesmo como um catalizador, alguém que lança um processo numa determinada direcção e reorganiza os resultados. É uma espécie de orquestração, mas sem muita condução, eu não sou um maestro".

In his work, which is at the interface between art, design and architecture, Tobias Rehberger explores the role of the artist as 'auteur'. Curator Leontine Coelewijn talked with Rehberger about the first major survey of his work in the Netherlands at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam: *the chicken-and-egg-no-problem wall-painting*, which travelled to the Museum Ludwig in Cologne.

Leontine Coelewijn: First of all, can you explain the title?

Tobias Rehberger: Of course, but first I should talk about what I want to do in the show. I am playing with the idea of what a "work" actually is: where does it come from and where is it going? If you're not entirely into the idea of the romantic genius, then it is quite an interesting question to pose to yourself: where do the works come from and how do they develop? That is the "chicken and the egg problem".

The wall painting from the title also relates to the structure of the show. I will use three-dimensional objects to produce a two-dimensional image on the wall. That's also "the chicken and the egg", where the existing works are used as the material for a new production. But it also relates to how a work is always material for future work.

All the sculptures in the space are lit from different angles, so they produce shadows on the wall. There is also a sketchy wall painting, roughly based on the shadows, which I made on the spot. I like the idea that something elaborate and solid could be the starting point for something vague and sketchy. And on the other hand a wall painting is in a way the most solid way of doing a painting because it is fixed. I think that all these discrepancies create a very nice confusion about how work is produced. This issue has a wider relevance than just my own work: how aware are we as artists about how the things we do come together? This has to do with the fact that I am highly sceptical about this idea of the genius artist, which remains a very big issue...

Do you think that this idea of the romantic genius is also at the basis of today's art market?

Yes, I think so very much, especially in relation to the concept of "authenticity". The market is based on these romantic nineteenth-century ideas. It's not that my work is a statement against that; I just think that it's not such an interesting concept anymore. And I am trying to ask myself what other concepts are possible in this exhibition. I continually question the perspective.

In your work you're looking for alternatives to this idea of the solitary genius, such as shared authorship. You have worked together with other people, such as the craftsmen from Cameroon who made the design "classics" Breuer and Rietveld chairs based on your sketches ...

That's right, but it also exists in a lot of my other works. But I think it's not so much about shared authorship as about realising how absurd the idea of control is in our concept of production. But you can also find it in the idea of the "model" with which I am very busy: *Mutter 93%* an almost life-size model for a garage. If you buy the model, you have the right to build the garage according to your own interpretation of the model. You can also see our show from this perspective: on the one hand the sculptures stand for themselves, and on the other hand they represent something else.

Some of your works such as *Mutter 93%* or *Cutting, preparing, without missing anything and being happy about what comes next* suggest a kind of use ...

Well, the works actually have a use. Often an art work is defined as a "useless" object, but this is actually a myth just like the myth of the neutral white space of the gallery or the museum. Art is used as a tool for cultural definition or as a tool in the art market or as a "happy-maker" on the wall above your sofa. There is always some kind of function. I always play with this question of function, of what defines function and the range of clichés about the "non-functionality" of an artwork. My work has

often been misunderstood as some kind of social interference. For me it's always more a struggle with the definition of what an art work is or could be. For example, I could use a bronze Giacometti sculpture to hammer a nail into a wall. However, an artwork is often more successful as a tool to develop your ideas than as a hammer. It all depends on the perspective from which you view the work. Another misunderstanding is that my work is close to design. For me that is not an interesting question. I am not particularly interested in design as design. There are design strategies that raise interesting questions about how I think about art. And that's why I use it. My work is more about differentiating between art and design, trying to define the differences rather than merging the two fields.

I also had the impression that you use different strategies from design to introduce the element of time. Such as the work *Cutting, preparing, without missing anything and being happy about what comes next*, which is an installation based on asking your friends how they would define an ideal place to relax. The first edition of the work was made in 1996, the second one in 1999, both in the design styles of those years ...

One very interesting phenomenon in relation to time is fashion. The idea of fashion relates to the definition of something in time. The work you just mentioned poses the question: what happens if the visual appearance of a work changes in time without the content having changed? To what extent is the surface of the work the actual "work"? Or is the surface completely irrelevant?

There is this very general question for artists which is about the "understandability" of the work they make ... And that is a rather weird idea ... Of course we, as artists, communicate structures, but how far does this "understanding" go and what are the processes of making things understandable? Just as photography took on some of the "duties" of art in the nineteenth century, so advertising did this in the last century: the controllability of the message. Advertising tries to be "scientific" about the effect it has on people. And advertising does this well, so that is something we artists need

not concern ourselves with, just like we no longer need to concern ourselves with an exact naturalistic representation in a portrait.

What do you see as the role for art now?

I believe that art is a completely open field where questions can be raised that can't be raised in other fields. But I think in the end it's a theoretical game. Art is mostly about the possibility of making art, about its circumstances and its conditions. And in this respect it is an example to other fields just like mathematics is. It's a field where you can discuss things that are not of any direct, practical use. I also think of mathematics like this because in a way it runs parallel to the production of beauty.

Light plays an important role in your work; sometimes you use it to make connections with different parts of the world – like the village Arroyo Grande – or moments in history – like the day Nancy Spungen was killed in a hotel room in New York in 1978; but also in the exhibition you are working on now ...

The use of light in my work is not about "branding", it's simply a material that I use, like you use a piece of wood to make chair, to repair a ceiling or as fuel to cook with. For me it's just a material like wood or metal. It's not the content of the work. But it is an extremely interesting material to work with because it can be used in so many different ways. And it is also the essential material of communication. It's the first thing a baby sees, it's crucial for the visual arts, and it conveys a large amount of knowledge. I can use it in different ways as a strategy to change perspectives: literally and metaphorically.

Can you tell me something about the choice of works for this exhibition? You explained to me already a while ago that, "this is not going to be a retrospective." What did you mean by that?

Since we said from the beginning that it should be an exhibition of existing works, I thought about what that means. I thought about the classic way

of dealing with this – which is the retrospective. But I was not interested in the more “historical” approach to the overview of existing work. Therefore I asked myself what, from my own point of view, could be interesting about an exhibition of existing works. For me it was how this presentation could produce “non-existing” works. That was the initial idea. The question was how could I make all this into an interesting visual product which could give other people a certain understanding of the work, but could also give me a new understanding of the work. And at the same time I am not completely fulfilling the museum’s demand, because I am producing a new work. I like the idea that the show has a slight retrospective touch because it brings together a couple of important works, but then I am disrupting that with works that might be less important for me – which is sometimes not so obvious – which appear less understandable. Then a technical aspect came in: how to create this new “sketch” on the wall of the museum space. I tried to combine objects that work very well and objects that do not work at all, in this structure with light and shadow.

By using your sculptures as raw material in a new installation they will also acquire a different meaning. What happens to works such as your *Videolibraries* – sculptures used as an archive for film fragments which are visible only as flickering lights because the TV sets are placed facing towards the wall – when they are placed in the middle of the space as an object to create a shadow on a wall?

It’s again this question of a change in perspective. In this case the object is normally positioned in front of the wall to produce a reflection of the light from film clips. Now it’s placed in the middle of the space. First of all, you encounter it from the front and it looks more or less the same as before; only the reflection is less obvious than it normally is. So it’s rather close to what the work usually is. But then you go around and it’s just like a Madonna from the fourteenth century, which is three-dimensional from one side and hollow from the other side. So now you see the mechanism of the work itself – which

is almost like a pathological perspective on the work. Suddenly it lays bare its organs. I could only do this in this situation where the sculpture is used as raw material for the wall painting. It is comparable to the role of the model. On the one hand it is one thing, but then when you look at it in a larger, smaller or broader sense it could be something different. It’s all about the ambiguity of things, the ambiguity of reading the artwork as a final product.

Does this position also come from a dissatisfaction with the role art has nowadays?

No not dissatisfaction, but more doubts or uncertainty about what seems to be so clear and easily understandable. Perhaps I would be happier if I simply made “nice” art; but my work is more about the uncertainty about what you call art. And in the end it’s very satisfying. It’s great fun posing all these questions. I am always grateful for all these “problems” I have. For me it’s fun to deal with them.

Are you inspired by the way other artists in the past have dealt with these questions?

Of course. I don’t know how far back it goes. I have a great appreciation for “old” art, but the work of the last hundred years has more relevance to my way of seeing art. Contemporary art is closer to the “confusion” I am in.

Do you mean the work of artists of your own generation such as Olafur Eliasson and Rirkrit Tiravanija?

Yes, but also an artist like Donald Judd, whom I admire very much but also have problems with. He dealt with a lot of the problems I deal with as well, like the idea of the genius artist or the “artist’s hand”. But then I have difficulties with the idea of production; that an industrial-looking object or a spray-painted metal box has nothing to do with the fight the person who made it had with his wife the night before. It’s almost an inhuman attitude towards the object, at least from my point of view. It’s not about good or bad. It’s more a matter of whether it really makes sense.

TOBIAS REHBERGER

BY ELVIS MITCHELL

FROM THE ARTIST WHO'S BEEN CALLED A COMPLETE ORIGINAL, A COMPLETELY ORIGINAL WAY OF MAKING MOVIES—YOU MAY NEVER SIT IN A CINEPLEX THE SAME WAY AGAIN

The work of German artist Tobias Rehberger encourages, even relies on, a compact with the audience that is similar to the approach the artist uses in the actual creation of his pieces. Rehberger's art examines the quotidian objects that we all have relationships with—relationships so comfortable that we're beyond thinking about them—and in so doing, subtly commands the viewer to literally make contact with them. These pieces include everything from cars (his *Version J* features a real-life Maserati in a metal box, while next to it, *Version L* is a box made of a compressed Maserati) to furniture (in the installation "We Never Work on Sundays," he commissioned African artisans to build modernist pieces—Bauhaus and Le Corbusier chairs—from his own drawings, reinterpretations of reinterpretations). As we touch and examine the latter pieces, we come to understand the design and craftsmanship involved as well as their collaborative aspect. In effect, by bringing our own perception of the story to the one he has fashioned, we are added to the team of creators. That's particularly true of his new show, *On Otto* (on view at Milan's Prada Foundation until the end of May), for which Rehberger has assembled a group of film professionals to make a movie in a way that demands we understand how it was composed. He does this by spotlighting each aspect of the collaboration in a unique and witty fashion that wouldn't be out of place among Godard, Truffaut, and the other avatars of the French New Wave.

ELVIS MITCHELL: Tell me about *On Otto*.

TOBIAS REHBERGER: The whole project is based on this idea of producing something resembling a movie. To do this we went through the main production steps, which I defined as scriptwriting, storyboarding, production design, costume design, acting, cinematography, editing, music composition, sound engineering, and title-making. Then I tried to produce the whole thing backwards, meaning the first thing I did was to have someone make a poster for a movie that at that point didn't exist. And this poster was then given to the people normally involved in the last production steps in the process—the people who make the titles—and they had to come up with an idea that was somehow connected to the poster. Then these two things, the poster and the titles, went to the sound person, and he tried to connect to these elements and come up with 90 minutes of sound for the "movie." In other words, everybody was handed the results of the steps before theirs, and then had to position their own artistic work in relation to what had come before.

EM: It sounds a lot like your installation "We Never Work on Sundays."

TR: Yeah! This project has lots of connections to other projects I've done, since my work is based on a couple of central questions. It's about communication, misunderstanding, points of reference, and production itself—what does it mean, how does it function, how do you come to a result? The questions for me are always, how do things communicate, how do people read something, and what kind of conclusions do they draw from what they're reading? It's like, if an architect delivers plans, it's possible to understand his intentions, but there's still this gap within which things have to be interpreted and where things can be read differently. That's what I'm interested in—how this process could be made transparent or displayed and what kind of result that produces. With this project I tried to avoid people who are into making art films, working instead with real movie people. I thought if they had to turn their own thinking around, then what resulted could reveal the process in a way that their normal routine wouldn't. Also, there was no director—there was nobody saying, "You should see it this way." I was interested in how these people would see it for themselves.

EM: It also seems like you were getting them to ask questions about what they do as they're doing it.

TR: Exactly. It forced them to think about how they could respond when they weren't working in a routine way. A couple of people involved in the project told me how interesting it was for them to suddenly not have to fulfill some other person's emotions or feelings about how something should be done. I'm sure they dealt with their tasks on an emotional level but also on an intellectual one—what it meant and how it should function. Some people referenced the idea of the overall project, while others referenced what they were doing. So I think it was definitely the kind of thing where they could suddenly use their creativity in a freer way. When I talked to them I had the feeling that what they were doing was more a reflection of their own perspective than somebody else's.

EM: That's what this project really seems to be about—the exchange of different points of view being brought to each aspect of the film.

TR: Exactly. I think that it opens up the possibility of seeing more explicitly what these artists do. I am very interested in film because I think it's the most collaborative art form. I had this idea that we could have something that was both collaborative and very individual.

EM: Because film is a process by which the director finds people to help realize his visions, it seems collaborative. But somebody who has a singular vision is actually not that collaborative.

TR: Yes, but everyone involved has to use their creativity, their knowledge, and their feelings to help the director fulfill his ideas, and in that way they are collaborative. So I think it is collaborative, but sometimes it is not individual enough. In the end I was not interested in making a great movie, and, in fact, it is a movie that is not a movie, because it's never going to be on a roll of celluloid that's put into a projector. It will end up being a different kind of experience. I designed special architecture for this particular kind of film, where you kind of walk through it, and some of the things appear again in different combinations. We're used to the idea that a movie comes as a certain kind of product, but maybe there are other possibilities. Those were questions I was asking myself, and this was also an experiment. My vision was to have a bunch of great artists throw in their creativity and perspective on things and to see what came out of it. I had a vision about the process and about how to trigger certain things, but not about the end result. My influence came in the way that I chose the people; from their past work, I had a certain idea about what their abilities were.

EM: How did you find and choose them?

TR: In the end it had a lot to do with my favorite cinematographers, my favorite actors, my favorite storyboard artists. But I also composed it a bit like a painting, with some young people, some older people, some very known, some less so—for example, among the actors there's this guy named Justin Henry; he was a child actor who's not doing very many movies anymore.

"MY VISION WAS TO HAVE A BUNCH OF GREAT ARTISTS THROW IN THEIR CREATIVITY AND PERSPECTIVE . . ."

EM: The kid from *Kramer vs. Kramer* [1979]?

TR: Exactly. I was interested in having somebody who's an adult now, who was a very important figure as a child in a certain movie. It wasn't only that I thought Justin did a great job in *Kramer vs. Kramer* 28 years ago; I was also interested in seeing him in combination with a grand diva like Kim Basinger, or with a young up-and-coming actress like Emmy Rossum. That was how I tried to compose the whole thing as a picture—like somebody old and experienced would be the red, and somebody who was doing freaky things would be the blue, and somebody who's a classic would be the green. It was that kind of composition of people that made a complete picture in the end.

EM: Do you think of the film as a kind of sculpture, even though it doesn't have that same literal space and volume?

TR: Yeah, because a big part of a movie is a physical experience, and it's about the size of the screen, your distance from it, its strength of color. And in a movie, moments bounce off of something, and that's very physical.

EM: What was your approach to finding a way to address the effects of film as such a large presence in our lives?

TR: It's hard to say. Since I was certain that we were not going to have the normal physical appearance of a film, with the normal narration and things like that, I had to find a way to make the experience different, so it's probably not a film that you would surrender to. You have to be more active and draw a lot of connections for yourself that are usually delivered to you for free. [laughs] This time you have to pay by putting in a bit of work.

EM: In much of your work, you're asking the viewers, or in this case the audience, to bring their own narrative into play.

TR: Yeah. I think there are different ways of reading. Some I can lay out, but sometimes it happens that people come up with their own ways that I haven't thought of. I'm trying to present a couple of possibilities, but I am not totally in control of them. I think it's fantastic when people find ways to read the work that I never thought of. That's what art is about.

EM: It reminds me a lot of the French New Wave, where they wanted to change the audience's relationship to the narrative.

TR: I wouldn't say it was that ideological—it's more about giving the audience an opportunity to think about the relationship in a different way. Achieving that would be enough for me.

EM: But by virtue of making it less passive and more active, you're changing the audience in a very subtle way.

TR: You're right, but it's not that I'm at war with the usual use of film; I'm just interested in possibilities and seeing what they are and what they could do. Even if in the end you were to say, "Doing that was interesting, but ultimately I prefer to stick with the old way," I still think it's good, because once you've experienced film differently, you can better understand what you see when it happens the usual way.

EM: Who were some of the people you worked with on this?

TR: The cinematographer is a guy from Austria who I really love named Wolfgang Thaler; the titles were made by Florence Deygas and Olivier Kuntzel, a team from Paris—the most famous thing they did was the titles for *Catch Me If You Can* [2002]; Randy Thom did the sound; Ennio Morricone did the music.

EM: Who was the production designer?

TR: Jeffrey Beecroft, the guy from *Twelve Monkeys* [1995]. For the storyboard artist we got J. Todd Anderson, who does the storyboards for the Coen brothers movies. Scriptwriting is being done by Barbara Turner, who did *Pollock* [2000]. That's why I asked her, because I wanted somebody who wrote about artists. *Pollock* is a bit clichéd, but I was interested in that too—this clichéd idea about an artist.

EM: When you approached these people, what were some of their responses?

TR: Most were very enthusiastic. It was interesting, because I didn't have any connection to the film business, so I thought most of them would say, "Who's this stupid guy from Germany who's coming up with this idea?" [both laugh] But it was the other way around. We got every-

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body we wanted unless they didn't have time; we had a certain time schedule we had to keep to, since no one could work simultaneously. A lot of people were quite happy about the fact that they were able to start from the point of reference we presented. Like Randy Thom, who for me is kind of the pope of sound design, said to me, "Finally, after all these years I get a project where I can come up with ideas." [both laugh] I thought that was great.

EM: All these people you mentioned are true artists; each has changed film through their contributions. Was it intimidating for you to go to all of them?

TR: Totally. I almost fainted when I had to meet Kim Basinger.

EM: What was that like?

TR: I was briefed by tons of people who told me, "You should say this, you shouldn't say that." But when she arrived this was what happened: She was on the phone in her car, and the driver took her bags out. I was standing there alone, and the driver said, "Who's carrying the bags?" So I said, "Maybe I should." She wanted a bungalow to change in, so I showed her the way. When we got to the bungalow her hairdresser and stylist and makeup artist were there, so she said hello to them, and then said to me, "You can put the bags down in the corner, thank you." Finally I had to say, "I'm Tobias, by the way. Thank you for coming." She was like, "Oh, my God, I thought you were the porter!" And she came over and hugged me, and that broke the ice. [both laugh] My whole plan for what to say was gone in a second. We chatted for an hour, and then she got prepared. It was quite fun.

EM: How many actors are there in the movie?

TR: Five: Danny DeVito, Kim Basinger, Emmy Rossum, Justin Henry, and Willem Dafoe.

EM: What was your conversation with Justin Henry like? He hasn't really acted much in a long time.

TR: He thought he was getting *Punk'd* [both laugh]—a kind of *Candid Camera* situation or something. But in the end he came to trust us, and he was great.

EM: As you went through this process, did you find there was more art in making a movie than you imagined initially?

TR: I didn't have a clear idea about how the various individuals who make a movie did things, but I knew that everyone involved was much more individual an artist than you would think if you were to see one of the movies they'd done. Like our costume designer, Mark Bridges, for example—he does great costumes, but how much do you look at that when you're watching a film?

EM: One of the things that strikes me about this project is that everything operates out of this sense of community, and the film is really about exploring and defining oneself through that community.

TR: Every artist defines himself with his or her work, and then the other artists have to react according to that definition.

EM: So much of art and film, though, is typically about the primacy of the individual point of view.

TR: Yeah, but our individuality is always in space—it's more like 25 spaces that you have to go through, like a labyrinth.

EM: What were some of the films you saw early in life that had a big influence on you?

TR: I would say *Star Wars* [1977], *Apocalypse Now* [1979], and *The Shining* [1980]. Later it was *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* [1989].

EM: The first three are very dreamlike films.

TR: Yeah. Maybe that's why they made such a big impression on me. I remember I had to sneak into the cinema to see *Apocalypse Now* because I was four years too young, according to its rating. Maybe it was so impressive to me because I couldn't make sense of it.

Tobias Rehberger
Interview, 2007
Elvis Mitchell

EM: With this project you seem to be making people ask themselves questions about their subconscious. Because in taking on something like film, one thing could be really frightening to you and to me but funny or boring to somebody else.

TR: Yes, since we have all these different elements in the film and they're all pointing in various directions, everything carries its own story while referencing a narrative common to all of them. There are lots of stories, and they all kind of mix up, and it comes out as a very ethereal thing. I approached this project from the point of view that the strength of an Andy Warhol painting should still be there if you turn your back to it. It's not just about the one perspective; sometimes the environment might be even more important.

Elvis Mitchell is *Interview's* special correspondent. Opposite: Composition of stills in chronological order taken from the titles sequence by Florence Deygas and Olivier Kuntzel from Tobias Rehberger's film *On Otto*, 2007, mixed media, variable dimensions. Photo composition: Doublestandards, Berlin/courtesy Fondazione Prada, Milan.

The Provocateur

TOBIAS REHBERGER'S ONLY INTEREST IN THE STATUS QUO IS TO UPSET IT. MAURA EGAN MEETS THE ARTIST.

Tobias Rehberger's work space is preternaturally neat. The two light-filled floors are spare, with just a pair of assistants studying computer screens, some brightly colored 1950's-style furniture and a couple of drawings precisely tacked to the wall, courtesy of his 6-year-old daughter, Nelli. Even his office's location, in Frankfurt's red-light district, feels oddly civilized. The only element that is unkempt is Rehberger's grizzlylike beard,

which is probably the aftermath of a long flight back from Korea, where he was scouting for his latest art piece: a barbecue setup.

That Rehberger is not clad in the de rigueur paint-splattered jeans and construction boots says a lot about the type of artist he is. He works in the wider sphere of design and architecture, and his art is difficult to categorize. He has created an idyllic Japanese garden in the middle of Manhattan; Pop-inspired wallpaper consisting of photographs of his organs; a series

of Modernist-looking treehouses in a park in northern Germany; and an enormous tanker based on a crude boat that the father of a friend built to escape from Vietnam. Like the barbecue setup, which is a cheeky nod to Korea's popular cuisine, the work is typically delivered with a punch line: the boat, built on a Hamburg wharf, was shipped in pieces to the Friedrich Petzel Gallery in New York for a show titled "American Traitor Bitch."

"I would call him a conceptual sculptor who is telling stories," says Petzel, his New York gallerist. Unlike Donald Judd, who believed that art should unequivocally stand on its own and just exist, Rehberger is more interested in the conflict between function and aesthetics, once turning a Judd sculpture into an outdoor bar. He's an Oz-like figure behind a cross-pollination of workers who realize his ideas, whether he's working with carpenters in Cameroon to remake a Mies van der Rohe chair or with the Italian company Moroso on an installation for the Milan furniture fair last spring. Rehberger clearly believes that art can be about an ordinary object, like a chair or a Volkswagen Beetle.

For his art-car series, a project that he began in 1999, Rehberger sent simple sketches, composed essentially from memory, of a Porsche 911 and a McLaren F1, the rare British automobile, to a manufacturer in Thailand. There were no measurements or schematics included. The only parameters were that the cars had to be drivable and built to human scale. "The craftsmen there are super-easy to work with," says Rehberger, 40, who grew up near Stuttgart, the home of Porsche and Mercedes-Benz. "They never argue. The Germans are so specialized, they offer too many suggestions."

Rehberger selected Thailand, which has been called the Detroit of Asia, because the country is also known for its knockoffs of everything from Adidas sneakers to designer handbags. A few months later, two cars were delivered. "People thought the McLaren was really well made because they weren't really familiar with it," he says. "The Porsche was criticized a lot more because it's such an iconic car." But Rehberger likes the imperfections in so far as they enhance the personal stories behind his work. He later sent to Thailand just a few design renderings, clipped from the newspapers, of the new Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren. The Thai crew cobbled together a version even before DaimlerChrysler could roll one off the line. For his last installment, two Renault Alpines, he upped the ante. "I just gave them the info over the phone," he says. Currently he is working on an Abrams tank. "I am just sending a plastic model," says Rehberger, who plans to park it on the Bard College campus in upstate New York.

Rehberger's role as a merry prankster may have been inherited from Martin Kippenberger, the German art world's proto-bad-boy and one of his teachers at the Städelschule in Frankfurt. But like his friend Rirkrit Tiravanija, another art-world provocateur, whose



Brother of invention Clockwise from far left: a treehouse in Schlosspark Wendlinghausen; the artist Tobias Rehberger in his Frankfurt studio; Rehberger collaborated with Thai carmakers to build a Renault Alpine.





Mast appeal The show "American Traitor Bitch" (left) featured the artwork/boat that Rehberger had assembled on the docks of Hamburg and then shipped to the Friedrich Petzel Gallery in New York in 2006. The interior (below) suggests the inside of a cathedral.



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repertory includes serving pad Thai in a gallery, Rehberger is dealing with the social as well as the functional facets of his work. Several years ago, he built a wooden house for the Land Foundation, an art-meets-agriculture commune in Thailand that Tiravanija helped establish. The Korean barbecue pit is a mechanism for bringing people together for a meal. For a show at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London in 2004, he built a large box. Inside, a single lamp was connected to a switch in the bedroom of another Tobias Rehberger, a 16-year-old boy in Mannheim, Germany, who could flick it on and off at will. (The artist hired a detective to track down Tobias "Junior.") "Light is a good way to show a visible connection," he says. He once

decorated a tunnel in a Tuscan village with lights that were illuminated via the Internet from places as far away as South America.

Rehberger's work thrives on chance connections and unexpected encounters. His latest project brings different Hollywood players together, as he deconstructs the process of moviemaking for a show at the Fondazione Prada in Milan in April. He is producing the film backwards. "It starts with the movie poster and ends with the script," he explains.

For Rehberger, it's all about switching the perspective, which he does by turning art slightly on its ear. "There is a Serra sculpture in Berlin," he says. "I think it's a great place to sit down when you are tired." ■