ALMINE RECH

Gregor Hildebrandt
Zum Wohl der Tränen

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« Today, you can think what you want of cassette tapes, as a recording medium for music, they determined the perception of an entire generation. The first cheap simple tape recorder, the first tape recorder with an integrated radio, and all those cassette tapes one collected and exchanged. Think alone of the almost magical process of the first self-made recordings from the radio. The German word for bootleg, Raubkopie, didn't exist then, and at any rate one wouldn't have known what that might be. And with the tapes, you collected the beloved bands. Punk came from England, and in the German provinces, the first pierced noses and red mohawks appeared. If you were particularly committed, you listened to the Peel Sessions, the program of one of the most important radio show hosts of the 1980's, John Peel. From London, he regularly broadcast the really latest in pop music, and he received around 250 demo tapes a week. A whole generation of artists identified with this music, and we listened equally enthusiastically to The Sex Pistols and The Cure. On the one hand the hard, edgy, tied-together and the proletarian qualities of pogo dancing, and on the other hand the romantic, anemic, darkly made-up elegies. Later, it was divided up. Here the spitting punks, and there the black romantics. But in the beginning, everything was mixed up and came together in one's own collection of tapes. What became of all these tapes ? Are they gathering dust in an old suitcase, are they still in an old plastic bad in the car trunk, or were they gotten rid of long ago, thanks to the renewals of CDs and MP3 players ? No, I still have some.

So when I first saw Gregor Hildebrandt's pictures, I was not all that surprised by the use of material ; rather, I encountered old friends, set and formed into pictures, and I tried to remember the time way back then. [...]

In one sense, Gregor Hildebrandt is a romantic who interlaces dead roses into his pictures. And even if they are only symbolic roses in songs, or indeed real ones, or eye-lashes. Classic materials and symbols of the Romantic picture of remembrance. Collected and found things interpenetrate each other there. [...]

The chosen songs are the content of the tapes used. Thus, they also become the narrative content of the pictures and represent a mood. The author of the image decides on a title that he wants to use as a « motif of the image » and copies this so long onto cassette tape until the amount of the tape used fills the previously determined surface of the picture. The result are postcard sized sketches, wall-covering pictures, usually on canvass as the bearer of the image, or even installations that cover entire building facades, « sound pictures » of used and recorded tape material. A rather unique and unusual method to make the recording material worthy of becoming an image and of turning it not only into the surface material of the pictures, but to raise it to be one of its signifiers. Frozen, silenced music. [...]

Especially in Berlin, in a circle of artist friends, in which Gregor Hildebrandt is a well-known figure, one encounters a pronounced interest in looking back without pathos. [...]

Slightly anemic, appealingly so, and with a hint of a future that seeks the past. Seen that way, Gregor Hildebrandt's pictures set the « tone » for that. No scream, no painterly stews, but a clear choice of material and a clear form. And quietly, the picture sings a song. »

Extract of the text by Peter Lang, « Boys don't cry », in « Gregor Hildebrandt », éd. Arsenal HKMI, Galerie Pankow, Berlin ; translation in english : Wilhelm Werther

Gregor Hildebrandt presents a set of previously unshown works on the ground floor of the Galerie Almine Rech—notably an important wall sculpture composed of audio tape cases ; and

‘End of Love,’ a polyptych in four elements on canvas whose motif makes with audio tapes suggests the ripples of a curtain, inspired by ‘Dance me to the end of love’ by Leonard Cohen ; and also new paintings and photographic collages.