

# Music Is The Muse

For German artist Gregor Hildebrandt, a song says a thousand words and often translates into an artistic masterpiece. This February, Hildebrandt is all set to surprise the city's art aficionados through his unusual pieces of work. *Noblesse India* decodes the artist's unique style, only to concur with several rave reviews.

By Sukanya A. Shah

Music and art. How do these link your worlds?

I'm very interested in painting and I really enjoy listening to music. In my work, I try to charge my paintings with music. My original goal was to paint pictures like *The Cure*.

Since your works derive depth from words, use one word to describe each of the six tape paintings.

Goldstrips, Gesticularnament, Whitegold, Blackflowers, Flowerrain, Warhol.

Your reinterpretation of 'Warhol's flowers' have received much acclaim. How did it all take shape?

Three years ago, I started treating rip-off works with a wallpaper flower roll, and I wanted to take this further. Mr. Ashwin Thadani, Director at Galerie Isa, was very enthusiastic about these works and gave me a lot of suggestions. Looking for another flower roll, the question arose—since I couldn't find one that I liked—why shouldn't I simply make one myself, and then came the question of which model to use. And I thought, I might as well go the whole hog.

Describe your use of colour. What are your signature colour codes and textures?

My colour palette is very reduced, because my point of departure are the cassette tapes and there the range is rather limited. In the end, I usually choose black.



My colour palette is pretty restricted, since I confine myself by and large to the colours of the different cassette tapes. As a result, my colour spectrum includes the white of the canvas, beige/brown, grey and dark black with the exception of the various beginning or end markers. In most of the cases, the dark greys, browns, and blacks correspond strongly to the chosen songs, which are also rather dark.

What is your creative process like?

I would record the self-same song on cassette tape over and over again, and then mark the end of the song, and thus also its new beginning, with adhesive crepe tape. So the composition of the picture would largely depend on the white markers and on the ends and beginnings of the cassette tape, the strips of which I would apply onto the canvas from left to right, one next to the other. I then made

the first rip-offs in 2009—Starting from a 'positive', the white painted canvas is completely covered with acid-free adhesive tape, its sticky surface facing out. This surface is then treated in a way to make it less sticky.

After the song referred to in the picture's title has been recorded onto all of the tapes, they are lightly stretched, with their coated side facing outward, across the surface. The surface only has a slightly adhesive quality at this point of the process, so that the coating on the tape sticks to it only in places where I have pressed it down with a brush or with my hands. The coating comes off the tape, and only the transparent 'carrier film' is left.

Each piece of tape behaves differently in this process, and this leads to different structures. Then, all tapes are successively ripped off and glued vertically, without gaps onto another canvas of the same size.

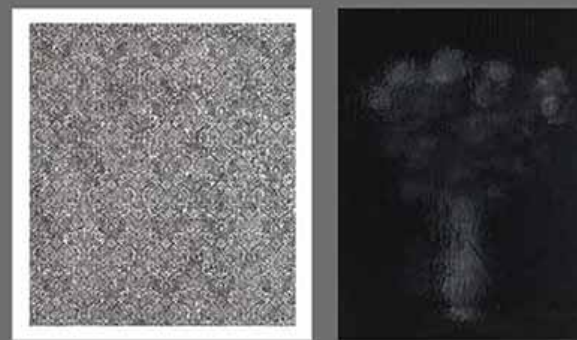
The places where the dark coating has stuck to the original canvas are white on the second canvas, because here only the transparent film is left, and the white canvas shines through. The variation in the colouring is due to the various browns and blacks of the cassette tapes. The result is a 'negative' of the original image.

Tell us about your history—how did you delve into the world of art?

In my studies, the idea I strived for, was painting pictures like *Sonic Youth* or *The Cure*. In 1997, I had a crucial experience when working on an artist book related to my picture *Wie die Motten ans Licht* (As Moths to the Light). I wanted to incorporate a song by *Einstürzende Neubauten*, which proved difficult at first: "How do I get the song into the book?" Eventually, the solution, most plausible then, occurred to me: to simply record the song on cassette and to then cut the tape in strips and glue these strips onto the book pages. It was not until 2000 that, on the basis of this technique, I started the series 'Tönende Jugend', a German translation of 'Sonic Youth', which I had already designed in 1999 and which I've been obsessed with since.

I developed this technique during my studies in Mainz—in my apartment, I would first record the song on cassettes and then, in the studio, I would glue it onto the pages. And I am still interested very much in this transformation of a song recorded on a small cassette to a large black gestural canvas. Also, I am fascinated by the intangibility of music; the fact that it cannot be presented to the eye. There is a certain mystery to the cassette tape. ♦

From the left: 3 Imaginary boys (The Cure), cassette tape and acrylic paint on canvas, 2009. 7 Wishes Earlier, Laser engraving on granite, 2013.



Excerpts from the catalogue of the Gregor Hildebrandt show, written by noted art writer Dr. Anna Ballestrem.

*Transience, memories and traces are frequent themes in Hildebrandt's work. Formally in the various working modes and materials, the pictures immortalised in stone, the rip-offs that reveal merely remnants, and the tape, which itself is only a silent remnant. In terms of content, Hildebrandt's figurative works capture, for example, the legendary screen beauties from long ago, thus always also addressing the transience of beauty and the timelessness of myth. However, Hildebrandt is not a melancholic, his mixture of pathos and wit, devotion and fearlessness when it comes to beauty, as well as his nonchalance, makes him rather a cheerful romantic.*

*Quite apart from the obviously romantic themes and content of his work, such as melancholy love songs, the flowers, the Eichendorff quotations and the tears and eyelashes, which appear frequently, the mirror and the doppelgänger are classic motifs of romanticism, which thematise the dark sides of the soul against the rationalism of Enlightenment. The mysterious doppelgänger allows the self to break free from the compulsion of socially prescribed individuality. He offers the possibility of transgressing borders, and thus of freedom.*

Gregor Hildebrandt will be exclusively showcasing his works at Galerie Isa between 5<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

This *Dream Always Ends* cassette tape and acrylic paint on canvas, 2013. *Flowers of Gold* cassette tape and acrylic paint on canvas, 2013.

