

Gregor Hilderbrandt Explores the Art of Music

By Avni Mehrotra posted Feb 6th 2014 at 3:47PM



The work of an artist is usually the culmination of all possible mediums he can explore to create something beautiful. So is the case with renowned German artist Gregor Hilderbrandt, who is acclaimed for combining art with music through the use of paintings and cassettes.

Mumbai's Galerie Isa is presenting a special showcase of his works – called *These Flowers Will Never Die* from February 5 to April 26, offering the city's art lovers an immersive art experience.

We speak to Gregor Hilderbrandt about his work and inspirations.

When did you know that you wanted to be an artist?

I was drawn towards art in my youth, since I was quite poor in studies and knew that I wouldn't pass the 'Abitur' [the German equivalent to 12th grade exams]. I remember when I was 16 years old, my mother registered me at a summer school to learn painting; here my friend Johannes Lotz and teachers encouraged me to pursue this interest. Since in Germany, you don't need this particular school-leaving qualification for art, I gave the advanced college entrance qualification exam to get a specialisation in design. It was also through Johannes that I came to study art in Mainz.

Tell us more about your style of painting.

I have always been fascinated by the intangibility of music and the fact that it can't be presented to the eye. I like to explore the transformation of the song recorded on a small cassette and translate it on to a large black or gestural canvas since there's a certain mystery to the cassette tape. In my studies in Mainz, the ideal I strove for was painting pictures like Sonic Youth or The Cure. In 1997, I had a crucial experience when I wanted to incorporate a song by Einstürzende Neubauten into a painting which proved difficult. Eventually, the then most plausible solution occurred to me was 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 keeps me obsessing even till today.



Where does your inspiration lie?

Everything I am involved with, right from where I live to my friends, a holiday with my girlfriend, or a long walk on the beach, finds its way into the work that I am doing. For instance, I did *The Carny N C* (San Michele) after my sojourn in Venice in 2004. But most of the inspiration comes from Berlin, and all the small things that make life exciting there. For example, my exhibition *Für kommende Morgen* (For Future Tomorrows) at Wentrup Gallery in 2011 featured a replica of the pillar from my favourite bar, Bar 3. The artists who inspire me would be Andy Warhol, Christopher Wool, Rudolph Stingel, Anselm Reyle, Matthias Bitzer and Saâdane Afif. I have previously collaborated with Matthias Bitzer and Axel Geis and would love to collaborate with Saâdane Afif and Bharti Kher.

Tell us what are you currently working on?

Just now, I'm very excited about my New York exhibition at Galerie Perrotin, which opened a while back. Recently, I also had a lot of fun with the works *Die Blumen des Guten* (The Flowers of the Good) and *The Flowers of Gold*, which form the pattern repeat on the cover of the catalogue for my show at Galerie Isa. At this exhibition, apart from two granite works, I will exclusively show rip-offs. Onto all of them I have pre-recorded the song *Bloodflowers* by The Cure. Also the title for the exhibition, *These Flowers will never die* is taken from this song.

What has been your most satisfying or most memorable exhibition?

I have always liked creating pieces which allow me to invent something new each time. Thus, it's the artist books from my student days and the pictures from this period which I cherish most, like *Wie die Motten ans Licht* (As Moths to the Light) from 1997 and *Blaue Tage* (Blue Days). Also my first cassette tape collage, *The Figurehead* from 2000, *The Faith* (Cure) from 2001 and the recent *Flowery landscape - Sunset* (Cure BF) 2013, are my favourites. I was very happy with all my recent exhibitions: *Die Geschichte läuft über uns* (The Story / History is About Us), 2014, Galerie Perrotin, New York; *In Jade stände eine Stadt* (There Would be a City Made of Jade), Galerie Wentrup, Berlin; *Du stehst im Licht, du stehst im Schatten* (You're Standing in the Light, You're Standing in the Shadow), 2013, Sommer Contemporary Art Gallery, Tel Aviv, And *Orphische Schatten* (Orphic Shadows), 2013, Almine Rech Gallery, Brussels, and now I look forward to my Mumbai show at Ashwin Thadani's.

These Flowers Will Never Die is on at Galerie Isa, 132, Great Western Building, 1st Floor, SBS Road, Opp. Lion Gate, Fort, Mumbai until April 26, 2014.