

The Sea Falls Into Night Without A Motion / Reglos Nachtet Das Meer

Gregor Hildebrandt's work makes formal references to Minimalism and Abstract Expressionism, and it is nourished by a multitude of literary, cinematographic, musical and architectural influences. He uses these cultural sources to trigger both collective and personal memories. Working mainly with analogue sound storage mediums, the German artist first started using audio cassette tapes in his paintings in the late 1990s, and in the 2000s he became interested in other recording media: VHS tapes and vinyl records. This choice of medium reflects Hildebrandt's intense love of music, and although it accompanies him at every stage of the artistic process, never does a sound emanate from his works. Instead, sound and lyrics are embedded in the materials themselves, existing only implicitly through titles that inform us partially about their nature.

In August 1913, the Austrian poet Georg Trakl went on his first and only holiday. It led him to Venice. A photograph shows him standing barefoot in the sand at the Lido in a bathing suit, with people swimming in the sea in the background. Inspired by his stay in Venice, Trakl wrote a poem from which the Berlin artist Gregor Hildebrandt borrowed the title of this exhibition almost 109 years later. 'Reglos nachtet das Meer,' which translates roughly as 'The sea falls into night without a motion.' Venice and its canals, the Lido, the sea—the theme of water flows through the exhibition like a blue-green thread.

This is perhaps most evident in the large-format work 'Entschwand am Kanal' ('Vanished along the Canal'). It recalls the view through a typical Venetian window grill onto the shimmering water of the Grand Canal, glistening in the sun. The water is made from green, blue and white vinyl records, the grill from black ones—for more than 20 years Gregor Hildebrandt has been using records to create his work, in addition to VHS tape and audio cassette tape. In the case of 'Entschwand am Kanal,' the coloured records come from the German bands Anne and Paar, whose albums Hildebrandt has been releasing on his own label Grzegorzki Records since 2018.

However, he not only publishes music and makes his works from discarded analogue music storage media, he also frequently names his paintings, sculptures and installations after musicians, bands, songs and lyrics. Gregor Hildebrandt makes art out of his passion for music and his interest in what it can stand for: youth, friendship, community, memories that etch themselves into the mind. His work is an ongoing attempt to grasp the most immaterial of all artistic media and to capture it for eternity.

Venice, water and music also come together in 'Piena di sogni e di sapienza (Conte).' It is one of Hildebrandt's "rip-off" paintings. For this series of works, begun in 2009, self-adhesive tape is applied to the canvas and colorless fixative is painted onto it in a pattern.

Subsequently, audio or VHS tape is applied, and when peeled off, its magnetic coating adheres to the unfixed sections of the canvas. In order to make a second image from the first, the remaining tape is pasted on another canvas, thus he creates a positive and a negative part of the same motif. The tape used in "*Piena di sogni e di sapienza (Conte)*" features the song '*Blue Tango*' by Italian singer Paolo Conte, in which the motif of water appears, for example, in the form of a shipwreck, Turkish baths and fountains.

The bouquets of flowers in '*Stilles Wohnen*' ('*Still Living*') and '*Folgt mir leise,*' ('*Follow Me Quietly*') on the other hand, appear as if they are being viewed through a sheet of rain: blurred and veiled. To achieve the effect, which looks as if Hildebrandt had photographed the objects behind a pane of frosted glass, he captures their reflection in a canvas covered seamlessly with black video tape. For the viewer, the impression is the same: the attempt to bring the objects into focus, as it were, and thus to capture them completely visually is akin to that of capturing sounds. In the end, it will always be in vain.

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