



G2 Kunsthalle
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Press release
EN

LUFT IN ALLEN ZIMMERN

Gregor Hildebrandt

16 October 2020 – 17 January 2021

Press Preview: Thursday, 15 October 2020, 11AM

Opening: Thursday, 15 October 2020, 3–8PM

G2 Kunsthalle, Dittrichring 13, 04109 Leipzig, Germany

G2 Kunsthalle presents Gregor Hildebrandt's first solo exhibition in Leipzig. For two decades, the artist has transformed analog sound storage media such as audiocassettes or vinyl records into collages, sculptures, paintings, and installations. Melding visual art with music, Hildebrandt has developed a complex interdisciplinary creative vision and devised a specific artistic idiom he continually enhances and refines. The exhibition at G2 Kunsthalle Leipzig showcases new ensembles and expansive installations, complemented by selected works from the past ten years. Gregor Hildebrandt (b. Bad Homburg, Germany, 1974) lives and works in Berlin.

The cassette tape collage is the seminal form that defines Hildebrandt's creative practice. What started as the idea of capturing an acoustic phenomenon on canvas, harnessing the picture as a novel resonance chamber, has evolved into a multifaceted system of visual forms of expression. In working on his art, Hildebrandt takes inspiration from a personal repertoire of bands and musicians who have meant a great deal to him since his teenage years: The Cure, Björk, Einstürzende Neubauten, Tocotronic, Jacques Brel, or Christoph Willibald Gluck—what their music has in common is the romantic narrative of loneliness and a melancholy undertone, a sentiment that is also reflected in the artist's works.

The titles of Hildebrandt's pictures and exhibitions quote song lyrics or poems. The cassette tape collages' titles consist of a line of text or phrase that serve as a specific reference to the material recorded on the tapes the artist used in them. The title of his exhibition at G2 Kunsthalle, *Luft in allen Zimmern*, derives from a passage in *Kein Regen mehr*, a song by the Munich-based music project *Anne* around the singer, painter, and guitarist Johannes Lotz. Their debut album *Flamingo*, which features unconventional sounds in combination with gently doleful lyrics, came out in an edition of 300 vinyl records on Hildebrandt's label Grzegorzki Records in 2019.

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For his sprawling installations and extensive series, the artist draws on a virtually inexhaustible personal inventory of audio and video storage media. He buys up used VHS cassettes from video stores, private collections, or estate sales. As late as the early 2000s, stores still carried blank tapes. More recently, as audiocassettes have become rare, Hildebrandt has chased down supplies on eBay. In addition to audiotapes prerecorded with music, the cassette cases also find their way into his monumental creations. For vinyl records, he goes to flea markets. It was there that, in 2004, he first spotted records upcycled into snack bowls. To his mind, the knickknacks were “sound bowls,” and he subsequently adopted the principle for his own work, stacking up the unplayable records in columns. For colored vinyl, the artist has a specialized supplier who presses the material into discs. Having cut the records into pieces, he assembles the fragments in imposing tableaux that remind the beholder of wall mosaics, inlaid work, or stained-glass windows.

How much time and material Hildebrandt expends on his art is illustrated by the large-format floor installation *Hirnholzparkett* (2015), for which 35,000 audiocassette tapes were wound up to obtain reels the size of records. Carved into pieces and cast in epoxy resin, the different basic shapes can be laid out in a floor pattern of variable dimensions. He collected the clear and colored leaders at both ends of the tapes, sorted them by hues, and stored them in a number of boxes, a stockpile he continues to draw on for new works.

“Im Blick zurück entstehen die Dinge,” TocoTronic sing: it is in looking back that things become what they are. In keeping with this adage, Hildebrandt’s compositions embody the nostalgic desire to enshrine the past. What would be detritus gains a new lease on life, being preserved in a creative process of transmutation and incorporation. The magnetic tapes as such are no longer legible; the music cannot be heard or replayed. And yet the artistic objectification evokes invisible and buried phenomena and endows them with presence. The focus on analog media such as vinyl, audiotape, and VHS cassettes follows from the artist’s individual frame of reference; a second reason is that with these recording media, unlike their digital counterparts, the content encoded on them materializes itself on their surfaces.

Hildebrandt’s pictures are steeped in music, but they operate as visual objects first and foremost. The artist himself indicates that painting is at the basis of his creative approach, describing his motivation in retrospect as follows: “I wanted to paint pictures that are like pieces of music.” His rip-off compositions achieve this interweaving of painterly gesture and audio storage medium with particular poignancy. The artist always begins with two canvases of equal dimensions coated with white primer. He covers one of them with Filmoplast, with the adhesive side facing up, and paints on the sticky surface with a fixative, producing a translucent and initially invisible pattern of contours. He then places audio- or videotape on the surface in parallel bands, with the side with the magnetic coating carrying the music or film data facing down. Finally, he removes the film strip component of the tapes. The magnetic coating clings to the canvas in the areas where the adhesive was not sealed by the fixative. The detached magnetic tapes with the remaining coating residues are arranged on the

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second canvas. The result is a pair of images of the same motif, a positive and a negative; only the magnetic coating of the tapes reveals the painterly gesture that went into them.

The large-format multipart wall installation *Die Hoffnung der Notwendigkeit* is both a tribute to and a remake of a live performance that the French artist Georges Mathieu (1921–2012) staged in 1971. Footage from the event recorded by Frédéric Rossif documents how Mathieu's creative practice fused painting, music, and dance. Physical movement and the tempi of the music guide the painterly process in the form of dynamic gestures. In 2018, Hildebrandt reenacted the performance at his studio, translating the action into his own visual language, and integrated the VHS material of the video documentary in rip-off tableaux. Painterly trace and video and audio track complement each other in a rhythmic composition in the spirit of Tachism.

That same year, Hildebrandt began work on a series of minimalist geometric stripe paintings that quote canvases by Piet Mondrian (1872–1944). The Dutch artist had developed his style during the years between the two World Wars under the influence of avant-garde music. The musical-rhythmic quality energizing his motifs attains its supreme expression in his late oeuvre. Hildebrandt scales the format of the work that serves as his source to match his material so that he can replace the original's painted bands and color fields with segments of dark and colored audiotape. Until a few years ago, the black-and-white contrast was a defining feature of much of his work; most recently, intensely colorful compositions have emerged as a prominent strand in his output. Shimmering audiotape textures and the scintillating gleam of vinyl surfaces are now also the scenes of a dance of colors that unlocks novel tonal spaces.

Text: Anka Ziefer

Translation: Gerrit Jackson

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Vita:

Gregor Hildebrandt (b. Bad Homburg, Germany, 1974) studied at the Mainz Academy of Fine Arts (a division of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz) from 1995 until 1999 and at the Berlin University of the Arts from 1999 until 2002. He was a fellow at the Deutsches Studienzentrum Venedig, Venice, in 2003, and was awarded the Falkenrot Prize in 2016. Hildebrandt lives and works in Berlin; since 2015, he has held a professorship at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts. He established the exhibition space Grzegorzki Shows in Berlin-Wedding in 2017 and founded his own music label, Grzegorzki Records, in 2018.

Solo shows (selection): 2020 Wentrup, Berlin; 2019 Almine Rech, Brussels; 2019 Avlskarl Gallery, Copenhagen; 2018 Kunsthalle Recklinghausen; 2018 Perrotin, New York; 2017 Sommer Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv; 2016 Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; 2016 Kunstverein Heppenheim; 2015 Saarlandmuseum, Moderne Galerie, Saarbrücken; 2012 Museum Van Bommel van Dam, Venlo (NL); 2011 Grimm Gallery, Amsterdam; 2010 Van Horn, Düsseldorf; 2009 Berlinische Galerie, Berlin; 2008 Contemporary Art Museum S. Louis (USA); 2008 Kunstverein Schwerte; 2008 Haus am Waldsee, Berlin; 2007 Kunstverein Ludwigshafen.

Group shows (selection): 2018 RuhrKunstMuseen, Oberhausen; 2017 Museum Frieder Burda, Baden Baden; 2017 Salzburger Kunstverein; 2016 Belvedere 21, Vienna; 2016 Haus der Kunst, Munich; 2015 Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg; 2014 MARTa Herford; 2014 Centre Pompidou, Paris; 2014 Bass Museum of Art, Miami; 2013 Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig; 2013 Kunsthaus Nürnberg; 2013 Gagosian Gallery, London; 2012 Sammlung Philara, Düsseldorf; 2012 Kunsthalle Kiel; 2012 Miami Art Museum; 2011 Kunstmuseum Mülheim an der Ruhr.
