

Tobias Rehberger

And the rest should be squandered

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Pedro Cera is proud to present the third exhibition of Tobias Rehberger at the gallery.

German artist Tobias Rehberger (Esslingen, 1966) is a leading figure in the field of contemporary art today. Although rooted within the conceptual frame of sculpture, his works frequently “happen” on the intersection between what is traditionally considered visual art, design and architecture, challenging thus art’s conventional understanding, its classification, authenticity and the romantic notion of the artist. Moreover, making the subject of transformation a central theme of his practice, Rehberger’s work questions traditional modes of perception, awareness and temporality, creating a sense of transience, discontinuity and of ambiguity.

The current exhibition, the title of which, derives from a quote by George Best, a Northern Irish football player, who in one of his interviews said: “I spent a lot of money on booze, birds and fast cars. The rest I just squandered.”, brings together numerous groups of works, which aim to challenge the above mentioned perception of art, by bringing into play subjects, such as, art’s functionality, its reading, authenticity and perfection.

A series of floor sculptures (mother without child) – empty vases, which inhabit the first room of the gallery, are a continuation and an evolution of the well known vase series, which have been produced by the artist since the mid 90’s. Dedicated to a fellow artist, each vase would only reach its completion through a collaborative act, of the respective artist choosing and placing flowers into his/her vase, the gesture of which, would become an inseparable part of each piece. Maintaining the form and function of a vase and thus emphasizing the object’s utilitarian side, the present series of sculptures, continues to challenge art’s myth and the range of clichés about the non-functionality of an artwork. Although, in this case, none of the sculptures bear a reference to a specific person and remain empty, their personification, highlighted by their titles and human scale, rejects the idea of a static art object, accentuating rather, the animation of its human characteristics. Moreover, the reference of the work to the act of birth and life cycle, addresses the idea of what a work of art is, its origin and development, or in other words, scrutinizes the idea of “where does an artwork come from and where is it going”.

The limits of art’s reading and translation is further explored in a series of letter paintings, which through means of abstract formalism, used here, to cover-up the works title that is spelled out in each painting, challenge our understanding of the abstract and the representational. The cognitive side of art and the way an art work is consumed and communicates with its/to its spectator, has been at the center of Rehberger’s practice for a long time. Using light, as an important and reoccurring component in his practice a large flickering light box sculpture (AFTER THIS POINT VIOLATORS (FREE NOT AFRAID), examines further, this idea, while pointing to the thin line between what is considered to be a complete and an incomplete work of art, a work that is functional or dysfunctional, perfect or damaged.

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Works by Tobias Rehberger have been included in four Venice Biennales and exhibited – amongst others – at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and Museum Ludwig in Cologne, or the Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai. In 2009 Rehberger was awarded the Golden Lion as best artist for his sculpture at the 53rd Venice Biennale. Tobias Rehberger teaches at the Städelschule in Frankfurt, where he also lives and works.