

GROUP EXHIBITION

NO ORDINARY SANCTITY

SALZBURG VILLA KAST

29 Friday - 28 Sunday



with Jennifer Cohen , Gardar Eide Einarsson, Delia Gonzalez / Gavin Russom, Terence Koh, Chloe Piene

An Unholy Search for the Grail

"no ordinary sanctity" in Deutsche Bank's Kunstraum in Salzburg

Aspects of lust, of purity, and of desire: in Deutsche Bank's Kunstraum in Salzburg, a 19th-century crusader novel offers the impulse for an exhibition of current American art.

Next Generation is the title of a series of exhibitions initiated by the Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery presenting current positions in American art in Deutsche Bank's Kunstraum in Salzburg. After last year's group show Heavenly Creatures, which featured works by artists such as Rita Ackermann and Hernan Bas and addressed the theme of youthful desire, searching out the uncanny, the ghostly, and the romantic in pop culture, the current exhibition is also committed to the narrative: the New York-based curator Shamim Momin has called this tendency "baroque minimalism," while the works themselves can be seen starting July 29 in Salzburg in a show titled no ordinary sanctity. For the director of the much-acclaimed 2004 New York Whitney Biennial, a passage from Sir Walter Scott's novel The Talisman (1825) served as the point of departure for an exhibition concept that brings together six young American artists. In Scott's novel, which is based on the myth of Richard the Lionhearted, the crusader, on his way through the desert, reaches an out-of-the-way chapel "containing unquestionably, some image or relic of no ordinary sanctity."

During a nightly vigil before the altar, during which the crusader expects a wondrous revelation through the saint's picture, he falls prey to a group of ghostly virgins that carry him seductively, albeit untouchably through a magic ritual of spiritual transformation. With this passage as their base, the works shown in no ordinary sanctity reflect the metaphorically charged language of the novel, and with it the abysmal connections between the flesh and transcendence, the holy and the profane, power and passivity, desire and awe.

The coded symbolism of Romanticism is contrasted here with strategies of pop culture and contemporary art production, which includes influences from Minimalism, performance and conceptual art as well as the current investigation of formalism and Classic Modernism. Thus, the work of the New York-based artist Jennifer Cohen transforms an ordinary ballet barre into a talisman charged with meaning.

A dancer who trained with George Balachine, Cohen takes recourse to archetypal images that are connected to dance. In her work Barre (2004), the ballet barre, covered in artificial snakeskin, becomes a mystical symbol of seduction and wisdom whose animal power is transferred onto the dancer.

The Norwegian artist Gardar Eide Einarsson, who also lives in New York, became known for his social architectures and artistic experiments with subcultural groups such as skaters, American youth gangs, and drug addicts. His works are always made from simple materials and reflect the place they are made in. In his acrylic painting I Want You Dead Uncle Sam (2004), the myth of the knight and pilgrim celebrates a grotesque rebirth. In a combination of propaganda and B-horror movie poster, Einarsson invokes the spirit of past war veterans. The questionable heroism of the Crusades crumbles in the cynical image of a soldier zombie risen from the grave who damns the government that sent him to Vietnam or Iraq.

Parallel to his participation in no ordinary sanctity, Terence Koh, also from New York, will be showing an installation at the Vienna Secession which can be seen there through September 4. Going by the title Gone, Yet Still, he developed a work that circles around the themes of youth, sleep, and death. Koh has produced books, art pornos, sculptures, performances and installations. He initially gained a wider public as Asianpunkboy with websites and fanzines in which he collected haikus, paintings, pornographic illustrations, secretions of lust, and in general every variation on "forbidden" love. In no ordinary sanctity Koh presents showcases containing relics of his performance The Voyage of Lady Midnight Snowdrops through Double Star Death, a glamorous "Chinese opera", for which he donned surreal costumes and androgynous masks. In his works, Koh generates moments of temptation, of lust, and of desire. They are the examples for the strategy of introducing odd, polymorphously perverse approaches into artistic production. As with Koh, the theme in the works shown in no ordinary sanctity are often tied to private stories and a broad spectrum of fields of subcultural association.

In this show, the artistic search for the Holy Grail occurs far from official ideologies, without any promise or longing for redemption. While the artist duo Delia Gonzales and Gavin Russom connect the "holy features of disco culture" in their light installation *Tomorrow Belongs to Me* (2005) both to mass ecstasy and the aesthetic vocabulary of German fascism, it seems a though Chloe Piene had indeed pulled the last tooth from art's noble aim. The wisdom tooth she exhibits under the title *Lost* is merely a relic from her own body. Instead of images of saints, the accompanying drawing series *Keeper* (2005) shows the self as an abstract skeleton, a dissolving trace of an adventurous and futile search.