

CASSINA PROJECTS

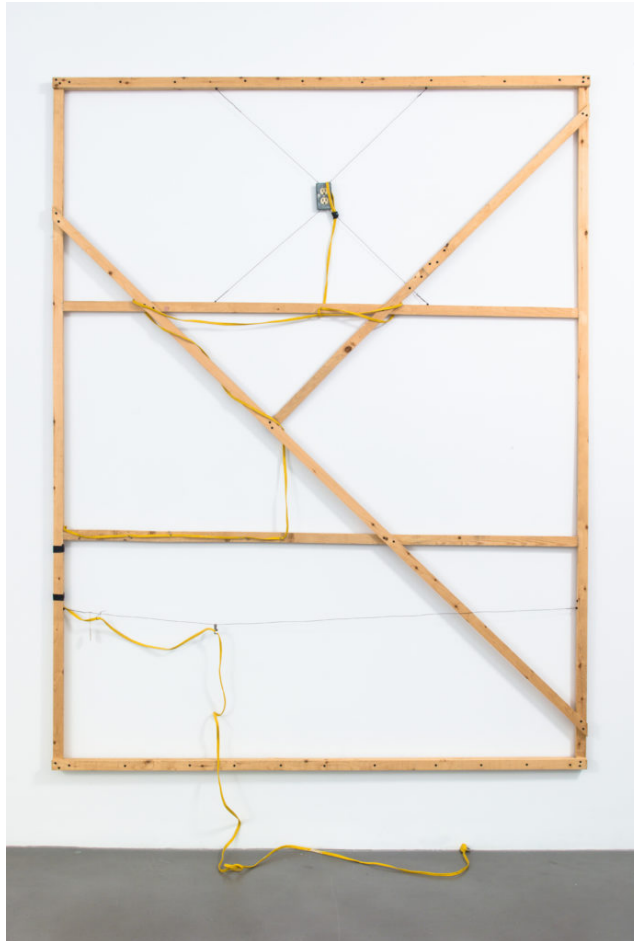
GEORG HEROLD

Selected Press

12/17/2019

## Gallery Walk: Upper East Side, NYC

Six art shows to see on NYC's Upper East Side this weekend, including exhibitions of work by Bill Traylor and Barbara Probst.



### A.

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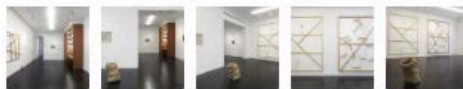
(Contact gallery for holiday hours)

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Thru Jan 12: **Georg Herold**. This thoughtful selection of paintings and sculptures from the late 1980s by Herold—a student of Sigmar Polke and a compatriot of Werner Büttner, Albert Oehlen, and Martin Kippenberger—distills both his work's irreverence and its unexpected aesthetic appeal.



Installation shots



Artists

**Georg Herold >**

Gallery

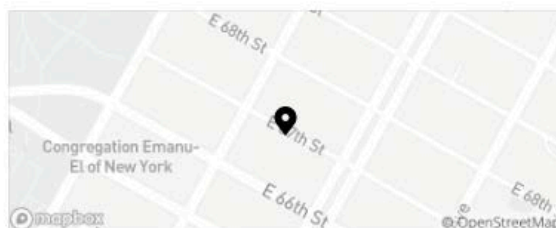
**Petzel Gallery | East 67th Street >**

Duration

6 Nov – 21 Dec 2019

Address

35 East 67th Street,  
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# Solo Exhibition

Rejecting traditional materials, Herold creates sculptures, assemblages and wall-based 'drawings' using commonplace items such as bricks, baking powder, wood lath, vodka bottles, buttons, electrical cords, underwear and mattresses usually altering them very little, if at all. As Herold said in 1988, "my choice of materials is not subject to any conscious esthetic criteria. The materials must merely be able to absorb and transport my ideas. I do not use materials that speak their own language as a matter of principle. This is why I seek out 'stupid, unplanned' material that does not raise any questions."

Herold has maintained a deeply irreverent approach to art throughout his 40 year career, what *The New Yorker* called in 2009, "slapstick formalism." Often political, his work engages with socio-cultural issues and art history yet denies any simple reading. Be it an empty frame holding not a canvas but rather latticed with wooden strips bearing Cyrillic inscriptions and the title *Russische Schweiz* (Russian Switzerland) stamped on the top stretcher; or a painting titled G.O.E.L.R.O. (initials of the Russian name for Lenin's 1920 plan for the electrification of Russia) made up of two yellow extension cords haphazardly attached to an unworking electrical socket—his work quite purposefully defies categorization and challenges the artistic status quo.

It has often been said that finding a single interpretation or mood in Herold's work is nearly impossible, remaining intentionally ambiguous at all times. A risky maneuver, the efforts could all too quickly be rendered meaningless but it is in this tension between minimalism and absurdity that his work makes its impact. The use of materials, mixed with sharp wit, humor, and clear deliberation embeds the work with a refreshing tone of honesty. As curator John Caldwell once noted, "we look at Herold's work as if traveling with him to the edge of the abyss, and then, reassured by laughter as well as his obvious seriousness and skill, rediscover that the ground, though crumbling, is still under our feet" (San Francisco Museum of Art, 1990).

## New Orleans Museum of Art's Amazing Sculpture Garden Expansion Opens to the Public

NEW ORLEANS, Louisiana / May 15, 2019

The New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA) has opened its newly expanded Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden after 18 months in construction. The six-acre addition builds on the existing five-acre garden within New Orleans City Park and includes innovative architectural elements and showcases 27 new, recent, and commissioned large-scale sculptures. The sculpture garden is free and open to the public, seven days a week.

“Congratulations to the New Orleans Museum of Art on the expansion of the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden,” said Mayor LaToya Cantrell. “This project makes the site more environmentally sustainable going forward, and it will help ensure equitable access to beautiful outdoor art for generations to come.”

“Sydney and Walda Besthoff, along with the NOMA Board of Trustees and museum staff, view this breathtaking garden as a gift to the city of New Orleans,” said Susan Taylor, NOMA’s Montine McDaniel Freeman Director. “This project further advances our efforts to unite, inspire, and engage the New Orleans community with the wonder of sharing landscape and art as one distinctive experience.”

With environmental impact at the forefront of planning, the sculpture garden expansion emphasizes the distinctive character of the Louisiana landscape while incorporating architectural elements such as the first canal link bridge of its kind in the United States designed by landscape design partners Reed Hilderbrand, an outdoor amphitheater and stage, and a sculpture pavilion created by Lee Ledbetter & Associates.

New commissions include a sculptural drawing by artist and architect Maya Lin, a 60-foot-long mosaic wall by artist **Teresita Fernández**, and a glass bridge by **Elyn Zimmerman**; along with sculptures by **Larry Bell**, **Tony Cragg**, **Johan Creten**, **Katharina Fritsch**, **Frank Gehry**, **Jeppe Hein**, **Georg Herold**, **Thomas Houseago**, **Shirazeh Houshiary**, **Baltasar Lobo**, **Robert Longo**, **Gerold Miller**, **Beverly Pepper**, **Pedro Reyes**, **George Rickey**, **Ursula von Rydingsvard**, **Sean Scully**, **Yinka Shonibare**, **Frank Stella**, **Hank Willis Thomas**, **Bernar Venet**, and **Fred Wilson**. A work by **Ugo Rondinone** will be installed in the garden in late 2019.

February 2019

## New Orleans Museum of Art Announces 26 New Sculptures Acquired for Garden Expansion



Georg Herold, *Liver of Love*, 2013, Lacquered Bronze, 41 x 149 x 69 inches, New Orleans Museum of Art: Gift of Sydney and Walda Besthoff. © The Artist.  
Image courtesy of Cassina Projects. Photograph by Federico Possati.

Opening on May 15, 2019, the expansion of the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden at the New Orleans Museum of Art will feature 26 new bronze and metal works by artists working primarily in the 21st century. The expansion, which broke ground in December 2017, builds on the success of the museum's existing five-acre Besthoff Sculpture Garden, widely regarded as one of the top sculpture gardens in the world. The existing site is home to 64 sculptures from renowned artists from the 19th century to the present.

Artists featured in the expansion include Larry Bell, Tony Cragg, Johan Creten, Katharina Fritsch, Frank Gehry, Jeppe Hein, Georg Herold, Thomas Houseago, Shirazeh Houshiary, Baltasar Lobo, Robert Longo, Gerold Miller, Beverly Pepper, Pedro Reyes, George Rickey, Ursula van Rydingsvard, Sean Scully, Yinka Shonibare, Frank Stella, Hank Willis Thomas, Bernar Venet, and Fred Wilson. A work by Ugo Rondinone will be installed in the garden in late 2019. Two new works have been commissioned for the site: a 60-foot-long mosaic wall by artist Teresita Fernández, and a glass bridge by Elyn Zimmerman.

"The Besthoff Sculpture Garden expansion celebrates NOMA's primary mission of sharing significant art and artists with the broadest possible public. It also incorporates contemporary, innovative approaches for a healthy and sustainable environment into a compelling experience of art," said Susan Taylor, Montine McDaniel Freeman Director. "We look forward to sharing with our public new work by some of the most interesting and important artists working today."

The Besthoff Sculpture Garden expansion will offer a lush, green space that will allow NOMA to celebrate art, and broaden the museum's opportunities to engage with the community in an inviting and environmentally sustainable way. The new garden will showcase contemporary sculpture that has inspired our landscape architects to engage with the work and emphasize the relationship between landscape and art. A sculpture pavilion will be located in the expanded garden, offering exhibition space for indoor sculpture and other works in NOMA's collection that complement the garden's installations.

"It has been a collector's dream, putting together the sculptures that will populate the sculpture garden expansion," said Walda Besthoff, patron of the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden. "Many outdoor collections grow over time, and do not always have the forcefulness or unity of a carefully designed entity within a specifically designed landscape. Sydney and I have had the rare privilege of formulating a plan in collaboration with the New Orleans Museum of Art."

Titelthemen

## Dachlatten, Ziegelsteine und Kaviar machen Kunst

Kölner Konzeptkünstler Georg Herold in Frankfurt



Georg Herold Ohne Titel, 1985  
Ziegelsteine auf Leinwand, eingeschnitten,  
Dispersion, 250 x 205 cm

Köln | Noch bis zum 2. November 2019 zeigt die Frankfurter Galerie Bärbel Grässlin Arbeiten des Kölner Künstlers Georg Herold. In einer großen Einzelausstellung präsentiert die wohl wichtigste Frankfurter Galerie ältere und neueste Werke des Konzeptkünstlers.

Georg Herold, 1947 in Jena geboren, lebt und arbeitet seit 1983 in Köln. 1993 bis 1999 war er auch Professor an der Städelschule in Frankfurt, danach bis 2014 an der Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Im Kunstbetrieb bekannt wurde er vor allem durch die Verwendung nicht-nobler Materialien wie Dachlatten, Backsteinen u.ä. und den „Skandal“, den die Verwendung des Luxusproduktes Beluga-Kaviar bedeutete, den Herold gerne auf der Leinwand ausbreitet. Häufiger wird der Künstler dazu so zitiert: „Die Auswahl meiner Materialien unterliegt keinen bewussten ästhetischen Kriterien. Die Materialien müssen nur fähig sein, meine Ideen aufzunehmen und sie zu transportieren. Materialien, die eine eigene Sprache sprechen, werden von mir grundsätzlich nicht benutzt. Deshalb suche ich mir 'ungehobeltes, dummes' Material, das keine Fragen aufwirft“ (Georg Herold 1988).

Die Frankfurter Galeristin Bärbel Grässlin begleitet den in Köln lebenden und arbeitenden Künstler seit Jahrzehnten. Fragt man sie nach den Anfängen ihrer Zusammenarbeit mit Georg Herold gerät sie in's Stocken. „Ich glaube, er ist über (den Künstler) Martin Kippenberger Anfang der 80er Jahre zu uns gekommen.“ Was sie an Herold gereizt habe? „Seine Arbeiten waren völlig eigenständig, anders und neu. Natürlich lässt er sich in der Kunstgeschichte verorten; die Verwendung nicht-nobler Materialien gab es davor schon in der Arte Povera und bei Joseph Beuys. Aber das sind nur formale Analogien; Georg Herold hat eine ganz andere Inhaltlichkeit. Und ich mochte seinen Humor, auch dass seine Arbeiten politische Statements sind.“

Grässlin hat Herold in den vielen Jahren ihrer Zusammenarbeit immer wieder Einzelausstellungen gewidmet, so 1988, 1992, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015 und zuletzt 2018. Auf der Website der Galerie finden sich über 50 Arbeiten des Künstlers aus den letzten Jahrzehnten. „Wir sind noch eine echte Programmalerie“, sagt Grässlin. „Für uns hat die Galerie die Aufgabe eines öffentlichen Ateliers. Wir zeigen immer wieder neueste Arbeiten unserer Künstler – direkt aus dem Atelier.“

Auftakt der laufenden Ausstellung in Frankfurt ist eine prominent platzierte orange leuchtende Skulptur aus Bronze und mit Autolack überzogen zum Leuchten gebracht. Grässlin verweist darauf, dass die Vorgehensweise keineswegs neu für Georg Herold ist und zeigt in der Ausstellung ein viel älteres Objekt „Brown Betelgeuze“, das ähnlich konstruiert ist, nur nicht aus Bronze, sondern ein mit Leinwand überzogenes Skelett aus Dachlatten.

Natürlich finden sich in der Ausstellung auch mehrere Georg Herold-Arbeiten mit den „signature pieces“ Dachlatten, Backsteinen oder Kaviar. Doch Grässlin mag nicht besonders die Reduzierung Georg Herolds auf das Etikett Konzeptkünstler. „Es gibt einen malerischen Aspekt in vielen Arbeiten von Georg Herold. Es geht immer auch um die Bildfindung.“ Man könnte es auch so sagen: Wo Andere Dachlatten an der Wand sehen, sieht Grässlin die Bildkomposition.

Ein reines Konzeptkunst-Objekt findet sich in der Frankfurter Galerie-Ausstellung aber auch: eine Vitrine mit diversen Objekten und vielen Bezügen. Die Verbindung dieses Multiples zu den Vitrinen von Joseph Beuys ist evident. Als Galeristin in Frankfurt verweist Grässlin auf den „Darmstädter Block“ von Joseph Beuys im benachbarten Darmstadt, wo sich im Hessischen Landesmuseum der weltweit größte Werkkomplex des Künstlers befindet, darunter gleich mehrere Räume mit Dutzenden Vitrinen.

Dass es in den letzten Jahren etwas ruhiger um Georg Herold geworden sei, lässt Grässlin so nicht gelten und verweist auf große Ausstellungen in München (2012) und Bonn (2017/18). Und für seine Galeristin steht fest: „Georg Herold hat seinen Platz in der Kunstgeschichte.“

In Köln widmete zuletzt das Museum Ludwig dem Künstler 2007/08 eine Ausstellung („wo man kind“). Das Museum Ludwig besitzt auch ein großformatiges Triptychon „Ohne Titel“ von 1991.

Eine große Georg Herold-Ausstellung gab es im 2017/18 im Kunstmuseum Bonn (Kuratoren: Stephan Berg und Volker Adolphs). Zuvor hatte schon das Museum Brandhorst in München 2012 eine große Einzelschau („Multiple Choice“, Kurator: Armin Zweite). Darüber hinaus besitzt die Udo und Anette Brandhorst-Stiftung mit über 50 Arbeiten das wohl größte Konvolut an Georg Herold-Arbeiten überhaupt.

Ein größeres Georg Herold-Konvolut befindet sich auch in der von Holger Broeker aufgebauten Sammlung des im Wesentlichen von der Volkswagen AG finanzierten Kunstmuseums Wolfsburg.

Zu leichter Irritation führte in Köln der Umstand, dass der Kölner Verleger Benedikt Taschen 2013 dem Frankfurter Städel-Museum zwei großformatige, typische Georg Herold-Arbeiten schenkte, Teil einer Schenkung von insgesamt 15 Arbeiten der deutschen Malerei der 1980er Jahre.

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Frankfurt

Galerie Bärbel Grässlin

Schäfergasse 46

Frankfurt (Innenstadt)

Ausstellung Georg Herold "oben ohne"

Bis 2. November 2019

Köln

Museum Ludwig

Triptychon „Ohne Titel“ von 1991.

Derzeit ausgestellt

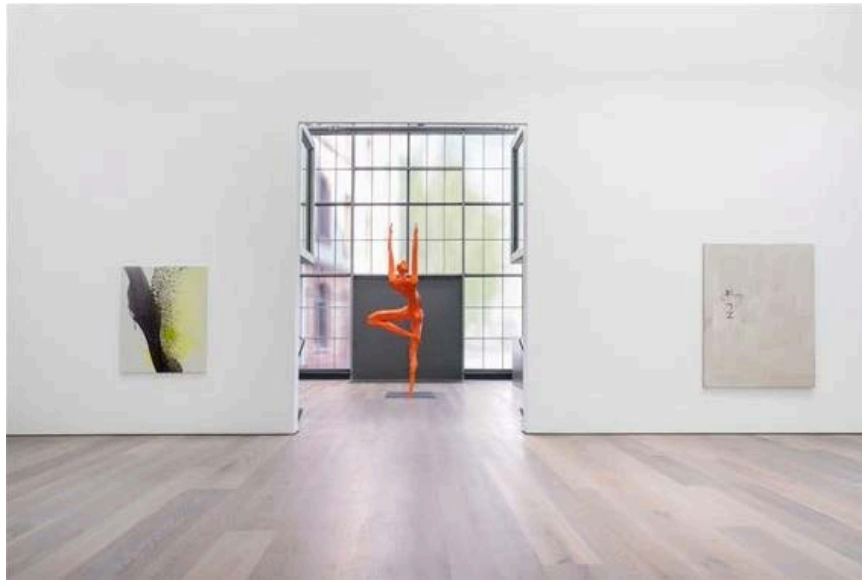
Von Christoph Mohr | 29.10.2019 | 11:44:10 Uhr



# Georg Herold: Oben Ohne

Galerie Bärbel Grässlin  FRANKFURT | GERMANY

SEPTEMBER 06, 2019-NOVEMBER 02, 2019



## Contact details

 [Website](#)  +49.69.299.246.70  [Get in touch](#)

Schäfergasse 46 B  
Frankfurt, Germany  
60313

Tuesday - Friday 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM  
Saturday 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

# ART

EXHIBITION

## Georg Herold. Beverly's Cousine

10 Mar 2018 - 21 Apr 2018

[Times and details](#) ▾

**Contemporary Fine Arts | Grolmanstrasse**

[Berlin](#)  
[Berlin, Germany](#)

Contemporary Fine Arts gallery is pleased to present Beverly's Cousine, Georg Herold's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery.



### About

The exhibition includes works made between 1980 and 2018 that exemplify many of the material investigations that have garnered him international renown for nearly three decades.

'Gram,' a humanlike figure made of roof battens and screws, kneels in the centre of the gallery: Herold has long been interested in knocking down anything put on a pedestal, literally or metaphorically. This unruliness and his use of crude materials, however, bely the scrupulous precision that informs his practice. Each work communicates a search for harmonious incongruence in form and content. While similar paradoxes can be traced through Herold's works – the precarious equilibrium of bricks on canvas, the critique of and absurd complicity in obscene luxury in the caviar paintings – they cannot be reduced to these dichotomies.

While Herold is an artist of international importance, his German sensibility and experience of the country's fractured past remain evident in the political and humorous undercurrents of his work. Further, his practice was influenced by his teacher Sigmar Polke and contemporaries like Joseph Beuys, Martin Kippenberger and Albert Oehlen, among others. His sculptures, or what he terms wall-based 'drawings' that use materials like wood, vodka bottles, buttons or baking powder, have also linked him to the Arte Povera movement, a connection destabilized by his use of caviar and lacquer. Indeed, some sculptures evoke an enlivened minimalism, while others recall Manet's placid nudes. Thus, while Herold's work broaches wide-reaching art historical and socio-cultural issues, it cannot be so easily summed up.

Herold could be called the last Dada artist. Language is a sculptural material in his practice as well, as the titles of his work extend or complicate the objects. Just as he plays with tension between materials, Herold engages with the incongruity between language and object, as if to suggest they can never really communicate the same thing.

In reflecting on Herold's retrospective at the Kunstmuseum Bonn last year, director Stephan Berg suggested that Herold's practice is characterized by "a joy in widening the gap between what is shown, what is said, and what is meant to the point that everything almost collapses – but only almost."

# artmap

Contemporary Fine Arts

**Georg Herold**

Beverly's Cousine

10 Mar - 19 Apr 2018



GEORG HEROLD  
Beverly's Cousine  
10 March – 19 April 2018

Contemporary Fine Arts gallery is pleased to present "Beverly's Cousine" – Georg Herold's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery.

At the beginning of the 1980s, Georg Herold, who studied under Sigmar Polke from 1977 until 1983, questioned art and the art business in a radical and sarcastic way together with Martin Kippenberger, Werner Büttner and Albert Oehlen. During the 1980s, the group developed an oeuvre which seems like a dada-inspired encyclopedia of the provisional. Their paintings, sculptures, installations, objects, texts and videos with their character of being created en passant reflect an artistic core belief that confronts the myth of perfection and masterpiece with calculated "unfinishedness." Georg Herold's works which are made from everyday objects and materials critically and ironically deal with art historical, social, political, ideological and religious ways of thinking and constantly surprise the viewers by confronting them with their own expectations of art.

Ever since the 1980s, the artist, who was born in Jena in 1947, has numbered among the most impactful artistic figures in international contemporary art and has been represented at almost all the trend-setting group exhibitions of the last decades, including documenta IX and Skulpture Projects Münster 1997. (Text: Kunstmuseum Bonn, September, 2017 to January, 2018)

Georg Herold lives and works in Cologne.  
[www.cfa-berlin.com](http://www.cfa-berlin.com)

# ARTNEWS

ART BASEL 2018 — PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

Parcours, Hardcore: A Look Around Art Basel's Public Section, with Works by Pierre Huyghe, Jessica Stockholder, Nina Beier, and More



A work by Georg Herold at the Basler Münster.

ANDREW RUSSETH/ARTNEWS



Pierre Huyghe, *Exomind (Deep Water)*, 2017, in the Garden of the Allgemeine Lesegesellschaft.

ANDREW RUSSETH/ARTNEWS

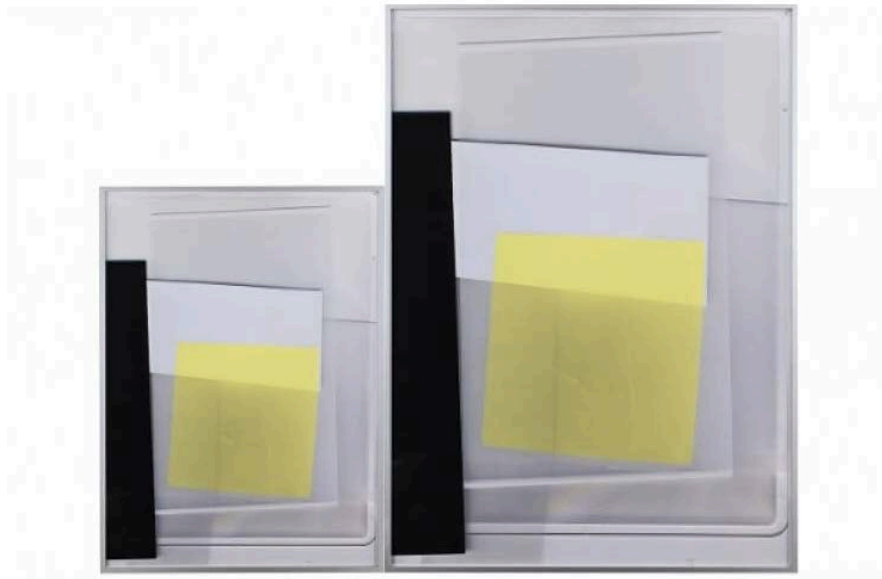
*[Follow all of ARTnews's continuously updated coverage from in and around Art Basel 2018.]*

All day on Wednesday, one could find art types moving briskly around the Old Town section of Basel, south of the Rhine, holding maps in their hands and looking everywhere for street signs and landmarks. They were on the hunt for the 23 works included in Art Basel's Parcours section, organized by Samuel Leuenberger, the director of the local Salts space, who has placed art in the area's museums and gardens, parks and private buildings.

Some works are easier to find than others: it would be impossible to miss Georg Herold's exuberant sculptures in the Basler Münster's courtyards, but finding Pierre Huyghe's sculpture of a woman whose head is teeming with a bee colony—à la his famous [Documenta 13 contribution](#)—requires trekking down a series of steps to a garden near the river, and Nedko Solakov has simply written little remarks and drawings on vitrines at Museum of Ancient Art.

A slide show of many of the works follows below, but if you are in Basel, I heartily recommend seeing Mark Manders's piece at an old church building (he has another in the Natural History Museum), which he has turned into one of his sui generis studios, where it seems a mysterious sculptor has been hard at work for a few days—or maybe a few millennia. It feels like a full-on museum show—it's a real treat.

Also great: Nina Beier's incredibly bizarre bucking-bull sculptures, accompanied by Mars bars; Jessica Stockholder's explosively colored works affixed to architecture around the area; and Simon Denny's pieces, versions of the board game Life, which he's reimagined as a kind of exposé on cryptocurrency, one of which has been installed in a gaming shop with a perfect name: Fantastic Empire.



[Blog Home](#)

## Georg Herold and The Luminous West at Kunstmuseum Bonn

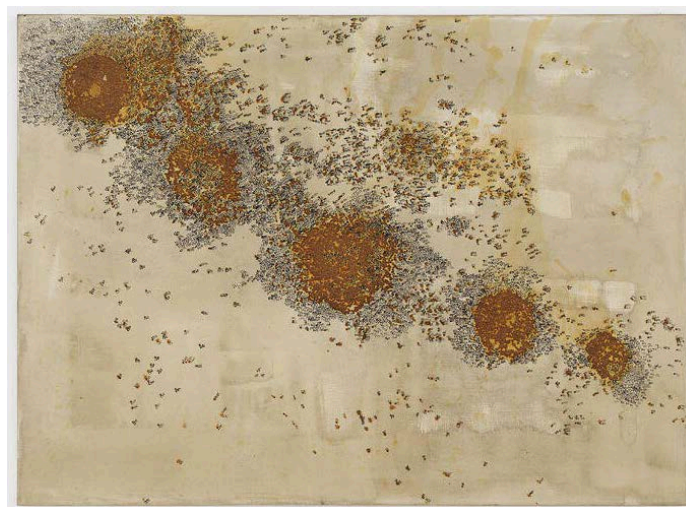
Oct 4, 2017

Most people would probably categorize Georg Herold as a member of the so-called “older generation.” He is 70 years old, after all. And as a matter of fact, seven years ago the Kunstmuseum Bonn officially strapped Herold with that unfortunate and somewhat meaningless label when they included him in an ambitious group exhibition called *The Luminous West*. That exhibition featured the work of 33 artists, all of whom hailed from the Rhineland / North Rhine-Westphalia region of Germany. The goal of the show was to establish a cohesive vision of the aesthetic heritage of this part of Germany, and to tie it to a predictive examination of what the future of the region might hold. To accomplish this monumental task, the museum adopted a unique curatorial approach. First, they charged their five-person academic team with the job of selecting 19 artists who represented, in their words, “the older generation.” The team began with what they called the “historical core” of the region, which was comprised of five artists: Joseph Beuys, Sigmar Polke, Imi Knoebel, Gerhard Richter and Blinky Palermo. They then selected 14 more “older” artists, among them Georg Herold. Next, the museum invited these so-called “older” artists, or at least the ones who were still alive, to recommend artists from the “younger generation” whose work they believed warranted inclusion in the exhibition. Since he was 63 at the time, it perhaps seems like no insult that Georg Herold was selected as a representative of the older generation. But nonetheless, something about that designation seems wrong. It was not that long ago that Herold was brand new on the scene. And to this day his work remains fascinating, fresh, witty, irreverent and provocative—in many cases, far more so than that of the chronologically younger artists who supposedly represented the future in *The Luminous West*. That fact is brought sharply into view by the new monographic Georg Herold exhibition currently on view in that same space, the Kunstmuseum Bonn. The work remains dynamic, and continues to represent the bleeding edge. It makes me wonder if perhaps biological age should not be the sole measure of “oldness” in the arts. As Herold demonstrates, it is sometimes with the passage of time that the best ideas and most powerful works emerge from an artist, and the full meaning and potential of earlier work is finally revealed.

## A Late Entry

Georg Herold was born in 1947 in Jena, Germany, a university town of about 100,000 inhabitants. His early training was as a blacksmith apprentice, after which he attended university and began to study seriously to become an artist. He first studied at the University of Art and Design Halle, in the town of Halle, nearby where he grew up. Then he moved to the southern part of the country, to Munich, where he attended the Academy of Fine Arts from 1974 through 1976. Next, he went north to Hamburg, where he studied at the University of Fine Arts under Sigmar Polke from 1977 through 1981. While he was in Hamburg, Herold made the acquaintance of several other student artists, most prominently among them Martin Kippenberger and Albert Oehlen, who had already started making a name for themselves with their punk approach to making art.

Together with these new wild ones, Herold became dubbed as one of the emergent “bad boys” of the 1980s German art scene. By the time he graduated from university, Herold was 34. Nonetheless, he was considered part of the new, young and brash generation. One of the “bad boys” did not survive long. Kippenberger died in 1997 at age 44, but in his brief career grew to exude enormous influence over the art world, and almost singlehandedly re-invented what it meant to be a contemporary artist. Oehlen is still active today as an artist and a teacher. His abstract paintings are beloved, and his investigations into process have proven to be enormously influential over emerging generations of artists. And then there is Herold, the oldest of the “bad boys.” He took the longest to come of age, and in some ways has resisted categorization the longest. As he once said, “I intend to reach a state that is ambiguous and allows all sorts of interpretations.” True to that aim, his oeuvre defies any and all categorization, and no one single work within it has yet to be successfully diagnosed.



Georg Herold - Untitled [Caviar], 1990, Caviar, lacquer, ink on canvas, 31 1/2 × 43 1/4 in, 80 × 109.9 cm, photo credits Magenta Plains, New York

## Sticking With It

The first artwork for which Georg Herold is remembered was a thin slat of wood, the type used in construction, screwed to the wall. He called the piece Präsentation der ersten Latte, or Presentation of the first Plank. The work was produced in 1977, while he was still in school, for an assignment in a class taught by Sigmar Polke. The work was, in strict formal terms, undeniable. It represented line and form. As a three-dimensional object hanging on the wall, it challenged the roles of painting and sculpture. It was both minimal and conceptual. Its title implied something ceremonial. Its history as a material implied that it was a component of something larger to come. Its status as a found object invoked Marcel Duchamp and Robert Rauschenberg. But there was also something whimsical about it, and perhaps something absurd.

But in time, the title of that first piece would prove to be prophetic. Herold has again and again returned to the material of construction planks. He has used them in larger sculptures, he has hung them on the wall in different configurations, he has used them as supports for paintings and other works, and he has used them as raw materials in the construction of a series of haunting, figurative sculptures. To construct these forms, Herold binds construction planks together with thread and screws. He then stretches canvas over the bound sticks to create a sort of cocoon over the form of a human body. He allows the canvas to dry and shrink over time then he paints and lacquers the form. In some cases he then makes limited edition bronze castings of the forms. Seen in context of his early work in that class with Sigmar Polke, these figurative forms are poetic in their depth of potential meanings. But even without knowledge of their material essence, their presence evokes a range of emotions, from suffering to sensuality. They are both humanizing and dehumanizing, and call forth myriad interpretations, from images of dance to images of death.



Georg Herold - Untitled, 2011, Batten, canvas, lacquer, thread and screws, 115 x 510 x 65 cm, image © Saatchi Gallery, all rights reserved



## Caviar and Bricks

Another body of work for which Herold has become known is a series of paintings in which fish roe is used as the primary medium. These abstract caviar paintings possess a tranquil, natural quality in the vein of Korean dansaekhwa paintings. They are nearly monochromatic, lightly textured, and beautiful. But it is their medium that raises questions. The millions, perhaps billions of fish eggs that went into their making mean they are literal killing fields. They potentially represent literal wasted potential. Then again, caviar is just food, and not exactly necessary food at that. It is an expensive luxury. There is potentially much to discuss about whatever message these paintings send about commerce, art, and exploitation. Then again, maybe there is nothing to say. Maybe they are simply pretty paintings.

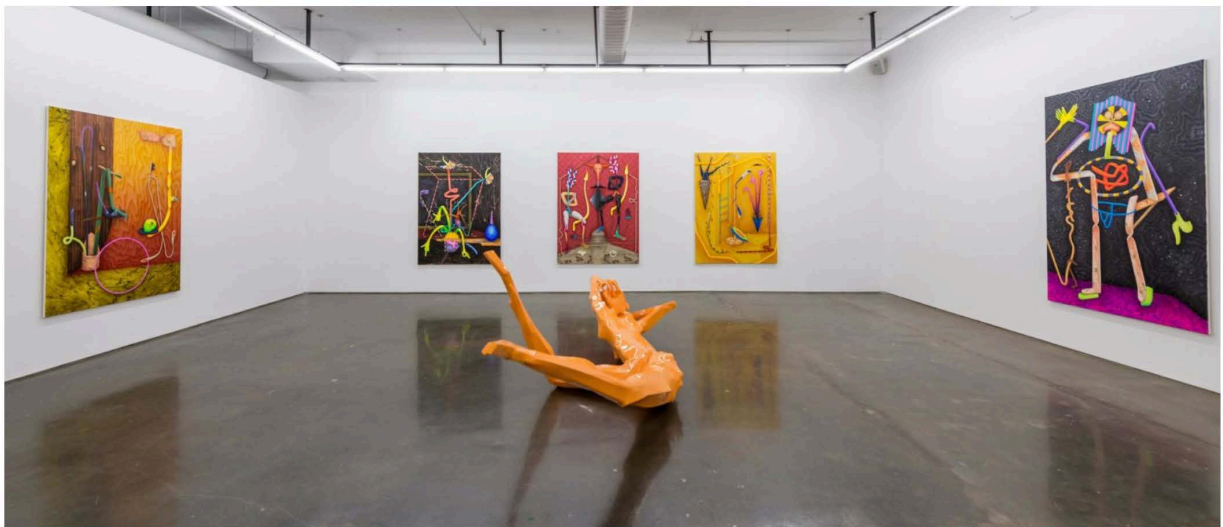


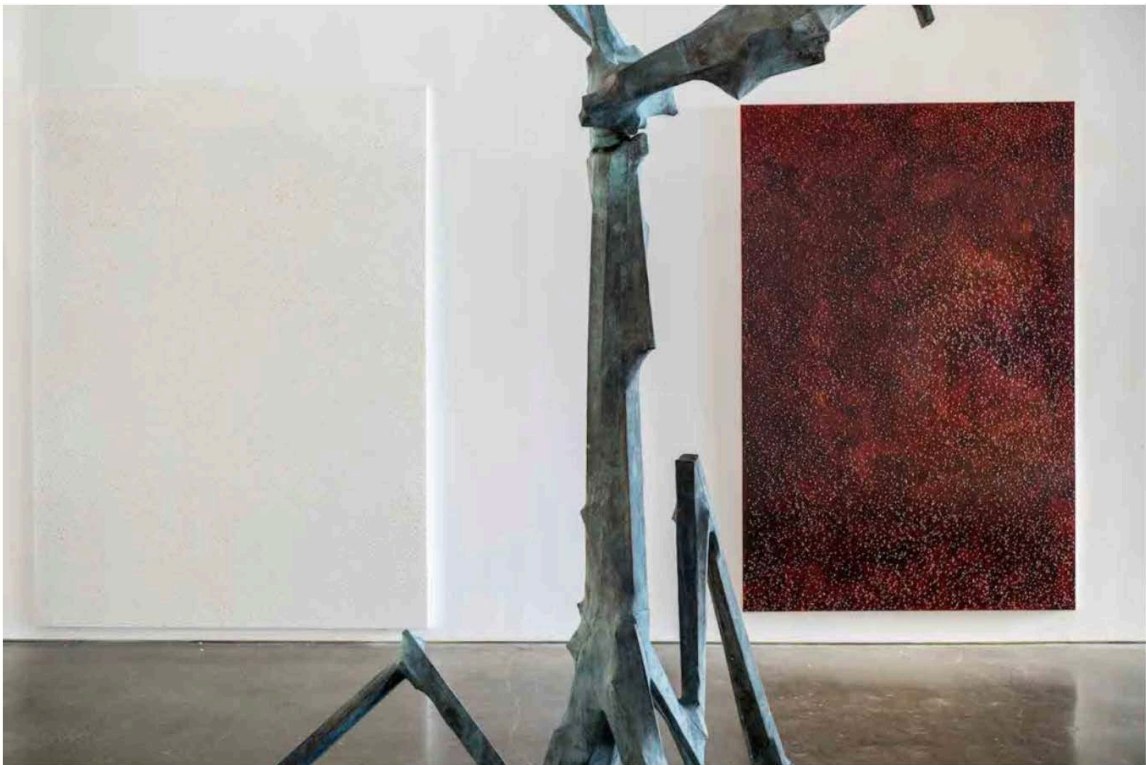
Georg Herold - Untitled, 2011, caviar (numbered), acrylic, lacquer on canvas, 2 parts, each 350 x 203 cm, image courtesy Galerie Bärbel Grässlin

Another material to which Herold returns frequently is bricks. He attaches bricks directly to the stretched canvas surfaces of his paintings. The weight of the bricks often pulls down on the surface, stretching it and making wrinkles and ripples in the fabric. The appearance is often of a partially ruined work of art. There is tension inherent in the piece as viewers watch and wonder whether the bricks will eventually fall. These pieces seem like disasters waiting to happen. They are also fascinating examinations of materiality, texture, dimensionality and space. They are funny, and in a way they even have a mocking manner about them. They are also sublimely ambiguous. There is a great chasm between what they show us and what they tell us. Then again, they are just a construction, another step forward from the presentation of the first plank. Most notably, they are fresh. They are continued evidence that Georg Herold is not an artist who deserves to be labeled as part of any older generation. Respectfully, in fact, no living artist is.

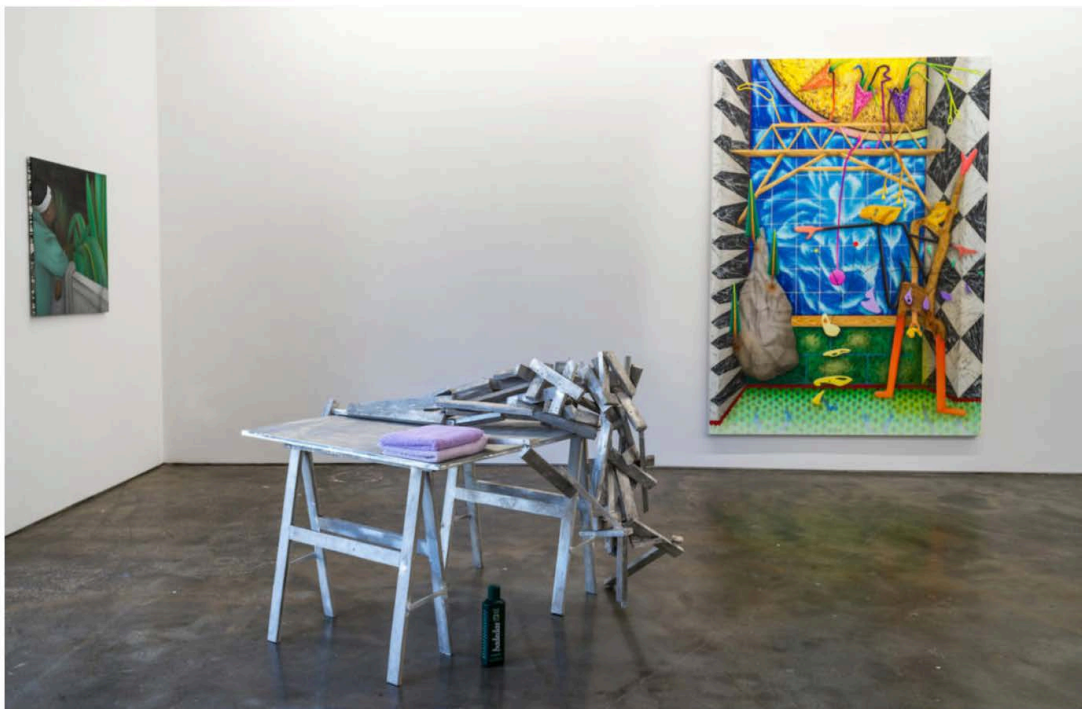
Georg Herold at the Kunstmuseum Bonn is on view through 7 January 2018.

By Phillip Barcio









ART, DECEMBER 14, 2016

## Cassina Projects and ARTUNER present “Figure of Speech”

By Charlotte Boutboul

**Cassina Projects** and **ARTUNER** are currently holding “Figure of Speech,” a new exhibition on view through January 14 that is the second chapter of a joint exhibition program between the gallery and the curated online platform. The show features new works by **David Czupryn**, **Georg Herold** and **Katja Seib**.

This exhibition looks at the practices of the three contemporary German artists affiliated with the **Kunstakademie Düsseldorf**. Specifically, it explores the ways in which each of them articulates the characters within the different narratives weaved into their works. Indeed, Czupryn, Herold, and Seib evoke, through the protagonists of their paintings, a plethora of references and affects.

The title of the show, understood as a rhetorical device (simile, metaphor, hyperbole, personification, allegory...) that enriches text with complex layers of significance through omission of words, repetition, or any departure from the words' literal meaning, has been chosen as a way to describe the three artists' respective approach to their art. Their practices employ mediums that are often unexpected or displaced from their original context, subverting usual associations. Their use of material, such as that of a figure of speech, often refines denotation by means of bringing sentiments closer to the everyday, or conversely by elevating simple experiences.

Not interested in a faithful reproduction of nature as such, Czupryn's investigations of the natural and artificial merge with uncannily human emotions in his works on canvas. Personal episodes and dark stories take the shape of disquieting anthropomorphic assemblages of plants and plastics, polymers and minerals.

Herold is presenting both his monumental humanoid bronze sculptures and the signature caviar paintings he makes by arranging and numbering thousands of the precious black eggs on canvas. The caviar paintings are an investigation into displaced materials, into luxury and mortality, created with a substance that is simultaneously precious and degradable. The sculptures, on the other hand, embody the struggle between the maker and his creation, between desire and wish-fulfillment.

Often metaphorical, Seib's mysterious paintings articulate ineffable feelings that are at once personal and universal. The narratives she represents reflect with self-irony on the human condition in its infinite declinations. This body of work looks at current events through her portrayal of friends and people she feels close to, bringing such occurrences closer to an intimate dimension. Some, like the death of the legendary musician Prince, are moments that blur the boundaries between public and private, as they touch us deeply, without concerning us directly.

VISUAL ARTS / GALLERIES / ARTICLE

## Three-artist show 'Figure of Speech' at Cassina Projects, New York

BY ISABELLA MASON | DECEMBER 15, 2016

Cassina Projects: Figure of Speech installation view, at Gallery 2.  
(Courtesy: Cassina Projects)

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Georg Herold

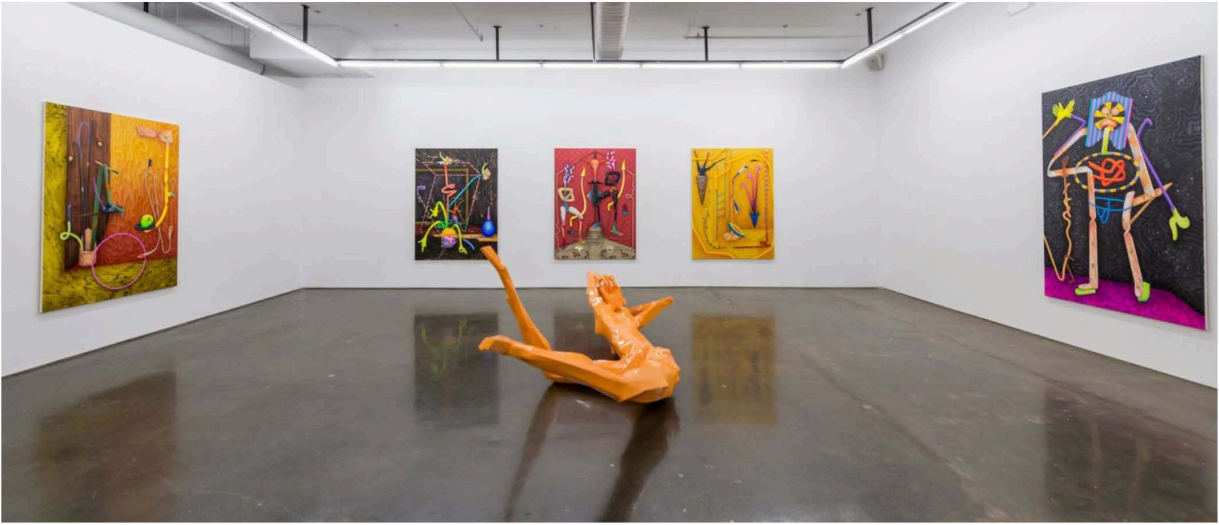
Cassina Projects and Artuner present "Figure of Speech," a new exhibition featuring the work of David Czupryn, Georg Herold and Katja Seib, on view till January 14, 2017.

"Figure of Speech" looks at the craft of three contemporary German artists affiliated with the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. It explores the ways in which each of them articulates the characters within the different narratives weaved into their works. A 'figure of speech' is a rhetorical device that enriches text with complex layers of significance. And not unlike its usage in verbal discourse, Czupryn, Herold and Seib evoke, through the protagonists of their paintings, a whole gamut of references and affects to enhance and enrich their work.

*The exhibition is on view at 508 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10001, United States.*

*For details, visit: [www.cassinaprojects.com](http://www.cassinaprojects.com)*







REVIEW - 01 JUN 2011

# Georg Herold

Kunstverein Freiburg & Contemporary Fine Arts

BY MARK PRINCE

Georg Herold, 2011. Installation view, CFA Berlin.





It is said that it takes eight years for a sturgeon to mature, eight minutes to remove caviar from its belly and eight seconds to taste it. Shrinking exponentially, those numbers tell a grotesque tale of economic and environmental decadence. Numbers – random, consecutive, wildly escalating – also run across Georg Herold's 'caviar paintings', yet his work refuses to conform to the reductive post-Marxist equations between art and the market so dear to younger artists. If caviar suggests conspicuous consumption, in Herold's work it is also the aggregate of a Pop image and the Beuysian aura of pure material. Herold, after all, is in his mid-60s, old enough to belong to the generation that superseded the great German shaman.

Serpentine spills of caviar, affixed to canvases under varnish, meandered across the surfaces of two massive triptychs that faced each other across the width of Contemporary Fine Arts (each untitled, 2011). Tight clusters of handwritten numbers – some poor assistant's Sisyphean labour – provide shadowing for the eggs, rendering them pictorially illusionistic. Both languages multiply from a seed: the tiny egg, the single number. Herold's paintings may be straightforwardly spectacular, but they are also conceptually elusive. Resembling process painting of the late 1980s – such as Ian McKeever's huge diptychs in which combinations of oil and acrylic triggered sublime chemical reactions – they subvert that model, investing material with symbolism. If caviar connotes

wealth, the numbers evoke the babble of markets as the forms they create wind like the parabolas of economic graphs.

The snaking caviar trails found a sculptural equivalent in the curves of four reclining female nudes, laid parallel to each other on narrow plinths (each untitled, 2010). Constructed from cheap wood haphazardly screwed together, each sculpture was sheathed in either transparent chiffon or canvas sprayed with brilliantly coloured household gloss, consolidating what would otherwise appear as a tangle of disjointed timbers. One sculpture tested this tenuous perceptual coherence to the limit, its figuration held together by a pair of stockings pulled up to the 'knees'. Laid bare as configurations of worthless materials, their Picasso-esque forms are also lurid symbols of expensive 'modern art'. The caviar portraits (of Lionel Richie, Bertrand Russell, Sean Penn and others) also double as signs for already-existing value, mimicking Andy Warhol's benday dots. They are a reminder that Sigmar Polke – whose hand-painted dot screens also parodied Pop art – was Herold's teacher in the 1970s. Adapting caviar to the portrait genre emphasizes that eggs, like pixels, contain information and instructions for life, though here their growth is arrested by the resin sealant. Creating a likeness to life occurs at the cost of transforming it into stillborn decay. Get up close to the canvases, and they stink. Where a person's likeness is created by the shading of numbers, the eggs, superfluous to the illusion, appear to attack the face like

mould spores.

The subjects of Herold's caviar portraits – writers, scientists, actors, musicians, philosophers – defy any more specific taxonomical categorization than that of an all-purpose celebrity club. Tightly hung in a cabinet room off the main space in a presentation that assumed the look of 'art for sale', the paintings are not only Pop but unashamedly popular. Herold flouts the risk of seeming meretricious and mercenary, and the impending hypocrisy exposes contradictions. The portraits resemble Arte Povera relics – siblings to Yves Klein or Piero Manzoni's art – but what could be more of an oxymoron than Arte Povera made of caviar? In the same room, a bronze cast of a cheap kitchen chair hung from a wire (*anders denkende Einrichtung*, 2010). It might be slightly raised from the ground or a few centimetres from landing, a weak defiance of gravity, or an almost complete succumbing to it. As in the paintings, an arrested natural process becomes an image of potential action. Herold's chair seems to mock up a cartoon-version of the act of giving in to the world's inexorable forces.



# Georg Herold

The work of Georg Herold has been of international importance for nearly three decades. Rejecting traditional materials, Herold creates sculptures, assemblages and wall-based 'drawings' using bricks, baking powder, wood, vodka bottles, buttons and mattresses. This has been linked to [Arte Povera](#) although any influence the movement has had upon him is likely to have filtered through the work of [Joseph Beuys](#). Often political, his work engages with socio-cultural issues and art history yet denies any simple reading: 'I intend to reach a state that is ambiguous and allows all sorts of interpretations.'

Herold often assimilates a concern for the issues of the day, from the worlds of politics, art, and science, with his sardonic wit. In

1982 he made an untitled drawing of a map of the world adding a brief handwritten definition to each country: United States, 'Criminals'; Germany, 'Nothing Seen, Nothing Heard'; France, 'Know Everything'; Russia, 'Nothing Learned'. Herold has also responded with humour to technological development. In his exhibition *compu.comp. virtual visualities equivacs bitmapdys* 1995, the artist mimicked computer drawing software by making a number of wall-based works using Mylar mirrors and hundreds of small blocks of wood. These were joined together to create elaborate twisting forms that protruded into the gallery like a line drawing in space. Each block represented a computer pixel, mocking contemporary computers' inability to draw smooth curving lines. The work also alludes to the processes of art making and to techno-savvy sculptors who use 3D modelling packages.



Georg Herold  
*Come all, kneel and profess* 2002  
© Georg Herold/photograph by Wolfgang Günzel

Titles and the incorporation of text are also important to Herold, as demonstrated by the world map. In *Russische Schweiz* (Russian Switzerland), included in the exhibition, Herold has constructed a frame of the kind typically used to support a canvas. Yet instead of this the frame contains a web of wire on which are placed wooden strips bearing Cyrillic inscriptions. The opposition of the text and the missing canvas, emphasised by the work's title (printed at the top of the frame), suggest a sense of displacement and exile. Herold's intense reaction to the subject undoubtedly stems from personal experience; he was imprisoned for an escape attempt by the East German government before finally being allowed to settle in the West in 1973.

Georg Herold was born in Iena, East Germany in 1947. He studied at the Academy of Fine Art in Munich from 1974 to 1976 and at the Academy of Fine Art in Hamburg from 1977 to 1978. Recent solo exhibitions include Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London (2004), Galeria Juana de Aizpura, Madrid (2000) and Kunsthalle Zürich (1999). His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions.

# Contemporary Art Daily

Georg Herold

June 18th, 2013

Georg Herold at Gerhardsen Gerner









*Artist:* Georg Herold

*Venue:* Gerhardsen Gerner, Oslo

*Date:* May 8 – June 2013



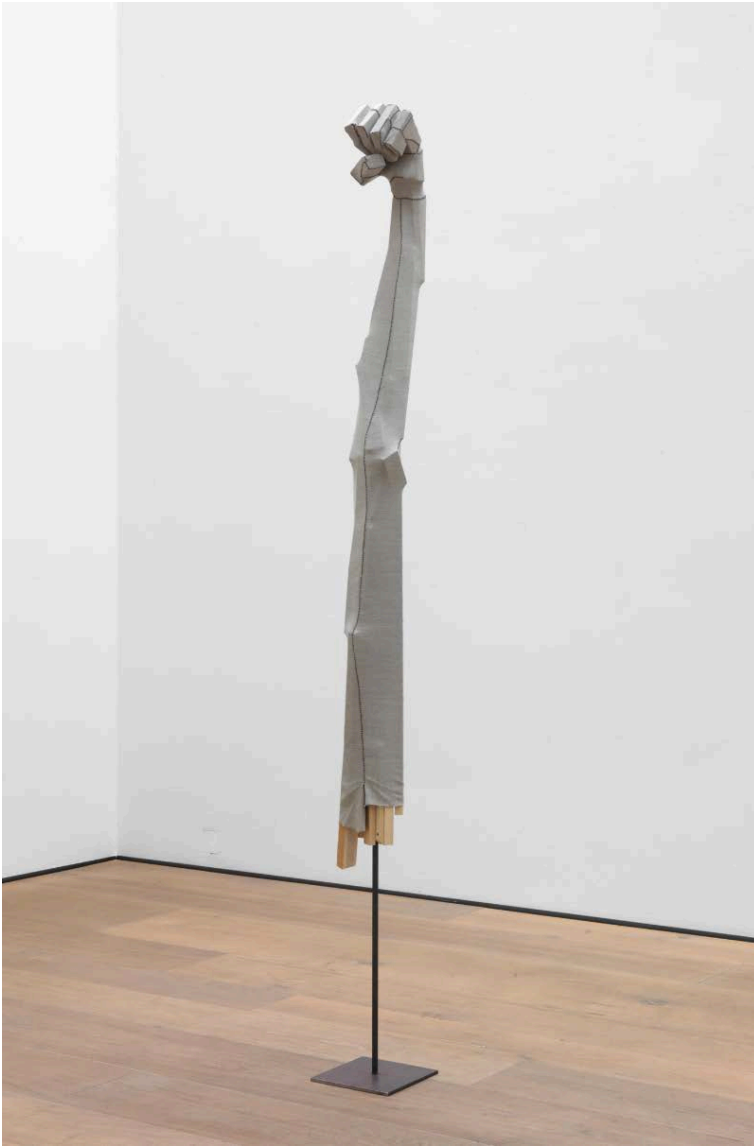
# Contemporary Art Daily

January 23rd, 2012

## Georg Herold at Barbel Graesslin







*Artist:* Georg Herold

*Venue:* Barbel Graesslin, Frankfurt

*Exhibition Title:* RESTLESSEGGGS

*Date:* December 19, 2011 – January 28, 2012

# Contemporary Art Daily

May 14th, 2009

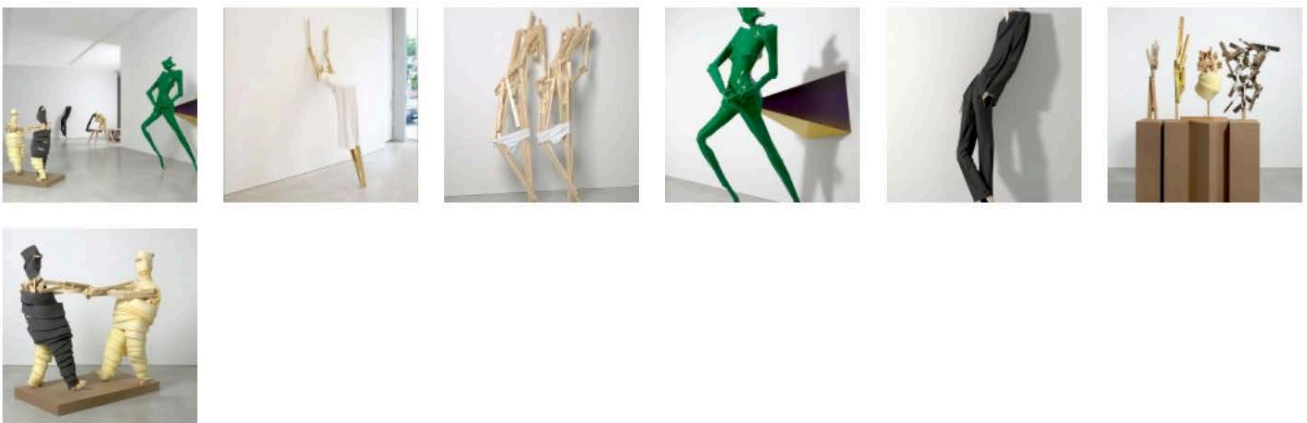
## Georg Herold at Contemporary Fine Arts

*Artist:* Georg Herold

*Venue:* Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin

*Exhibition Title:* Place The Lord

*Date:* April 29 – June 6, 2009



Images courtesy Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin. Photos by Jochen Littkemann.

Press Release:

Contemporary Fine Arts is pleased to announce two solo exhibitions with new works by Norbert Schwontkowski and Georg Herold in the gallery's space Am Kupfergraben 10.

One should avoid speaking of a principle when considering Georg Herold's work, because quite obviously he himself is interested in not following any principle.

Roof laths, bricks, car paint, caviar – whether his material comes from the building supplies store or a delicatessen: Georg Herold loves to take art off the pedestal to put it on the floor, down to earth, as it were. In 1977, he presented his first roof lath at Hamburg's Hochschule für Bildende Künste – his art is not just famous for that, but especially for his brick and caviar pictures. With caviar, Herold creates a kind of abstract expressionism on his canvas, frequently numbering the seemingly countless individual grain of caviar. The artist does not make any elaborate sketches or models, but rather tests his ideas directly with and against the material. He creates sculptures by stretching pairs of tights over object-like structures made of foil. In the 1993 work *Cross Culture*, Herold used roof laths to build a stretcher frame, but instead of canvas, he stretched two pairs of tights diagonally over the 'image area', using clothespins.

'I have decided to observe, that is to say, to derive my experiences and views from questioning phenomena, rather than posing questions to others. That means I reject any catering service in matters of the mind.'

Contemporary Fine Arts is greatly looking forward to the exhibition 'Place the Lord'. It will be the first solo show at Contemporary Fine Arts with recent sculptures. Georg Herold was born in 1947 in Jena and lives in Cologne.

the only signed one-of-a-kind piece in the exhibition, is valued at three times the price of the reconstruction of a comparable work (*Diagonale Faltung* [Diagonal Foldings], 1966/2007) appears just as logical as it is counterutopian. In May 1968 Posenenske published a statement in the magazine *Art International*, which, while it marked the beginning of the end of her activity as an artist, and despite the impression of dashed aspirations, speaks to the continued relevance of the questions posed by her artistic practice today: "It is painful for me to face the fact that art cannot contribute to the solution of urgent social problems."

—André Rottmann

Translated from German by Oliver E. Dryfuss.

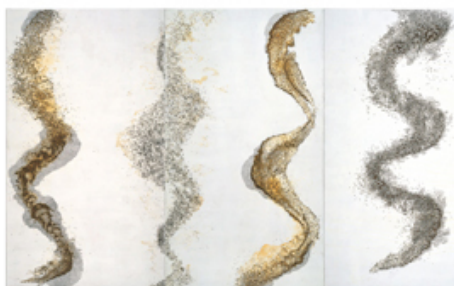
## COLOGNE

### Georg Herold MUSEUM LUDWIG

New to Georg Herold's sculpture are the five oversize figures that dominate this one-room display of his work. Constructed from canvas stretched and stitched over lengths of timber, and sprayed with glossy car-body paint, they appear caught in some epic, spastic struggle with an invisible enemy. These ungainly antiheroes, generically titled *Figur I–V*, 2007, have enabled Herold to create a dramatic staging of the handful of earlier works also on display. One, for example, points accusingly at *Künstlerische Medizin, Patho-Ontologie (Cabinet patho-psychologique)*, 1995, a makeshift vitrine containing jars with faux-scientific labels. Another appears unimpressed by *Delivering the WOW*, 2005, a bare linen canvas from which jut five stacks of crudely cemented, unspectacular bricks. Small, mock-Beuysian drawings for the five large figures are displayed deliberately too high on the walls to be properly viewed, against a wide band of thinly brushed cheap green paint.

Herold's satirical cynicism is aimed both at the inflated mysticism of some contemporary (German) art and also at the self-satisfied *Spießbürger* (petits bourgeois) of postwar West German society. His target is the "creative stultification" that Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich psychologized in their famous book *Die Unfähigkeit zu Trauern* (The Inability to Mourn, 1967) as the "ego-depletion" of the German people after World War II, when all efforts were concentrated on reconstruction and none on interrogating the country's guilt. But whereas the Mitscherlichs retain some faith in the expressive language of psychoanalysis, for Herold all meaning is ironic and contingent. He reads creative failure through the elements of postwar reconstruction—softwood lathes and bricks—which, to recontextualize the Mitscherlichs' description of forms of postwar German public life, can be seen as "stage props" that "conceal a very inarticulate way of life."

But as the display here shows, Herold's works constantly undercut one another, revealing an attitude cynical even about cynicism itself. In his so-called caviar paintings, begun in 1989, inarticulacy is exchanged for a self-consciously beautiful image. The example on display here, *Untitled*, 1991, comprises DNA-like spirals of caviar suspended like drifts of smoke, each egg laboriously numbered. The spirals recall Herold's earlier spoof of genetic description, *Genetischer Eingriff in die Erbmasse bei Frau Herold* (The Genetic Alteration of Mrs. Herold's DNA), 1985—not on display in Cologne—a makeshift model of DNA made from bits of old wire and wood. Both works recall the example of Herold's former teacher, Sigmar Polke, but have a focus and direction often lacking in Polke's work. Herold asks questions of material and spiritual value in a consistently more engaging manner and, as the display here shows, proves the depth of his attack by not flinching from taking his own work as a target.



Georg Herold, *Untitled*, 1991, caviar, acrylic, and lacquer on canvas, 11' 9 1/2" x 20' 8".

But relentless engagement of this sort does have its drawbacks. Herold's insistent criticism of the art market borders on a solipsistic withdrawal from the "dirty" world of carpet dealers and back scratchers. Yet he cannot escape the rather obvious point that rather than destroying the valuable Beluga eggs, paintings such as *Untitled* increase their value by placing them in the luxury market for art (as Boris Groys observed in the catalogue for the first museum exhibition of the caviar paintings, at the Kölnischer Kunstverein in 1990).

Political commentary also falls flat when explicitly expressed. The sore thumb in the Cologne display is *There is nothing left—There is no right*, 1992, which comprises two gray doors, each bearing one part of the work's title. The punning suggestion of an ideological *buis clos* is weak and opportunistic, and it fails to function as Herold's rude-avuncular humor does elsewhere: to diffuse the potentially hectoring tone of his discourse on the morality of value. We already know that traditional political ideologies have been frustrated, that the art market is venal, that to fail is human, and so on. It takes the use of surprising satirical forms, and the *détournement* of common materials that Herold has otherwise made his own, to give such assertions any force.

—John-Paul Stonard

## MUNICH

### Joanne Tatham and Tom O'Sullivan GALERIE RÜDIGER SCHÖTTLE

What presents itself as meaningful is not always so; and what at first seems meaningless can be deeply significant. "Lead Rhetoric & Other Category Errors," the meaning-laden title of this exhibition by Joanne Tatham and Tom O'Sullivan, who live in Glasgow and have been collaborating since 1995, already hinted at this contradiction. But what rhetoric was at work here, and what errors were in question? The rhetoric was that of Minimalism, and sometimes of Land art. Using the same form in various contexts, the artists might place a large cube in a landscape, or a smaller one in a museum on a pedestal under glass; they call this recurring object, which is decorated with a diamond pattern in black and pink, "Think Thingamajig"—a phrase they've been using since 2003. Things get even stranger when, in *Think*, *Think Thingamajig*, *Think*, 2005, a meticulous black-and-white drawing, a human figure in top hat and tails "wears" a diamond-patterned cube. Pure geometric form in body-specific application—a minimalist contradiction? More like parody.

The diamond pattern in black and pink appeared again on the long wall of one of the two gallery spaces in Munich, interrupted by circles; this wallpaper, *Untitled*, 2007, served as a background for small



PRINT FEBRUARY 2008





View of "Georg Herold: wo man kind," 2008.

COLOGNE

## Georg Herold

MUSEUM LUDWIG

Heinrich-Böll-Platz

October 27, 2007–March 24, 2008

Georg Herold, one of the “bad boys” of 1980s German art, deploys an idiosyncratic blend of existential humor, text, and everyday materials (such as wooden slats and bricks) to question art and its context. Now, at the age of sixty, the Cologne-based artist presents a retrospective of his own design at Museum Ludwig’s DC project room. In a forty-foot-high hall, Herold has installed a survey of well-known pieces from the museum’s collection that unfolds on different levels and is viewable from both the floor of the exhibition space and a raised platform. The show includes *There is nothing left—there is no right*, 1992, originally exhibited at Documenta 9, paintings that contain bricks or caviar, new figurative sculptures, and a recent drawing series.

On the floor stand four towering, suggestive male and female figures constructed from slats, covered with canvas, and lacquered in bright colors; they pose in mannerist, sporty, or sexually provocative postures. Seemingly without a consistent physical relationship to the other objects displayed nearby, instead these figures are each equipped with a wooden pole. (A smaller fifth figure lies on the ground.) They transform the exhibition into a dynamic, gymlike situation, or a battlefield in which each competes for attention. Above this scenario (or at eye level, if one stands on the raised viewing platform) is a green frieze of forty-four framed pencil drawings. In these, Herold, like a cartoonist, sketches many more nude figures confronted with similar poles.

As indicated by the show’s title, “wo man kind,” which is a grammatically nonsensical play on words, the artist invites viewers to rethink the social status of man, woman, and child (kind), as well as the relationships between these concepts; the show functions like a stage on which such questions are effectively dramatized.

— Barbara Buchmaier

## *Art in Review; Freud and Contemporary Art*

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By GRACE GLUECK JUNE 16, 2006

The Collection of the Sigmund Freud Museum, Vienna Austrian Cultural Forum 11 East 52nd Street, Manhattan Through July 8

After giving a work in 1989 to the Sigmund Freud Museum, Vienna, the Conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth, heavily influenced by Freud, the psychoanalyst, invited other artists to do likewise. Today the museum owns 13 works by 13 Freud-influenced Conceptualists of varying stripes, adding another dimension to the museum that is Freud's former apartment and consulting room at Berggasse 19.

The 13 are temporarily installed in the Austrian Cultural Forum's small but handsome gallery spaces. Mr. Kosuth's contribution, "O.&A./FID! (TO I.K. AND G.F.)," from 1987, is, sorry to say, the most viewer-proof, a linguistic conundrum out of Freud through Duchamp, in which a large, mundane photograph of a hall doorway meant as a metaphor for the entrance to the Sigmund Freud Museum is set against a blown-up passage from Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams." Another layer of text, defining a boundary in the context of the work, is imposed on the photograph.

Other works are more accessible. Contrasting with the Kosuth is Haim Stainbach's simple "AHA!," a "found" word painted on a wall invoking the "Aha!" experience said to play a major role in psychoanalytic therapy. Georg Herold's "Amor and Psyche," a tall, open cupboard containing a woman's nylons on a hanger, is punctuated at the crotch by a black brush. Alongside them is a long, round stick with a button nailed to the top, the whole invoking the omnipresence of sex in psychoanalytic theory. Franz West's "Liege" makes the analyst's couch a work of art; a metal skeleton of a divan placed on a pedestal with a wall-mounted invitation to the viewer to confirm its aesthetic status by lying on it.

"The Man Who Flew Into His Picture" (1987-89), an installation by Ilya Kabakov, is the most evocative. An autobiographical work dealing with childhood recollections and the artist's own identity, it consists of a small room with a table and two chairs separated by a trestle from a wall hung with a painted white panel. The panel's surface is broken only by a minuscule abstracted drawing of a human figure. Notebooks in several languages on the table tell the story of a man whose lonely room this is, where he is able, by contemplating the board and the drawing he has made, to fly away from his cares into the board and "the shining distance of some sort of strange light."

Considering the mix of ids and egos represented here, this show has a nice measure of humor, helping a display that the good doctor himself might find worthy of analyzing.

## George Herold: Uncertain Relationships

By: [Donovan](#)



Georg Herold's work expresses a biting sardonic sense of humor in elegantly spare, almost hermetic formal conundra. While the irony in sculptures made by stretching underwear over a pyramid-shaped armature or in paintings made of bricks glued to canvas is often hilarious, its point is a serious one. Yet, because his imagery and language are intensely German, for Americans the nature of the jokes sometimes requires translation.

Herold's skeptical wit surfaces in such early, rudimentary works as a small, untitled map of the world from 1982. In this simple brush drawing, executed with careless ease, each country is assigned a brief ironic motto: Germany, "nothing seen, nothing heard;" Russia, "nothing learned;" United States, "criminals;" France, "know everything;" Israel, very good." Nebenlatte (Beside Lath, 1983), another rather early piece, is a terse and pointed assault on the compulsory subordination of the individual to the will of the group. The piece consists of nothing more than a short, rough scrap of wood scrawled with the motto "together we are assholes." Herold's intensity of feeling on the subject undoubtedly owes something to the fact that he was imprisoned for six months by the East German government for an escape attempt, and was only allowed to emigrate to the West in 1973 at the age of twenty-six.

As the above examples illustrate, the point of Herold's jokes is often political. Such humor has a special edge in Germany, since as a German observed to me, "humor isn't the first characteristic you associate with my country." Nor, in a larger context, is it associated with authoritarianism in any form. A joke has a unique and valuable limitation: it can only deflate a stuffed shirt- especially those in uniform-whether black, brown or olive drab-never inflate one.

Yet, if Herold's work is political, his approach is quite different than that of American artists such as Jenny Holzer, Jeff Koons and Barbara Kruger, all of whom have attempted in different ways to alter the political consciousness of the public by crossing over from the art world to wider channels of mass communication. For Herold, "if one wants to attain something politically, then one should become a terrorist or a politician. Political art is a coquetry of the artist who needs an alibi and a moral justification. Naturally, I do the same, but I coquette consciously with politics by making jokes." However, in rejecting an instrumental role for art and opting for "coquetry," Herold is not declaring himself apolitical, he's rejecting a political tactic he views with the deepest suspicion, since in his experience, the manipulation of mass consciousness, even for a "constructive" purpose, smacks of authoritarianism.



For the use of visual humor, Herold had an excellent mentor in Sigmar Polke, with whom he studied in Hamburg from 1977 to 1981. Both Polke's use of humor as a social scalpel and the skill with which he weaves his comedy into deft formal structures left their mark on the younger artist. As Herold's work has developed this second, formal aspect has become increasingly subtle and sophisticated, revealing an abstract cast of mind less obvious in the earlier work. As a young man studying mathematics, Herold encountered Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, which states that it is impossible to measure both the position and momentum of a quantum particle simultaneously. So fascinated was he with the paradox stated in the principle, he used it for the title of a catalogue, *Unschirferelationen*, which he translates as "Uncertain Relationships." But Herold is no scholar or mathematician; the way he uses "Heisenberg" is broadly metaphorical, not technical. For him, it's an emblem of the provisional nature of understanding.

This adaptation of an idea from physics to his own metaphorical purpose is characteristic of his scavenging of forms and ideas from other areas as well, for example, from politics, language or art. He juxtaposes ideas from different realms so that one's awareness of their points of correspondence and divergence is sharpened. A.J. Greimas, quoted by Fredric Jameson in *The Prison-House of Language*, offers a description of this conceptual operation in a different idiom: "Signification is thus nothing but ... such transposition from one level of language to another, from one language to a different language, and meaning is nothing but the possibility of such transcoding." Jameson himself calls the result of this operation the "truth-effect"- a term that also suits Herold's sense of the uncertain character of perception. Transcoding underlies the stylistic juxtapositions ubiquitous in postmodernism; what distinguishes Herold's version is his idiosyncratic feeling for materials and his ability to manifest his ideas in pungently witty objects.

In *Hologram*, a piece from 1986, two heavy, battered bricks, stuffed into the legs of a pair of torn party hose, form a kind of bridge: the bricks are the "piers" and the nylon stretched between them the "span." The dark, diamond-shaped crotchpiece centered between the bricks seems to hover in the evanescent lighter nylon, as a hologram image is suspended in its beam of light. The piece is one of Herold's most succinct. There is an odd beauty in the contrast between the opacity of clay and the translucence of nylon. The elastic pulling against its moorings, has an unexpected force given the smallness of the object; at the same time there is something clownish about the common-law marriage of the lumpish bricks and the dainty, faintly risqué party hose.

Although Herold isn't always so frugal with his means as the lath pieces and *Hologram* would indicate, economy is essential for him. He admires the complexity of expression, achieved in Oriental art with the fewest strokes: the intellectual discipline that leads to a quick, sure realization of the idea. *Jahresgabe* (Donation of the Year, 1986) is a kind of visual equivalent of a Zen koan in its ellipticality, love of paradox and formal austerity. Two bulbs project out of holes cut side by side in the tip of a roughly crafted waist-high table. The one on the right is a working light bulb, that on the left, a bulb-shaped cactus of identical size. Through a slot in the front edge of the tabletop, the electrical connection for the bulb and the flowerpot holding the cactus are visible. The careful articulation of the piece-the proportion of the table and its simple carpentry, the "window" of the slot, the holes through which the bulbs peek, the contrast between the smooth, bright glass and the prickly, dark plant as well as the rhyming of their size and shape-impresses the object on the viewer's mind, despite its refusal to make "common" sense, just as the precision of the koan's image does.

Herold selects his materials from the most commonplace things: wood lath, common wire, bricks, socks, buttons, paper scraps. This aspect of his work has sometimes been associated with *Arte Povera*, but the comparison is a misunderstanding of his lineage. Whatever traces of that school-or of Fluxus-there may be, have been filtered through the pervasive influence of Joseph Beuys. In pieces of Beuys' like *Jason* (1961), a metal washtub hanging on a piece of wood lath, the precedent for Herold's practice becomes clear.

In order to escape from the dominating influence of Beuys, Herold adopted Polke's strategy: the transubstantiation of the older Meisters mythopoeic tragedy into comedy. Then, by returning to the object, a form rarely employed by Polke, Herold also distanced himself from this second influence and discovered his own territory. Once that territory was established, Herold was able to return to painting without sacrificing his independence. In various series he has glued bricks, sewn buttons, smeared caviar and attached pieces of electronic circuitry to canvas, seamlessly transposing the kind of thinking he developed in his objects to his pictures.

As with Beuys and Polke, the game Herold plays is all or nothing; he aims for a combination of conceptual elusiveness and visual concision that is perversely demanding. In his best work, there is so little wasted motion that if the relationships between elements are off by a hairsbreadth, the pieces run the risk of disappearing. That's their kick. In saying, "there are no intermediate levels between art and nothing," Herold clearly takes the risk with his eyes open.



BY RALF CHRISTOFORI

13 SEP 2005

What makes Georg Herold's work stand out, according to Matthias Winzen in the catalogue for the artist's first major retrospective, is the 'fundamental irreconcilability of what is seen and what is said'. And indeed, faced with this exhibition, it was enormously difficult to put what you had seen into words: when trying to explain your enthusiasm for a plain roofing slat, of all things; or reading how respectfully, almost lovingly, Herold talks about the 'rough, stupid material' used in his works; and especially when considering the bizarre discrepancy between his works, his materials and his titles. Goethe is a roofing slat leaning against the wall (Goethe-Latte, Goethe Slat, 1982); the mountain peak of the Kleiner Bernhardiner (Small Saint Bernard, 1985) is a worn-out pair of underpants; and the canvas entitled Rumsfeld (2004) looks like it might collapse under its heavy burden of red bricks. Although Herold's retrospective began chronologically with Goethe and ended with Rumsfeld, it would be wrong to attribute any great symbolic importance to this, especially since the artist has always resisted a definitive interpretation of his works. There is much that is irreconcilable in Herold's oeuvre. It is unruly and witty, regardless of whether one is talking about it or just looking.

Herold studied under Sigmar Polke and Franz Erhard Walther in the late 1970s. In the early 1980s he found kindred spirits in Werner Büttner, Albert Oehlen and Martin Kippenberger. The 'revolutionary tone' adopted by Büttner, Oehlen and Herold in the artists' book *Facharbeiterficken* (Fucking Skilled Workers, 1982) was a form of grassroots activity that rebelled against all forms of bourgeois art connoisseurship. Their works were intended primarily as an imposition – crude, but logically consistent. Apparently the one who took this attitude most to heart was Herold himself, who jumped at the idea of using simple building materials. In 1977 he celebrated the 'presentation of the first slat' at the Academy of Fine Arts in Hamburg – a metre length of the wood used to make canvas stretchers, hung horizontally on the wall. A year later he made a mobile 'laser' out of bricks and nylon thread.

And then, along came Goethe: a roof slat of impressive proportions, bearing the name of the great writer and thinker, and alongside it another slat, no more than knee-high to the first, bearing the words 'compared with some arsehole or other'. In the following years Herold doffed his disrespectful hat to Albrecht Dürer, whose Hare (1502) he cobbled together out of roofing slats (Dürerhase, Dürer Hare, 1984), and meted out similar treatment to Josef Stalin in the form of the Stalin Organ (1984). In Herold's *Steinhenge* from 1985 – an inadequate translation of 'Stonehenge' – heavy bricks protrude from an unprimed canvas, while by the end of the 1980s only isolated scraps of canvas are left hanging over galvanized stretchers. Here Herold exalts the mortal remains of conventional artistic expression as a down-to-earth measure of all things. And yet it would be unfair to see his provocative gestures merely in the tradition of Arte Povera or ready-mades, doing no more than presenting comparatively poor and pathetic material as what it essentially is: a waste product of art and a waste product of reality. His works are too polished for that, his titles too clever.

In the late 1980s and early '90s, for example, Herold numbered each of the countless fish eggs that made up portraits of Barry White, Donald Trump, Yasser Arafat and Charles de Gaulle in his 'caviar pictures'. The artist is no less manic in his passion for collecting, processing his finds into small works and multiples or systematically ordering them in plain vitrines. Glass vessels, for example, contain the liquid placebo of an 'artistic medicine' (1995), with labels wonderfully obscuring the fact that the liquid in question is just water. In another vitrine from the same year, entitled *Idiolatrine Modules* (Complementary Supplements), Herold keeps differently perfumed socks in airtight storage jars. And the vitrine entitled *Herrenperspektive* (Gentlemen's Point of View, 2002) offers the opportunity to kneel before a mobile comprising roof slats of various lengths.

For Herold this is where it all started: art, language, seriousness and humour. 'How does one process confrontations with the unknown and the unbelievable?' he asked at the beginning of the 1990s, before answering his own question: 'One laughs, say, out of embarrassment or out of enthusiasm.' At this retrospective, one was constantly laughing – and it was a laughter of pure enthusiasm.