

# Krobath

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## Demian Kern – Collectibles

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For the current exhibition, Demian Kern placed some Swarovski figurines from the 'Silver Crystal' collection and some plastic candlesticks on an overhead projector and then meticulously painted the projections of the various objects. What you see in *Stylish Beauty 2*, for example, is not a cat, or even an image of a cat, but the image of the projection of an object that is supposed to represent a cat. Kern picked up the collectibles somewhere in his environment, looking for things that already have a porous relationship to reality. The industrial design of the dog, cat and duck, as well as the colorful cake decoration, do not refer to the actual appearance of animals or flowers, but to similarly artificial artifacts that are supposed to embellish and make it a little prettier. Swarovski is profiting from this longing for a glittering world, behind which, as a side effect, the company's involvement in National Socialism is being concealed.

While the translucent material casts dark shadows on the projection surface, the white light at the sharp edges of the crystals breaks up into all the spectral colors, which are then transferred into the projection and thus into the images. The translation from object to image represents a clear shift to the figures, which are hardly recognizable because the light from the overhead projector makes them appear as opaque surfaces, giving them a surprisingly graphic appearance. The indeterminate depth of the projector's light space is appears in the image as an opaque matte gray ground. The silhouettes, which have harder or softer contours depending on the translucency of the originals, create a peculiar kind of spatiality that is constructed very differently from the crystalline source material.

The blurring at the edges and the prismatic light reflections further emphasize the difference between the three-dimensional object and the two-dimensional representation by delaying and irritating perception. They make the viewer stumble at the moment when he thinks he recognizes a cat, because identification with the figures is constantly undermined by the structure of the pictorial representation. Instead, a mental movement is set in motion that shifts between figuration, abstraction, gesture, figure and ground, surface and volume, transparency and opacity, light and shadow. Demian Kern explores this sequence of pictorial modalities, bringing the relationship between the object and the representation of the object into flux.

This iridescent mobility is in tension with the still, frozen situations that capture the shadows cast by the fleeting arrangements. The static small figures, thrown together in a kind of no man's land, are animated in their reception by the sequence of group scenes and close-ups. The works are linked not only by the supposed narrative, but also by conceptual painterly categories. What is also the aim of the only picture that repeatedly falls out of the frame in the constellation of the exhibition: a monochrome painting that does not represent a reproduction of anything, but is pure pictorial invention. Once again, the painterly is called upon to contrast with the original. The green canvas offers an empty projection surface for imaginary afterimages of the forms seen. It represents a rupture, confirming at the same time the consistent logic of the pictorial investigation.

Anette Freudenberger

*Demian Kern lives and works in Vienna. He studied at the Kunsthochschule Berlin Weissensee with Ralf Ziervogel and Nine Budde and at Art Center Pasadena with Stan Douglas, Laura Owens and Bruce Hainley.*