

August 12, 2011—Lothar Hempel's ninth solo show at Anton Kern Gallery comprises three sculptures, five aluminum paintings, three diamond-shaped photo-montages, and a set of seven collages. The entire show is framed by the reference made in its title, *Suedehead*, a term describing an early 1970s subculture in the UK.

Hempel's mode of working consists of combining such disparate materials as blown-up mounted photographs, etched or screen-printed steel plates, cast concrete, abstract geometric steel elements, along with a variety of found objects such as Moroccan carpets, a birdcage or a bumper car. Even Hempel's paintings are combinations of painting and printing on an aluminum support. The bold colors, the hardedge qualities of the materials and the use of manufactured, rather than hand-shaped forms speak to the character of the work and the artist's intention. While the title refers to a past (yet, uncannily timely!) moment of youth dissatisfaction and aggression transformed into the nuanced and ambiguous style of the *Suedeheads* with their grown-out Skinhead crop, dapper Hard Mod clothing, and latent hostility and demi-monde aloofness. It is Hempel's skilled language of combinatorial synthesis that allows the viewer to look beyond the intricacies of subcultural signifiers and to enter a world of body language and abstraction. Elegant modern dance poses meet thuggish posturing and swagger, while both coexist on a stage of extensive artifice and cunning craft. Likewise, and metaphorically, the shape of a knife, including superimposed madcap dancers, floating below a dream-like image of the moon becomes a biomorphic abstraction of lunacy, or moon-sickness. A hand-made Moroccan rug combined with etched, lacquered metal plates and thin concrete reliefs comes to be a nocturnal shop window displaying marvelous objects. Hempel explores a stage of human conduct, sometimes quite unsound, where emotions and desires are clad in artifice and imagination.

Lothar Hempel's work has been exhibited continuously since the 1990s, most recently in solo shows at Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (2008), and Le Magasin, Grenoble (2007). Among the numerous group shows he has participated in were recent exhibitions at the Centre d'art contemporain, Chamarande, France; the Centre of Contemporary Art Andratx, Mallorca, Spain (both 2011); LA MOCA, Los Angeles (2010); the 2nd Athens Biennial, Greece; the Beaufort 03 Triennale, Ostend, Belgium (both 2009); *7th Gwangju Biennale*, Korea; Skulpturenpark, Tilburg, Netherlands; and the Barbican Art Gallery, London (all 2008). Future projects include a one-person show at La Conservera Contemporary Art Center, Murcia, Spain (2012), and his participation in the *Herzliya Biennial*, Tel Aviv, Israel (October 2011). Hempel lives and works in Berlin, Germany

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