

Herbert Brandl is presenting a series of bronze sculptures, new mountain and crystal paintings, and a new series of monotypes in his upcoming exhibition “Schönes Leben” (Beautiful Life), his eighth solo show in the Galerie nächst St. Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder.

„Brandl’s art consists not only of painting as painting—be this in the form of abstractions or landscapes—there are also unusual elements to be found. These curious renegades, black sheep, or thorns in the side of panel painting take the form of lovely little flowers, a megalomaniac mushroom mutation, aquariums, domesticated wild cats, or bloodthirsty packs of hyenas tearing into their prey. About five years ago, one of these creatures escaped from the canvas, and since then the artist has been working on the sculptural permutations of this creature in bronze. The starting point for this project was a big cat from Indonesia made of wood that Brandl used for many years to scrape off the left-over paint from his pictures. At the end of the 1980s, the painter had removed all impasto from his paintings, making the surface smooth and opening it up to light and space. The sediment of the oil paint remained on the animal, which became a kind of painting in its own right. The artist then decided to take this painterly ready-made and make many mutations of it before casting it in bronze, also elongating its limbs and incisors. Out of the sleek and crouching cat, grotesque and fantastic fighting clones were born that looked as if they come straight out of the movie Brotherhood of the Wolf. Are these the inhabitants of Brandl’s scorched post-apocalyptic landscape pictures, or are they the wild and ancient gatekeepers of the picturesque Yangtze River?“ (Florian Steininger)

After his series of Yangtze River and hyena paintings, Herbert Brandl has returned to mountains, letting the breathtaking ruggedness of Grossglockner and Aconcagua set a new tone. Stunning spaces of light and color (primarily blue and white) emerge, while nature presents itself in its most richly associative form. The blurred line between abstraction and representation – the tension created by Brandl’s “unintentional” painting in each picture – has been referred to by Ulrich Loock as the “representation of the non-representability of landscape.” Above all, Herbert Brandl’s work on mountains is work on painting: how to approach the atmosphere and conditions, paint as matter, painterly gesture, and finally the inscription of physical movement into the picture. Brandl has integrated Chinese ink painting into his range of painterly techniques, placing airy brush strokes on patches of white untreated canvas, lending the rugged and powerful mountain motifs an astonishing lightness. He has also created a new series of pictures of mountain crystals, whose jagged structures resembling crumbling peaks or tall buildings toppling over are rendered in an apocalyptic dark blue accentuated with light lines and cross-hatching. Monotypes revolving around the same theme make the exhibition complete.

Herbert Brandl, born in 1959 in Graz, lives in Vienna. Herbert Brandl took part in the São Paulo

Biennale in 1989 and the Documenta IX in Kassel in 1992. In 2007, he represented Austria at the Venice Biennale. Selected solo exhibitions: Kunsthalle Bern; Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent; Museum Haus Esters, Krefeld; Secession, Vienna; Kunsthalle Basel; Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz; Deichtorhallen, Hamburg; Albertina, Vienna; Bank Austria Kunstforum, Vienna; Osthaus Museum Hagen; Haus der Kunst St. Josef, Solothurn Selected museum collections: Albertina, Vienna, Centre Pompidou, Paris, Kunsthaus Zürich, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, Museu Serralves, Porto, Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna, Reina Sofia, Madrid, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, The Renaissance Society, Chicago, Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz.

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