

Manfred Naescher

Works 2008-2011

Faces (2010)

Watercolor on Paper, Series of 9 Drawings, Dimensions each 24 x 30 cm / 9.5 x 12.5 in

Faces is a series of watercolor portraits of female actors in films. As the marks of watercolor have solidified into visible traces of the passage of time on paper, the resulting image reveals a memory of the process. Derrida's concept of cinema as "the art of allowing ghosts to come back" is interpreted here with watercolor acting as the medium through which ghosts are invited to the present. This process "presupposes a memory of the past that has never taken the form of the present" (Derrida), which is especially valid for film, a mere product of artifice. The images of Faces are both portraits and evocations of ghosts.

I Walked with a Zombie (2010)

Watercolor on Paper, Series of 22 Drawings, Dimensions each 20 x 29 cm / 8 x 11.5 in

The zombie in the 1947 Jacques Tourneur film of the same name is not an imminent threat, but a calm, permanent presence, a personified reminder of an occurrence in the past, an undead memory. The horror, here, lies in how haunted a life can become, as opposed to horror being derived from abrupt effects and gore. The series of watercolors builds on the film's premise of being followed, literally and figuratively: being haunted. The zombie, devoid of life, yet existing, lives with the other protagonists for the sole purpose of being a constant presence, like a disease, or a curse. The film's ambivalent atmosphere (tropical yet sinister, light yet tense) and haunting imagery is reimaged using a wide spectrum of the diffuse effects and sharp edges of watercolor painting, in a sepia palette that returns us to the idea of the past, like a memory.

Mountains with Subtitles (2010)

Watercolor on Paper, Series of 10 Drawings, Dimensions each 70 x 100 cm / 27.5 x 39.5 in

The series Mountains with Subtitles contrasts the relative permanence of mountains with the elusive nature of language. The images are simultaneous displays of impermanence in seconds and over millions of years, of human memory and memory of stone.

Architecture Without Films (2010)

Pencil on Paper, Series of 19 Drawings, Dimensions each 21 x 30 cm / 8.3 x 11.7 in

Architecture Without Films is a series of drawings, for which the play of light on buildings (or what appear as buildings) is extracted from screenshots taken from films. By projecting the images onto a wall and by the use of pencil and paper to create a wall rubbing of the architectural elements in the frame, architecture permeates the paper from both sides of the sheet: the front side of the sheet receives the shape and tonality of the projected building, while the back side connects to the wall and transmits a surface texture of a building that, in the process, becomes imprinted onto the paper. This process contributes actual light and stone to mere images of light and stone. All the non-architectural elements of the film frames are voided, yet the voids themselves frequently create visibility through negative space, which allows the human element and narrative possibilities to enter the context.

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Works 2008-2011

Fighting (2009)

Watercolor on Paper, Series of 11 Drawings, Dimensions each 30 x 40 cm / 12 x 15.5 in

Based on films of various eras and genres (from *La Strada* to *The Bourne Supremacy*), this series of drawings coalesces into one continuous, book-length/five-decade-long fighting scene. The zine's drawings of man-on-man fighting are based on film frames from *The Wild One* (Laslo Benedek, 1953) with Marlon Brando as a motorcycle gang leader, Fellini's *La Strada* (with Anthony Quinn as the Great Zampano, 1954), *East of Eden* (with James Dean, by Elia Kazan, 1954), the spaghetti western *Django* (Sergio Corbucci, 1966), the headbanger mockumentary *Fubar* (Michael Dowse, 2002), and the slick action movie *The Bourne Supremacy* (Paul Greengrass, 2004).

By imposing a uniform color scheme and omitting the original scenes' backgrounds, the initially diverse imagery gains narrative cohesion. At the same time, the anonymous protagonists in their voided locations create an iconography of fighting that ranges from troubled men's awkward shoving (*Fubar*) and clumsy fist fights (*La Strada*, *The Wild One*) through emotional, violent outbursts (*East of Eden*) and brute macho aggression (*Django*) to the precision of Matt Damon's man-as-weapon in *The Bourne Supremacy*. Arranged in a non-chronological, non-hierarchical order, the drawings create a subjective iconographic compendium of male aggression, as well as a narrative of pure action; the whole story is about nothing but fighting, and fighting alone.

Vargtimmen (2009)

Pencil on Paper, Series of 17 Drawings, Dimensions each 27 x 34 cm / 10.5 x 13.5 in

For *Vargtimmen*, the source images from the film of the same title by Ingmar Bergman were selected in chronological intervals of five minutes. Bergman's concern with character and composition and Sven Nyqvist's contrast-rich black and white cinematography turn almost every frame into a striking portrait, so that the experimental five-minute interval becomes a surprisingly effective device for locating adequate source imagery. The drawings, as well as the series as a whole, are governed by the principles of reduction and distortion. Foregoing a straight retelling of the film's narrative, this deliberately and necessarily fragmented succession of portraits creates a pictorial sequence distantly parallel to the film.