

## Eckpunkt Matthias Bitzer – Palimpsest



Matthias Bitzer  
Rua Dos Douradores (The Weeping Walls), 2010  
Pencil on paper / lacquer behind glass  
Diptych, 90 x 65 cm  
Courtesy Galerie Iris Kadel, Karlsruhe

**February 6–March 28, 2010**

Press conference Thursday, February 4, 2010, 11 am  
Opening Friday, Februar 5, 2010, 8 pm

In the exhibition “Palimpsest,” the Kunstverein Hannover presents the most recent series of drawings, sculptures and installations by the young German artist Matthias Bitzer (\*1975 in Stuttgart, lives in Berlin) in which he deals with the potentials of portraiture between figuration, representation and abstraction.

Matthias Bitzer, who was awarded the art prize of the city of Nordhorn in 2007, combines painting, sculpture, wall drawing and installation into an experience space of history and identity. The portrait as the starting point is a recurring theme in his works with which he transfers marginal historical figures in the tension field between abstraction and figuration into a new level of visual perception. For the first time, in the exhibition at the Kunstverein, he singles out one historical personality with the aim of enabling various formal approaches to be experienced.

The exhibition focuses on the complex figure of the Portuguese lyricist and poet Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935) who is counted among the most important authors of the twentieth century. To deal with the topic of portraiture, Bitzer thus chose a particularly exiting subject who was not only one writer, but many. Pessoa constructed an entire series of fictional personalities who were each equipped with their own biography, educational background and writing style, so-called heteronyms whose individual characteristics go far beyond the simple renaming in a pseudonym. The most famous among them were Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos who carried out fierce debates in the letters to the editor columns of contemporary literary journals.

After Pessoa’s death, a wooden chest was found in his apartment containing countless manuscript pages and slips of paper on which the collected, only rarely published works by Pessoa and his approximately seventy pseudonyms and heteronyms were written. To open his exhibition, Matthias Bitzer draws on this chest in which the writer’s various identities were assembled: **“My Love Is Still Untold”** (2010) consists of a closed wooden chest encased in a gray, glazed base as a symbol of the unknown that remains to be discovered and which cannot be experienced in its entirety.

From the poet's many facets, Bitzer isolated the fifteen most prominent heteronyms which he summarized into a restive pattern in an abstract crayon and acrylics painting. The white lines contrast the black wood of the background like smoke rings in swirling forms. The incomprehensibility of the fleeting system is echoed in the title **"Mindmap/Chasing Rabbits"** (2010). In those areas where the white is thickest or the lines peter out into nothingness, the monograms of Pessoa's different personalities are fitted in like intarsia. The glass surfaces that simultaneously protect and seal the clusters of letters follow a color scheme that runs through all the pieces in the exhibition, connecting them like a golden thread.

The green and brown hues, for example, form a two-dimensional glass base for the pencil drawing of an urban canyon. It is overlaid with a geometrical pattern in whose fields the representation alternates in positive and negative and lets the drawing disintegrate into individual pieces like burst glass: The street scene seems to be an image and an afterimage at the same time. The title **"Rua Dos Douradores (The Weeping Walls)"** (2010) references the street in Lisbon which was at the center of the salesman Pessoa's life.

Pessoa's artistic portrayals are continued in a series of stylistically similar drawings. Behind abstract patterns of increasing complexity, Bitzer drew the café that Pessoa frequented, the famous occultist Aleister Crowley, with whom he was friends, his wife Ophelia and, finally, Pessoa himself whose portrait is fragmented into so many individual parts that hardly anything other than his eyes are recognizable. The increasing abstraction culminates at the end of the exhibition: The forms are removed from any type of illustration. Similarly impalpable and playful as the smoke lines of "Mindmap ...", complex structures are formed from taut arches, spirals, wirings and the surfaces spanned between them.

Bitzer leads portraiture far beyond the illustration of a person in this exhibition, translating it into a complex interplay of concrete and abstract manners of representation, Pessoa's multiple personalities increasingly dissolve in Bitzer's portrayal and discharge into an atmospheric abstraction.

"In the end," Pessoa wrote in the "Book of Unrest" as Bernardo Soares, "that what remains from today, what remained from yesterday and will remain from tomorrow is namely the insatiable and uncountable desire to be the same person and a different one."

**All press photographs and texts regarding this exhibition can be found as downloads on our homepage [www.kunstverein-hannover.de](http://www.kunstverein-hannover.de) under "Press". For further information and images, please contact [presse@kunstverein-hannover.de](mailto:presse@kunstverein-hannover.de), tel: +49 (0)511 1699278-12.**

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#### Parallel exhibition at Kunstverein Hannover

Jason Dodge – I woke up. There was a note in my pocket explaining what had happened.

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#### Opening hours

Tuesdays to Saturdays 12 noon to 7 pm  
Sundays and holidays 11 am to 7 pm

#### Admission

€ 5 / reduced € 3 / members free  
Sundays free admission

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#### The exhibition is supported by

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