

Eberhard Havekost

Fanzine

Foreword

Barry Schwabsky
Art critic, art historian, and poet

Writing thirteen years ago about the art of Eberhard Havekost, I was struck by its haunted quality, the way it turns ordinary things eerie, and I connected this to his use of photographic sources, not for clear and distinct imagery, but precisely to detach images from their referents, producing what I called "representations of something that refuses to be identified." Since then, the art world has taken a turn: Many artists and viewers have begun looking to art for images with secure identities. They have become allergic to ambiguity. To my mind, that's why Havekost's work is even more urgent now, four years after his much too early death: It reminds us to think twice before putting too much faith in the meanings we ascribe to images. Paintings like Havekost's say both more and less than we want them to. And then, if we let them, they surprise us by conveying something only they know, something we can't quite put into words, a disconcerting beauty.

New York, July 2023

Max Hollein
Marina Kellen French Director and
Chief Executive Officer of
Metropolitan Museum of Art

I so often miss Ebs as a good friend, thoughtful observer, opinionated interlocutor and outstanding artist. His work has accompanied me in its fundamental ambition to interrogate images, imagery and visual truths ever since I started working in the art world.

Havekost's paintings represent a highly consequential, visually powerful and intellectually challenging apparatus of investigation into the potential of everyday motives and their transformation in both material and meaning through the artistic process of documentation, adaptation and usage. For Havekost, any motive was essential for starting a process of artistic creation but its specific selection was in essence inconsequential for the perception of the work by the viewer. In fact, it merely provided the base structure and inspiration, a starting point for a painterly process that then further built on the dematerialization of the object depicted. Already before an image for a painting was chosen by Havekost, he was acutely aware of the process that the motive had already gone through, having been dematerialized through

the initial photographic depiction into a digital file status and then resurfacing in a new material existence, a simplified yet enhanced physical quality in a Havekost painting. Motives in these paintings have gone through an extensive alteration, they are filtered, made more abstract, are being cropped, distorted and denuded of unnecessary detail and signifiers that could locate them within a broader context or story. They rather are centered on themselves, images of a latent contemporaneity, cool representatives of a visual culture that produces image vessels for the interaction with the viewer, on offer by the artist allowing them to rematerialize and be seen, used and perceived in newly individual and subjective ways.

Havekost paintings are meticulously planned, carefully crafted conduits into the un- and subconscious of the spectator. He was a trailblazer in understanding the filters that construct and deconstruct the visual culture of our time. Ebs made sure that it is the medium of painting that can most convincingly engage in the process of manifesting the picture plane as a user interface to experience image taking, making and perceiving in our digital time.

New York, August 2023

Fabrice Hergott
Director of Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

Among the abundance of paintings in the last thirty years, the work of Eberhard Havekost stands out.

His first paintings from the end of the 1990s depicted building facades, houses, and camping trailers. Since they first appeared, they had a melancholic and disturbing tone which gripped you as if self-evident. Was it because of the banality of the subject, treated coolly, distantly? Or more directly still, by the grace of their plastic and colorist qualities, which would be confirmed by his later works. The painting of Havekost is anything but boring. If it seems to be boring, the subjects, which often come from his own photographs, seem chosen by idleness.

His paintings possess something poignant and unique, that one can believe to have seen in the empty and mineral squares on the first de Chiricos, or in the liquid surfaces of Felix Valloton. There is nothing in the treatment of his subject that has the literality of pop art. Everything here is tense and gives the sensation of an arid intelligence that one finds in the films of urban policemen by Michael Mann who, like other filmmakers of this decade, seems to me a likely source of his tight framing.

It has often and very rightly been said that his paintings are like clues to a drama. I readily believe that they speak of a tragedy, but which is linked to our relationship to the world, and in particular the fact that the world, reality, no longer belongs to us. The world as it was confiscated from us by machines after they took power, against which this painting rises and fights in silence, scrutinizing and dismantling these images, like an abundance of clues about a tragedy that has become so grand, one cannot make of it anything other than an observation. And why not take as his subject the idea that it would be a painting of the dispossessed? One of the few that still has meaning.

Today, in looking at his thirty-odd years of painting, one can ask if these paintings do not express the experience of the dispossession of reality that was stolen by photography; that is to say, by the machines, of which the camera is the true ancestor. Whatever the subject of these paintings, from the most figurative to the most abstract, they evoke the drama of this absence. Whether it is that "3 minutes" painting or an image of a marine dinosaur. All of these paintings are images of images that flee under our gaze as beings hunted by the fear of our own disappearance.

Sartre said that it is after death that life transforms into destiny. It is a bit disconcerting to see that after the untimely demise of this artist, his destiny seems present in each of his works, as if they had only ever spoken of that.

Paris, July 2023

Ulrich Loock

Curator and art critic, and former director
of the Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland

What is it that makes Eberhard Havekost's painting so extraordinary, so significant? It is the way he was able to turn a decisive crisis of painting to the advantage of his work. To have triggered this crisis is arguably the most important achievement of Gerhard Richter: "I find some amateur photos better than the best Cézanne." Richter initiated the most profound degradation of what used to be considered painting by subjecting painting to the mode of photography. It was up to a generation of painters who emerged in the 1980s and 1990s to pick up at that point of no return. Often Havekost used photographs as a starting point for his painting – found photos but increasingly also photos he had taken himself – that were explicitly "photographic" in terms of cropping, sharpness and blur, typical effects such as the reflection of a flash, and imagery such as TV monitors or a cell phone. He also reacted however to the new challenge of digitally generated images by electronically treating his photos before painting them. In that sense he affirmed under circumstances of contemporary technology the zero point of painting established by Richter, there was no nostalgia, no revisionary urge. At the same time and notwithstanding, however, Havekost was able to imbue his pictures with a sense of physicality and resistance. He painted to reconstruct the digital-photographic as an uncharted field of the physical – physicality was not to overcome or revise the photographic and the digital but to corrupt and expand it from the inside. It was his great achievement to entangle the digital-photographic and the physical, constructing a particular kind of ambiguity he attributed to "self-referential skepticism". Consequently, his praxis has never been systematic and strategic as the praxis of Richter. Havekost's paintings seem rather to depend on momentary impulses, instances of selective desire. In 2006 he said in a private conversation, "I've developed a few preferences, but I just go with the flow and try to keep seeing something new." In the same conversation he said that he was interested in "obscure situations". Yet, it would be wrong to consider the course of his work as arbitrary. Without a doubt, he did prove his sense of an "oeuvre" – or maybe rather a deconstructed "oeuvre" – when, in his later work, he tended towards depicting signs, logos, bar codes, configurations of lines, or even an empty sheet of paper – images to a large extent adapted to the digital condition – and, on the other hand, spreading thick crusts of paint on the canvas without any model.

Berlin, September 2023

Christoph Gerozissis

Senior Director at Anton Kern Gallery

It is an illuminating experience to read the old catalog essays on Eberhard Havekost again; from the early seminal texts by Ulrich Loock, who already in 1998, recognized the paradigm shift that was taking place in Havekost's paintings: the detached analysis of the mediated image and our sensory processing, including the paintings' ominous tv-screen glow; to the debates on the "user interface" initiated by Jean-Charles Vergne around 2008; towards a remarkable shift in the perception of the artist's later work, first picked up on by Katy Siegel in 2013, who noticed the "physical, rather than purely discursive nature" of Havekost's work. It is refreshing to be reminded of Havekost's radical approach to painting and of the way his works were seen and interpreted, especially now, in an age of the implosion/entropy of visual culture, of extreme image manipulation and overload, and of the make-believe world of "artificial intelligence."

Havekost never belonged to any school or group as was popular in the 1990s and early 2000s for painters coming from the former East Germany. He was a true artist maverick, a free spirit. When Anton gave him his first show in 1998, he was drawn in by the total uniqueness of the work, his singular position in the art world. From his short career, Havekost has left us a distinctive group of paintings that still manage to startle the viewer. Each one can clear your head and your cluttered optical senses, and reboot your perception of the world.

Eberhard was my friend. I knew him as a loving man, passionate, hungry for life experience, with a sharp sense of self-irony, a music lover, a DJ in dark techno clubs, who made people dance and enjoy themselves, and, in one of my favorite memories, he once leaned over backwards and stuck his head into a blasting speaker to close his eyes and smile. As a young man, growing up in East Germany's conformist and denunciatory society, he was denied access to art school because he had not joined the communist youth organization. He took up a stonemason apprenticeship instead, specializing—with some eerie sense of premonition for the fate of the German Democratic Republic perhaps—in the making of gravestones. Once the wall came down, he swiftly entered art school in Dresden, and after graduating, moved to Frankfurt and lived in a techno club (no joke!). He was an unpretentious and unconventional person, precise, thoughtful, and warm.

There was not an ounce of a bourgeois or, even more surprisingly, anti-bourgeois attitude in his bones. The keen analytical senses of the artist were directed towards the grip technology has on our societies, while his artistic sophistication found its clearest expression in the old-masterly painting techniques he applied. It came as no surprise that Havekost's early work confronted a world of surveillance, of being permanently watched, observed, even followed and aimed at by snipers. He pictured a sense of paranoia in our naïve embrace of image technology. But it always fascinated me that his simple personal way of life was free of the influences of mass technology, societal pressures, and social media. Studio visits in Berlin always consisted of two parts: first, hours of intense looking and putting into words what you just saw, followed by two hours of listening to techno music at full volume, to specific tracks that he had collaged into mixtapes. Detroit was at the heart of that matter.

Afterwards, we would leave together for a well-deserved and relaxing beer in a pub nearby, with me feeling a step closer to ultimate freedom.

I am extremely thankful to all the contributors of our little publication and excited that some of the early advocates joined us in commemorating Eberhard Havekost, a great artist and dear friend. A heartfelt thank you to everyone!

New York, July 2023



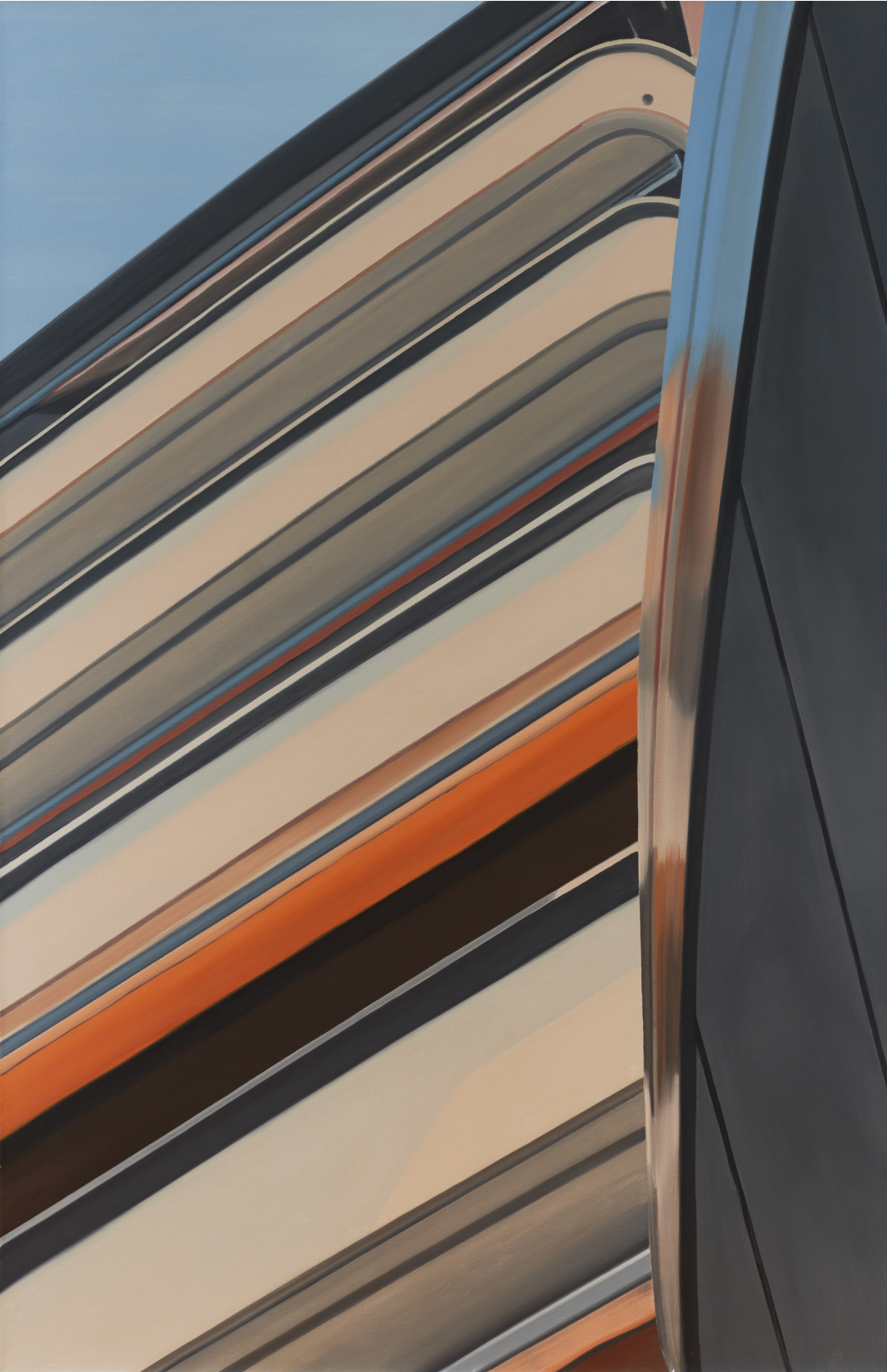
Auto, WD 98, 1998



Bath/Flashlight, 2002



Record Sleeve for 'Bohnerwachs', 2002



Retina, DD, 2002



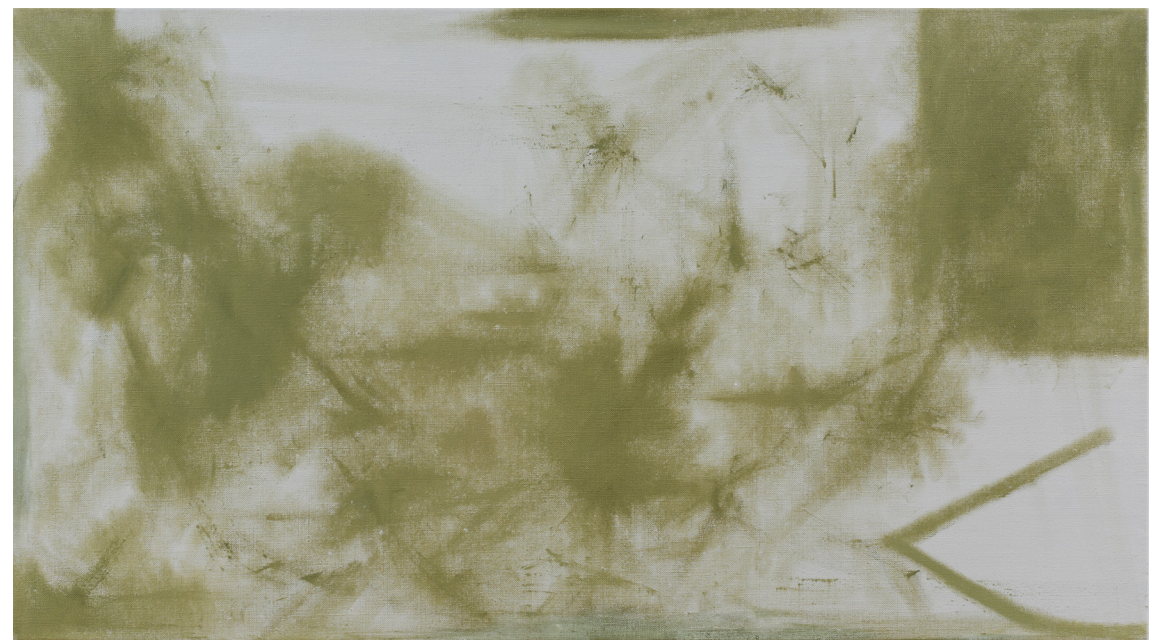
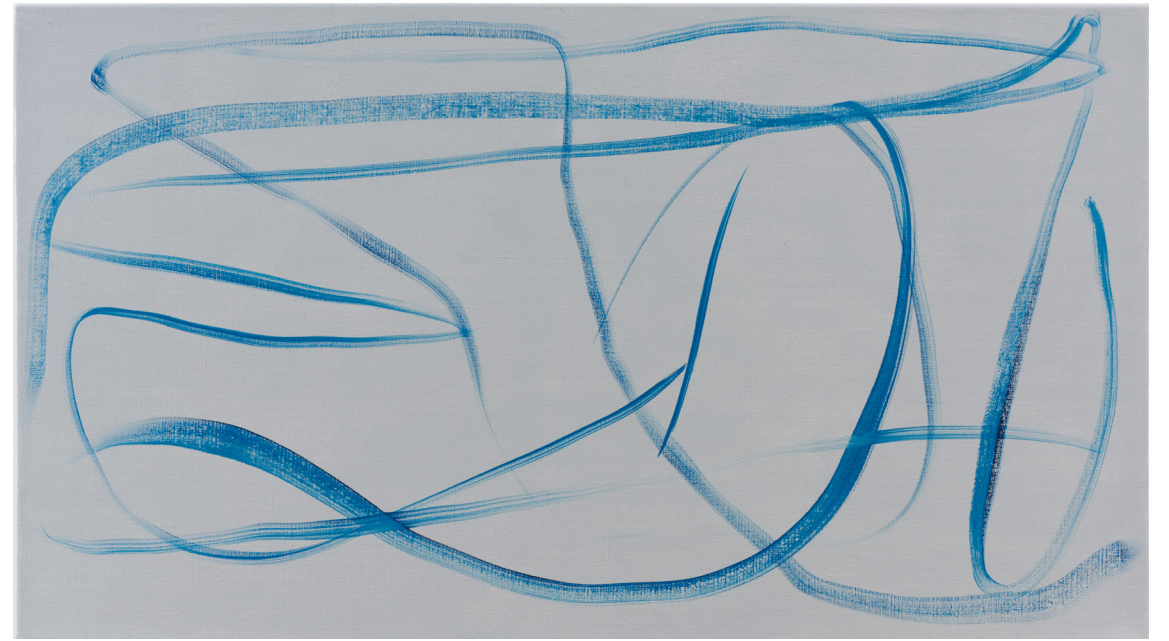
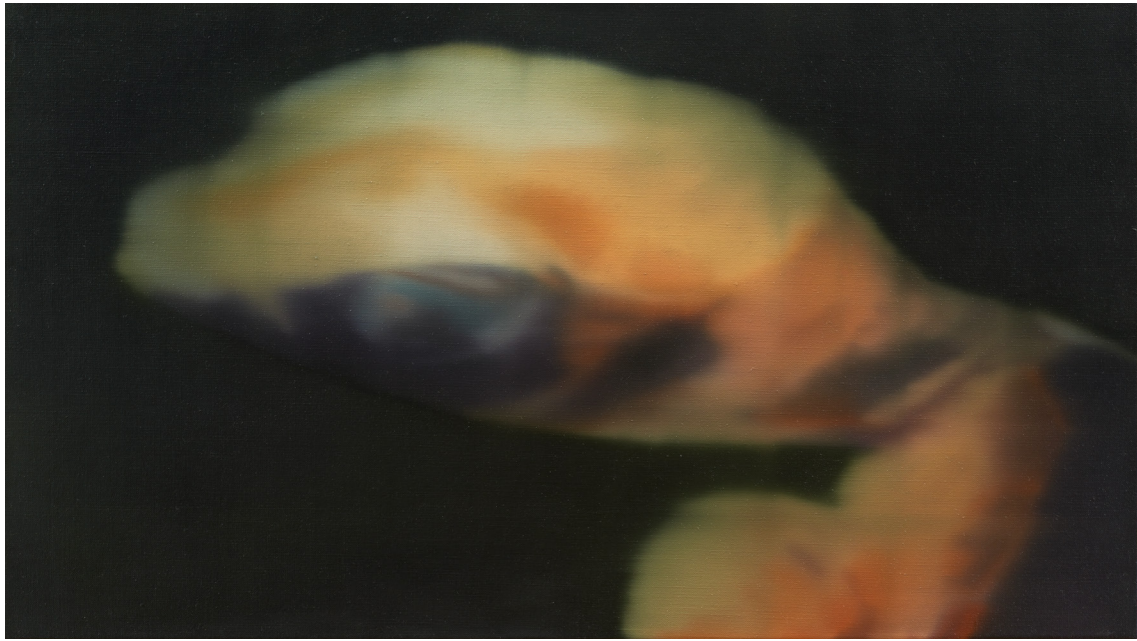




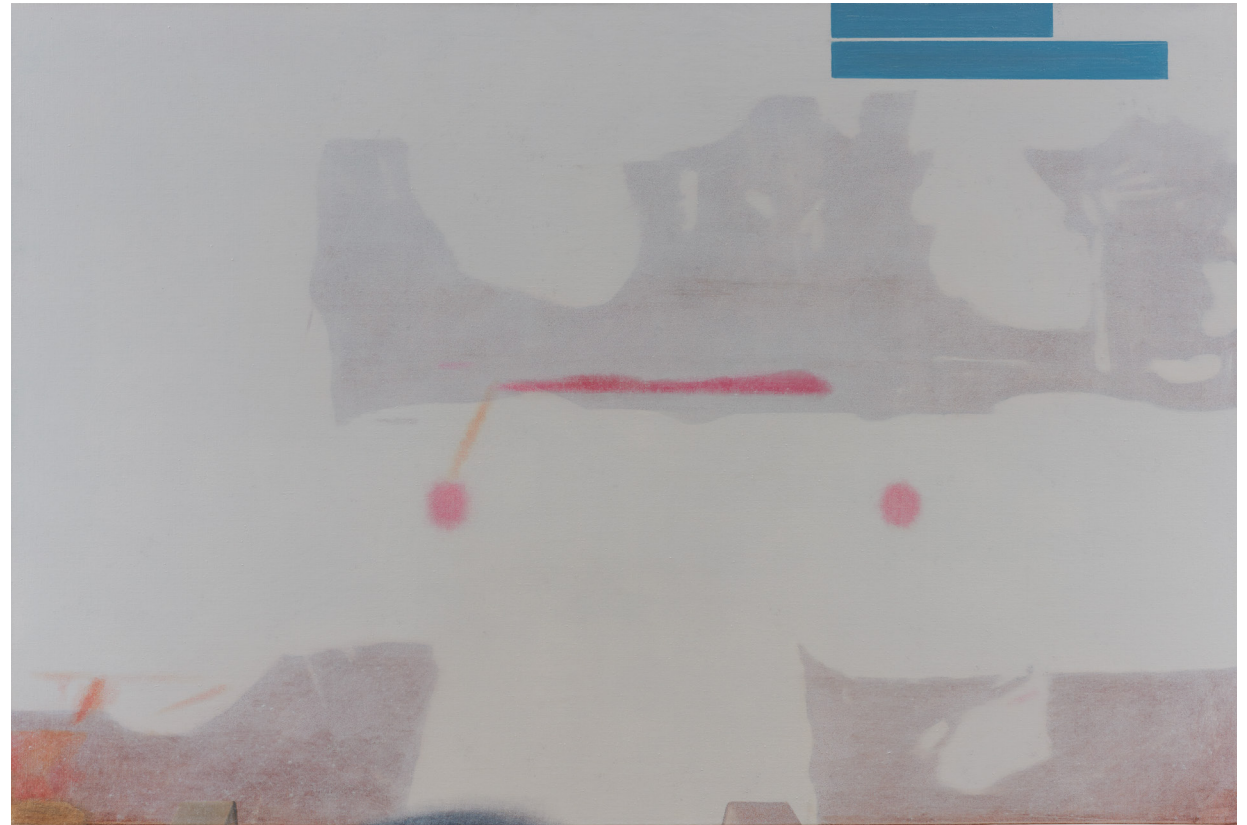








Wesen, B15, 2015 | 3 Minuten, B15, 2015 | 1 Tag, B15, 2015



Spray, B13, 2013



Illustration, B15, 2015





Ulrich Bischoff (1998):

The transformation of images through the image-media has pushed the pictured subjects into a realm of artificiality where they become completely available. In this entirely dissolved state, Havekost takes what is depicted, picks it up – sublates it – in the old Hegelian sense, and makes something new out of it.

Bischoff, Ulrich: Dorothea von Stetten-Kunstpreis, Eberhard Havekost. Kunstmuseum Bonn, 1998.

Ulrich Loock (1998):

The Renaissance paradigm of painting-as-window is replaced by the paradigm of the infinite availability of images within images: an idea that also appears in the language of electronic image manipulation, where it is denoted by the word “windows.” [...] Havekost does not paint TV pictures (even when he uses them as source images); what he does is to open his painting to the intrusion of the televisual constitution of the image. His work bears the signs of a manipulation governed not only by the individual source image but by the way they are produced.

Loock, Ulrich: Eberhard Havekost, Fenster – Fenster. Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1998.

Fabrice Hergott (1999):

It is therefore a form of vanitas painting developed in, or rather aimed at, the contemporary world. Vanitas images in which the facades are faces, on the surface of which emerge doors and windows that are nothing more than the eye sockets and the teeth of our future skulls.

Hergott, Fabrice: Future of No Return, in: Eberhard Havekost: Druck. Galerie für zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 1999.

Annelie Lütgens (2005):

A crucial aspect of Havekost’s work is his precise, analytical, and often indirect approach to examining contemporary images. He selects motifs from his own photographs as well as pictures from the media, and these images are then scanned and digitally processed with the intention of looking behind their superficial appearance. The result of this research is then formulated on the surface of the canvas.

Lütgens, Annelie: Image Space/Conceptual Space – Havekost’s Painting as a Science of Images, in: Eberhard Havekost. Harmonie. Bilder / Paintings 1998 – 2005. Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 2005.

Eberhard Havekost (2006):

In 1996, I started taking photographs in Frankfurt am Main.

The first subjects were the facades of houses. I would walk along the rows of houses and see the flickering of televisions in the windows. Then I started taking pictures of the facades, and at the same time I started taking photographs of video stills from the television. I used a 400-speed film for both, in order to have similar light and color in the indoor and outdoor images.

Coetzee, Mark and Eberhard Havekost: Interview, in: Eberhard Havekost 1996-2006: Paintings from the Rubell Family Collection. Rubell Family Collection, Miami, 2006

Ulrich Loock (2006):

What Eberhard Havekost paints comes from the real world, but does not lead back to it. This cancellation is reflected in numerous ways by the way he treats his depicted objects— faces behind sunglasses or behind the visor of a helmet or even struck through with a black stripe. [...] One effect of Havekost’s rendering of photographic images in paint is that every step closer to the subject matter increases the feeling of distance, until the distance is so great that no aura is sufficiently resilient to bridge the gap. As a consequence of the electronic editing of the photo, the objects and subjects themselves have become uncertain, and the painting acts as confirmation of this uncertainty. Havekost’s pictures do not depict reality—they drag reality behind them.

Loock, Ulrich: User Environment, in: Eberhard Havekost 1996-2006: Paintings from the Rubell Family Collection. Rubell Family Collection, Miami, 2006

Martin Herbert (2007):

And with such productions we wave goodbye to the idea of the viewer’s agency. This is the defining shift, if you will, of Havekost’s art: to clarify within the safety zone of painting—to perform, through painting—how objectified we are as subjects. Endlessly, Havekost dangles intimacy and then overrules it.

Herbert, Martin: Eberhard Havekost: BACKGROUND. White Cube, London, 2007.

Eberhard Havekost (2007):

Here I photographed a naturalistic butterfly sticker on a windowpane.

Havekost, Eberhard: Eberhard Havekost: BACKGROUND. White Cube, London, 2007.

Jean-Charles Vergne (2008):

User Interface. The glass surface of a building is an interface: its outer environment is reflected, its inner life and complexity vanish, all that matters is the building's presence as a building. [...] The façade gives the most "friendly" access to the building's reality; the façade is a face. A face is a mask. [...] The user interface principle is crucial in Eberhard Havekost's work and acts as a binding concept. His paintings are interfaces addressed to the spectator, and in themselves depict a very partial reality of what they truly are. [...] In other words, Eberhard Havekost's paintings are interfaces that reproduce what we do endlessly: filter reality, see things from a subjective and thus necessarily erroneous viewpoint, embark on incessant simplifications of reality, partake in a chain of disparate realities that follow one another like photograms in a film reel.

Vergne, Jean-Charles: The Reality Principle, in: Entrée. FRAC Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand, 2008.

Barry Schwabsky (2010):

Havekost is no romantic. The "abstinence from imagination" evidenced by his reliance on photographic sources allies him with the realist tradition from Courbet onwards. In this Realism lies Havekost's contemporaneity. Today, the imagination is no longer opposed to matter, but assumed to be one of its manifestations. Our propensity to project meaning into meaningless images no longer appears to be liberating but compulsive. That's why the beauty of Havekost's paintings is melancholy. This melancholy is perhaps the last precious trace of free spirit.

Schwabsky, Barry: Phantom Images, in Eberhard Havekost Ausstellung. Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden, 2010.

Max Hollein (2010):

One series within this new collection of works, appropriately titled Retina, could represent the entire show, in that it refers to the first surface projection that is apprehended by our visual perception. This approach is one that recurs constantly in Havekost's artistic work, and it challenges our existential relationships and the parenthetical yet simultaneously permanent way we process images.

Hollein, Max: Foreword, in: Eberhard Havekost, Retina, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, 2010.

Katy Siegel (2013):

Photography has often been seen as a dematerializing force, creating a distant, and even false, world of images; in line with this, critics have read Havekost's work as a kind of essay on the unavailability of reality today. I think this work is more complicated than that. Over the past several years, Havekost has been making paintings that offer a series of proposals about the nature of the material world and our relationship to it that are unusual in their sophistication and in the physical, rather than purely discursive, nature of that sophistication.[...] In a kind of counterpart, Island, B12, depicts a thigh tattooed with a graphic version of a similarly tropical paradise. The former image is taken from an H&M bikini ad in Berlin, which reiterated precisely an experience Havekost actually had in Costa Rica; the tattoo decorates the thigh of a friend, who touches it in times of stress. In these paintings, flesh tangles with image and symbol, providing direct access to reality through touch and physicality. Thigh and paint are equally vivid.[...]

Through choosing this emphatically incarnate source material, Havekost prefigures the re-materialization that his painting process enacts, a translation that has been relatively latent in his work until now. Much of his work expands on the complications of vision and materiality.

Siegel, Katy: And the Moon Came Nearer, in: Titel. Eberhard Havekost. Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst, Duisburg, 2013.

Andreas Fiedler (2016):

With his painting, Eberhard Havekost makes clear how the mechanical reproduction of reality, a form of visual experience that we are confronted with every day, threatens to make a conscious, sensory observation of reality superfluous. He brings pictures from an illusionistic depiction of the world, out of self-contained life simulated in the electronic medium, back into an aesthetic fiction. In the painted picture, the artist transposes something seen into a more complex visibility. Havekost's painted pictures, in their fundamental openness, which the often cryptic titles markedly heighten, stand in opposition to the loss of reflective perception of the world and the self.

Fielder, Andreas: Bikini, Ocean, and Mark Rothko (Foreword), in: Eberhard Havekost. Inhalt. KINDL - Zentrum für zeitgenössische Kunst, Berlin, 2016.

Kito Nedo (2019)

Ultima Thule means the last land. The term comes from the ancient Greek notion of a northernmost region of the world. Sometimes Eberhard Havekost's paintings also look as if they have materialized on 45 x 80 centimeter canvases after months, years even, of data transmission through space.

Nedo, Kito and Louisa Elderton: This Half of Reality, in: Eberhard Havekost. U Say Love. Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin, 2019.



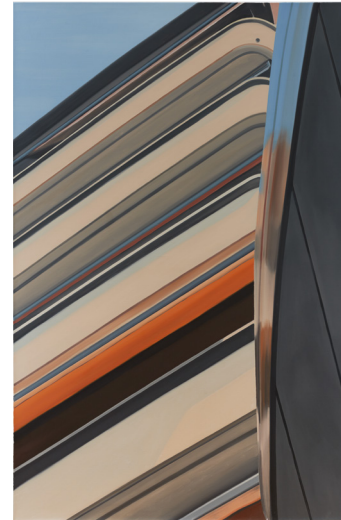
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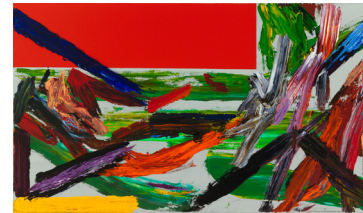
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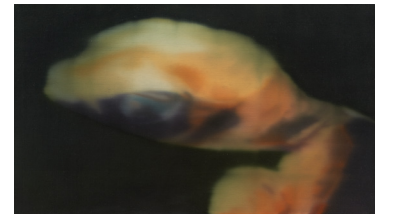
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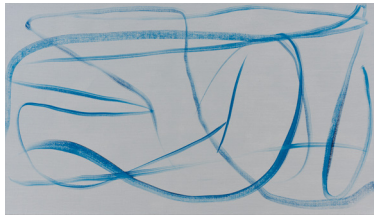


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1. *Auto, WD 98*, 1998, Oil on canvas, 14 x 20 inches (35 x 50 cm)
2. *Bath/Flashlight*, 2002, Oil on canvas, 39 3/8 x 27 1/2 inches (100 x 70 cm)
3. *Record Sleeve for 'Bohnerwachs,'* 2002, Oil on canvas, 35 1/2 x 35 1/2 inches (90 x 90 cm)
4. *Retina, DD*, 2002, Oil on canvas, 78 3/4 x 51 1/8 inches (200 x 130 cm)
5. *Indiz*, 2008, Oil on canvas, 63 x 43 inches (160 x 110 cm)
6. *Konstruktion 1/2 2/2*, 2008, Oil on canvas, 27 1/2 x 19 2/3 inches each (70 x 50 cm each)
7. *Nuclear War, Let's Talk About It*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 43 1/3 x 74 3/4 inches (110 x 190 cm)
8. *Island B12*, 2012, Oil on canvas, 35 7/16 x 23 5/8 inches (90 x 60 cm)
9. *Papier, B12/13*, 2012-2013, Oil on canvas, 106 1/3 x 67 inches (270 x 170 cm)
10. *Gestaltung 1/2 & 2/2, B14*, 2014, Oil on canvas, 17 3/4 x 31 1/2 inches (45 x 80 cm); 74 7/8 x 43 1/3 inches (190 x 110 cm)
11. *Wesen, B15*, 2015, Oil on canvas, 17 3/4 x 31 1/2 inches (45 x 80 cm)



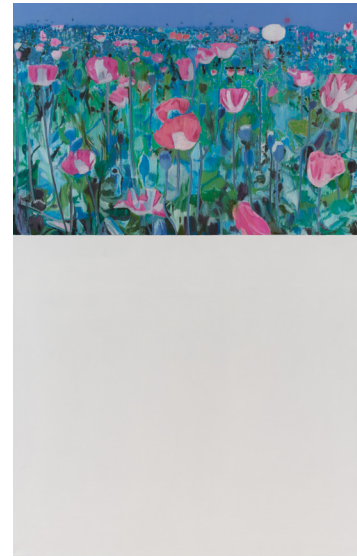
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12. *3 Minuten*, B15, 2015, Oil on canvas, 17 3/4 x 31 1/2 inches (45 x 80 cm)
13. *1 Tag*, B15, 2015, Oil on canvas, 17 3/4 x 31 1/2 inches (45 x 80 cm)
14. *Spray*, B13, 2013, Oil on canvas, 39 1/3 x 59 inches (100 x 150 cm)
15. *Illustration*, B15, 2015, Oil on canvas, 74 3/4 x 47 1/4 inches (190 x 120 cm)
16. *Europa Asien*, B15, 2015, Oil on canvas, 90 1/2 x 43 1/3 inches (230 x 110 cm)
17. *Saurier*, 2016, Oil on canvas, 110 1/4 x 70 7/8 inches (280 x 180 cm)

Eberhard Havekost Fanzine
Published by Anton Kern Gallery, New York
on the occasion of the exhibition
Eberhard Havekost: *Paintings 1998-2016*
September 7 – October 21, 2023
Editor: Christoph Gerozissis
Copy editor: Paige Auerbach
Designer: Kevin Lowenthal
Printer: Sheer Printing
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