



Wolfgang Betke I'd so like to be your ornamental hermit!

Duration: 11 September – 16 October 2010
Opening: 10 September 2010, 6 – 9 PM
Location: ScheiblerMitte
Charlottenstraße 2
10969 Berlin

Wolfgang Betke's allusion to the decadent version of the hermit as an employee on display in eighteenth century English landscape parks sets a broader context for his first solo show at ScheiblerMitte. The social role of the artist within

the current culture industry is viewed ironically. The intense singularity of his paintings, however, leads one to suspect a critical, if not hermetic, distance to the increasing shallowness of the media. Wolfgang Betke has been discussing this theme for years in his widely renowned spoken performances, delivered both live and in his radio poems on OceanClubRadio, which he broadcasted on a weekly basis.

Wolfgang Betke's paintings unite the most disparate elements. Innumerable layers of paint generate a series of frames from which the viewer can read the creational history of the works. They often give the impression of combining contradictory pictorial arrangements. Betke achieves this not least through his command of a vast range of artistic techniques: painted details of landscapes and scraps of clothing stand before amorphous, undulant surfaces, and painting *alla prima* accentuates sweeping color gradients.

In other instances, scraps of posters or photos are worked into the picture, showing parts of a face and serving as the starting point for the reconstruction of a new visage. Their distortion and brokenness make Wolfgang Betke's figures incomparable to the images of people produced by the mass media, but in the artist's eyes they are more realistic than any such photographs. Aggressive deconstruction is deployed in equal measure to constructive methods. Betke sands away parts of his surface layers, resulting in a canvas that is extremely thin and perforated in some places. This effect is welcomed as part of the process. In these cases, decomposition in the most literal sense of the word not only affects the figure portrayed, but the painting itself. In addition, this action turns the artist into an archaeologist, who goes backwards in the painting's timeline to reveal deep underlying sediment. For him, paintings are stratified time. It's no surprise that Betke considers the experience of duration to be an important aspect of his work. This increase in the paintings' formal and spiritual density reaches out to the viewer, who for a short time participates in a quasi-hermetic act.

Image: **Something About Hope**, 2010, mixed media, 150 x 120.5 cm, ca. 59 x 47 in.