

WILDE GALLERY

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Thomas Demand
HANS HOLLEIN
Jasper Morisson
Nick Cave
ZHANG HUAN
Moritz Waldemeyer
JDS meets Lars Von Trier
PAUL SMITH

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Urban Eulogy

EVOL's cardboard urbanology

Berlin-based artist EVOL creates impossibly realistic paintings of architectural structures using stencils and spray paint, the typecast tools of graffiti writers and agitprop street artists. Yet although EVOL's origins are, in fact, street-related (he's been a member of numerous crews under multiple pseudonyms), he finds the term street artist semi-pejorative, a category overcrowded by self-referential tags that add nothing but noise to the discourse of art in the public sphere.

text EMILIE TRICE
images COURTESY THE ARTIST AND WILDE GALLERY

The work EVOL makes for the streets, in particular the defunct electrical transformer boxes he spray paints to look like low-income housing blocks, have been described as 'meta-urban'. His recent installation in a former slaughterhouse in Dresden (coincidentally the same slaughterhouse that appears in Kurt Vonnegut's 'Slaughterhouse Five') resulted in a miniature, post-apocalyptic urban wasteland so realistic in its neurotic execution that photographs documenting the piece evoke the same amazed bewilderment as a work by Thomas Demand. And, similar to Demand's paper models, the original installation will ultimately be destroyed. The entire complex, which still reeks of rotting carcasses, is slated for demolition.

Embedded Narratives

Photography plays an integral role in EVOL's work, not only as documentation of site-specific installations or his public 'interventions' that will eventually either be stolen or removed by authorities. EVOL obsessively photographs familiar city scenes - empty balconies, deserted courtyards, run-down facades - then digitally illustrates select images, isolating each colour field, which he then prints and meticulously cuts out by hand. His aerosol palette reflects the banality of these settings: grey scales and

shades of ochre, brown and yellow dominate the work. With a compulsive eye for gradient detail, he builds layers upon layers of shadows, suggestions of urban neglect and occasional traces of anonymous inhabitants. Still, despite their photographic precision, EVOL's paintings aren't merely exercises in geometric representation. Nor are they cynical critiques of the isolation and confinement that can accompany metropolitan life. Instead, they reveal a profound fascination with the narratives embedded in the city's surfaces and an overwhelming belief in the humanity inherent to the collective urban condition.

Working predominantly on bits of salvaged cardboard, EVOL's materials attest to his romantic preoccupation with the past and its untold stories. Small tears in the cardboard, exposed bits of corrugation, texts such as 'Fragile' and remnants of packing tape are incorporated into his compositions as visual signifiers of both the decay beholden to his urban subject matter and of his chosen material's previous function. We use cardboard to wrap up the by-products of our lives, accumulated moments, personal effects and tangible reminders of our youth. Entire histories

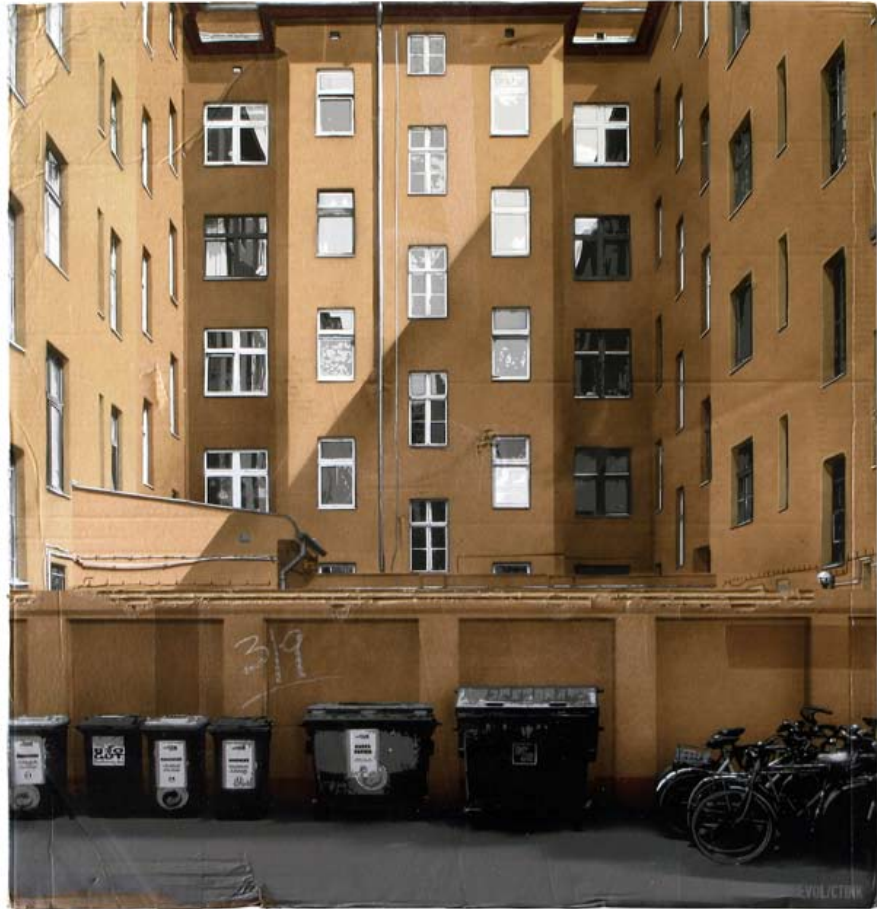


Wallflower, 2009 (top)
Spray paint on cardboard
68 x 54cm

Oberbaum (above)
Spray paint on cardboard
68 x 75cm

Evol, working on his 'Big in Kleinmachnow', 2007 (facing page)
Site-specific installation in artist hotel corridor (Flamingo Beach Lotell), Berlin/ Spray paint and mixed media
Dimensions variable
Photo by Just





Dieffenbachstrasse Backyard, 2008
(top)
Spray paint on cardboard
98 x 104cm

Handle with care (Lehmbruck 9-11),
2006
Spray paint on cardboard
121 x 63cm

Caspar-David-Friedrich-Stadt, 2009
(facing page, top)
Site-specific installation in abandoned
slaughterhouse, Dresden/ Spray paint
on concrete
Dimensions variable

Berlin Shroud, 2009 (facing page left)
Spray paint on cardboard
98 x 8cm

Wallflower, 2009 (facing page, right)
Spray paint on cardboard
68 x 54cm







Plattenbauten, Alles wird Gut, 2008
(above, left)
Spray paint on disused electrical cabinet, Berlin
Dimensions variable

Plattenbauten, 2008 (above right)
Spray paint on disused electrical cabinet, Berlin
Dimensions variable

Triple towers, 2009 (middle right)
Site-specific installation, Dresden/
Spray paint on concrete
Each tower approx. 5.5m high

and extensions of our identities end up in cardboard, to be stored in cellars, moved to a new home or discarded on the sidewalk, until adopted by another. In this same vein, EVOL views the facades he so painstakingly recreates as stoic testaments to the passing of time, concrete monuments whose mundane surfaces belie the dramatic trials of human emotion taking place within their walls.

Urban Utopia

EVOL's imagery is all Berlin-specific, derived predominantly from the urban landscape to the East of where the Wall once stood. Considering the uniquely turbulent history of the city, the buildings he depicts assume another layer of meaning: their shrapnel-scarred facades disclose the wartime carnage and political upheaval that they've somehow withstood. Friedrichshain, the neighbourhood EVOL moved to nine years ago and a recurring motif in his work, has borne witness to the rise of fascism, the fall of communism, a mass-exodus of residents and a more recent-influx of artists who saw opportunity in the abandoned buildings forsaken by their tenants. EVOL says that Friedrichshain, 'offered possibilities and space for people to make things happen with little or no money, like off-cinemas, illegal or improvised bars and clubs or galleries or other projects...Then the area got more and more popular and just like anywhere else where gentrification happens, prices go up, thousands of gallons of yellow paint were dumped on those buildings and took away the charm, the people and the possibilities. So, for me the surface of those buildings is a symbol for a neighbourhood that offers a lot of exploration and discovery because it hasn't been commercialised yet.'

Today, two decades after the Wall fell, the city's widespread refurbishment has erased much of its past. Scaffoldings and cranes are the new symbols of a reunified Berlin, Europe's largest on-going construction site. EVOL's work frames this new iconography and the homogenising effect it has on the cityscape and, by extension, its residents. His work is both a eulogy for the individualism and



inspiration suffocated by attempts at urban utopia and, at the same time, a celebration of the ordinary existences that inject poignant meaning into otherwise lifeless slabs of concrete and stone.

www.wilde-gallery.de