

MATHEW HALE

WENTRUP - BERLIN



MATHEW HALE, n.n., 2008 (detail). Paper collage, 103 x 69 cm. Courtesy Wentrup, Berlin. Photo: Hans-Georg Gaul.

Encountering the work of English, Berlin-based artist Mathew Hale, one is reminded how inherently perverse collage is as a form. Consisting of dismembered images, improbable juxtapositions, eyebrow-raising hybrids and conspicuous corporalities, collage has a miraculous ability to accommodate (and encourage) the strangest and most abnormal of desires. Another quality that inheres in the form is a rigorous sense of intuition; given

MATHEW HALE, *Wacht Schatz*, 2010. Installation view at Wentrup, Berlin. Courtesy Wentrup, Berlin. Photo: Roman März



that one is working with a physically limited vocabulary of 'found materials,' a sense of chance and even subconscious serendipity will always inform any composition (two reasons why the form was probably so cherished by Surrealism).

As much can be gleaned in Hale's third solo exhibition "Wacht Schatz" at Wentrup gallery. The show features over a dozen new collages of varying dimensions, a wall installation, a three-dimensional plexiglas collage installation and a three-channel slide show, *Die Münze*.

Upon first perusal, the mood is elegant, restrained and visually piquant — aided in part by Hale's signature deep-set, slender-sided black frames — but a deeper engagement immediately discloses more unsettling currents, as well as an agreeably gruesome sense of humor. With true surrealist flair, collage is intuitively used to bring unconscious or repressed desires or historical trauma out into the open. From a young Nabokov writing wittily juxtaposed with Lolita-aged princess Diana similarly writing to more unwieldy subjects — such as the 2001 suicide of the wife of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl under reunification, not to mention an aggressive abundance of tits, cock and ass, and the inevitable swastika — the subject matter is never easy.

That the fluid and optically lyrical meditation on West Berlin in *Die Münze* should be accompanied by a voiceover by Astrid Proll, a former member of the extreme left terrorist RAF, is therefore fitting: Hale's collages are vividly resonant with a prohibition that only art can embrace.

Chris Sharp