

Review: Ulrich Gebert at Winkleman Gallery

By Joerg Colberg
Feb 18, 2010



(<http://jmcolberg.com/weblog/archives/GebertAtWinklemanWeb.jpg>)

The problem with conceptual art is that, well, that it's conceptual. Just like Germans are not supposed to have any sense of humour, conceptual art is supposed to be difficult or serious, not fun in any case, and it usually doesn't take long for someone to start talking about the Emperor's clothes. I'm German so I can't tell whether we people have a sense of humour (there's [this](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FOiv9GKzxxk) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FOiv9GKzxxk>) or [this](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qx9HEn8aq1c) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qx9HEn8aq1c>), but then again there's [this](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytLTSJxmMas) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytLTSJxmMas>), [this](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YX4QSqthVJA&feature=related) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YX4QSqthVJA&feature=related>), or [this](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IliHC7QSiG8) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IliHC7QSiG8>), it's really quite confusing). What I do know, though, is that conceptual art often has much more to offer than most people think, and Ulrich Gebert's *This Much Is Certain*, which was on display at Winkleman Gallery (<http://www.winkleman.com/>), provided a fine example (click on the image above for a larger version).

I linked to Gebert's work a little while ago (http://jmcolberg.com/weblog/2010/02/ulrich_gebert.html), and that post caused a bit of a discussion on an internet forum about the photography. Most people seemed to agree that the photographs were very unspectacular (this is a rather polite re-phrasing of what I remember reading). Such statements are interesting in more ways than just one, but in the context of conceptual art, they are somewhat telling: Conceptual art is ill served if it is being judged by looking at its individual pieces. What is more, while the individual photographs of trees might not be as spectacular as some may wish, I was somewhat surprised that nobody talked about the way they were displayed: They are parts of groups, and once you start looking at those groups, you realize that the grouping is not

just random. There is a beauty to the way it's being done (can you say this about the Becher grids? I'm not so sure).

Apart from the trees, This Much Is Certain also contained images of humans interacting with animals, in what will strike many as not necessarily the most loving ways. Any which way you look at these groups of images (which obviously were taken from larger images, and thus removed from their original context), something doesn't make any sense, and you end up thinking that it's disturbing, absurd, funny, or whatever else comes up. [Holleree Dee Doodle Yirh \(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IliHC7QSiG8\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IliHC7QSiG8) indeed.

I'm sure there are lots of people who can write much better - and much more academic - articles on or reviews of conceptual art. But I think people who dismiss the kind of work Gebert produces really might want to have a second look and see what it really does. In particular, that means not expecting something that might confirm what they've been thinking all along. I certainly enjoyed This Much Is Certain, in fact much more than I expected before I went.

Also see: [DLK's review \(http://dlkcollection.blogspot.com/2010/01/ulrich-gebert-this-much-is-certain.html\)](http://dlkcollection.blogspot.com/2010/01/ulrich-gebert-this-much-is-certain.html)

COPYRIGHT © 2002-2011 JÖRG M. COLBERG