

**PRESS RELEASE
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Friedrich Kunath

Tropical Depression

October 23 – December 4, 2010

Since our last show, Friedrich Kunath has had celebrated solo exhibitions at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, Kunstverein Hannover, and the Aspen Art Museum. *Tropical Depression*, Kunath's third solo exhibition at the gallery, stages a watery world and shows Kunath's unique ability to wrest together normally contradictory notions of romanticism and despair, and irony and sincerity, to fill the gallery with a mood, almost the way a scent invisibly permeates a room and alters one's perception. His work shows us how images, no matter how seemingly universal, can become personal, even emotional.



Besides describing the most benign form of oceanic storm, the title *Tropical Depression* refers to a kind of internal weather system combining melancholy and a sense of hopefulness. *Tropical Depression* is a lush depression one wallows in and holds in itself a kind of promise and optimism.

In the main gallery, a new series of notebook paintings surround three figurative sculptures. Well known for his colorful canvases, Kunath's new notebook paintings are primarily colorless and rendered in lush shades of graphite. As if the color has been sucked out of the paintings and drizzled on the skin of the sculptures, the figure in each of the three sculptures features skin colored in a watery swirl of pigment. Each of the sculptures are a combination of realistic figuration and the surreal. Life scale and wearing the artist's clothes, the sculptures possess an uncanny presence. Each of the sculptures' titles begin with the phrase "All my problems are water based . . ." evoking ongoing themes in Kunath's work of homesickness, melancholia, and addiction. The line between nurturing and excess become blurred with images of a man engorging himself on a giant strawberry or watering a tree connected to a noose.

Kunath describes this new series of works as existing between Hieronymus Bosch and Jimmy Buffett. Always interested in the deep influence of popular culture, Kunath's work locates sincerity in the banal. Balancing wanderlust and a desire for home, his work is a guide to surviving in the vastness of the universe. Living and working in Los Angeles for the past several years Kunath has become a literal stranger at home in a city built on the perverse pairings of glitz and misery, fame and isolation, paralleling the contradictions of his own native Germany. As Douglas Fogle wrote recently, "For Kunath, perhaps home is found in the space between two bodies, real or imagined." Kunath's work is ultimately so desirable because it "feels" and it feels personal. Using humor and what might seem like a simplicity of means as an easy seduction, like a favorite song, they embed themselves deeply within your psyche. The surface becomes like the lyrics and the formal qualities like the affective power of music.

In 2010 Friedrich Kunath had solo exhibitions at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and Kaikai Kiki in Tokyo. In 2009 he had a solo exhibition at Kunstverein Hannover and in 2009 he had a solo exhibition at the Aspen Art Museum as well as being included in the prestigious 55th Carnegie International, Pittsburgh. Other recent group exhibitions include the Seattle Art Museum; Ludwig Museum, Cologne; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Tate Modern, London; Museum Für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt Am Main; Maggazzino d'arte moderna, Rome. Kunath was awarded the Peter Mertes Stipendium, Kunstverein Bonn, Germany in 2001 and Arbeitsstipendium der Jürgen Ponto – Stiftung, Frankfurt AM Main, Germany in 2005.

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