

ARTFORUM

Judith Hopf

ALEX ZACHARY PETER CURRIE

16 East 77th Street

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Judith Hopf, *Erschöpfte Vase 2 (Exhausted Vase 2)*, 2009, pottery, lacquer, 12 x 6 x 6.” From the series “*Erschöpfte Vases*,” 2009.

In Judith Hopf’s 16-mm film *Zählen (Counting)*, 2008, a horse proves to a bunch of clowns that it can do math as the artist stands resolutely alongside the animal. Hopf’s role as both maidservant and bodyguard resonates throughout “Spoken from a Balcony,” her first solo exhibition in New York. Based in Berlin, Hopf is well known in Europe for collaborative films and mixed-media projects that display a signature blend of brutality and humor. And “signature” is key in this show, where Hopf’s strong authorial voice comes through: She acts as the subversive director of our experience, continually flaunting the unbalanced power dynamics of working with people and things.

Alex Zachary’s grand upstairs space is empty save for a skinny tree limb sticking out of the wall. *The Sumac Is like the Cherry Blossom Branch*, 2005, is a bronze cast of a “pioneer branch,” the kind of thing

that grows where nothing else will, and this mix of ferocity and survival anchors the selection of works. Winding down into the ground-level living room, we land in the middle of Hopf's series of "*Erschöpfte Vases*" (Exhausted Vases), 2009, which rest on elegant white pedestals (designed by the artist) evacuated of their customary mass. On top of these voids are the banal shapes of narrow cylinders and rotund pitchers, tinted an innocuous shade of beige, on which Hopf has painted "faces" lifted right out of Saul Steinberg drawings, smiling and weeping at all the emptiness.

— **Megan Heuer**

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