

# JOHANNES VOGT

Rappaport, Emily, "Quick Photocopies Become Complex Paintings in Manor Grunewald's Ghent Studio, *Artsy Editorial*, June 2015



## Manor Grunewald, *Installation view of "Glances Closer to Blindness"*, New York, 12 March-6 June

A visitor to Manor Grunewald's recent solo show "Glances Closer to Blindness," at RH Contemporary Art might be surprised to hear about the artist's practice. The exhibition largely comprised a series of untitled canvases in shades of white, grey, and black, as well as stacks of mostly plain newsprint clustered around a column. The result was a show that appeared highly formal, minimalistic, and controlled in nature. Interestingly, Grunewald's process is anything but

Grunewald, who is based in Ghent, Belgium, began his career as a street artist around age 12. Later, he enrolled in art school, but, more interested in painting than in a degree or professional validation, he left after several months. Although Grunewald's aesthetic has evolved from illustrative to minimalistic, his artmaking process retains these core elements of experimentation, play, and, ultimately, revelation. He collects magazines, newspapers, and especially vintage art catalogues; after digitally printing the found images onto canvas, he manually erases, obscures, saturates, or otherwise alters the forms to create new ones.

Grunewald's work has a strong intellectual component that is rooted in his commitment to exploring the relationship between artworks and grayscale reproductions of them. The pictures that Grunewald used for works in "Glances Closer to Blindness"—which look like experimental photocopies on canvas among the monochromes—come from Olivia Newton John's 1981 album *Physical*. He felt that these scenes resembled Théodore Géricault's painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818–19)—another indicator that, despite his instinctive and organic process, Grunewald is heady and art-historically minded. In the wake of his recent RH show, and in advance of numerous summer group shows—at Neighbors (a nonprofit exhibition platform that operates out of his studio), Geukens & De Vil in Knokke, Belgium, and with *Hunted Projects* in Tilburg, Netherlands—and a solo show at Berthold Pott in Cologne later this year, we caught up with the artist to discuss his process, interest in the printed image, and street art origins.

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Artsy: When did your work take a turn for the minimal?

Manor Grunewald: It started with the process of using copier devices in the studio, to have a quick and visual way of thinking about paintings. I like the idea of working in way sort of like an analog Photoshop or InDesign program. With a simple copier you just have two options: scale and contrast. And there's only a few seconds between your original and the output, a copy. This seems like a narrow process but it opens up a lot of freedom for me. So I started copying images over and over and zooming in a lot each time, and at the end the outcomes became very minimal, even though they started as figurative imagery.

Artsy: What most compels you about black-and-white reproductions?

Artsy: What most compels you about black-and-white reproduction?

MG: My interest in black-and-white imagery comes from a historical context within graphic design and the printing industry. First, you had woodblock printing and then the introduction of the Gutenberg press had a major influence in the worldwide spread of books in general. The next big revolution was the offset press at the end of 19th century and the screenprint 30 years later. These later techniques were used for mass production and could reproduce photographic imagery, but due to economic reasons, a lot of printed matter was still just black-and-white or printed in monochrome. I collect exhibition catalogs, so I felt intrigued by the ones that were printed around that period.

I like to look at reproductions of paintings in black-and-white to focus on form and shades. Beginning in 2012, I decided to use my source material in the same way, through a simple process of handling and copying using a black-and-white copier so that all of the source material has the same value and feel. The paintings that come from these sources have that same feel. In my latest pieces I also use monochrome color adhesive films on top of the copies from brands like Letratone and Mecanorma. They were used in the 1970s and '80s in graphic design and illustration as an overlayer.

Artsy: Can you tell us about the process that translates the photocopies to canvas? And what happens after?

For me, the photocopies are the first step within the work. Afterwards, I try to crop certain areas out of those that look interesting, or make small collages with some copied parts. Then, all original copies are scanned and digitized. Depending on the work or the show I'm working on, I make a selection out of my digital archive and try to see on what scale it could work as a painting. These are UV printed again on synthetic canvas—a canvas with less structure that is used for industrial purposes and commercial stretched billboards. After stretching them, the painting process starts.

I paint with acrylic medium, oil, and spray paint on top of the printed images. Visually, this becomes interesting for me because it's not clear anymore what's digital print or analog painting. Because of the blown-up size, the printed dots become more on the scale of silkscreen and small little defaults from the original copy become painterly gestures. The work questions the links between analog and digital, original and reproduction, painting and photography.

Does your history with street art influence your current work?

I guess I started spraying graffiti when I was around 12 years old. Living in a city, graffiti was very common for me; I was inspired by the colors and a certain freedom it offered. I did it for about 10 years, while also experimenting with other mediums—acrylics, oil paint on canvas, watercolors...all terrible stuff when I think about it [laughs]. But in the end that increased my interest in art.

—Emily Rappaport

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## Wall Street International

13 Mar — 6 Jun 2015 at RH Contemporary Art in New York, United States

June 6, 2015



Interested in the “space between an original and its reproduction,” Manor Grunewald creates works that explore techniques of mimicry and erasure. His exhibition, *Glances Closer to Blindness*, includes abstract paintings and mixed-media works that the artist made while in residence at the RH Contemporary Art residency in Dumbo, Brooklyn. Grunewald enjoys playing with craftsmanship and painting techniques that suggest digital reproductions and vice versa. He is drawn to a black-and-white palette, influenced by his collection of 1960s-era exhibition catalogues in which color artworks are reproduced in black and white. Grunewald mimics this technique, reproducing printed matter in two tones.

To achieve these effects, Grunewald makes digital prints of photocopies on canvas. These photocopies draw from a range of source material, including the cover of Olivia Newton John’s 1981 pop album, *Physical*, which he happened to have in his studio.

Upon using the images from the album, he discovered art historical parallels and significance to his own art-making process. He sees the image on the album cover as resembling the figure from *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818–19), by Théodore Géricault, while the song itself suggests the physical imperatives of the artist’s studio practice.

After printing these images on canvas, he uses the viscous material that accumulates at the bottom of a jar of paintbrushes to paint a fog over the images. Through employing this normally discarded material, Grunewald takes a byproduct of the painting process and uses it to both obscure and create content. He considers his work an open-ended narrative, saying, “I don’t like to point the audience in too much of a direction but instead provide reference points so they can make their own story of it.” Based in Ghent, Belgium, Grunewald has exhibited in New York, San Francisco, Brussels, London and the Netherlands.

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EVERY GENERATION OF ARTISTS HAS A SELECT FEW INDIVIDUALS THAT SUMMARISE THEIR STORY SO SUCCINCTLY, AND MANOR GRUNEWALD MAY BE THIS GENERATION'S FRONTRUNNER. FINDING ART SCHOOL FAR TOO RIGID AFTER YEARS OF BEING A STREET ARTIST, MANOR PROMOTES A DEEPER, MORE INSTINCTIVE AND ORGANIC APPROACH TO ART. USING A TECHNIQUE SIMILAR TO SURREALIST AUTOMATISM, MANOR OPTS FOR EACH PERSON TO DISCOVER THEIR OWN NARRATIVE IN HIS WORK. BASED IN HIS STUDIO IN BELGIUM, HIS WORK RANGES FROM EXPERIMENTING WITH PAINT THINNER AND THE SLUDGE THAT SETTLES AT THE BOTTOM OF THE JARS WHERE HE KEEPS HIS BRUSHES TO CAPTURING THE STRANGE, DISEMBODIED SPACE THAT OCCURS BETWEEN AN ORIGINAL ARTWORK AND ITS BLACK AND WHITE REPRODUCTION. WE HAVE A CHAT WITH MANOR AS HE DISCUSSES HIS EVOLUTION AS AN ARTIST AND GIVES US AN INSIGHT INTO TODAY'S ART WORLD.



**How did you begin as an artist? You spent a brief time in art school yes? What happened there?**

When I was around twelve I became interested in graffiti. It's one of the most common things you see around the city and I decided to get involved. I originally started at cooking school, something completely different, but then I went to art school for about six months before I decided to leave. When you're in the school studio you're with twelve or sixteen people and I was used to working on my own in my home studio. I decided it wasn't for me so I left and have been working on my own ever since.

**What was it like leaving school so early on and becoming a professional artist on your own?**

During that period I was in contact with people like Vincent Geyskens who teaches here in Ghent at KASK, and Michael Borremans, alongside some other friends of mine who suggested that if school's not your thing then just do it on your own. It's not like you need a degree in order for you to be a painter. It wasn't my main goal at that point to become a professional artist, I just wanted to be more focused in the studio and try to reveal new possibilities for myself.

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**Do you feel that there's much of a difference between street art and the work that you're doing now?**

Yeah, I don't feel that I'm too connected with street art anymore, but of course there are a lot of influences present in my work because I did it for ten years or so. I started to feel that my work was developing beyond street art. There are still the illustrative aspects that I used to work with but the approach now is more minimalistic.

**Yeah I've noticed that your recent work is quite different to your earlier work...**

I think it's because I never had a clue what I wanted to do, I just tested a variety of different things to see what worked for me. I only really discovered what I wanted to do in the last two years and step by step filtered out all the things I didn't need anymore.

**Did you have a different idea or concept for your most recent work?**

I'm a collector of art history books and old exhibition catalogues, particularly black and white ones. I really like the way that the black and white reproductions make you look at the work in a completely different way, you look more to the form itself instead of other aspects in the work that distract from the form. I like the mental space between the original and the reproduction.  
.....

**You've just been invited to do a three month solo exhibition at the RH Contemporary Gallery in New York, can you tell me a bit about what the exhibition will be like?**

The exhibition starts in March 2015, it's called Glances Closer to Blindness. It will be a series of twelve to fourteen larger paintings alongside a newspaper publication with a collection of photocopy work. There will be digital prints of photocopies on canvas and I'm going to paint over them with the grey mess that settles at the bottom of the containers where I keep my brushes, I stir this

the image in a way so that you end up with a fog over it. That's why it's called Glances Closer to Blindness. I want to try and erase the original elements of the photocopy. The newspaper publication people will be able to pick up at the exhibition, an edition of 2500. It'll contain a wide variety of photocopies of the originals without any type or sources, just images. This will allow the audience to create a connection between the newspaper and the paintings and try to figure out what's going on.



**Finally, have you had any personal experiences that have had a strong impact on how you approach or practice your art?**

I try to work almost every day, so for me it's more about being in the studio and not thinking too much about my personal life but it's difficult because you can't always separate everything within your consciousness. It reminds me of a Philip Guston quote: "Studio Ghosts: When you're in the studio painting, there are a lot of people in there with you - your teachers, friends, painters from history, critics... and one by one if you're really painting, they walk out. And if you're really painting YOU walk out."  
--Simon Clay

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## ART HAPS

Review overload II: Rock and Ice – Manor Grunewald & Samuel Francois

*Book Launch CHELSEA*

*Sat Jun 21, From 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM*

*Printed Matter | 195 Tenth Avenue*



Review overload II – Rock and Ice is a publication by Manor Grunewald. Each issue exists as collaboration with an artist who is invited to take up a newsstand-bought magazine as the point of departure. The two work independently to alter the publication within a defined stretch of time before the magazines are integrated into a new editioned work.

For this issue Grunewald invited French artist Samuel Francois to use the content of the chosen magazine to create a fake exhibition catalog. Francois works in a range of mediums and publishes books under his small imprint Bunk Editions.

Alex Bacon, curator and critic, has written an accompanying text. Designed by Lisa De Brouwere.

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*unhelpful hunt - ze hat is not mine, I'm only trying it on for size,*  
2013, installation view, Chaplini Gallery, Cologne

Manor Grunewald is first and foremost as a painter, although he is also active in the fields of sculpture, installation and prints. His work is characterised by the constant analysis of the development of the pictorial in our daily environment. He finds and collects the sources of his images everywhere in daily life: in newspapers, advertising, books, comics, digital media and even illustrations of biological microcosms and macrocosms. His image archive serves as a source of inspiration, and his found pictorial material is often altered, partially on purpose and in some cases arbitrarily, by copying, enlarging

or collaging. The artist thus creates new pictorial information, which is largely free of cognitively controlled processes and which reveal the unfamiliar, allowing this to become the content of his painting.

Manor Grunewald's works have been exhibited across Europe and in the United States. In 2011, he was nominated for the Young Belgian Painters Prize at BOZAR. Recently, he has completed solo projects at Arco Madrid, Volta New York and Volta 9, Basel. Grunewald has presented recent solo exhibitions at Galerie Fortlaan 17, Ghent and Chaplini Gallery, Cologne. He will take part in a group exhibition with Evan Gruzis and Christian Vetter at Super Dakota Gallery, Brussels in April 2014.

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# ARTSLANT

# San Francisco



## *Ricou Gallery*

*54 Sovereign Street Opperstraat  
1050 Brussels  
Belgium*

Manor Grunewald's first solo exhibition at the gallery titled 'Veil of the invisible one' is on view till 26th Jan. 2013. Manor Grunewald was born in 1985. He lives in Ghent. His work has been shown in both solo and group exhibitions.

In this exhibition, it is difficult to know at a glance who is blind: the visitor or the artist. On the one hand, there are the works themselves, which are exposed on the white walls of the gallery. In this sterile space, they draw all attention to them. On the other hand, there is the dark basement, where it is only possible to spy through the cracks of an (unstable) wooden partition and see some excerpts, at first sight insignificant, of 1940s and 50s horror films, which also served as a source of inspiration for this exhibition. The wooden partition was previously the studio floor, in the same way as the pink veil it has witnessed the genesis of the works. The smaller pieces, visible on the first floor, are based on stills from the films shown in the basement.

### Manor Grunewald: horror at the gallery

15/12/12, 13.18 | SAM STEVERLYNCK



(© Manor Grunewald, More Than Teeth Were Dropped, 2012)

Manor Grunewald is a young painter who often alternates figurative with abstract work. His paintings, for which he uses a variety of techniques, are layered and can differ in style – although his hand is generally recognisable. In his “Veil of the Invisible One” exhibition at the Ricou Gallery, Grunewald presents a new series of paintings vaguely inspired by old horror films. He deals with them, however, in a rather abstract way, with only the emotionally charged atmosphere remaining. The painting from which the exhibition takes its title is an exception. In it, the artist has transferred an illustration from a magazine onto the canvas as a digital print. It presents a

double portrait of a miner; in one of the images, his face is badly burned. Grunewald has treated the background of the canvas with oil, acrylic, and a spray can. The result is a beige-ish, blotchy texture, in which the artist – like the illustration – plays with the work’s skin. For the most part, however, Grunewald keeps the horror muted – although a work’s title sometimes gives the viewer a clue. As in *More than Teeth Were Dropped*, for example, which presents an extremely dark scene, difficult to make out, with a sort of cloudy texture; the title leads one to suspect the worst. In a work with the ironic title *A Quiet Evening*, all we can distinguish is a man in a loincloth, who is tied up. A pink painting with whitish patches is also fairly disturbing, thanks to its similarity to human skin.

The exhibition is continued in the gallery’s basement, where Grunewald, using some old wooden planks from his studio, has constructed an enclosure. When you peer through the cracks, you can just about see a projection of the films on which the artist has based the series. In this compilation, however, he has omitted the actual horror, leaving viewers in the dark, as it were. A consistent theme running through the exhibition is the contrast between revealing and concealing, with the splendid installation in the basement as its culmination.

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## “ IMAGE STORAGE –

## THE FRIGHTENING FACTS ABOUT THE NEW”

**Galerie  
Fortlaan 17  
News**

The use of chaotic and intuitively arranged images within the context of the artist's studio led to the 'Image Storage' project. The objects/images used in the installation are all stored against the back wall of the booth. A billboard-sized poster with an index allows the visitor to quickly localise and identify each individual work. The spectator is forced to experience a kind of voyeurism within the oeuvre.



'Image Storage' consists of works that vary in image and can be figurative or abstract depending on the needs of the composition. They become one, even if every individual work also functions autonomously. The works are carefully selected and placed in the available space. Some of the canvases are interchangeable, can be moved to the front or disappear in the back.

With 'Image Storage' the artist is exploring the medium of painting by looking for alternative and new solutions for the problematic relationship of the image and the canvas and especially by approaching the canvas in a different way.

The function of the archive is first and foremost the result of the working process at the artist's studio. It's a personal visual database of the oeuvre. As several paintings are being created at the same time, the different paintings at the artist's studio are also created by dialogue. They offer each other solutions and different points of view leading to

decisions. The images are demanding different surfaces: canvas, wood, paper, polyester, etc. The works are constantly being turned, moved, put on top of one another. It's an intuitive process of construction and demolition in which the different layers of paint and image fragments can destroy as well as enhance one another.

The installation is also a reaction to our current society, the fragmentation of our era. Being submitted to a fast-paced bombardment of images and impulses leads to our attention being dispersed immensely. With his installation 'Image Storage' the artist tries to answer that issue. The context of an art fair is an invitation to a dialogue and at the same time, Manor Grunewald questions the accessibility of a presentation of his oeuvre within the limits of a booth.

16 - 20 February 2011 @ ARCO 2011, Madrid

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