

BARBARA MATHES GALLERY

Bernhard Hildebrandt
On the Lagoon: Venice Recalled
February 20-March 27, 2020

Barbara Mathes Gallery is pleased to announce Bernhard Hildebrandt's *On the Lagoon: Venice Recalled*. In this exhibit Hildebrandt explores the relationship between painting and photography, abstraction and narrative, and the nature of vision and technology.

Hildebrandt's photographs are based on Venetian late Renaissance and Baroque paintings and engravings. He photographs these source images—including works by Venetian giants Canaletto, Tiepolo, and Titian—with his camera in motion, thereby creating a distortion through the movement of his lens. The resulting images preserve the vibrant color and general composition of the originals but refuse to coalesce into the art historical cityscapes, mythological scenes, and portraits we expect. In his *Piazza San Marco, Venice* (2018), for example, he uses one of Canaletto's celebrated views of the square from 1742-1744. In subjecting the painting to such an intense vertical blur that it becomes a linear near-abstraction, Hildebrandt destabilizes the cliché of 'beautiful Venetian cityscapes,' forcing us to look anew at familiar historical images.

In photos such as his *Bacchus and Ariadne* (after Tiepolo) (2019), Hildebrandt's mechanical blur is gentler, adding a visual swing to an already swirling composition. Finally, in his series of graphic works based on engravings, copy machines and scanners replace the camera as Hildebrandt's tool of distortion. Francesco Bertelli's images of Venetian carnival costumes and Antonio Francesco Lucini's scenes from Venetian life twist and stretch, becoming surreal and uncanny through reproduction. Fascinated by the movement inherent in Baroque art, a style often discussed as proto-cinematic, Hildebrandt's 'motion studies' introduce further layers of dynamism that at once pay homage to and transform the Baroque aesthetic.

Bernhard Hildebrandt received his BFA in painting from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1984 and his MFA (also in painting) from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 1995. His work has been widely exhibited, including a recent exhibit at The Phillips Collection (Washington, DC), for which he photographed El Greco's *The Repentant Saint Peter* (1600-1614).

Contact Information:

Barbara Mathes Gallery is located at 22 East 80th Street. The gallery is open Monday through Friday, 10am to 6pm and Saturday by appointment. For more information or images, please contact the gallery at 212-570-4190 or art@barbaramathesgallery.com