

Flash Art



MICHAEL RAEDECKER, Ah (detail), 2005.
Acrylic and thread on canvas, two parts: 70 x 56 cm and
70 x 57 cm. Courtesy of Hauser & Wirth Gallery, Zurich.

ZURICH

MICHAEL RAEDECKER

HAUSER & WIRTH GALLERY

'Virulent' is the word that springs repeatedly to mind while walking through Michael Raedecker's latest show. 'Ghostly' runs a close second, and this conflation of the ghost and the virus, the corporeal and the spectral, is everywhere in the work. The embroidered flowers in *Ultimatum* seethe like maggots bits of venison. Darkness and random glitches of thread encroach from the edges of the canvas, blackening the dark green of a thinly painted space whose ectoplasmic atmosphere is as thin as a watery soup.

The figurative paintings (flowers, portraits, and one, titled *Consume*, of a log fire) are accompanied by a set of icky, delicate, bacterial abstract works, and embroidered semi-abstracts such as *Prosthetics*, in which a central lacuna, equal parts bruise and cloud, floats encircled by a halo of flowers. The painting's surface - as with most of these works - is crossed, sullied and punctuated by bits of fluff, straggling threads, scrapes and knots punched into the canvas, disrupting the spaces the pictures try to maintain, infecting the unreal with the real. The more you look, the more they appear sickly, on the verge of relapsing into their constituent parts.

There are also two near-identical portraits of Hitler: hung on different walls of the same room, you can't really look at them simultaneously. Raedecker wanted to see how much they could 'infect' the rest of the paintings, but what's more interesting, and perhaps surprising, is how the other paintings infect them, integrating them into a subtle, poetic hang that builds around echoes and repetition like a tour through the vestiges of a wilting purgatory, revealing glimpses of an imaginative space with the looping, elegant ineffability of a Möbius strip. Whether Hitler is an inhabitant here, a memory, a photograph glued to the back of a mirror or something else, remains satisfyingly unclear.

Lee Trimming