

Johnen Galerie

TIME OUT NEW YORK

Martin Honert

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Martin Honert
Matthew Marks
Gallery, through Apr 24
(see Chelsea).

Art about memory, especially when it takes on the subject of childhood, often buries itself in the kind of tawdry confessional and neurotic self-regard that lead to endless forms of navel-gazing, or road maps to the land of "me." Martin Honert's exhibition of seven large-scale sculptures, based on drawings he made between the ages of eight and ten, offers a quiet respite from the solipsistic din. (There are two exceptions: a mural-sized re-creation of a Düsseldorf sidewalk and a snapshot-based work, *Mirage* (1996), featuring a huge transparency of the artist as a boy on the beach building a sand castle.)

Honert's relationship to his childhood drawings suggests an archivist with his collection: his meticulously faithful reproductions, rendered life-size and in three dimensions, are acts of preservation. Memory, in Honert's view, is reliable only when unmediated by subjective content. As Boris Gorys points out in his essay for the exhibition catalog, the artist's approach is analogous to the use of readymades in Pop art. But while his emotional detachment, along with the work's clean lines,



Martin Honert, *Santa Claus*, 2002.

bright colors and cartoonish style, conveys a distinctly Pop aesthetic, there is nothing deadpan about Honert's work, as two of the strongest sculptures, *Knight's Battle* (2003) and *Santa Claus* (2002), make clear. Like a giant molded-tin Christmas ornament, the latter turns a simple pencil drawing of old Saint Nick into a glittering gold figure who stands regally beside his sack. Made of wood, polystyrene and paint, the work is a mute and obstinate presence—as idiosyncratic and arbitrary as memory itself.—Jane Harris