

Odd Nerdrum

Forum

The works of Norwegian painter Odd Nerdrum have always raised questions about art and philosophy. This impressive show of 13 large oil paintings (all undated) was no exception. A master of classical technique, Nerdrum often adopts the loose brushwork of Rembrandt, and, like his 17th-century predecessor, Nerdrum loves self-portraits, chiaroscuro lighting, and flamboyant costumes. In *Arcadia*



Odd Nerdrum, *Black Fur*, n.d., oil on canvas, 29½" x 25½". Forum.

shows the artist dressed in a long, white robe, eyes downcast like an angel's, emerging from shadows into dappled sunlight. *Self Portrait with Child's Skull* is a moody study in browns. The somber-looking white-haired artist sketches in his notebook, while a skull peeks from a dark corner. From the puffy, world-weary face and furrowed brow of the artist to his roughly drafted hands, the painting echoes Rembrandt's famous 1658 self-portrait in a fascinating and unsettling way. Why would a painter channel Rembrandt today?

Other works concentrated on antiquely garbed figures in desolate landscapes, with some of the paintings evoking the Pre-Raphaelites. Nerdrum identifies with them too. In the late 1990s, he embraced his critics' charge of kitsch and even tried to turn the tables by redefining the term in his own defense. He rejected the moniker of artist. "Art is a car. Kitsch is a horse," he said.

There's a whiff of grandiosity to Nerdrum's pronouncements and also about his paintings. But the madness of his project continues to make it compelling. In *Black Fur* he portrays himself draped in something resembling a bearskin. We view the artist from below, his forehead and hair bathed in a

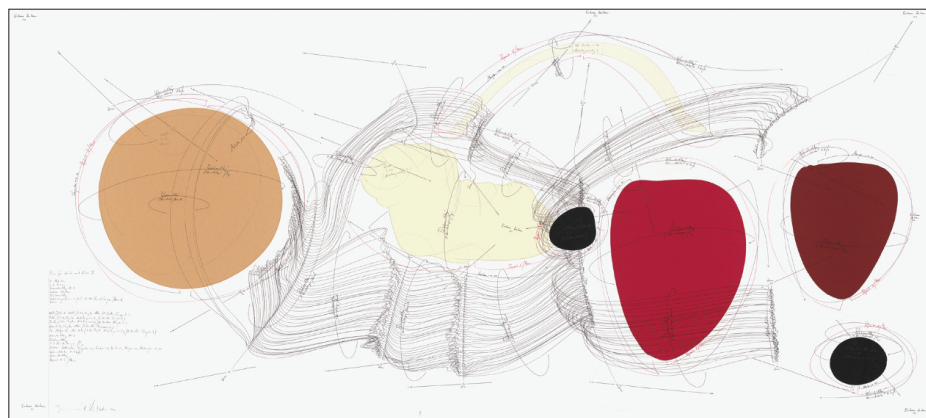
celestial light. The darkness is parting behind him. Could this be "Portrait of the artist as the Emperor Nero"?

—Mona Molarsky

Jorinde Voigt

David Nolan

This was a smart and stylish show devoted to the work of the young German artist Jorinde Voigt. Featured here were two sculptural installations and several series of drawings, including, in the front room, "Piece for Words and Views I-XXXVI" (2012), consisting of 36 works on paper inspired by Roland Barthes's book *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*. In



Jorinde Voigt, *Piece for Words and Views V*, 2012,

colored vellum, Ingres paper, pencil, and ink on watercolor paper, 31½" x 70¼". David Nolan.

this series Voigt attempts to render visible the invisible forces in our world—from acoustic vibrations and music to geography, weather, and her own performative impulses. The drawings encompass signifiers, ratios, rotations, proportions, concepts of time and space, algorithmic codes, as well as incomprehensible signs and illegible symbols.

Meandering pencil notations delicately delineate three-dimensional currents as if trying to give physical definition to a sixth sense. Among the recurring motifs are lists, silhouette cutouts of hands and horses, and colorful ovals that sometimes sprout into composites of birds, nests, and so much else. A piano in silhouette suddenly becomes decipherable, as do other forms, but certain shapes remain stubbornly unidentifiable.

Botanic Code (2009–10), in the rear gallery, made it even clearer that Voigt's work involves abstruse systems of thought. This installation includes long upright aluminum rods varying in diameter and painted with coded bands of bright color. By figuring out the code on the wall, you could identify and classify the plants in a particular botanic garden—in this case, a public garden in Kiev, Ukraine. On the mezzanine, a series of motorized propellers, titled "Grammar" (2010), underscored Voigt's fascination with the concept of love: the propellers conjugate the verb *lieben* (to love). But like love itself, the codes are private.

Although Voigt's art may sometimes seem a bit decorative, formulaic, or overly serious, her project is wildly ambitious, and she can draw like an angel. That she does so in the service of joining the scientific, the conceptual, and the sensory is admirable. —Kim Levin