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Florian Germann — St. Helena / Reichtümer aus den Tiefen der Berge
(St Helena / Riches from the depths of the mountains)
28th August — 2nd October 2010
Opening reception 27th August 6 – 8 pm

The first element from this new major body of work by Florian Germann (b. 1978, Thurgau) was revealed at the Kunsthau Glarus in the exhibition *Performative Attitudes* earlier in 2010. Following previous investigations that encompassed TV detectives, motorbikes, werewolves and precious metals, these works are inspired by the figure of Napoleon I, interpreting the figure with a potent, if anomalous, logic.

In Glarus a pulley grasped the severed rear half of a Renault 21 towards the ceiling of the gallery; under the strain the car was pulled apart to like a monumental hinged shellfish. This connection is echoed by the car's colour and the installation's title, *Austerlitz I*, which includes the German word for oyster, Auster, embedded in the name of one of Napoleon's most famous victories. The film documentation of the action is projected within this BolteLang exhibition, alongside more 'riches from the depths of the mountains' as the title suggests. Two large sculptures dominate the gallery, one being *Napoleon's Head/Athamor*, a wooden form which within contains a mould for an alchemical althamor or perhaps cannonballs, while from without it resembles a doctor's bag or Napoleon's bicorn hat. The other principal sculpture *Ansage (aus den Tiefen der Berge)* (Announcement (from the depths of mountains)) uses the shell of an industrial chest freezer to amplify the noisy mumble of an army of frogs recorded in Europe's largest underground lake in Valais.

Germann himself has crafted each of the works in this exhibition, following quests made to sites that resonate with the intertwining narratives that engage him. These works bear out his ongoing fascination with the transformation of energy and material, and a recurring trope of positive and negative forms. Factual connections can be made between the diverse symbols united here, say between cannons plundered from Austerlitz and melted down to cast the victory column in Paris' Place Vendome, the slower formation process where silt builds up within alabaster caves and an oyster's similar process of pearl development. On the evening of the exhibition opening Germann will paint *The Poltergeist*, a map of his inspiration and ideas, in the window of the gallery. But as the work's ambiguous title suggests, to expect exact expository associations is naive; the power of Germann's works lies where forms and ideas cast shadows together. New legends emerge where their overlap is indistinguishable.

Aoife Rosenmeyer

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