

Marcel Odenbach

Anton Kern, through Jan 13
(see Soho).

Marcel Odenbach is a political artist. You can tell this just by looking at his work, even if you don't immediately understand its subject. Why? Because the artist borrows from a number of sources—newsreels, propaganda films and graphic media—that have long been popular with politically minded artists. There's also a no-nonsense look to his work—that political-art look that declares an allegiance to a stance or cause rather than to an aesthetic.

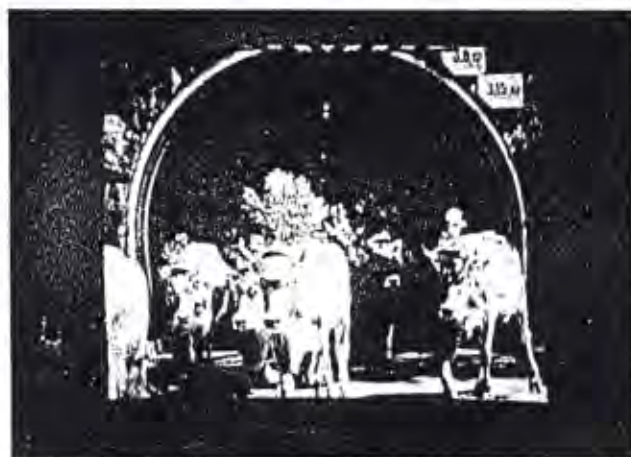
Odenbach has been making video installations that have ranged in theme from Germany's treatment of immigrants to Africa's geopolitical situation. This show is less specific: A front gallery features a stark arrangement of 13 watercolors, most of which are titled after popular films. *From Russia with Love* and *Torn Curtain* allude to cinematic representations of the Cold War, but the watercolors themselves are minimal works with such imagery as a ballot box and a Soviet-style radio painted in drab colors. *Dead Man Walking* and *Silence of the Lambs* (which show, respectively, an execution chamber and a dog with a muzzle) refer to incarceration and capital punishment.

An installation in the rear gallery consists of both original video

footage shot by Odenbach and snippets of borrowed films, including scenes from Sergio Leone's *Once upon a Time in the West*. Titled *Herdentreib* (*Herd Instinct*), the work features projections on opposite ends of one wall. One side features rock concerts, political demonstrations and carnival celebrations; the other a video loop of cows and goats decked out in garlands, emerging from an alpine highway tunnel.

Like much of Odenbach's work, the projections and watercolors suggest that the media's representation of historical events affects our perception and understanding of those events. But with *Herd Instinct*, Odenbach moves from the subtle to the facile. The herd instinct of humans, ably demonstrated in the films of his countrywoman Leni Riefenstahl, is an interesting topic. But Odenbach doesn't offer much in the way of new thinking on the topic.

—Martha Schwendener



Marcel Odenbach, *Herdentreib (Herd Instinct)*, 1999.