

Meliksetian MB Briggs

# ARTFORUM

critic's picks

Basel

**Johannes Wohnseifer**

GALERIE NICOLAS KRUPP

Erlenstrasse 15

March 4, 2004–April 24, 2004



View of "Enklave/Exklave."

Even though the letters "DB" have been removed, the red rectangle above the entrance of Erlenstrasse 15 still retains the recognizable color and shape of the

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Deutsche Bahn logo. Johannes Wohnseifer uses the German railway corporation's leftover signage as a point of departure in a show that weaves specifically "German" topics into a multireferential matrix of association and causality. The title "Enklave/Exklave" refers to the peculiar situation of the former Deutsche Bahn building—built on German soil but subject to Swiss law—and, indeed, to the multinational peculiarities of Basel itself. The red of the sign is a registered RAL color, part of a standardized chromatic scale developed in Germany in the 1920s and still in use today. Wohnseifer appropriates RAL hues 3004, 3020, and 3031—the three colors Deutsche Bahn has used for its logo since its founding—for several pseudominimalist sculptures and for a series of abstract paintings that are also on view. Their collective title, "Wehrmachtsausstellung" (Wehrmacht Exhibition), alludes to "Verbrechen der Wehrmacht" (Crimes of the Wehrmacht), a highly controversial show about Nazi war crimes, organized by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, that recently completed a tour of Germany. Five framed collages amplify the themes at hand with Volkswagen Golf advertisements and photographs of a young Leni Riefenstahl. As usual, Wohnseifer's use of branding and design strategies to frame historical, political, autobiographical, and fictional data adds up to a smart and stylish show.

— *Eva Scharrer*