

Tacita Dean works in a large number of techniques in media ranging from painting to photography and film, frequently combining more than one of them. She addresses issues relating to the passage of time, exploring what we remember and how we remember it. Often her art revolves around decay and loss as triggers of memories.

That is the approach adopted in the installation „Die Regimentstochter“ (*The Daughter of the Regiment*), on display in the Jakob Kaiser Building. It features thirty-six different programmes for opera performances in the 1930s and 1940s that the artist discovered in a flea market in Berlin in 2000, including one for the eponymous comic opera by Gaetano Donizetti. The previous owner had very carefully

cut out those parts of the covers where a swastika appeared originally. Was this done before 1945, as a way of disassociating the owner from the Nazi regime, or after 1945, as a way of avoiding prosecution if the programmes were discovered? Whatever the answer, the Third Reich has been eliminated and the physical gaps that remain suggest memory gaps. The artist was first attracted by the strange cutout, but then much more by the political message behind the blank spaces. She left the found objects as they were and simply hung the programmes next to each other in wooden frames.

## **Tacita Dean**

### **Die Regimentstochter**

Each programme tells a different story because the cut-out sections act as windows, opening onto a passage of text or onto a photograph of a performer or performance. Viewers are made to wonder who it is they are looking at, since faces are frequently cropped, sometimes leaving nothing more than the eyes of a composer or performer. This results in surreal compositions vaguely reminiscent of Max Ernst's collages. In one case, for example, only the edge of a Rococo wig appears above the words 'Deutsches Opernhaus Berlin' and, in another, a hat brim is all that remains of the Flying Dutchman. Text fragments evoking carefree contentment suggest how light-hearted entertainment served to distract attention from the horrors of the time.

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Things no longer visible thus enhance our view of the past, and gaps, paradoxically, become memorials that engage the beholder's imagination more actively than a didactic demonstration could. Merely by showing what remains, Tacita Dean not only calls up in our mind's eye a specific historical situation and its abysses, but also erects an anti-monument to the forms customarily taken by the culture of memory.

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