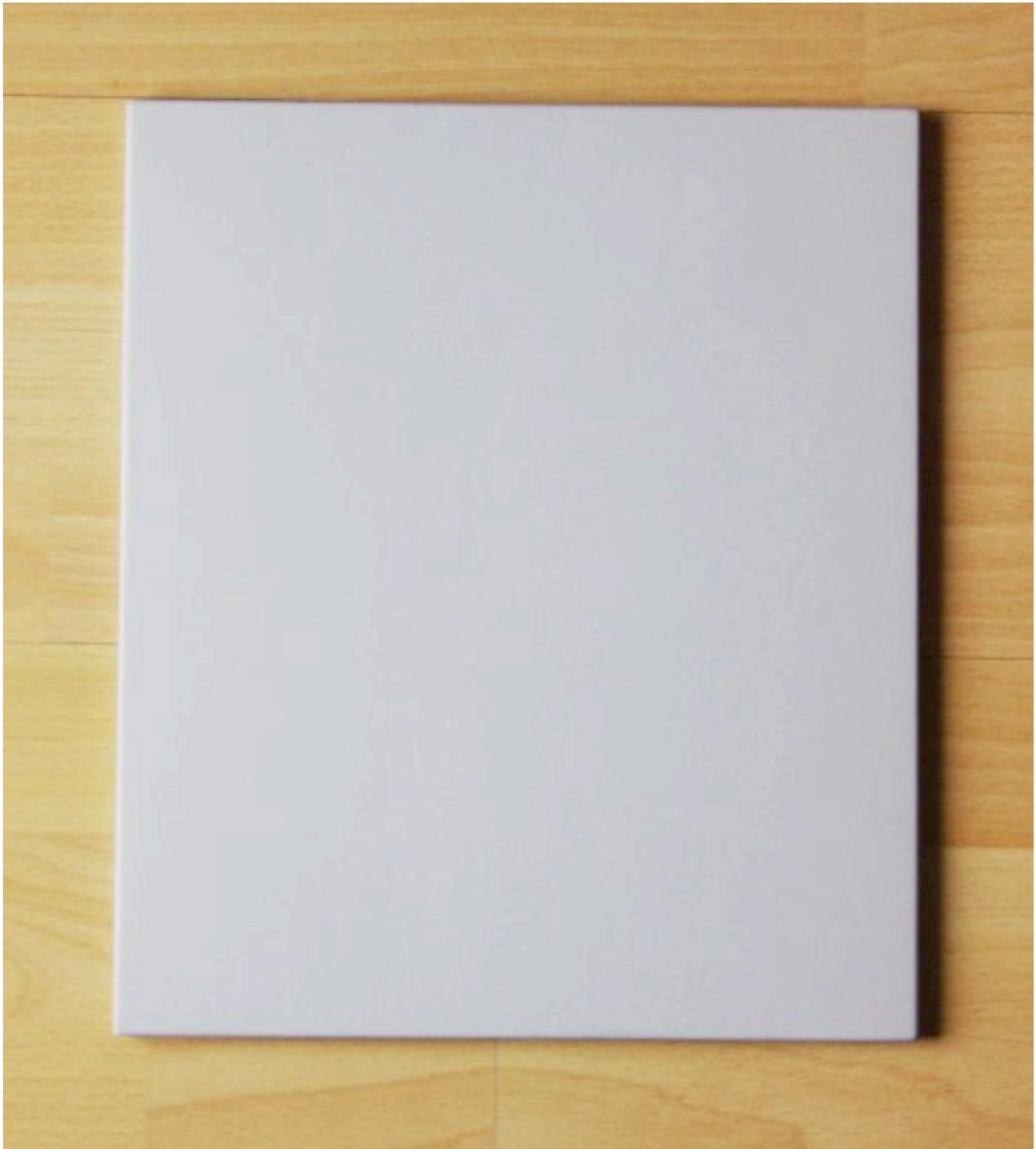


## German Skies for Christmas

Tommi Brem, January 22nd, 2010



**Rudolf Reiber** had told me about this work even before it existed, way back in late 2008 or early 2009.

We were in his studio, talking about some of his works that include **the process of "erasure"**, such as "Dark Matter" (all the stars removed from a Thomas Ruff work), "ohne Titel" (the face of a 1 Euro coin sanded down to a smooth surface) and some of his video works.

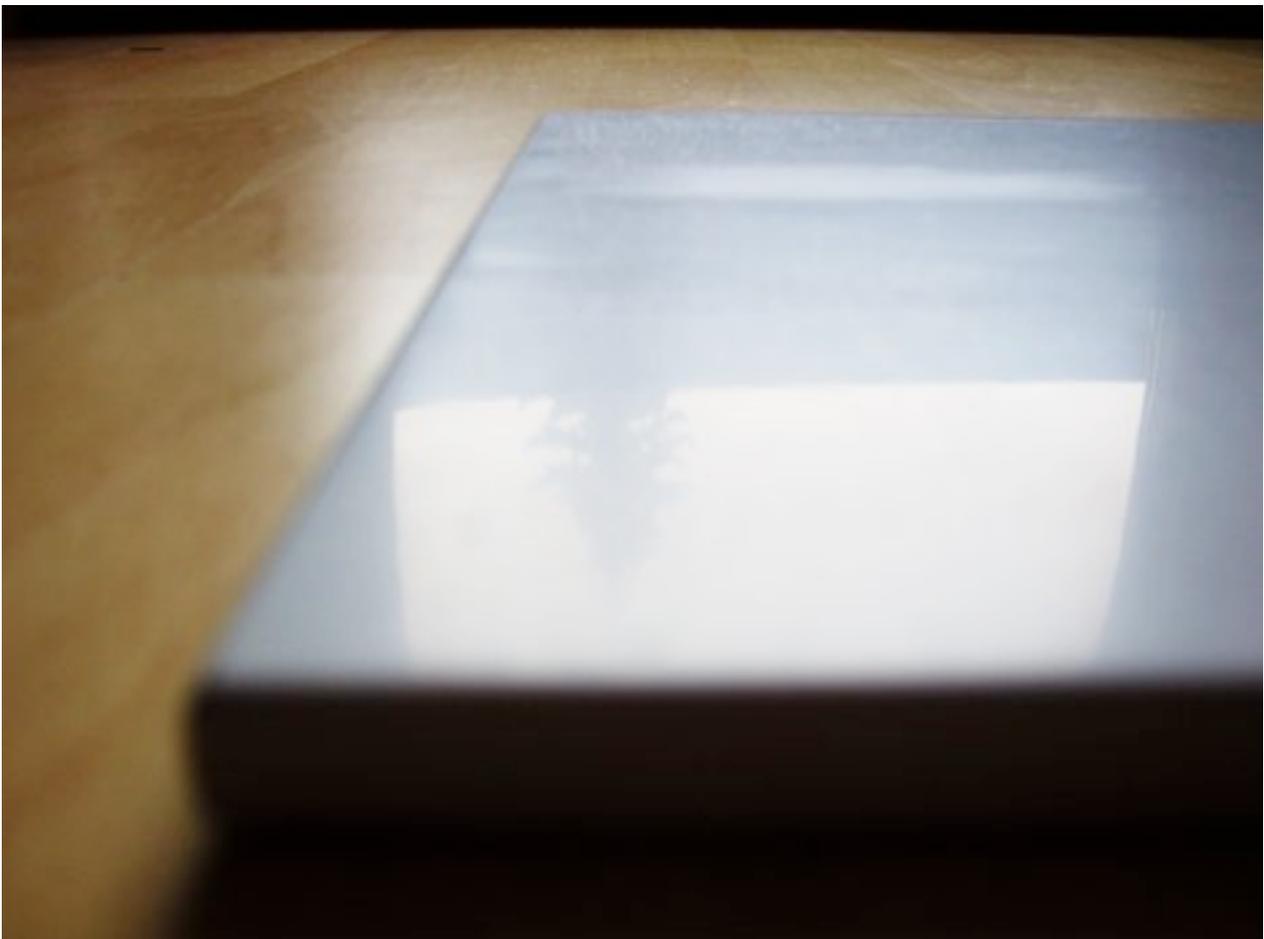
Then he mentioned his latest project, involving another form of erasure: camouflage. He had researched the exact colours used by the British Air Force in WW2 to

camouflage their bombers in different kinds of weather. "Sky", "Sky Blue" and "Sky Grey" ... the series is called "**German Skies**". He wanted to have huge metal sheets painted in the reproduced, matte colours. And, if I remember correctly, he was already talking about exhibiting them in Ulm, in the atriums of the new Weishaupt Museum, high up in the air so you could actually compare the camouflage effect of the painted metal against the sky.

He did that exhibition and luckily, he also did an edition of smaller versions (17"), each colour is available three times, sold separately.

There are many reasons why I love this work. For one, because it is such **a reduced, featureless and simple shape, yet it builds on something horrific and violent**. I grew up in Ulm, which was heavily bombed, and the Museum Weishaupt now fills a gap left by the bombing. Reibers work was appropriately placed. My family (from my mother's side) were refugees from what is now Poland, having first hand experience of the camouflaged planes. Plus the sky above Ulm very often has the colour of "Sky Grey", a foggy, greenish, featureless haze.

As if that wasn't enough, the small versions, hand painted and sanded down by the artist, come with **an inbuilt surprise**. The surface which is matte and almost completely featureless and not reflecting any light becomes a highly reflective surface when viewed from the appropriate angle.



*"German Skies: Sky Grey", painted metal, 33 x 28 x 1 cm*

It's a mirror in which you will never be able to see yourself. This may not be intended by Rudolf, but for me it exemplifies one purpose art has in my life. It's a means to see the world from a different perspective, rather than a reflection of myself. At the same time, it's so closely related to my life that it does that, too.

My wife bought this for me for Christmas. My wishlist included "Sky Grey" by Rudolf Reiber or a telescope. I can understand why Rudolf's work was picked. It's smaller, easier to store and it's considerably less expensive than a good telescope.