

Teun Hocks  
P h o t o g r a p h s

O i l T o n e d S i l v e r G e l a t i n P r i n t s

Teun Hocks has a flair for the absurd. In his recent large, hand-tinted photographs, he appears as a proper bourgeois, dressed immaculately in suit, tie, and white shirt, in a variety of deceptively plain stage settings of weirdly improbable worlds: a shack in the woods; a kind of foxhole; a wide, uninhabited landscape. Seemingly unaffected by the surreality of his situation, he impassively holds his own.

In one image he puts his head into a framed picture as if through a window; in another he lies hunched up on a bed spanning a road in the middle of nowhere. In a third work, also in the middle of nowhere, he leans forlornly against a tree to which a birdhouse is attached, perhaps waiting for its tenant to show up. Elsewhere, he shields a candle from the wind, like Diogenes in search of an honest man--but there's no wind, and while the philosopher searched in the city, Hocks here seems to be high above the clouds. Back on earth again, he walks through a denuded forest (there are almost as many stumps as trees ) holding a kayak paddle. In one scene he's removed his jacket and tie and reclines against a haystack with a rooster on his lap, a takeoff on a Brueghel figure.

Hocks is the star of his own show, as one work makes explicit. Dressed as a ringmaster, he stands next to a large gray letter s and holds a red h in his right hand, balances a yellow o on his head, and holds a blue w in his left hand--a portrait of the artist as jester. Hocks, a sober Dutchman, seems to be praising folly, the folly of both art (works of art as "follies") and life (a funny, daunting

2. To alarm, frighten, or surprise suddenly. See Synonyms at frighten. here is the sense of isolation. This is a man who likes his loneliness, however depressing it might be. He doesn't seek others to make him feel better, because he knows there is no feeling better--no way to escape the absurd situation. There's a kind of emotional as well as social nihilism. in Hocks's insidious work, a sense of the nothingness 4. Something inconsequential or insignificant. of it all, which one can only tolerate with humor.

As Dutch critic Paul Hefting pointed out in a catalogue essay published earlier this year, Hocks's images are essentially updates of sixteenth-century emblem books, which focused primarily on the misery of life. Hefting notes that if Hocks had worked in that era he would have used a skeleton rather than his own figure to convey his desperate sentiment: "Oh, I miserable wretch, who is going to redeem me from the body of this death?" Of course it is a living death as well as a literal one, but Hocks is one up on the pithy old emblemists: He knows that humor, even gallows humor is redemptive.









































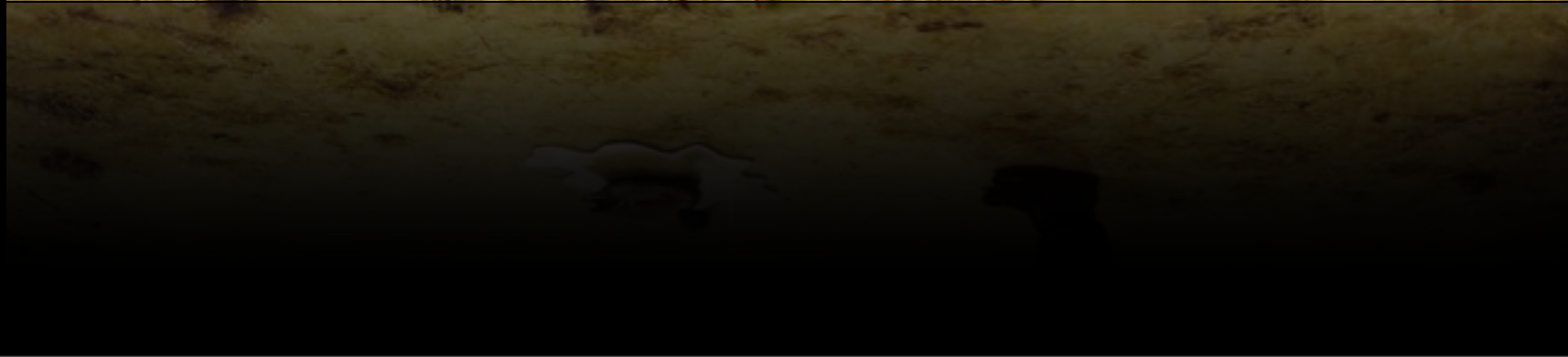














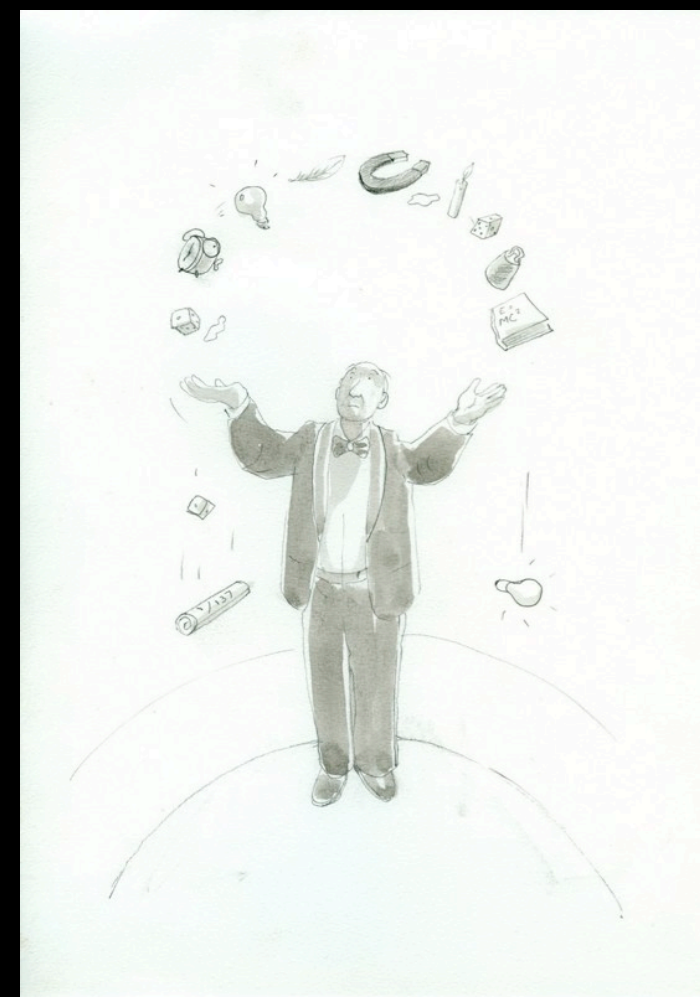
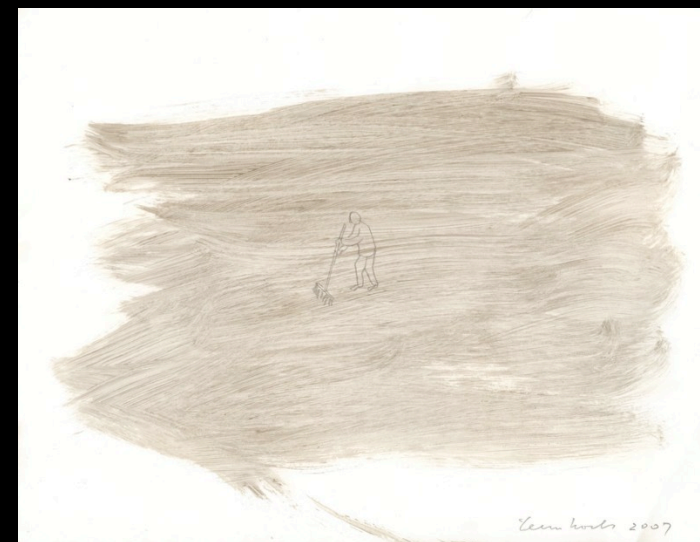
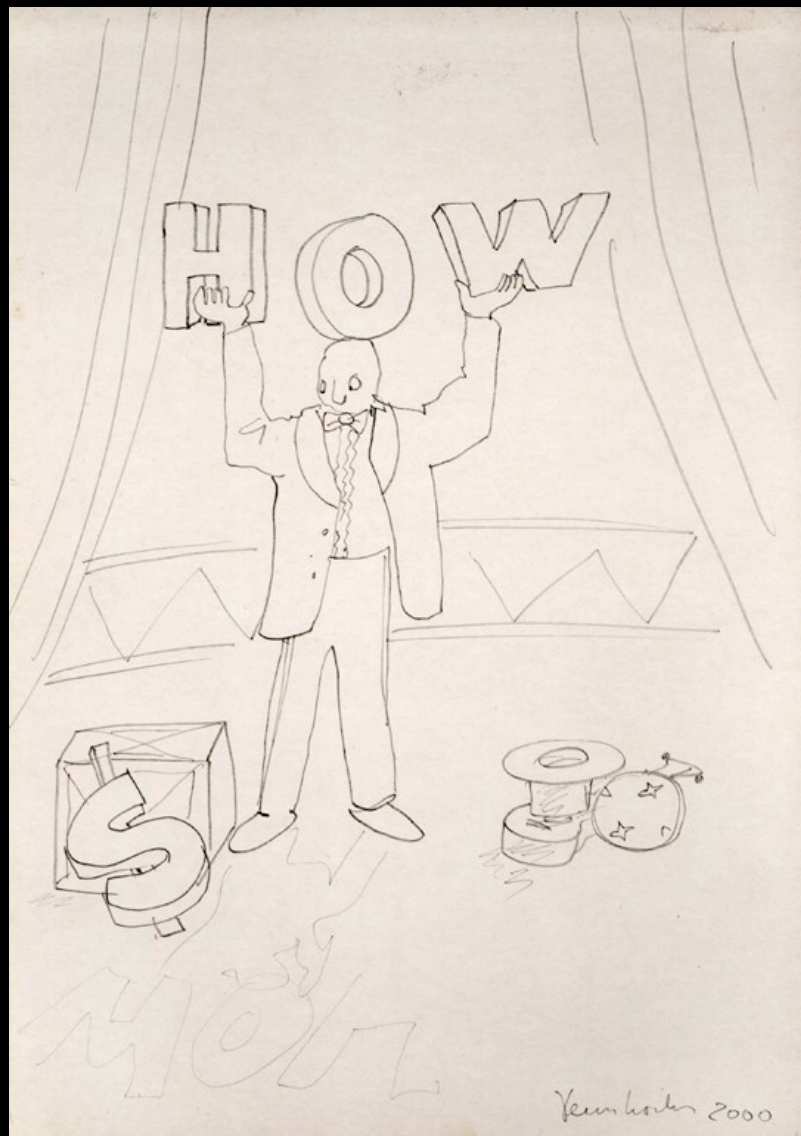




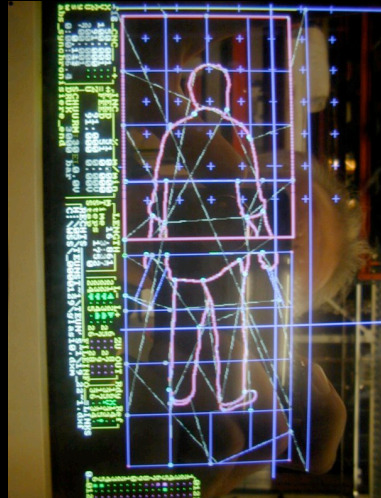












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