

It's conceptual art" explained the gallery assistant as he finished outlining the works to be seen in Stefan Brügge's solo exhibition; perhaps he feared I'd ask for my money back had I done a round of the gallery in 30 seconds. Conceptual, and spare, this show certainly is. The exhibition orbits the Black Box of the idea, a labyrinthine space of darkness, flashes of light and recorded white noise which in its insistent being envelops and blocks out all other sensation, the opposite of an astronomical void.

All around the Kunsthalle space Brügge has covered the walls with vinyl text pieces, but with each consisting of a handful of words, what the press release calls a prodigious output would not give an author cause for concern. To use the supporting text again, these words should allow the viewer to formulate their own experience, out of the artist's control. That particular idea is leaned upon too frequently when art threatens not to be up to par, and what is really interesting here is the fragility of the experience created by Brügge's captions. The text leaves little ambiguity and flirts with nihilism with lines such as SOMETIMES I THINK SOMETIMES I DON'T-Brügge seems to openly insult the viewer, while suggesting that his frankness is endearing. (Whatever the outcome of the exchange, the viewer's ego is always overshadowed by this other moody L.) And struggling with righteous indignation, one begins to wonder how with a little straightforward denial, the artist can provoke such a heated reaction, all the while employing the most generic language imaginable.

While these text pieces have become a well-oiled medium for Brüggegan, he has only recently included the neon scribbles also seen here in his practice. The series is called Obliteration and turns the work of a moment's destructive penmanship into a studied light work. It is nothing - but has become a finely crafted and rather beautiful gesture. Brüggegan consistently avails of the sleek lexicon of pop art but manages to revivify it with concepts. .

In conjunction with this exhibition, visitors to Bern can see Brüggegan's 2006 film "A Production of Nothing at the Cinématte". This was created in conjunction with music producer Christian Vogel, who also developed the Black Box soundtrack and shows that popular culture is also a tool in Brüggegan's artillery.