

Visual Arts

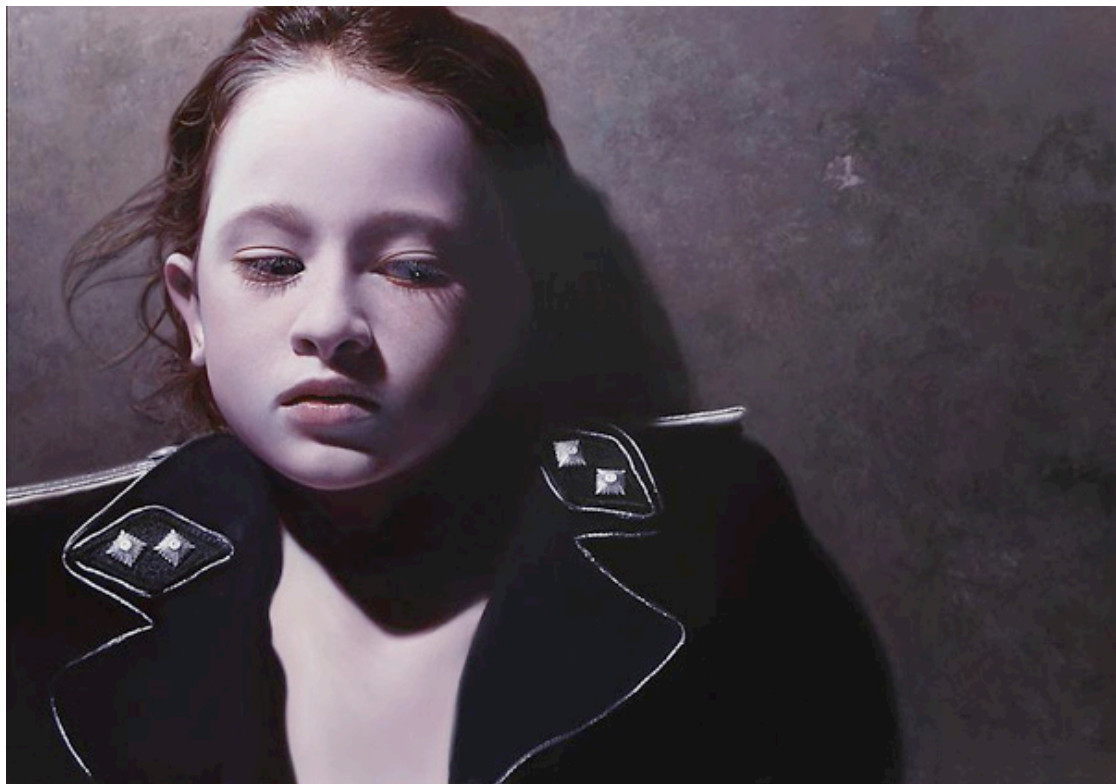
Gottfried Helnwein's Haunting Vision of Youth

2:59 pm Wednesday Sep 29, 2010 by Paul Laster

Using the metaphor of youthful innocence as a means to reveal the age-old violence that continues to permeate our times, Gottfried Helnwein produces impeccable realist paintings that send shivers down the spine. Casting children in the roles of both perpetrators and victims of war and terror, the LA-based artist strikes a sensitive nerve with his haunting visual narratives. Young girls disturbingly sport Nazi uniforms and wield guns in the direction of dolls, while simultaneously being bandaged at the head and lying in pools of blood. Likewise, Mickey Mouse becomes a sinister symbol of aggression, while a male child destined to become a Hitler youth gets doted on by SS officers.

Drawn from diverse sources, including old movies and current events, as well as Helnwein's own childhood memories of growing up in post-WWII Austria, these exquisitely painted canvases, which are currently on view at Friedman Benda in New York, capture the image of a world gone bad.

Gottfried Helnwein: *I was a Child* remains at Friedman Benda through October 23.



Gottfried Helnwein, *The Murmur of the Innocents* 17, 2010. Oil & acrylic on canvas, 70 3/4 x 101 inches, Courtesy Friedman Benda, New York