

Remo Helfenstein – *Comforting Katharina*

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Comforting Katharina, the solo debut of Swiss musician Remo Helfenstein, finds a tender melancholy in the small gestures in the search for atonement. Helfenstein's music does not pursue a sublime but rather dwells in immanence and intimacy. Even in its most rapturous moments, as in his take on the gospel hymn "What a Friend", *Comforting Katharina* unfolds as a question and not as a creed. The five songs might be understood as a form of devotional music; but in the sense that it subjects itself primarily to the whims of an outdated media technology.

Helfenstein, who has released an album and an EP with his band Les Yeux Sans Visage over the last few years, recorded the majority of the material on *Comforting Katharina* on cassette using a four-track recorder. He then replayed those recordings, let them overlap, and manipulated them with effects while singing live, recording this process once more in one take. Helfenstein's manual handling, playing, and removing of the tapes while recording emphasizes the loss of control over the composition in the interplay between his body and the machines he is using. Resisting the regime of precision and control of digital music production, *Comforting Katharina* thus obtains a momentous, precarious and contingent quality.

Comforting Katharina combines atmospheric pop, gospel, and Americana with harsh electroacoustic and dark ambient touches. The work and the dispositif used to record it are based on a live performance by Remo Helfenstein for an evening curated by music magazine *zweikommasieben*. The tape was recorded in 2019 with the support of producer Samuel Savenberg aka S S S S, whose solo album *Walls, Corridors, Baffles* was released on Präsens Editionen last year.

The cover was designed by the Lucerne-based studio Feixen.