



A TWISTED PALETTE

PAINTING: Think Germany's mood is dark? Check out MARTIN EDER's sick dogs and malevolent kittens. No wonder he's so hot

IN *KNOCKING ON WOOD*, AN OIL

painting by Martin Eder, a woman with a haunting smile reclines on a sofa that appears to be drifting off into an ocean landscape. A frightened poodle sits at her feet fitted with one of those protective collars that make the animal look like it's wearing a lampshade around its neck. The dog's name is Elvis, and Eder is a big fan of the original Elvis, having once made a pilgrimage to Graceland.

Knocking on Wood is typical of the style that's made Eder one of the most up-and-

coming artists in Germany: a command of traditional figurative painting combined with kitschy and faintly apocalyptic subjects. "Eder is able to reinvest vigor in very traditional images," says Michael Lynne, co-chairman of New Line Cinema and an avid Eder collector. Eder is part of a new wave of German painters driven by a desire to return to the roots of the country's art. A



KNOCKING ON WOOD: Featuring Elvis the dog

lanky 35-year-old with big hands and a fondness for cowboy hats, Eder works in a sprawling five-room apartment on the edge of Berlin's hip Prenzlauer Berg neighborhood. For him, Elvis the dog—and kittens, another favorite subject—represent an abuse of nature, an attempt to shape it to human needs. "That's what interests me," Eder says. "Insanity, cruelty, horror often occur within the confines of the home. To get at that, I have to work with figures and objects." Elvis may have crooned "Don't be cruel," but for Eder the strategy definitely works. —W.B./Berlin