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KATJA DAVAR
Reptile Turf & Copper Alloys
2/27–4/3/2010

The superimposition and overlaying of antagonistic picture elements constitute Katja Davar's image spaces, in which the artist brings together moments of prospect and doubt, uniting them to a utopia-like landscape: With an analytic and critical eye, Davar examines the interplay of nature, technology and social value systems, which her drawings and animations depict in multidimensional layers and levels. The confrontation of possible and actual states and spatial structures is a decisive factor in Katja Davar's conceptually informed image solutions. The title of her artworks often functions as an interface that positions and interrelates the image situations taken from fictive and real events.

For her current show in our gallery, Reptile Turf & Copper Alloys, the artist produced two large-format graphite drawings, which she juxtaposes with a spatial installation – a found architecture model. This Asian-style, stone-cast miniature of a palace complex was used in the 1920s as a kind of “city” for turtles in the context of Belgian landscape gardens. Presented in the exhibition space as a ready-made, this functionless miniature is now a sculptural relict exemplarily illustrating the imitation of an ideal social structure. Individual building elements of the model city reference Davar's drawings.

The artist has symbolically integrated the material qualities of copper – one of the oldest culturally employed metals – as a form-generating element in her drawings: radial, crystal-line surfaces differentiated into circles, serpentine lines (as a symbol of the metal's electrical conductivity) or rising and falling bar structures (alluding to diagrams of copper prices of the last century) are pictorial elements forming the substance of the panorama as generated by Davar. While the subject matter of her drawings is in line with a landscape-oriented and architectural depiction, thus taking up the exhibition space in the image, Katja Davar's inherent picture language

circulates between a realistic and abstract formal vocabulary that synthetically penetrates the image.

The formal elements employed by the artist – partially drawn from an (art) historical context – constitute a subtle mirror of natural, social and cultural developments and relations, which form an alliance in Katja Davar's designing and imply breaking up a technocentric view. For example, the ornament designed by the British industrial designer and botanist Christopher Dresser serves as a model for the shape of a leaf structure lining the root system of an Asian tree in Katja Davar's drawing. Elsewhere, the artist contrasts a fictively constructed industrial landscape with a tower structure designed in the Renaissance – a pictorial element corresponding to the picture panel The Renunciation of Worldly Goods from Giotto's 14-part fresco in Assisi.

Finally, Katja Davar's animations continue the notion of subtle social mapping elaborated in her drawings in the filmic image. The work Silence is far from an idle task shows a picture surface vacillating between still image and moving image, with the picture object emerging from the superimposition of words and curved lines. While the superimposed, parallel line structures are taken from a media image of the channels created in the ocean bed of the Pacific by a manganese excavation in 1978, the text passages selected by Davar show fragments of an essay by the artists' group Art & Language dealing with the meaning of physical objects within the context of art production. Here, as well as in her work in general, Katja Davar shows the results of human developments without visualising the human as such. Davar mainly captures fragments of past and potential actions in her picture situations and dialectical pictorial techniques, presenting them in both traditional-analogue and contemporary-digital media formats.

Christina Irrgang

Biographical Notice:

Katja Davar is born 1968 in London. She lives and works in Cologne. Collections (selection): Westfälischen Landesmuseum, Zeppelinmuseum Friedrichshafen oder Daimler Kunstsammlung

Solo Exhibitions (selection):

2009 Europäische Kunsthalle Köln;
Kunstverein Lippstadt;
2006 The Drawing Room, London;
2001 Bonner Kunstverein; Städtische Galerie Nordhorn /

Group Exhibitions (selection):

2009 „Pittoresk“, MARTa Herford Museum;
„Drawing Sculpture“, Daimler Kunst Sammlung, Berlin; „Unter Wasser-Über Wasser“ Kunsthalle Wilhemshaven,
„Review Videonale“ Kunstmuseum Bonn;
2008 Zendai Museum of Modern Art Shanghai;
„Parkhaus“ Kunsthalle Düsseldorf.

GALERIE IRIS KADEL

Hirschstraße 45
76133 Karlsruhe
Germany

Telephone 1 ; 0049(0)721.467 28 01
Telephone 2 ; 0049(0)721.47 00 06 07
Fax ; 0049(0)721.467 28 00
E-Mail ; info@iris-kadel.de
www.iris-kadel.de