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SKAFTE KUHN

...and the tarn closed sullenly and silently
4/11–5/15/2010

The starting point of Skafe Kuhn's complex spatial installations is his dealing with texts from music and literature. He is interested in contexts and interrelations between musicians and authors from different epochs who, although far apart in time, describe similar longings, moods or situations.

Texts such as those of the poet John Milton (1608–1674), the author William Shakespeare (1564–1616) or the lyricist Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) were reference points in earlier groups of works and were set in relation by Skafe Kuhn's installation settings and artist's books to lyrics by bands such as Joy Division, The Meteors or Anne Clark. The content-related motifs that these sources have in common often include the fragility and transience of the moment, the longing to hold on to time, comparable with the frozen frame in film, and the comprehension of the labyrinthine convolutions of the human psyche – especially its dark side.

The start of the current exhibition, ...and the tarn closed sullenly and silently, goes back to the first album of The Alan Parson Project from 1976, "Tales of Mystery and Imagination". Described as a concept album, it is a collection of seven short stories and poems by Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) set to music. Founded by Alan Parson and Eric Woolfson, the band's musical style was classified as art rock or progressive rock. Numerous guest musicians were invited to the project, among them John Miles, who became known for the song "Music", or the band Pilot. In terms of style, the album "Tales of Mystery and Imagination" is characterised by rock and electronic sounds in combination with large symphonic arrangements. This form of an almost "celestial" setting to music constructed a world of sound that emotionally involves the listener on an acoustic level, in addition to Edgar Allan Poe's mysterious and dark narrative world conceived 100 years earlier.

The seven short stories and poems correspond with the seven-part sculpture at the centre of the exhibition space and the seven paper works. However, Skafe Kuhn's group of works, ...and the tarn closed sullenly and silently, renders the literary and musical sources abstract in a space-filling installation that simultaneously becomes a theatrical setting for possible narrative and performative variants. The seven crystalline drops hang at different heights in a spiral from the ceiling of the exhibition space. Fragments of language are embroidered on the fabric's surfaces – quotes from E.A. Poe's seven short stories and poems. Among each other, the seven fragments generate new meanings and, as a narrative subtext of the sculptural scenery, form a new, open course of action: ...they creep through the fingers to the deep¹ / darkness there and nothing more² / it grew louder – louder - louder³ / and the clamourer grew still⁴ / nearly lost itself in a dense forest⁵ / and the tarn closed sullenly and silently⁶ / a green isle in the sea, a fountain and a shrine⁷. The seven medium-format paper works depict the purported protagonists of these optional stories, respectively referring to E.A. Poe's seven short stories and poems. But only the quotes from the individual short stories, which act as titles, impart information on this, so that the human and animal figures become representatives of the temporal and spatial transience of seemingly fixed situations.

¹ from: A Dream Within a Dream

² from: The Raven

³ from: The Tell-Tale Heart

⁴ from: The Cask of Amontillado

⁵ from: They System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether

⁶ from : The Fall of the House of Usher

⁷ from: To One in Paradise

Short biography:

Skafe Kuhn (1969) studied at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Karlsruhe.

Exhibitions (selection):

Kunstfonds Bonn (2007),
Künstlerdörfer Worpswede (2007),
Akademie Rom / Casa Baldi (2008).

Previous exhibitions (selection):

“The Library of Babel / In and Out of Place”, 176
Zabludowicz Collection, London, UK. (2010),
“Semaine de Jardin”, Villa Romana, Fierenze, IT
(2009),
“Mehr als ein T-Shirt”, Kunstverein Bielefeld,
DE (2009)
“abc Berlin”, Akademie der Künste Berlin, DE
(2009)
Westfälischer Kunstverein, DE (2008),
Halle für Kunst Lüneburg, DE (2008),
IBID PROJECTS, London, UK (2008),
“Vertrautes Terrain. Aktuelle Kunst in/über
Deutschland”, ZKM I Museum für Neue Kunst,
Karlsruhe, DE (2008),
“Lustwarande o8 – Wanderland”, Fundament
Foundation, Tilburg, NL (2008),
“Legend”, Departmental Domain
Chamarande, FR (2008).

GALERIE IRIS KADEL

Hirschstraße 45
76133 Karlsruhe
Germany

Telefon 1 ; 0049(0)721.467 28 01
Telefon 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