

by Christoph Tannert

Speech for the exhibition opening

Dietmar Brixy: Discover – Painting

Joseph Kerscher: Interior Images – Photography

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If our eyes don't deceive us, this exhibition is anything but an exercise in abstinence. As opposed to any kind of restraint, we encounter a veritable feast for the eyes here, a sight that even a Berliner pampered by aesthetic experiences and saturated with art would have to call 'splendid'. Tempting us less with paradise than a promise of happiness, this exhibition puts one in such good spirits that it can rightfully be praised as a catalyst to gain a better hold on life. In any event, walking through the exhibition, one encounters work that bespeaks something beyond our human limits. Abstracting from images and representations, what the two artists Dietmar Brixy and Joseph Kerscher have lost by jettisoning earthly weight through their working methods, they have gained in height. Their recasting of visual reality into experiential and interior images has led to new understandings, as attested to by the works here in the exhibition. Thus, we arrive at the insight that the physical world we perceive cannot be all that there is, and revel in universes that make our hearts race and reveal the sublime possibilities of art.

Dietmar Brixy was born in 1961 in Mannheim and studied in Karlsruhe under Harald Klingelhöller and Katharina Fritsch. One immediately recognises his training as a sculptor: He moves volumes around the picture plane, his painting is an act of force. He conquers the canvas, working alternatively with brush, palette knife, and hand. Molten lava and a variety of fragrances seem to bubble up between the lines that he sweeps and scrapes across the canvas. This type of painting is not simply entertaining; it is existential. Brixy's work is both stirring and relieving, and it reveals a striking variety of innovations within a traditional approach to painting.

Even in small format, one is fully immersed in the magic of Brixy's world. The composition of each image is complex. Brixy is a robust painter, and each of his images features a unique array of aromatic qualities that lend the work current relevance. Now it is the process that takes centre stage, now a haptic moment of the painting's surface itself, and now we can even begin to imagine that the image has transcended the realm of mere object or commodity. Brixy constantly offers us new approaches, allowing us to interact dynamically with the

images. It often seems as though a daredevil was doing a headstand on a razor's edge. Currently, the 2013 cycle *Discover* offers us this multiplicity of perspectives, qualities, and readings. At times it is the texture that catches our eye, at times the flavour (or 'the paths of the senses', to quote Roland Barthes), or as in truly masterful works, both unite to provide viewers with a transcendent sensory experience.

To 'discover' means to uncover, to locate, to encounter. In the process, the viewer moves between the poles of nature and painting, not to mention the nature of painting.

Brixy, who has travelled to Malaysia, Mexico, and Bali, brings new meanings to the popular longing for the Garden of Eden. However, he also allows us to tease out the secrets of his painting, which present a jungle-like thicket of surfaces. At other times, the image is so skillfully composed that it is nearly impossible to deduce the ways in which the artist is actually directing our attention through the painting. We will probably never gain full insight into his working method. Brixy's perspective is simply too complex, his work too diverse and rich in its visual articulation.

If one experiences a similar difficulty in understanding the underlying dimensions of **Joseph Kerscher's** photographs, one nevertheless experiences a powerful filmic version of the painterly. Born in 1961, Joseph Kerscher has lived in Berlin since 1981 and is first and foremost a formal artist who leads the viewer into unknown terrain.

Kerscher developed his artistry over a long period of time, working in different botanical gardens and landscapes. The exact setting or the precise species of plant he is photographing matters little to him – Kerscher denies any horticultural motivations for his work, speaking instead of his own psychological geography. From the outset, his work has developed along existential lines. Joseph Kerscher seeks images that make internal conditions visible.

The series *AREALE/1-6* was developed between April 2011 and September 2013. It currently comprises approximately 70 photographs of different sizes, only some of which are now on display in the exhibition: an earlier work from *AREALE 1* of 2011, as well as works from *AREALE 3* and *4* from 2013.

In Kerscher's themes, nature is both fractured and re-created. Even from a limited selection of works – ranging from images with only a partial presence of nature to those of completely alien landscapes – one gains a clear idea of the artist's gently executed process.

Through the employment of special prisms, Kerscher forces open the familiar shape of plants, thereby creating completely unique visual formulations. The images are digitally

reworked after exposure, whereby their structure is not altered, but rather their colours and tonal values are changed in order to serve the artistic idea behind the image.

As Kerscher's photographic process is determined by three variables (camera, prism, and object), chance plays no insignificant role in shaping the picture. He does not attempt to tell us anything about nature. Instead, his inspiration forms a backdrop and the viewer must decide how to proceed with the elements and forms, and how to draw connections among the diverse *Arealen*. Brought into play with one another by Kerscher, the contents of the image lead an independent existence, inviting the viewer on a journey of discovery. Dietmar Brixy and Joseph Kerscher are truly exceptional artists.

Before you, dear public, proceed with your plans to fast or to plunge once again into the usual passive acceptance of overstimulation, you should consider cleansing yourself in this clear stream of images.

You won't regret it.

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