

the goma

TILL GERHARD

Ahnen ahnen

29/05/2014 - 19/07/2014

Till Gerhard's second exhibition at The Goma has its precedents in "The Fairy Trail", a film co-directed by the artist and released just a few months ago. Better known for his facet as a painter, in this documentary Till wished to trace the narrow path that separates reality from myth, exploring and speaking with the inhabitants of allegedly magical places. However, it comes as no surprise that Gerhard is drawn towards film, given that his painterly output is hugely indebted to the cinematographic gaze. Akin to films, it is in Nature where the mysterious and the unknown seem to be most believable.

The forest, a breeding ground for legends and home to age-old cults, is also the backdrop for Till's new body of work. Nature and rituals are presented in these settings through a kaleidoscopic gaze of decreasing optimism. An unknown force worms its ways between the spectator and the protagonists of these idyllic landscapes, a force so unfathomable that the painter describes it as "a state between sleep and wakefulness such as when premonitions comes to me, rising to the surface from the depths of the unconscious and telling me what I should add to the canvas." Similarly to the name of the film, in the exhibition title Gerhard again plays with words: the German word *Ahnen* can mean to foretell but the same word also means ancestor and forefather. This etymological and Freudian coincidence has its reward in the gift of foretelling the future that is conceded to the living when they invoke their ancestors.

This symbiosis with nature is tainted by a struggle between the spiritual and collective self-knowledge, between the natural and the artificial, beauty and depravity. The forest served as a refuge for a large part of the subcultures of the past century (*the Wandervogel*, *Lebensreform*, Hippies, etc) and even today it is still the place of choice for dropping out and taking shelter for rebels against the system. An impartial Gerhard borrows from these vestiges in which superstition, drugs, music and the orgiastic are ever present. To outline the scenes he makes use of photographs, but the images are soon diffused on the canvas by means of abstract brushwork, which distances him from the School of Leipzig and brings him closer, together with his acid palette, to other artists like Daniel Richter and Peter Doig. Sometimes the strokes are like rays from the firmament above, satirising the otherworldly elements added on to the naturalism of Renaissance painting. Alternatively, in others, broad swathes slide down the canvas, producing a kind of dripping, one of the signature techniques of Action Painting, connecting it with a movement that held shamanism in high esteem. In short, we could conclude that the painter transcends the romantic and idealist vision of the collective memory of these marginal societies, harking back to the history of painting yet without overlooking the major influence of film and television that weighs so heavily upon us.

Till Gerhard (Hamburg, 1971) studied at Muthesius Collegue of Art and Design in Kiel University and in the Faculty of Science and Design of Hamburg University. His work has been exhibited in the exhibition "The Triumph of Painting" at Saatchi, in the Hamburg Kunsthalle, CA2M (Madrid) among many others galleries and museums worldwide. Till paintings and sculptures are included in collections such as Jumex, Sammlung Falckeberg, Inelcom and in the private collections of Richard Prince and the Hort Family.