

Christoph Pöggeler

Paradies

3 June – 2 July 2016

Maerz Contemporary Berlin presents Christoph Pöggeler's latest paintings from his Düsseldorf studio in this solo exhibition titled *Paradies*, the German word for paradise, derived from the ancient Eastern Iranian word *pairi-daēza*, a place of eternal harmony. The show pivots around a composition with the same title, a 122x216cm piece of wood on which a broad strip of blue sky is painted above a partially interrupted section of fence. The artist's preference for painting on wood was evident in last September's group exhibition at *Positions* in Berlin, when his works such as *Schwarze Löcher* (2014) and *Alte Zypressen* (2014) demonstrated Pöggeler's preference for working on material that has had a life of its own. Remarkable is the fact that sky and fence are meticulously portrayed in a Dürer-like old master's style, whereas the rest of the *tableau* is left unpainted, leaving the natural grain of the wood to speak for itself.

There are objective contrasts, abstract contradictions and still harmonies in Pöggeler's style. *Diptychon* (2016) shows two nudes on separate pieces of wood. A more reserved young male is painted onto the surface of a vertical plank whereas a bolder young female seems to spring out of a splendidly marked circular piece of wood. The background surface of natural wood with its innate design is embellished only in part by the artist's soft yet precise painterly strokes. Comparing this new piece with Pöggeler's *Schwarze Löcher*, of well-clad businessmen depicted on a rough, used table top, one is again reminded of *Neue Sachlichkeit* or New Objectivity, the short intense period of realistic painting during Germany's Weimar Republic that arose in reaction to expressionism.

Pöggeler also chooses simple inanimate objects such as a wagon axle in *Omnibus* (2016) as his subject matter and paints these with accurate detail, evoking a magic similar to the spiritual one emanating from the ultimate German romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich's 19th c. works. In Pöggeler's piece *Haus/Tempel* (2016), the artist depicts a somewhat surreal, Dali-esque, spindly outline of a house which exudes the same boundless melancholy as Friedrich's solitary monk in *Mönch am Meer* (1810), or Andrew Wyeth's yearning girl in *Christina's World* (1948) more than a century later. There are boundaries that are not real boundaries but feel as such. His conceptual *Triptychon* (2016), suggesting a tripartite medieval altar, shows the side of a plain house, its three windows boarded up. The „boards“ in the windows are the actual wooden surface left unpainted whereas the cement facade is photorealistically painted around them. The inside protected, certainly separated, from the outside. This idea becomes even more obvious in *Schrein* (2016), showing a wooden shack, perhaps a workmen's shelter, set in the middle of an urban setting, another juxtaposition created by the artist in his particular manner.

Two works from Pöggeler's *Anonymous Portraits* series, *Jack in the Box* and *Shady Character* (both 2015) bring back his modern iconic image of the businessman often favored not only in his painting but also in his urban sculpture series for Düsseldorf called *Säulenheilige*, an ongoing outdoor project in which he puts modern figures – a businessman with his attache case; a girl reading a paperback; a father carrying a child; a woman in jeans looking at the sky – on top of 19th c. advertising columns, dispersed around the city center.

Rounding out the show, another grand nude study of four upright figures, each painted onto their individual wooden plank, is aptly titled *Applause* (2016) – in their separate togetherness this group stands tall, applauding in collected harmony. CAZ