

# THE INVENTION OF NATURE

Opening: 13.01, 18 - 22:00

Duration: 14 - 28.01.2023

Opening hours: Saturday & Sunday 12 - 18:00 and by appointment

Raum MG16

Meister-Gerhard-Straße 16, 50674 Cologne, Germany

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ALEXANDER ECKHARDT / PAUL GALAS / DENNIS KAUZNER / YAËL KEMPF / GALA KNÖRR / HELENA MÜNCH / DAVID SCHMITZ / NILS LEVIN SEHNERT / MATTHIAS SURGES / THERESA WEBER / DENISE WERTH

"The descriptions of nature must not be deprived of the breath of life."\*

In 1845 - 1862, \*Alexander von Humboldt presented a unique life's work with "Kosmos", the aim of which was "to present the whole material world, everything we know today about the phenomena of the celestial spaces and of life on earth, from the nebulous stars to the geography of the mosses on the granite rocks, all in one work [...]."

Needless to say, this life-encompassing undertaking cannot be visualized within a small exhibition and yet the approaches are the same to search for answers or rather to question our image of nature - how does the development present itself from an artistic point of view with some subjectively selected artists and how far does the interplay between scientific empirical knowledge of nature and subjective experience of nature or its artistic further development and fictional narrative or in short its (re)invention go.

In contrast to the previous exhibition PARADISIAC, which reacted to our change in perception towards a romantic understanding of nature, THE INVENTION OF NATURE focuses more on scientific and autobiographical moments. The participating artists refer to experiences of visible natural phenomena as well as emotional moments that go hand in hand with personal connection to nature and knowledge of the self. In this sense, reference might be made to Goethe's "The Sorrows of Young Werther". Goethe describes nature, in relation to Werther's emotional worlds, as a *Locus Amoenus*, i.e. as a "lovely place" or "place of pleasure", which, however, is not able to keep the promises made to it in the end. What expectations do works of art generate on this theme - what emotional and scientific confrontations take place and become visible?

In short, the pictorial modes of expression are as diverse as the artists represented in the show themselves. Where Gala Knörr, Vitoria-Gasteiz/Marbella, shows portraits from Greek mythology whose contemplations of nature remain philosophically cryptic, Paul Gala's almost naïve, comic-like vedutes reveal a direct approach to the landscape. Like Paul Gala's paintings, Matthias Surge's large-format aluminum paintings, which appear to be perfected with car paint, reveal horizons that seem to flow into one another before the eye. In Helena Münch's work, too, colors melt into diffuse landscapes, while Dennis Kauzner's large-format charcoal drawings grant nature an exchange with its architectural surroundings. In his wall sculptures, Nils Levin Sehnert takes imprints of an almost unnoticed nature and, through the use of colors as well as surprising color effects, brings them to a new level of perception. Denise Werth uses in her object - reaching from the ceiling into the exhibition room - borrowings of biomorphic form language and transfers forms taken from nature into a fascinating, swinging sculpture. Works that float freely in space are also an artistic means of expression for Theresa Weber, which she has already cultivated in numerous international exhibitions. Her sculptures take up personal memories, closeness to nature and identity. David Schmitz sees his paintings in a similar nature-based context when he creates an impenetrable

tangle of overlapping layers of stylized black 'leaves' with powerful brushstrokes. Photographer Alexander Eckhardt, on the other hand, is acutely aware of his pictorial subjects as he balances *Vanitas* and *Natura Morte* with the destruction of the surrounding landscape. French artist Yaël Kempf takes a playful approach to her understanding of nature when she has horses play a game of soccer in her video - as a fusion of art and subjective understanding of nature.

Incidentally, Humboldt's original idea was to publish "Kosmos" together with Heinrich Berghaus' "Physical Atlas". The latter contains maps that illustrate Humboldt's texts on the geographical distribution of natural phenomena. This did not happen at the time, as the two could not agree on a joint publication.

The small show at Raum-MG16, Cologne attempts to make precisely such overlaps and perceptions visually visible - aesthetically, personally and contemporary.

M. Kersting