

Zwischenstation

Lars Unkenholz / Paula Breuer

17.04 - 05.06.2021

Stopover

Alba Raja

"Zwischenstation" ("stopover") is an interstice between the gazes of two young artists, Paula Breuer (Düsseldorf, 1998) and Lars Unkenholz (Ratingen, 1997), who use painting as means to delineate their immediate environment through a radically personal vision. The result of a carefree yet determined gesture brings the spectator to the precise and unrepeatable moment of painting; even if we do not guess its final destination nor its pretensions: we can only witness, if anything, a brief but lucid record of scenes that ooze everyday life as well as strangeness, suggesting, at the same time, certain melancholic temperament lightly veiled by the colours impregnating it.

Through a mostly figurative language, Breuer and Unkenholz revisit those themes that the German Expressionist tradition frequently feeds off. The combination of ambiguous elements, bodies, animals, natures and temporalities return bucolic landscapes and scenes of a quiet life that sometimes deform into an oneiric delirium exaggerated by the emphatic use of color and its brushstroke, and through the introduction of forms and places away from reality.

The spectral appearances we can find in Unkenholz's wastelands seem to be the result of the world of dreams, although their aura invites us to imagine they are some kind of phantasmagoric manifestation of his own self. By means of marbled, silhouetted surfaces of colour, the artist self-portraits his depersonalisation to little by little embrace his animality: his body is now an anthropomorphic mass already far from the human, halfway to becoming the *eisbär* (polar bear) that Grauzone wanted to impersonate to free themselves from the tedious possibility of weeping¹.

This holistic vision of the story of the artist's own life is completed with other barely recognisable landscapes, objects, still lifes, which take shape more through drawing than through patch: they are fragments of a visual diary that aspires to intensify those personal experiences that the artist feels endangered in his memory in this unstoppable storm of digital transformation. The images appear fractured, reducing the human figure, the landscape and the object to the essential; devoided of detail in a desire to reveal the reality hidden beneath the surface of things.

Paula Breuer, for her part, has released a herd of vivacious, playful and somewhat fearful dogs which get anxious when they notice our strange and hostile presence in the room. Distrustful, they call to action: they provoke us with their attitude, forcing us to be the object of their rejection or granting us the consent for joining their little animal celebration. These words by Sonia Fernández Pan come to mind when the dogs stalk me: "(...) We need the aesthetic experience to be waiting

¹ Martin EICHER (comp.); Urs STEIGER, GRAUZONE (prod.), *Eisbär* [song], 1980, in *Swiss wave - The Album*, available at: <https://open.spotify.com/track/6dO3t1e3pb7sxyDQbDyVNX?si=8d2616efadfc4127>

for us there [the exhibition]. Like a dog with no owner waiting inside for someone to look at it. Like something personal and non-transferable that we allow others to share with us. As a McGuffin that ends up being really important. As one that will never be².” Breuer is sometimes the dog, sometimes the rat and sometimes the swan, blatantly waiting among the scrublands for us to venture into her enigmatic imaginary without necessarily accepting us first: if we welcome it without prejudice we will enjoy a calm, singular nature walk with its scenes of slowness and repose, which appear before us in riotously colourful garments of determined traces.

The MacGuffin in *Zwischenstation* is, perhaps, the absence of a meaning that manages to keep the secret alive. An honest vindication of the beautiful in two stories as different as they are introspective, which are far from wanting to become universal, but which nevertheless subtly confess a generational feeling: the search for a sense of belonging, a place in the world and a voice of their own to soothe their unease.

² Sonia FERNÁNDEZ PAN, “De Kassel yo recuerdo Berlín”, 16.03.2014 [online], available at: <http://es-norquel.es/de-kassel-yo-recuerdo-berlin/>