

The Exhibition “Horizons” Gallery Ines Schulz, Dresden

Adina Hähnel, Art Historian, October 2006, Dresden

En-route is a poem from Sarah Kirsch.

*My body that is my escort
Life long followed
From a dark shadow
Formed like a dog, obsessed
About myself to be*

*A few words with chalk
On the street, written in
Rain*

He is also in transit, the Berliner artist Christian Heinrich. Thank God he doesn't write his words with chalk, not on the street, not in the rain. Thank God he writes his words on canvas, on paper, on wood. In brown and yellow tones, traces of rust, in more colour shaded black and sometimes with sandy material. Christian Heinrich tells us of his travels, invites us to come along on “Familiar Paths”; “Little Dream Journeys.” He recollects for himself, and also if we want for us the onlookers, about Colorado, Manhattan, on Foothills, Coastal Landscapes, Mystical Stalactite Caves and a State of Rapture. We don't need to follow these path indicators, we can search for our own pathway. To be sure it certainly won't be easier. Heinrich averts a quick glance. Whoever wants to understand him, literally in the true sense of the word needs time. Time to immerse in an infinitely seemingly appearing world. How else shall one understand these abstract pictures of a traveller that refer to nothing only themselves? Of their beauty, their composure, of their eloquent silence.

What does Christian Heinrich offer us for help? Secrets; old walls, moss like braid, cracks and splits in dry earth, rugged cliffs and a bewitching light, yellow, hot, shimmering, a lame dusty surrealistic atmosphere lays itself over the picture. Everything appears blurred but still then completely clear with an incredible brilliance; in other words collage per-excellence. Hand scooped paper of different types and origin soaked in oil, immersed in glue, torn, wrinkled, crumpled and singed. Precisely applied colour layers and yet these are again processed, scraped, scratched, smoothed, maltreated and carefully shoved together or stretched up to the tearing point. The results are areas, layers of seemingly time passages. If one didn't know better one could believe to stand in front of an excavation field, one literally sees the archaeologist how they uncover the brittle earth layer for layer, knock off the soil extracting an artefact in hours of long laborious work. The surface of these collagen seem encrusted, stiff and scared. One would like to touch them to see if the impression is a deception or true. Are these relief soft, crystalline, rugged, moist or greasy, and when not what then?

The Berliner is a master of suggestion. His pictures draw you into their spell. They are detached, restrained and cautious. Yes restrained and frightening subtle. Look for yourself at the “Red Rapture”. Please look at it carefully. You penetrate and lose yourself, your view becomes wider and wider. Suddenly you are in the middle of a sea of flames and you can't escape, when you really dare to intrude an escape is no longer possible, you will consume yourself in the heat.

One should definitely ask Christian Heinrich afterwards why he exposed himself to this blazing fire, why is he doing that to us. The Berliner born in 1957 studied Art History, Archaeology, and Journalism before he turned to Art with studies at the Hochschule der Künste Berlin (University of Art). The Master Student of Professor Herbert Kaufmann already had an early interest for interdisciplinary works. Mutual theatre projects with the playwright Heiner Müller, and a long standing experience as assistant professor for stage design, technique and character performance at the Academy of Art Berlin. Since 1987 his works have been shown in many individual and group exhibitions in Germany and abroad. Christian Heinrich's travel descriptions are finding due approval by now.

Understandable. Look for yourself at "Night Mirror." Very black, gray, brown, very earthly, very detached and dangerous. Deep ink black. In this deepness the linear structures. Somehow everything becomes held tight by a firm hand, but simultaneously everything is open. I see the knight of the night, his visor is closed, the view however goes into emptiness. Then again I see mirror over mirror or even streets. Everything is very geometrical, very sorted, in fact like streets, like streets in New York. 1st, 2nd, 3rd street, New York a city created on the drawing board, and also as an oil collage on canvas. That isn't a coincidence. Christian Heinrich was 1995 in New York. There on Broadway he discovered a pile of paper, laid paper out of silk, made of parchment and even elephant dung. There he began his paper collages.

I would like to introduce you to another work "Magic Congo Cave," a work on wood from 2001. Also this mystical stalactite cave withdraws itself from a quick glance to classify the stereotypes. Formations in ochre, yellow, black and rust seem to be shoved together. Please look carefully, you can actually see the dripping stones, and not only that you also experience the light and landscape of Southern Africa. This picture is also a travel picture.

The Berliner Christian Heinrich, a traveller, a seeker, a child with open eyes. May he on all his travelled paths always find refuge. May he at least always write a few words with chalk. On the street, even when it rains. His stories are so fascinating. Thank God.