

LUNGLEY

Andriu Deplazes: BLIND IN THE SEA WEEDS

Paintings and drawings

Curated by Celena Ohmer

07/07/18 - 05/08/18

Forget six counties overhung with smoke,
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke, Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
And dream of London, small and white and clean, The clear Thames bordered by its garden green.

William Morris, *The Earthly Paradise* (1868–70) 'Prologue: The Wanderers'

Andriu Deplazes creates paintings that live on dichotomy and flowing transitions, in terms of both form and content. They change between small and large formats, intensive colouration and gloom, apparent naturalness and artificiality, the familiar and the unknown, intimacy and distance.

Characteristic of his style is a dynamic, open and simultaneously controlled painterly flow that mixes soft, pronounced and brown-toned light and dark with garish or luminescent oil paints containing fluorescent pigments, and that avoids the idealisation of bodies. From the colour compositions, dominated by the complementary colours of red and blue, there unfolds a tension that can be read as extending to aggression at times.

Expressive gestures make visible the movement of the hand, allowing the direct energy of the painting process to be comprehended. The vibrating details of the images suggest a formal tension with the composed colour fields, which impressively demonstrate the possibilities for the handling of colour. Central to this is texture. With the help of various grounds, glazes and pigment treatments, a layering of colour develops that creates a play of colours, an organic chemistry and consistency. At times he frenetically applies the paint to the canvas with his fingers, emphasizing the works' tactile quality. The ambivalence between contact and distance is made apparent here.

The linchpin and fulcrum of this exhibition are his pen and ink drawings, presented here publicly for the first time, in which, amongst other things, he records fleeting moments from everyday life ad hoc, creating fragments that then become the basis for motifs in his paintings. These ink drawings, however, predominantly restricted to black-and-white, present more than just an exciting accompaniment to his colour-intensive, figurative oil paintings. In their incompleteness, they allow an intimate access on the part of the viewer to the painting process.

The artist creates analyses of human and societal conditions, inter-human relations and sexuality, which oscillate between fiction, research, concealment and invocation.

With this he does not seek that which is complete, but rather that constitutive moment of a process that allows ambivalence to appear clearly and so evoke the viewer's own anxiety. In single and dual depictions, predominantly pale, naked, hairless bodies can be seen in a somewhat idyllic landscape. The misshapen, often truncated and androgynous figures seem like foreign objects, planted amongst the floral-ornamental environment around them. An interplay between movement and lethargy is captured pictorially. While hands and arms form protective gestures, for example, mouths seem to want to scream or fall silent, lending an acoustic quality to the work and reflecting the artist's affinity for music.

The central moment is that of viewing the disproportioned, naked figures upon which Deplazes works tirelessly. Whether from a frog's, bird's or normal perspective, the viewer is sized up, or forced to look away in shame. In his own particular way of looking, the young artist plays with a reading of art history rooted in the male gaze. He distances himself from this by giving expression to the

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seemingly “weak” side of men, and the abrogated femininity within it. Deplazes’s drawings and paintings open up a murky world characterised by loneliness and rootlessness.

In preparation for the exhibition, Deplazes engaged with William Morris’ 1890 socialist utopian work *News from Nowhere*, whose opening citation makes clear that the people of that time – like us today – were facing similarly huge processes of societal transformation and the problems these bring with them. Rather than digitalisation, globalisation, climate change and migration, it was above all industrialisation that challenged them. Morris’ utopia postulates an individual freedom and human closeness to nature that should lead to a healthy, happy and satisfied life. To some extent the exhibition presents the perception of a first-person narrator, one who finally realises that it was, in fact, all a dream. Like Morris, Deplazes also questions, at times ironically, our understanding of nature.

For further information please contact the gallery at mark@lungleygallery.com