

Mariele Neudecker

Hybrid

10 March – 27 April, 2023

Pedro Cera is pleased to present the second exhibition of Mariele Neudecker at the gallery.

Despite known for her multimedia practice, encompassing sculpture, sound, video, or photography, painting occupies a fundamental role in Neudecker's oeuvre. Her approach to painting, however, overcomes a traditional attitude to the medium. Instead, painting, namely painting of the Romantic Sublime, may they be works by Caspar David Friedrich, Jean Honoré Fragonard, or Peder Balke, among others, serve Neudecker as a reference, and a point of departure for many of her pieces, shaping a strong conceptual layer in her practice. While some works appropriate the full image, others, like a new group of shifting panel paintings, focus instead on an image fragment only. Removing the human figure from the image and the exhibition, Neudecker emphasizes the idea of landscape, one of Romanticism's key tropes. An interest in landscape and nature pervades her work, allowing Neudecker to look closely at the meeting of the natural world (objective-external) with the subjective-internal world of perception and interpretation. The division of the paintings into maneuverable units examines themes of representation and recognition. The idea of a static image has been rejected through a modifiable structure. It is the idea of meaning's subjective construction, notions of appearance, and the idea of visual speculation which are at stake.

Deceiving by their appearance *You Will Never See This Again*, 2023, three sculptures, a rock, a cloud, and a bush, universal and timeless motives associated closely with the visual language of Romanticism, embody the autonomy of a sculptural object while maintaining strong ties with the formal characteristics of a realistic painterly surface. The realistic nature of these objects, resulting from a lengthy painterly process with a strong emphasis on detail, seduces by their form, questioning the powers of human imagination, notions of truth, and the role of illusion in human perception. Truth here is rendered relative, pointing to a state of post-truth established in the Postmodern world and furthered as a consequence of today's digital pluralism. The obvious displacement of the sculptures and their surprising proximity with the human body establishes a set of new relations, making the element of artificiality an essential part of the work, while at the same time generating contradictory feelings of familiarity and alienation. This dualism, frequently based on contradicting elements such as inside – outside, truth – fiction, visible – invisible, nature–culture, day-night, points to a strong sense of hybridity, a typical element in Neudecker's practice and one of the themes of the present exhibition.

Divided into two landscapes – day and night, the spectator is driven into the nocturnal, arctic back room with two tanks. Appropriating and casting motives of existing Romanticist paintings, in this case, Philip Jacques de Loutherbourg's painting *Shipwreck*, 1767, and William Bradford's *Scene on the Arctic*, 1880, Neudecker transforms fragments of these arctic scapes into a three-dimensional format, moving them closer to reality, while at the same time separating them through their enclosure, creating a sense of timelessness and estrangement.

A similar sense of time suspension can be found in most of Neudecker's works, *Ancestral Environment - Evolutionary Time Scale No.1* being no exception. Similarly to Neudecker's landscapes also here the artist chooses a timeless motive associated with classical/

Romanticist painting, depicting through destruction the forces of nature, and an image of human endeavor. Buried under layers of paint, we are reminded of painting's importance, not only as a reference but, in this case, as a structural element. Like layers of ice, the thick surface of paint covering the ship was built over time, layer by layer, emphasizing further the work's relation to temporality and the suspension of time.

Despite representing nature, to convey the Sublime, painters of Romanticism would use their subjective experience of nature, rooting that which was depicted in the wilderness of their own imagination. Neudecker's engagement with Romanticism, questions the truthfulness of an image, may this image be an image from art history or a product of the present digital paradigm, which has forever altered the epistemological limits of how we understand truth. Pointing to this reality, *Hybrid* sets us on a journey of simulacra and familiar appearances, where reality is defined by its artificiality, and where notions of truth and fiction, as clearly distinguished realities, have been rendered obsolete.

—

Mariele Neudecker (1965) lives and works in Bristol, UK. Solo exhibitions include Limerick City Gallery, Limerick, Ireland; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK; Tate St Ives and Tate Britain, London; Kunstmuseum Trondheim, Norway; Zeppelin Museum, Germany; she has shown widely in international group exhibitions. In 2020 her work was part of *Among the Trees* exhibition at Hayward Gallery, London. Neudecker is Professor at Bath Spa University, Fellow for CERN's Visiting Artists Program and is on the European Commission's Science Hub's advisory panel for their Joint Research Centre for Art and Science.