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billy childish

all
apparent achievements
and
misdemeanours
are
non defining

april 27 - june 22, 2013

exhibition opening
april 26, 6-9pm

temporary exhibition space
münzstraße 23, 10178 berlin

We are pleased to announce the gallery's second solo exhibition of paintings by Billy Childish (*1959), which will open April 26 on the occasion of Gallery Weekend Berlin and remain on view in a temporary exhibition space at Münzstraße 23 through June 22. Paintings produced by the artist in the past few years during his residency at the Historic Dockyard in Chatham have been selected especially for the sizable rooms of this old Berlin flat.

If Childish had previously turned to kindred protagonists from Modernity such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Hans Fallada or Robert Walser, he is now devoting himself to frontiers of a different kind - lost explorers, mountain climbers and seamen. Amongst these is Toni Kurz, who died before the eyes of his rescuers when his party's 1936 attempt to be the first to ascend the Eiger Nordwand was met with disaster. Childish does not show the actual fatal event, but rather the resigned mountaineers who later set out to fetch Kurz's body. In another image, Childish condenses the fate of the crew of the Farallon steamship - stranded near Alaska in the winter of 1910 - into a haunting portrait of one of the survivors who, shown gathering firewood, is thrown into a state of isolated self-reflection.

Childish currently lives in the former house of Oswald Short, who along with his brothers pioneered the design of sea planes for both military and civil aviation, notably the Empire flying boat made for Imperial Airways in the mid 1930s. The artist includes one of these massive aircrafts in a dream sequence set on the pale blue expanse of the Sea of Galilee. Turning towards the mirror of his various alter egos, Childish paints oyster catchers on the Thames Estuary, distant memories of a friend's father on the solid Medway Delta during the 'big freeze' of 1962/63, merging the past and present, the exotic and the familiar in highly charged and personal imagery. In all of this, a keen understanding of draughtsmanship and the value of abandoning sophistication yields an experimental negotiation with painting hovering on the threshold of reality and fiction, of role-playing and existential veracity. In these autobiographical appropriations, the heroic always already implies the fallen.

Billy Childish was born in 1959 in Chatham (Kent), GB, where he still lives and works. He is a painter, poet and musician. Works by the artist have been shown in solo and group exhibitions at the ICA (Institute of Contemporary Art), London; White Columns, New York; and, most recently, at the Historic Dockyard in Chatham.

The exhibition at Münzstraße 23 in Berlin-Mitte is open Tuesday through Saturday between 11am and 6pm. It is accompanied by a three-volume catalogue, produced in cooperation with Lehmann Maupin, New York, and International Art Objects, Los Angeles.

like spearmint dog shit

*despising the bloated faces of the winners
i knew there was no choice but to fail
refusing all gifts
i involinterilly spat bile
so i refused
gloriously
drunkenly
belligerently
looking for truth in dark resseses
spraying seed into the mouths of angels
denouncing the timid
and
the desperate
who cloyed for money
and
perfumed cunts
that only masked the stench
of their own breath
like spearmint dog shit
until
i favoured non
and
even failing became an affront
as that too is false*

Billy Childish, 2013

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