

GALERIE BERND KUGLER

## TERRA FECUNDA EST

JOSEFIN ARNELL, ERWIN GROSS, RENÉ LUCKHARDT

19.01.2018 – 03.03.2018

Galerie Bernd Kugler is delighted to kick off the year 2018 with an exhibition featuring works by Josefin Arnell, Erwin Gross and René Luckhardt.

*Terra fecunda est*, Earth is fertile.

The exhibition's initial focus was to depict landscape; ultimately it then focused on the topic of nature/Earth. The title is derived from a textbook used in Latin lessons, which states: *Terra Italia fecunda est*.

The origins of this intriguing sentence could not be traced back by the opening date of the exhibition. However if it is used in a rhetorical sense, then one is eloquently reminded of one's provenance. This clever strategy, we can agree, is definitely a consensus to build upon.

Once the location is no longer indicated, however, the exhibition title states that the Earth is fertile. This seems rather mundane (unless one intends to conduct a crusade against extraterrestrial aggressors). What else is it supposed to be, and where else should fertility be found? The Earth is always fertile. Is that true? Don't we know better today – after our experiences with planned economy and ruthless capitalist exploitation, and not least as a result of climate change? We may well have to get used to the idea that the long-term destruction of fertility lies within fertility itself. We must recognize that fertility is relative and that the destruction of one species may in turn bring prosperity to another. Ultimately aside for the need for natural food, humankind's dream of taking fertility and creation into one's own hands still remains. The question of the relationship between art and nature is an old and possibly inexhaustible subject in art as well. The works shown were not specifically produced for this exhibition; instead the subject and the exhibition title have rather evolved from the relationship between these two.

Josefin Arnell's three-part installation comprises, amongst others, a video work featuring a whale that passes different stages on its journey through an animated underwater world.

In her videos, mixed-media installations and performances, Josefin Arnell navigates between exuberance and self-exploitation. Her fictional and semi-fictional works employ elements of disaster documentary films and resort to advertising campaigns and soap operas just as naturally as to wild nature.

Josefin Arnell (born in 1984 in Sweden) first studied at Beckmans College of Design in Stockholm, then at Sandberg Instituut Amsterdam (MA "dirty art department"), and took part in the biennial Residency Program of the Rijksakademie of Visual Arts in Amsterdam. Currently, her works can be seen in "beyond future is past" in Kunsthalle Münster (together with works by Omer Fast, Hito Seyerl and Isa Genzken, among others). Josefin Arnell lives and works in Amsterdam.

Erwin Gross shows a new group of works characterized by a painting style that is dominated by

shades of white. Yet, clear traces of the grey and brown shades dominant in his former paintings still remain. Additionally, the canvas works are complemented by collages of steel engravings dating back to around 1800.

In his work Erwin Gross creates a type of colorism with a wealth of nuances that materialize in restraint; the painting – in parallel with the natural processes of growth and accumulation – doesn't act as a landscape painting but rather as the formation of a purely pictorial landscape (Carolin Meister).

Erwin Gross (born in 1953 in Langenbrücken/Baden, Germany) studied at the State Academy of Visual Arts in Karlsruhe from 1975 to 1980, and from 1980 to 1982 at "de Ateliers" in Haarlem, the Netherlands. Since 1990 he has been a professor at the State Academy of Visual Arts in Karlsruhe. Erwin Gross took part in numerous international exhibitions, such as documenta7, Kassel, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (Becht Collection), Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (solo exhibition), Städtische Galerie Karlsruhe (solo exhibition), ZKM Karlsruhe (Der besondere Blick).

René Luckhardt's large-scale painting of an untitled garden traces back to his grandfather's photography. The work dates from his phase of "Kellerloch Paintings".

René Luckhardt's painting style of that time is dark and full of secrets, at times grotesque, then again blissful, peaceful, calm. During that time he noted that Lewis Carroll and Aleister Crowley's paintings were influential in his style.

René Luckhardt (born in 1972) studied at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz and at Chelsea College of Art & Design in London. In 2010 he established the art space *Wonderloch Kellerland* (Berlin/LA/Manhattan) in his apartment. 2013 saw a retrospective of his Kellerloch Paintings in Berlin. The catalogue of the same title was published by *Q.H.S.O.I.Q.O.C.M.S.* in cooperation with Christian Malycha.