

CHRIS CORNISH *THE WORLD LIES WAITING*

25 April, 2015 - 06 June, 2015

SCHLEICHER/LANGE BERLIN
Opening Friday, 24 April, 2015, 6 - 9 pm

Opening times during the Gallery Weekend Berlin:
Friday, 1 May, 2015, until 9pm
Saturday and Sunday, 2 and 3 May, 2015, 11 am - 7 pm

Chris Cornish's current exhibition "The world lies waiting" tests the limits and possibilities of photographic means through focusing on their inherent attributes, such as light, time, and the apparatus. Transposing photography beyond the conventional limitations of the photographic genre into the realms of sculpture and installation, Cornish interweaves real, analog, and digital spaces, blurring the seeming simplicity of how we read surface and volume.

The most humble of the works on show, "I come in peace", portrays a human presence, the presence of the artist in the exhibition. This small clay almost-sphere, hand-sculpted by Cornish himself, stands for the artistic and mental process he underwent in preparation for "The world lies waiting". It is both an artifact of mental thought (the unconscious rolling of clay between hands) as well as a practice in attempted perfect creation (to form the most ideal of Platonic solids, but always to imperceptivity fail). Thus we are all truly only human after all.

"The world between is invisible to them" reproduces the lighting atmosphere on a particular evening in the wilderness of Joshua Tree, Southern California, thereby transferring the specific conditions of an already past unique moment into the gallery space. Cornish recreates the special place-time-moment by first capturing the lighting parameters using technical photographic techniques and then carefully converting and replicating these within the confines of a custom made geodesic sphere. The resulting lighting is programmed and coordinated in such a way that it will forever recreate the evening light from a particular date in the desert. As the viewer cannot enter the sphere, the space and the light experience inside remain physically inaccessible, the transferred place becoming accessible only as an idea. With this, Cornish sheds new light on the question of the reproducibility of reality, a question inherent to photography, and makes it physically comprehensible.

"The world between is invisible to them" stands in dialog with the photographs "The world lies waiting". In these works, photographic paper was exposed to the natural lighting situation in the desert of Joshua Tree, left undeveloped and finally fixed, capturing the lighting situation permanently within the photographic paper medium itself. The moment is thereby conserved between the layers, but in this, it is forever invisible. The photographs are thus the analog equivalent of the sphere. Even as the place and subject of the photographs remains visually obscured to the viewer, the choice of location, the romantic wilds of the American wilderness, serves to establish a link to the history of photography (a connection to the analog experiments of Ansel Adams) and the search for the sublime.

In contrast, the photograph "Nor does God whisper in the trees" uses analog photographic procedures in order to bring existing but invisible elements to the observable surface. Using controlled flash light and cross polarizing filters, Cornish illuminates the space within a prism, a place usually confined to the action of light refraction, causing it to glow with a magical quality. In doing this, Cornish creates the idea of a space that is fundamentally closed-off to our ordinary perceptive capabilities, opening up a hidden world to be experienced by the viewer. In this capturing of a transcendental moment, the work can be read in parallel to historical experiments attempting to reveal the supernatural and occult in film.

Also using analog photographic techniques, “When we next occur” seems to show the deep space of a star-studded night sky seen through an oddly octagonal opening or portal. However, as the details in the photograph are successively realized, the viewer’s perception starts to unravel: what is surface and what has depth become blurred. Here, Cornish has created a situation that spatially unfolds in front of the viewer’s eye, creating an impossible paradox. Just as a writer produces a fictional account from real elements, Cornish conceives of an unreal space formed by light and shadow using photographic media. He hereby challenges the viewer’s perception, leaving her to meander between real elements and imaginary moments.

In the installation “Without our knowledge” Cornish reveals the inherent relationship between our own point of view and an understanding of a larger context. The metal plates, measuring 40 x 60 cm each, have been coated with ‘chameleon’ automotive paint that shifts along a spectrum of colors depending on the angle viewed. Grouped so that they orient towards a specific central point, representing both the artist’s position and therefore that of the prospective viewer as well, it is not until this center point is reached that all the plates assume the same color, and the pieces of the puzzle finally fit together. Touching on perspective and authorship, “Without our knowledge” allows the viewer to interact within the prescribed space, literally stepping into the artist’s point of view.

In these works, Cornish asks what lies beneath the visible surface. He shows how photography and photographic processes can be used to explore the realm of both the visible and invisible, creating new understandings of location, depth, and volume. The viewer is shown a world that has always existed but is never seen. Though technical in the making: a controlled use of process and media, the outcome is poetic: a revealing while also denying of vision and experience.

Text: Kirsten Eggers
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