

Isabell Heimerdinger

ENGLISH

On Days of Clear, Perfect Light

January 20, 2024 – March 09, 2024

Opening: January 19, 2024, 17 – 20 PM

Mehdi Chouakri Wilhelm Hallen

Kopenhagener Straße 60–72

13047 Berlin–Reinickendorf

Isabell Heimerdinger has developed an atmospherically rich setting for her exhibition at Galerie Mehdi Chouakri. Upon entering, the attention is drawn to the 42-minute film ***On Days of Clear, Perfect Light***, presented on a partition diagonally placed in the room. Behind it, visible at first only as an artificial gleam of light, is the second part of the spatial concept, a green, yellow, and purple 'forest' made up of neon tubes shaped like bamboo poles. This installation forms part of an ongoing series of neon signs in the artist's oeuvre. Yet the emblematically reduced formalism of these fluorescent tubes moves beyond the realm of image and language and subtly incorporates the sound of the film.

In the film ***On Days of Clear, Perfect Light***, shot in São Tomé and Príncipe in the equatorial region, we experience nature itself as the true protagonist. Here, with the landing of the Portuguese captain João de Santarém in 1471, is where half a millennium of turbulent colonial history began, evident until this day in many aspects of daily life. Yet the film provides few clues as to the location. The viewer's attention is drawn away from the expectation of an ordered plot toward, one might say, a sensual, atmospheric, and subjective perspective. The experiences of the implied traveller and the viewers are caught in a state of uncertainty, somewhere between recognition and conjecture and between physical experience and remembered transformation of (actual) personal encounters and observations.

The dimension of language is of particular importance, recognisably developed from within the artist's oeuvre. Sentences appear at irregular intervals as language tableaux on screen. These texts are not always synchronised with their references in the film; instead, they also add dimensions of memory whilst viewing. Engaging with the sentence formations and the language fragments, the unlocking of an echo chamber occurs, adding further levels to the bodily experience of closeness and alienation in and from nature — intellectually, emotionally, and conceptually.

For me, this is the essence of the film: attempting an approach and simultaneously failing at it. Deliberately disregarding familiar clichés, historical facts, and the entire postcolonial discourse. Realising that nothing can be disregarded. The unspoken (in the truest sense of the word), the gaps. There were two journeys: the physical journey followed by a journey of the material. In between, so much had shifted, making defining a posi-

tion within the whole difficult. I consider the fact that we allowed precisely this — openness, fragmentariness, ambivalence — to be both a weakness and strength of the film. (I.H.)

This element of dissociation, self-reflexiveness, and the bipolarity of seemingly unambiguous images and ›stories‹ is, as in her earlier works, a genuine characteristic of Isabell Heimerdinger's oeuvre.

Renate Wiehager

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