

Mandla Reuter

Slowly And Majestically The Sun Steals Gradually Over The Hilltops

Opening

27 January 2009, 19:00

Exhibition

28 January until 7 March 2009

In the first part of the Buster Keaton film "Scarecrow" (1920), from which Mandla Reuter borrowed the title for his exhibition, Keaton and Joe Robert live together in a house. In the self-made, high tech household the sofa can be transformed into a bathtub with one turn and the dining table conceals itself as a picture. Everything appears to be multifunctional and movable, doors and hatchways open and close, revealing furniture which then vanishes again: "All the rooms in this house are in one room." For his solo exhibition at Galerie Mezzanin, Mandla Reuter has to a certain extent reversed the initial situation of the film: one gallery room is made into three exhibition rooms. Mandla Reuter has restructured the gallery. He makes visitors go around the building, forces them to use back doors and leads them through rooms that are otherwise closed to visitors.

The movement and the perception and shift in time and space connected with it play a significant part in it all. At the beginning of the exhibition there is a photo of the 2009 New Year fireworks in Sydney, the city that is also known as "New Year's Eve capital of the world" for its celebrations. Reuter also commissioned a photographer for this picture - as he previously did for his sunset pictures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. While he was photographing the spectacle for the future on the other side of the world his client was still writing the past year on the other.

The artist underwent another kind of perception in a helicopter and circled the huge globe in Flushing Meadows Park in Queens, which was built for the 1964 Expo in New York. Black and white photographs fix the perspectives on the world and the gigantic park from above and capture views which do not know whether they should aim further into the sky or towards earth - as if they were just pausing in mid-flight. The architectonic remains of the great world exhibition spread out below the globe - ruins of an attempt to bring together special features of the world in a theme park. Also the palm trees, which Mandla Reuter places in the middle of the gallery space, are artefacts from another (distant) place. Like the around 4,500 plant species which are still nurtured in the Schönbrunn Palm House, they bear witness to the concepts of the 19th century as, with the development of world exhibitions, zoos and botanical gardens, the attempt was made to bring the distant and exotic close and to collect. The wall of palm trees closes off the view and the way through the gallery space and is the backdrop for the staging of places for which we yearn.

Similar shifts in place and time also take place in the sound installation Test (2008). Once an hour the theme tune of the THX company sounds out in the exhibition space, the certification system of the George Lucas film group which advertises itself with the slogan "the science of sensation". The crescendo of one of the variations of "Deep Note" transforms the gallery for 32 seconds into a venue promising attractions, solely in order to leave the space to remain quiet and empty for the following hour.

Mandla Reuter's works arouse expectations and longings and at the same moment expose their artifice and staging. They shift New Year forwards, a palm beach to Vienna and only show us a photo of a firework show and borrowed potted palms.