

ENDURING BEAUTY /**DOROTHEA SCHÖNE, LACMA / USA** [*Translated by Eileen Laurie*]

Enduring Beauty reports and records that which our restless gaze has passed over and that which remains caught as a vague moment of memory. Alluding to a catastrophic war policy and to a military offensive with a very similar name, the artist Sascha Weidner questions claims of truth and validity and highlights an inherent contradiction: what does not actually exist cannot be absolute and has neither claim to all-embracing validity, nor can it be enduring. And so, it is also not the terminal point of beauty. That which can potentially be stigmatised as »conventionally beautiful« is thus dethroned and, simultaneously, is re-elevated through aesthetic pictorial language.

Sascha Weidner stages the beauty of the small and the detailed; removed from the fast pace of daily life, from which these motifs were taken. Using cropped photographs, he creates something monumental without overstatement through expansive gestures: there is no exaggerated perspective, spatial distance, or fusion of volumes. Weidner recreates the form and the object, and produces an individual context, without entering into the realm of alienation. Shapes move around in what appears to be fog without space; we see an aeroplane in a wall, and our associations range from childish temper tantrums to full-blown adult chaos.

And in addition to the stillness and simplicity of his motifs and the emotionality of his visual presentations, we also discover irony: veins under skin as the branches of a river, a jacket that has been thrown down becomes the Madonna. Humour and aesthetic elements are drawn from random events. Equally, the artist uses transformation to break up the aesthetic.

He touches upon imagination, upon the details of our lives, without making reference to anything excessive, without distorting the dimensions and size of the object. The motifs and titles are biographical references and metaphors of what has been experienced – a game played with communication and also a re-evaluation that is linked to specific people. It is left up to the viewer to discover where these images come from, or to continue the narrative in his or her own way, helped with pointers from the artist. Sascha Weidner reworks that which surrounds him; in no way is this limited to that which he has experienced himself; he draws from the treasure trove of art history and develops existing themes: *L'amand II* relates to Magritte's lovers, *Bernd & Hilla II* as water towers. This has less to do with the conceptual and more to do with the creation of form. Here too, the visual mediation of the subjectivity of the artist, his inner life, and his perception are at the fore.

The process of creating an image does not end for the artist when the camera clicks: the motif is further developed, at times, a counterpart is added: either in the title or in the installation in space. The individual motifs, which he arranges in a certain composition in space, become narrative structures through their reciprocal connection; they become visual episodes that communicate with each other. Using space when creating visual images has clear parallels to photographic developments from the 1980s: Susanne Brügger's portrait installation [1985], a break with linear presentation, and Volker Heinze's *Schein des Vertrauten* [1985–86] are two possible comparisons. Equally, Weidner does not hang his works in a linear way using identical formats. The size of the works and the height at which they are hung is variable; only when we look a second time do we perceive a second layer of meaning.

In *Enduring Beauty* Weidner presents his most recent works, created during his second stay in Los Angeles as a DAAD scholar, as well as showing earlier works. These are arranged in a way that examines not only his creative practice but also the autobiographical narrative structure that is present in all of his work. He is interested in a playful investigation of polarity; the visual portrayals that lead us towards the monumental are undermined by the humorous titles; this is also the case with the exalted motifs when hung in a low position in the exhibition space. A large, impressive format is put into perspective by being placed right next to an image projected on the wall, which exists only because of the on-off switch and the light source.

Apparently contradictory objects and statements are linked in compositions and introduce a greater veracity to the viewer, as well as a new level of meaning; thus the contradictions seem to disappear. What remains, over time, from this dialectical analysis is a personal experience and reading that the viewer receives from the images of Sascha Weidner: the individually experienced beauty of the motif.