

BEAUTY REMAINS / SUSANNE KÖHLER

Sascha Weidner looks for the Beautiful amongst the Everyday. His large- and small-format, spontaneous or staged, colour photographs present landscapes, still lives and people. At first glance, these motifs may appear banal: thickets, shrubs, flowerbeds, lakes, gravel, house walls, empty spaces, curtains, cloths, tarpaulins, and rubbish. People are shown in apparently unspectacular situations: alone, as a couple or in a crowd next to a swimming pool, in the countryside or in an indefinable space.

However, behind these everyday, seemingly insignificant scenes lies a quiet melancholy: on closer inspection, an opulent bouquet of flowers is a gravestone decoration and a bizarre, silvery shining structure on a black background is actually a shattered pane of glass. A night sky full of stars is composed of pills in different shapes and colours. Used condoms, needles and other rubbish lie next to overgrown bushes that are, in fact, part of a hedge maze, where illegal dealings have been done. The superficial harmony of the pictures is constantly undermined. This beauty is not to be trusted.

The carefully composed colours of the photographs often make reference to works of art from the classical canon. Piles of rubble from a demolished building, for example, evoke *Das Eismeer* [The Sea of Ice, 1824] by the romantic painter *Caspar David Friedrich*. Weidner's ice floes, however, have mutated into construction waste; thus, gracefulness emerges from the apparently »ugly«. His fondness for romanticism is revealed; we perceive a figure in the photograph, continuing the theme of being lost. In *Das Eismeer II* [The Sea of Ice II, 2003] the artist refers to life's constant changes and renewals. During the demolition process, the dilapidated roof joists have been compressed into a structure that conveys temporary stillness and peace to the viewer. Weidner experiences both romanticism and high drama in everyday locations and so makes us look at our familiar environment with new eyes.

This rupture and the concomitant antagonism in the photographs of Sascha Weidner is a metaphor of the human desire for beauty, happiness, harmony and perfection, and, at the same time, for the path to this desire, one that is always paved with sorrow, ugliness and horror. The pictures confront the viewer with the passions and desires of human existence and describe the constant interplay between desire and reality. The tension experienced in the photographs is a synonym for the unknown paths that our life leads us; the unforeseeable may well be more meaningful than our chosen goals.

The enigmatic ambivalence of these photographs raises questions that remain unanswered. We do not find out why the gravestone decoration was overturned, why the pane of glass was broken, how the pills manage to float, what is actually happening between the hedges of the maze or how the building was demolished. We find no answers to these questions. It is up to the viewer to decipher the enigmatic moments captured in the photographs and to complete the unfinished story for him- or herself.

Weidner's method of presentation inspires the imagination of the viewer; the artist uses the entire wall space of his exhibitions, combining different formats to create an ensemble. The individual works remain autonomous; nevertheless, their heterogeneous composition provokes new connections and creates new tensions. They all possess a certain beauty that is retained in the memory of the viewer. The familiar appears in a new light and, at the same time, frustrates.

Sascha Weidner provides insight into his pictorial cosmos through the generous arrangement of his photographs in the exhibition space. Just as we can perceive different constellations in the starry heavens of the universe, here, these pictorial worlds offer the viewer endless opportunities for association.

[translated by Eileen Laurie]