

DOMOBAAL

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writing about Daniel Cramer's work, extracted from the essay for 'Oyster Grit' - a group exhibition introducing a line-up of domobaal gallery artists as at September 2007.

As the tendrils, fog and fabric of these works poke at and attempt to envelop me I realise that there is not now, and likely never will be a single explanatory vat within which I can deposit them to contain the many untidy ends of meaning currently cluttering up my thoughts. There are plenty of clues available as to what these artists do, how they might relate and why they should be shown together at this time. However, having become immersed in the microcosmic realm they collectively create, the fact that they are all represented by the same gallery seems pretty low on the list of priorities driving the design behind, if not the guts within, this group exhibition.....

.... Daniel Gustav Cramer plays with pictorial truth but never to the point of actually recreating it. The guise through which his emotionally charged journeys are revealed - recently, photographic representations of the landscape - grants us a false sense of security towards the subject that gradually evaporates under the weight of our gaze. Cramer's trilogy series that began in 2004 - 'Woodland', 'Underwater', 'Mountain' - with its painterly frame of reference (and perhaps the artist's German heritage) has prompted alignment of his practice with Neo-Romantic photographic tradition. But narrative in this context is something to be transposed rather than available to interpret from the ephemeral, if faithful, bucolic details we are presented with. The prosaic subject headings inform us of what precisely we are looking at but these are no tourist snapshots or politicised views of the natural world in crisis. The proffered reality of each image hovers between the familiar and a prophetic sense of the uncanny contained within a compositionally disciplined, almost Modernist frame. Cramer makes no attempt to control his surroundings though - waiting for the right photographic conditions can take days - but with patience and a clear objective is able to imbue the elements he chooses with curatorial as opposed to documentary specificity. The moderate physical scale of these works is just enough to evoke a sense of the profound without over-egging epic potential or condensing the suggestion of elemental power to the point of combustion.

Light-spattered trees appear to bend and bristle in the lupine deep, while Vorticist spikes of geological strata pierce curtains of vaporous gloom with an optical persistence that defies the static logic of the 'still'. Cramer's technical illumination of the seabed, on the other hand, reveals lunar qualities that can only be explained by close inspection - the bottle-top magnification of the foreground. The formality of presentation here feels like a mutagenetic skin that alters in accordance with its two-fold mission: inviting ocular ownership to secure gut response while protecting the private intentions that pulse through the fibre of the image.....

.... No matter how quietly shocking or out of their time the works of these eight artists may appear, the apparent non-conformity of this group is driven by individual default settings over a collective sense of design. There is little evidence of preoccupation with trend or ownership - as if they might be curators of lost thoughts or property. The past, the many sources of reference unashamedly acknowledged in these works, offers an essential portal between states, a Narnian wardrobe of unknown elements that must be negotiated in the process of moving forward, a backstitch during the re-hem of a second-hand garment essential to the wending linear strength of the hand-sewn whole.