

Pierre Knop

OSCULUM INFAME

23 March – 27 April 2019

Opening: Friday 22nd March, 7 pm

With *Osculum Infame*, SETAREH GALLERY presents Pierre Knop's second solo exhibition at the Hohe Straße gallery space. The Cologne-based painter invites us into strange, sometimes uncanny pictorial worlds full of bizarre scenarios. Witch-like figures serve as a formal context, water and swamp scenes as settings and interfaces. They offer a multitude of reflectional possibilities and yet refer primarily to Knop's painterly concept. His painting, which by now has developed from mixed media to pure oil painting, constantly embarks on a search for new paths. Compared to earlier works, the landscape in some of Knop's current paintings is increasingly withdrawn, declining into reminiscences of spatial contexts and almost abstract background surfaces. The focus is now more on figuration and corporeality, and as such some of the pictorial arrangements appear as if Knop were choosing enlarged sections from earlier works.

The painter continues to use traditional genres such as landscape painting, still life, mythological or historical topoi as frames to playfully create new narratives. His sceneries, some of which seem familiar and others dreamlike, may subliminally lean on current social themes, but the supposed references are always also projections of the viewer. In addition, Knop constantly receives external impulses for his pictorial inventions, which are more or less consciously reflected in his painting. Current debates or a critical attitude towards social and political themes seem to echo here and there, but Knop's compositions are above all committed to their own pictorial reality, which is largely fed by intuition and the subconscious. What the works have in common is an idiosyncratic tension between the humorous and the disturbing, between strong rhythm and contemplation, the visible and the cryptically opaque. The manifold pictorial structures are composed into somewhat bizarre occurrences, which can at times be associated with dark fairy tale illustrations, and which have a long pictorial tradition in German painting and graphic art. What seems to emerge from this approach of an art-historical pictorial memory in the end turns out to be an intuitive synthesis of painterly set pieces and stylistic elements, which on the one hand are able to create historical references, and on the other hand seem to correspond to the approach of a naïve "sampling" in our digital media age.

Knop's free painting, his flowing and expressive use of colour as well as the representation of deformed corporeality lead to a visual immediacy that, in its complex combinations, seeks to explore the limits of figurative painting. Above all,

the artist himself is interested in discovering new sides and approaches within painting. Away from the academic ballast and towards new paths; to paint for the sake of painting!

The often misshapen and distorted figures complement the apparent simplicity of a pictorial world, which possesses a humorous subtext and in which a latent gloomy atmosphere simultaneously resonates. The shady ironic façade enables a playful approach to themes that are abstracted in a simplified way and thus deprived of their brutality and seriousness. In this way, the apparent naivety of the images functions as a strategy for approaching the viewer in order to make social contexts, social role models, sexism and power structures apparent.

Yet despite all the approaches to interpretation, Pierre Knop's painting still leaves – as good art should do – an incomprehensible residue; a certain mystery, a fragment that cannot be expressed in words, that does not seem to dissolve completely even with bourgeois and art-historical knowledge – painting remains the system of problems that want to be solved.