

photo exhibition by Marc Jordi

vernissage: 13. Januar 19:00 opening speech: Susanne Keller

Café Reet, Klausener Platz 5, Charlottenburg exhibition: 14. January - 14. February 2017 opening times: Mo-Sa: 09:00-18:30, Su: 10:00-18:30

DÄMMERUNG / TWILIGHT

PHOTO EXHIBITION "DÄMMERUNG / TWILIGHT" IN THE BRANDENBURG SERIES, CAFÉ REET, KLAUSENER PLATZ 5, CHARLOTTENBURG, JANUARY 14 – FEBRUARY 1, 2017, INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT DELIVERED AT THE VERNISSAGE ON JANUARY 13, 2017

BY SUSANNE KELLER

translated by Ian Pepper PhD

Dear Guests,

Little Café Reet looks crowded, and I'm delighted to see so many of you attending the vernissage of Marc Jordi's exhibition *Twilight* in Brandenburg.

For those (few) who don't know me, I am Susanne Keller – an architect and Marc Jordi's partner and wife. We live and work together (right here in the neighborhood), and have two children.

As you can imagine, I know Marc pretty well, and have followed his artistic and professional activities for some time now, and in the case of architecture, have made my own contribution as well. As a consequence, and given the (for us at least) almost private context of this café, Marc asked me (rather than a trained art historian or architect) to provide an introduction to this exhibition – which I agreed to gladly.

But first, a few words about the Café Reet:

for those of us who dwell in this highly urban environment, the Café has meanwhile assumed the function of a kind of external living room, a place to take a short break from job and family, in pleasant company, accompanied by good food and drink, and in particular, with an excellent selection of periodicals. Sophia and Lina, the establishment's Greek proprietors, have also succeeded in attracting an interesting public to the café, and we have made a number of nice acquaintances here.

On Marc Jordi:

A native of Switzerland, Marc Jordi is a cheerful and industrious person. With a knapsack filled with experience, talent, discipline, self-will, and humor, he roams through life with a sense of purpose.

On versatility:

Marc Jordi's principal occupation is architecture, but he has also been active since his study years as a photographer, draftsman, and sculptor. For the past two years, he has also published texts that deal with overarching topics in architecture and urban planning. This versatility is not only characteristic, but is mirrored as well in everything he produces. I want to explore this theme now in greater detail.

Marc's versatility should not be understood in terms of a co-mingling of fields. A house remains a house, it does not become a sculpture. Instead, it is the building's structure and façades that are elaborated in three-dimensional terms, and which display sculptural ornamentation, in dependence upon location and function. Examples include the Town Hall here in Berlin on Friedrichswerder (Caroline v. Humboldt Weg) and our two townhouses in the new Frankfurter DomRömer District, both still under construction.



Friedrichswerder Townhouse, Berlin, façade with spolia from the predecessor building



Markt 40, Frankfurt, façade with spolia from the district



Markt 8, Frankfurt, façade with finger stucco and washed concrete from the predecessor building 1974-2010

On architecture as the mother of the arts:

Marc turned his attention toward the interplay between architecture and sculpture in January of last year in an exhibition he initiated in Frankfurt, entitled "Die Mutter der Künste – Bauplastik und Kunsthandwerk in der Architektur" (The mother of the arts – architectural sculpture and craftwork in architecture). The focus was the Frankfurt townhouses. These are conceived to incorporate architectural ornamentation in the form of spolia from the old town, which are however complemented by new creations. These new elements became necessary because a few of the definitively planned abutments had already been incorporated into a private garden, and proved in their current state to be too porous to allow reinstallation.

This proved fortuitous for Marc, since his sculptural ability made him ideal for the plastic design of these supplementary abutments. Yesterday, he was still at the building site in Frankfurt and at the Bamberger Natursteinwerk to supervise their manufacture, from his clay templates, in the red Main sandstone so typical of Frankfurt.

On the sculptures:

In contradistinction to his photographic works, Marc's sculptures are strongly preoccupied with the expressiveness and sculptural qualities of the human body. Relying upon historic finds, the focus of the Frankfurt abutments is on powerfully (anthropomorphic) masks that bear human features. A purely sculptural exhibition entitled "Torsi" took place in 2014 in the Parochialkirche in Berlin-Mitte – itself a mere torso at the time, i. e. missing tower and roof.

The 14 sculptures of torsos were legible as individuals characterized by diverse forms of bodily expression. These unfinished pieces were articulated only to the point at which their individual characters became recognizable. Their cracked, fissured surfaces left the working process visible, and corresponded to the surface morbidity of the unrenovated exhibition hall.

On the drawings:

As a rule, Marc's richly contrasting black and white drawings are powerfully executed in charcoal, and emphasize their sketchy quality and their manual production. As with the torsos, traces of production often remain conspicuous, offering viewers a sense of the creative process and endowing each drawing with its own liveliness? The subject matter alternates between figurative and abstract motifs. Houses and quasi-architectural forms betray the architect, who frees himself here from the ballast of functionality, instead evoking a sense of formal ambiguity. In connection with Marc's drawings, our friend the art historian Marvin Altner goes so far as to speak of a "metamorphic (transformative) polysemy of the forms that triggers associations and makes them independent of functional contexts. (He continues:)

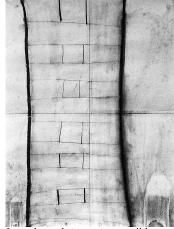
In an art context, the architect emphasizes his freedom from the specificity, precision, and utilizability of the drawing, which is (otherwise) necessary for presenting the building and for construction planning."



Study for Markt 40, sculpture/spolia Bartetzko, 2016



Kneeling Woman, exhibited at the torso exhibition, Parochialkirche Berlin, 2014



Large house between two small houses, charcoal on paper, Paris, 1994

On the photographs:

While in the 1990s, Marc's drawing exhibitions took place mainly in Bern and Paris (and in Berlin as well, but only during the period shortly before he started a family and launched his practice), he gave two photo exhibitions in Berlin in 2002-03.

The titles "Von der Natur zur Architektur" (From nature to architecture) and "Das Monumentale in der Architektur" (Monumentality in architecture) offer programmatic insight into the consideration of architecture that has become increasingly central to his artistic production – now using photographic resources. Both exhibitions featured precisely composed, highly contrasting black-and-white photographs that displayed only details of their respective subjects.

The poetry of these images emerges from the juxtaposition of nature and architecture and demonstrates how, for example, the leafy canopy of a boulevard reemerges in the vaulting of a cathedral, or how when we stand before a building, a fleeting perception of monumentality results in an experience the sublime. Emerging here is a marvelous synergy between Marc's well-trained photographic and architectural gazes.

On ephemerality:

Early this winter, after this graphic and photographic black-and-white phase, during an afternoon stroll in the frigid cold on Seddin Lake near Michendorf, the delicate interplay of colors in the Brandenburg evening twilight, the rising mist, seduced Marc Jordi to embrace color photography, the result being the present exhibition ...

As the sun gradually set, the wintry immobility of this icy landscape – which we had earlier seen in sunshine under azure skies – was submerged in a striking light that changed minute by minute. A strongly colored sunset – almost kitschy, much too beautiful for photography – was transformed slowly into a spectrum of pastel colors that took on yellowish tones through the rising mist, before gradually becoming gray. Sky and lake became one; soon, everything vanished into the fog. The scene was reminiscent of Faust, and the famous quote from Goethe:

"If to the moment I should say: Abide, you are so fair—Put me in fetters on that day, I wish to perish then, I swear!"

We too experienced an impulse to halt the moment, we even spoke of it. But no one needed to perish because of it. On the contrary – we remained alert to it, enjoyed the singular atmosphere. Marc grabbed his camera, and soon passed out of view in the rising fog ...

On the image compositions:

This disappearance bore fruit, and was followed by many excursions into the landscapes of Brandenburg. He succeeded in his attempt to capture the moods, the fleeting qualities, of these wintry late afternoons and early mornings. The result was a series of highly atmospheric snapshots – details of landscapes – whose formal composition, coloration, and mood are thoroughly reminiscent of the Romantic painting of artists such as Caspar David Friedrich – without, however, the presence of individual figures, sunken into self-reflection, in the foregrounds, so that they resemble instead paintings by Carl Hasenpflug, although





Nature - Architecture, photo exhibition, 2002







Monumentality in Architecture, photo exhibition, 2003

Marc's contain a very different kind of emptiness, one familiar from Asian art.

In Japan, reduction in favor of the effects of light in space on the few remaining objects is art at its highest, and allows us to concentrate on the essential while at the same time making an expanded mental space possible. Who can avoid thinking here of the landscapes of Brandenburg?

In these emphatically spatial photographs, composed with a minimalist stringency, the beholder is left alone with the sublime impact of seemingly infinite expanses. There are no identificatory figures. The gaze is drawn into the depths of the uninterrupted landscape, to the point where sky and earth converge. In some of these photographs, this point is no longer discernible, so that the gaze into nothingness is cast back upon the beholder himself.

Visible in the foregrounds of these deserted scenes are the (arche)typical landscape features that also provide these images with titles: Tree, Forest Edge, Meadow, Reeds, and Lake. In the photographs Field, Country Lane, House, Raised Hide, and Park, we can at least infer human existence through the traces of human activity.

In his photographs, Marc has captured the symbiosis of expansive, seemingly unbounded naturally and culturally shaped landscape that is characteristic of Brandenburg and the eastern Germany's flat and heathlands. On the one hand, this includes agrarian and forested areas that were functionalized and geometricized by GDR combines, but also streets, roads, and streams lined with rows of tall poplars, and of course the expansive romantic landscape parks and gardens designed by figures like Peter Joseph Lenné during Europe's Neoclassicist era.

On rambling:

Short walks are virtually impossible there. In Marc's photos, park and landscape call for extended rambles, as characterized beautifully by Hans von Trotha with great discrimination in his book Im Garten der Romantik (In the garden of the Romantic period):

"The stroll was an achievement of the Enlightenment philosophers, to which the Romantic artists replied with long rambles. Both were modes of experiencing nature, of interpreting the landscape, exploring the world. And as similar is the two may appear, they differ fundamentally upon closer examination. Both had much to do with the gardens of their times: the stroll because it was cultivated in this very garden; the ramble because it programmatically overcame the garden's walls, fences, hedges."

The Romantic striving to abolish boundaries is mirrored not just in the horticultural art of the time (the predecessor of the English Landscape Garden), but are also still in evidence in the photographs on view. But also traces of the unfathomable, the unattainable, and the sublime in nature, and for whose sake it was felt necessary in Romanticism to cover great distances, for example in order to feel the effects of the grandiose but also menacingly sheer world of the Alps and to then process this limit experience in artistic terms.



Seddin *Lake*



Forest Edge



House in Oderbruch



Country path near Blumberg



On the depiction of nature:

Despite the existential quality of the experience of nature in the images by Marc Jordi exhibited here, they radiate no sense of threat. In them, nature is sublime, for example the way a tree or group of trees looms up monumentally against the horizon, towering majestically above it, or equivocally, when a field, with its wave-shaped traces of the plow, is reminiscent of the sea, or a frozen lake, scattered with a few stones, whose limits are no longer discernible.

Here, we encounter the frozen stillness of barren, abandoned, but nonetheless aesthetically satisfying winter landscapes, of which the beholder sees only restricted segments, so that they remain in a certain sense ungraspable. And we discover an aesthetic of emptiness, of landscapes that seem almost swept clean – an impression that is only strengthened by the isolation of the very few objects present in them.

On ephemerality:

And above everything, the pale winter sky that occupies most of the surface in many of these images, with its diffuse, shadowless illumination at the moment of twilight – for the creative individual, it is a must to seize this transitory, almost magical moment artistically.

And so let us take up the theme of transitoriness as we drink a toast together to the New Year and to the old one, and of course to the photographs, to this exhibition, to all of you, dear guests, and to the Café Reet with our hostess Lina, who has made all of this possible.

And for those who are not yet familiar with the humorous aspect of Brandenburgian solitude and emptiness, I recommend listening to the song "Brandenburg" by the cabaret artist Rainald Grebe.

A Happy New Year, and many thank you for being here)!





Field



Meadow, Landscape Lenné's



Tree, picturesque oak near Blumberg, called Malereiche