

K O R E A K O R E A part 1. 2014

From Wednesday, 26 March on, galerie son is showing both two North Korean artists - SIM Kwang Chol and PAK Hyon Chol - and three South Korean artists - Kwang LEE, Junggeun OH and KWUN Sun Cheol. This extraordinary exhibition gives you the opportunity to compare artists from a divided country, united by a common past and traditions but having been trained and living and working in totally different ways.

KWUN Sun Cheol, stemming from a generation preceding the other painters in this exhibition, is one of the most distinguished artists from Korea. Born in 1944 in Chang-Won, South Korea, he has been living and working in Paris since 1989. He is famous for his huge painted faces. The effects of history on people are a central subject in his work. His picture on show, "Soul (Body)", shows a dark skeleton swinging across a grey background which could be read both as a decaying corpse, the incarnation of the misfortunes of war and partition, or an anguished soul.

The two painters originating from North Korea had the exceptional opportunity of having been able to spend some weeks in Berlin on invitation by galerie son and so they could get some new inspiration and give a try at new kinds of subjects, such as SIM Kwang Chol did in "Night in Berlin". His depiction of a famous equestrian sculpture of Frederick the Great on the avenue Unter den Linden has an eerie quality about it, he chose a perspective which allowed him to confront it with the television tower and the Berlin Dom, making these symbols of the greatness of past ages lose their intended impact. A similar subject was picked up by South Korean Junggeun OH: he appropriates random contours of emblematic urban architecture to transform them in weightless aesthetic surfaces. SIM is equally virtuous at portraying people. For instance, he painted Sabine Moritz, Gerhard Richter's wife, descending a staircase, an allusion to the famous work by her husband.

PAK Hyon Chol shows a more traditional and Asian looking landscape, a creek surrounded by colourful autumn foliage, which is quite impressive regarding both the size, the colourfulness and the realistic depiction, albeit being an ideal landscape. He also painted German Rock band Rammstein.

South Korean paintress Kwang LEE, trained at the Art Academy in Düsseldorf, opts for Berlin or Davos lakesides. Starting from real life, but observing her subjects at dusk or dawn, she perceives in them a myriad of unusual colours with which she carries us to the realm of dream.

Although looking at first sight very different, these painters have some similarities in their approaches: the heightened sensibility regarding atmosphere created by light in the landscape, the ambiguity between the real and the imagined and the subtle questioning of the role of architecture. These artists tackle borders of different kinds as their subject matter.

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