

In the dark sea of the Big Sleep

The mood of the threatening, where it ferments beneath the surface, where something terrifying can happen at any time, where no overview is possible, while a blanket of normality with absurd holes is lying over it, this is largely created in the film "The Big Sleep" by darkness, in which only small islands of space are bathed in light. An ominous mood is created. Nothing is logical and everything is possible.

The works in the exhibition "The Big Sleep" convey this mood too, since they deal with very different aspects and approaches of this uncanny under the surface, which can emerge at any time and cannot be rationally limited. A classic white cube exhibition situation with bright, clean rooms would have taken much of this aura. The fact that the west wing of the Haus der Kunst is not only in need of renovation, but also looks like it, was in keeping with the works. It was essential for the atmosphere in the rooms that almost all rooms remained in darkness. Only the exhibits were illuminated - like small islands of light in the dark sea of the "Big Sleep". In the darkness we experience many possibilities of reality. When the light is switched on, one of these possibilities becomes a reliable certainty. But the works of art that are immersed in light dissolve exactly this certainty and drive us back into darkness.

In the first, still bright room a giant seems to have thrown into it a mirror wall constantly kept in motion by sound waves, in which the reflecting, black, spotted glass roof is now completely deconstructed (work by Magdalena Jetelová).

Then the visitor enters the huge dark middle hall of 500 square meters. There are deliberately only a few works here. The visitor walks relatively long distances from light island to light island, which supports the magical, meditative atmosphere in this room. The content of all the works here is held together by the fact that something no longer functions, no longer remains connected. A plaster carpet broken into pieces, reproduced from the carpet on Sigmund Freud's treatment couch, a psyche shattered into pieces that can be reassembled like a broken vase, wherever the cracks will remain forever. On the narrow side of the hall, exactly where one of the basketball baskets of the American officers once hung, another basketball basket in which two balls condemn each other to eternal standstill (both works by Vera Lossau). In the middle of the hall, a woman talks about how she wanted to reinvent herself one day. But it didn't work. When assembling, the parts simply didn't fit together anymore. A series of black sculptures shows some of the failed versions (Veronika Veit). On the other narrow side of the hall, between huge door frames, an endless, silent train of strange white soul figures passes by. In front of it, her dark body shells, just cut off, lie as if fallen into a mass grave (Birthe Blauth). A giant droplet made up of intertwined, garishly coloured power cables, whose ends are not plugged together, hangs down heavily from the ceiling like a brain in which nothing communicates meaningfully with each other anymore (Susanne Pittroff). On the long side of the hall, a projection on a crumpled surface, like a broken screen, shows a post-apocalyptic state in which all knowledge is there, but disintegrates into individual elements that emerge and disappear without meaning or function (Peter Gregorio).

The works in the space beyond the Mittelhalle have something latently threatening that cannot be fathomed. Distorted women's faces on large-format prints frighten, but

the reason is not visible (Marilyn Minter). Houses enveloped in organic green slime that melt while the sound of a church bell can be heard from time to time (Louise Manifold). A delicate sculpture reminiscent of a dysfunctional bed (Nina Annabelle Märkl), as its formal counterpart a massive, mirrored machine that emits soft morse noises, but whose function and meaning remain incomprehensible (Amit Goffer).

Before the tour continues through dark rooms, the visitor enters a second, bright room on the right. It is empty. Bright and empty means a quick overview and no danger. But when the visitor looks up, he sees seven stuffed cats sitting twelve metres above his head, sunning themselves under the glass roof (Michael Sailstorfer).

Then the way goes through a corridor-like room. Here tension is created by extreme contrasts, the juxtaposition of antipodes. To the left, a series of delicate aquatints depicting guided light in space (James Turrell). On the right, the visitor has to climb a staircase to reach a small, old tube monitor, which was placed on a kind of monstrous pedestal. On it you can see a ragingly fast sequence of pictures of Disneyland, Nazi Germany, Neuschwanstein ... (Paul McCarthy).

In the following room there is an atmosphere like in the middle of the night on a cemetery. Above all hangs a long black night sky with white clouds (Miya Ando). Below a white model of the Haus der Kunst without a roof. The interior is a geranium bed, the Haus der Kunst a planted grave (Paul McCarthy). In front of two night sky paintings there is a shiny black panther with pebble teeth and false gemstone eyes, with rubbish and kitsch underneath (Edie Monetti). On the wall a video with ants running around according to inexplicable rules. A voice from which one hopes to get an explanation makes mysterious sounds (Leslie Thornton).

In the following room, the windows were covered with night-blue foil, which lets in light and creates a blue night mood. The works deal with the human body and with nature and the force of nature. At the centre of the room is a whirlwind stopped in motion, built of found timber (Laurie Palmer). Like the victims of the storm, two photographic works with life-size people incited to mummies with rescue foil lean against the wall (Dagmar Pachtner). On the other wall hangs a painting of a female figure struggling with her femininity and identity (Tschabalala Self). Between the midnight blue windows, a monitor documents an aimless, nocturnal hike through lonely alleys of Paris, during which the artist had tied up large branches that were supposed to act as antennas to connect with nature (Judith Egger).

The two separate, narrow, elongated rooms on the west side provide an insight into the artists' inner worlds. In the first room, the visitor is engulfed by a huge picture covering the entire wall. Whirlpools and clouds drawn in the style of the old masters, which have no meaningful, familiar connection, the decoupling from the grounded here and now into one's own world (Jutta Burkhardt). At first glance, the second room seems like the black chamber of an alchemist. In drawings, objects, videos, film props, archive boxes the artist's cosmos can be seen, an insight into his inner world is possible (Herbert Nauderer). In two further separate small rooms works can be seen that show absurd situations in different ways. The first room shows a video projection of a belly dancer dancing on raw meat in a camouflage costume, smiling

unflinchingly despite the unusual situation (Adidal Abou-Chamat). In the next room, visitors can play a record that only plays the cracking of record grooves, thus completely referring back to itself (Timm Ulrichs).

Then it goes back through the second side wing. First an empty, semi-dark room, separated from the others by white curtains. Also this room is - like the room with the cats under the roof - only seemingly empty. As one walks through the room, the sound installation there gradually makes the walls physically palpable, while the sounds suggest that something bad has happened or could happen somewhere invisible here in the room (Tanja Hemm).

In the following narrow space, the visitor first passes through a series of photographs of books by the educated middle classes of the second half of the 20th century, which all look somewhat tired and battered (Albert Coers), then a series of photographs documenting a performance in an abandoned, once splendid Cairo palace. A red carpet was rolled out for a man and a woman walking down the opposite stairs and letting pigeons fly from two cages into the large cage of the palace (toffaha).

The works in the last room contain scraps of logic and reality, but these don't fit together and all in all they become a confusing nightmare. A swimming pool slide tilted by 90 degrees becomes a sky slide, on which a bird sits ready to fly up. The voices from the videos on monitors on the floor mix to a cacophony, which the bird above probably hardly hears anymore (Thiede/Kluge). On the walls irritating, large-format, black-and-white images. On the one hand, a lonely, fenced house to whose open gate a giant man in a suit brings a headless person with reptile skin (Manuel Eitner).

At the end of the tour, the visitor returns to the first room with the moving mirror surface that dissolves everything fixed in the room and perhaps now reflects his inner state.

Dr. Birthe Blauth, design of the exhibition and co-curation

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