

GALERIE MARIA BERNHEIM

Silver Dust

12 June - 18 July 2020

Rico Weber, (1942-2004) spent his life imagining an idea of three-dimensional photography. Since its inception, photography has had the tendency to put a veil on our visible reality. It is as if no one doubted the link between reality and its inscription on paper, film, glass plate etc... It is believed that this chemical process cuts out the floating forms and fixes them. This transfer, simple to state, so clear to perceive, was born from the fascination that light has had on spirits. Rico Weber's works revisit the alchemical birth of photography.

It was indeed the alchemists who first noted the ability of silver salts to blacken with light. Through this process they realized the power of daylight in the transformation of substances and bodies. To observe it, to direct it, they had to control the darkness. The shadow gained its strength and deployed its capacity to freeze the world. By combining the two elements, and rigidifying the forces at work, reality and its image could be suspended for a time. It was a question of finding the Speculum Memor, the mirror with memory.

This second solo exhibition of Rico Weber's work at Galerie Maria Bernheim presents a series of strange and ghostly architectural fragments filled with fetishes, signs and symbols. The crevices of everyday life seem to be full of beliefs and the real is traversed by magical tensions. The chromatic range reduced to the exclusive use of this opaque anthracite resin contributes to amplifying this feeling of the uncanny. The titles of the works refer very directly to our potential spiritual quests, almost directing the viewers into a state of meditation. This is the very essence of what Rico Weber plays with, everything about his work seems familiar, anchored so firmly in our memories, yet all of it speaks of a distant, secret and dark elsewhere.

Somewhat in the spirit of a game, surely as a metaphor for the very meaning of defining oneself as an artist in society, Rico Weber reactivates an alchemical feeling that sometimes leads us to imagine the world as a simple reflection of what it is. The artist constructs meager and somber specters, reminiscent of what we could imagine cellars of the Parisian Marais must feel like, where a few lost initiates continue to scratch the walls in an attempt to find the Philosopher's Stone supposedly abandoned there by Nicolas Flamel.

- Samuel Gross

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