

28.August – 11. Oktober 2008

Tatjana Gerhard's exhibition at Galerie Rotwand presents a selection of new oil paintings on canvas. Although the majority are small format, the artist's recent experimentation with a larger scale is represented by a number of works. Made in the same loosely applied brushstrokes of thin paint that were employed in Gerhard's earlier paintings on plastic, the new works have an even greater fleeting quality. The artist's intuitive approach and spontaneous execution is inscribed in the fluidity of the mark-making. It is also an integral aspect of her subject matter, a consistently in-between world that is always just out of reach, like the nebulous fragments of dreams that evaporate on waking.

Many of the paintings depict lone figures or pairs that, in their gestures and relationship with each other, symbolise the contradictions of human nature. Threatening and vulnerable, innocent and aggressive, they are both adult and child, sometimes human and animal combined. The physical intimacy of *Spielende Kinder*, for example, detracts from the figures' mask-like faces and unnatural poses. Appearing abandoned and strangely disconnected from their ghostly surroundings they, like the figure in *Spiegelung*, gaze with an intense directness at the viewer.

The paintings marked by a human absence have a more complex structure. Positioned stagelike against the dark background, gateways and entrances to buildings hint at areas beyond the picture surface, while gloomy interiors become psychological spaces, abstracted from any tangible sense of time or place. Gerhard's sombre palette gives way to jewel-like colours in paintings that evoke fragments of fantasies, such as the patchwork of roofs or fields in *o.T. (Ebene)* and the fox performing beneath the fairylights in *o.T. (Fuchs)*. The white ground in a number of paintings increases the work's mystery: buildings become luminous, a human face glows in the torchlight and, in contrast, the things or thoughts lurking in the undergrowth grow even more threatening. With a continuing lightness of touch, Gerhard intensifies in these new works the ambivalent relationship between melancholy and the absurd.

Text Felicity Lunn