

Tatjana Gerhard  
Randland

Every one of Tatjana Gerhard's paintings presents an intrigue without, however, necessarily depicting a story. It originates through the sequence of brushstrokes she applies to the canvas. Every paint stroke furthers the visual intrigue that develops on the canvas, either by strengthening a previous paint stroke or quite contrarily by subverting it. Sombre colours are superposed with vibrant pastels, formless planes are delineated by precise contours, bold brushstrokes cover the underlying and more transparent layers of paint, ... And then suddenly – as if by coincidence - different forms, which first seemed to make up the scene of a still life, come together into the imagine of a face. In her painting, Tatjana Gerhard sets out to find solutions to heighten the tensile qualities of the final image. The creation of an artwork, for her, is a quest; not knowing in advance where the act of painting will lead her, occasionally losing herself in the throes of a painterly plot, until an unexpected solution presents itself. It is primarily an intuitive feeling that guides her through this process and not a lazy routine of sorts. Hence, the paintings of Tatjana Gerhard cannot be considered as illustrations or pictures of some other thing, but are to be experienced as a plastic adventure.

In the makeup of her painterly narrative, dark, humorous or even grotesque passages alternate each other. What is striking about the new works that Tatjana Gerhard brings together for her exhibition *Randland*, are the many references to the theatre or stage. In this way, she seems intent to imply that here, we are confronted with a meta-world that has been fashioned through her brushstrokes, in which she yields control as scriptwriter and director of a universe that is clearly not ours. The distance between that world - with its quirky characters - and ours is reinforced by the layer of varnish which Tatjana Gerhard always applies to her finished paintings. This inherent sense of detachment keeps the viewer out of the painting, on the outside of the space which she creates in her work. Tatjana Gerhard, in this way, does not seek to wreak a visual assault on her audience, but invites viewers to contemplate the painting from a safe position.

Through this distance, the gaze becomes even more intense, as in the theatre where one can gain new insights precisely because one does not partake in the action itself. Yet the world of Tatjana Gerhard escapes our logical comprehension, perhaps because her work rarely presents any sort of denouement. The role of the artist ends where that of the viewer begins. At the critical moment, she abandons the paintings, and finishes them with a final layer of varnish. Every painting is an open end and similarly also a new beginning. At this point, the plot is taken further by the viewer who in this way helps to expand this strange world that the artist creates. The viewer might then also create links between different works in her oeuvre, even if these were originally not intended by the artist. The creative process of every painting is conjured up, not through a visual logic of sorts, but in the imagination of the viewer. Tatjana Gerhard's work is in this way an invitation to a spectacle, an intrigue of a painterly nature.

Tanguy Eeckhout