



DIRK SKREBER

Opening: September 8, 2004, 7 p.m.

Duration of exhibition: September 9 to October 23, 2004

Press release

In an interview Dirk Skreber (born 1961 in Lübeck) once stated that he is able to develop an enthusiasm for everything in which the masses take part without giving much thought to it.

From here one could go back to Skreber's early works in which the motifs most often encountered include one-family homes, sports grounds or cars. And this also explains his selection of motifs in his most recent paintings. Here there are references to photographic material that could be taken from daily papers or magazines. The context in which this material is used can be clearly recognized – something familiar to us from the media – yet the actual information content is more than unclear. Aerial shots of disaster areas, flooded roads. An island drifting all by itself, surrounded not just by masses of water but also by dark black rings. An oil catastrophe? Or was the photograph on which this picture is based, one that held out the promise of getting away from it all, taken from the latest travel catalogue of the Robinson Club? Another painting: At first glance it appears entirely abstract, and only on closer scrutiny does one recognize boats floating in the water – in camouflage, a stroke of paint, which could also have been intended to hide something.

Skreber works with this manipulative potential of paintings. Their stories give him an occasion to trigger an interest in the picture per se: "the idea is to find a point from which the story can take off from." (Skreber). Only to end up with painting again. In these new paintings Skreber is ultimately only interested in reasserting the status of painting. It is amazing to see what stages the artist has passed through in his painting until now. At the very moment one believes to have found the final point of his painting Skreber once again takes off.

But to get back to the subject-matter. Skreber derives his motifs from his (and our) everyday life, processing these "views" that have become ingrained in collective memory through the pervasive influence of the mass media but at the same time are pale and without a fixed location. These images have lost some of their impact somewhere along the way through the various information channels of our visual culture. In the process of painting, the artist reinvests them with their incredible fascinating quality and dramatic thrust.

Yet apart from the history that might reside in the image itself but keeps receding further and further into the background in the process of seeing, Skreber is interested in allowing the picture (the original material) to become a picture in its own right. Crucial to his understanding of large-format painting are motifs that create a point of departure for creating atmospheric, non-definable or uncertain but incredibly dense states. Skreber freezes situations as it were, and then pulls as much as possible out of them. What precedes or follows them is ultimately inconsequential. The symbolism that the onlooker might want to derive from his paintings does not, in the final analysis, explain the "meaning" of the painting and history is not dissolved. Rather, Skreber asserts in his paintings the pure existence of painting with shocking intensity. (Maren Lübbke-Tidow)

In 2000 Dirk Skreber won one of the most prestigious awards in Germany, the prize awarded by the Nationalgalerie in Berlin to young artists. A number of one-man and group exhibitions, including ones at the Friedrich Petzel Gallery in New York and at Blum & Poe in Los Angeles followed. The second one-man show of the Düsseldorf-based painter will be taking place in our gallery space.

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