

kerstin engholm galerie

Schleifmühlgasse 3 A-1040 Wien T +43 1 585 7337 F +43 1 585 7338 office@kerstinengholm.com

CONSTANZE RUHM

„Off“

From: 10.12.1999 to 25.1.2000

With *„Off“* the Austrian artist Constanze Ruhm (born in 1965) shows a series of digital photographs dedicated to a completely new field of motives in her work: the landscape.

Thematically there are many connections to her hitherto works: *„Off“* is also developed through a recourse on cineastic material (Godard, Aldrich, Antonioni, Gainsborough). Cineastic narration and its functional effects are also subject to this series and are being transformed into a moving standstill of the two-dimensional picture. Again the actors disappear to make room for a „second story, that has no history“. All information concerning the actor is eliminated: In her earlier works the concentration on architecture and light served as a foil for the projections of the viewer, now being replaced by light and the scenery of the landscape.

The landscape and the related definition of nature are being seen as a culturally mediated construction, as "tamed fiction". At the same time Ruhm evokes a collective memory of pictures that can hardly be grasped and can solely be experienced on an emotional and subjective basis. This interspace between construction and emotion is a constitutional element to Ruhm's work. *„Off“* follows a narration that has no story. The empty spaces of narration take the lead. Moments without the consolation of beginning or end that evoke a never-ending chain of associations: a drive through the night (RIDE), a mountainchain on the horizon, a lightchain, an empty hut that promises DANCING, a road near hills at dawn, a sign that possibly shows a direction, an impassable road with HOT MEALS somewhere, a swamp, an exploding shack at the beach ...

These large photographs, reminiscent of "matte paintings", are like stills from films that have never been shot. Most films concentrate on the relations of people. Here the fiction of the landscape is the main topic. A landscape, characterized by man, but like an abandoned desert animated by our own fears and suppressed violence. These static and calm pictures evoke a fast ride of subconscious emotions, and seem to belong to a familiar pool of traumatic visions.

Like in a road movie inscribed into your mind, these beautiful and cruel images stand for the impossibility of recalling clearly what, at the same time, one cannot forget, an experience of trauma.