

MAI 36 GALERIE

Glen Rubsamen *VISIBLE FROM SPACE*

Opening: January 14 2016, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Exhibition: January 15 through March 5, 2016
Opening hours: Tue-Fri 11 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., Sat 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Glen Rubsamen's craft is painting, which he treats as a traditionally established medium. Yet what appears at first glance to be traditional is at the same time the very source of Rubsamen's subversiveness. His scenic and artistic views invariably play out against an impressive celestial backdrop that contrasts sharply and spectacularly with the silhouette-like black figures arrayed in the foreground – figures, incidentally, that cannot move; not just because they are painted, but also because they are usually things that are rooted to the spot, such as trees, antennae, and more recently, huge billboards. In spite of their immobility, they are protagonists in the sense that they narrate so much. Their narrative comes from their role serving as representatives of overarching themes. The images appear like film stills, exuding an air of calm and drama. And they all look remarkably Californian – which is still one of the classic projections of the western imagination.

Glen Rubsamen was born in 1957 in Los Angeles, where he studied at the University of California, and where he still lives and works, albeit now dividing his time between there and Düsseldorf. The continuity of style in his images is somewhat disconcerting – as though his painting were merely a companion to a life of equal continuity. The vibrant colours, the upward gaze, and the twilight zone that his paintings convey – all of this is somehow constantly repeated. And yet, these are images that captivate the gaze, for each of them shows something special and specific within the similar. Each tree is a unique individual, its black silhouette challenges us to conjure our own impression– an impression of the kind of tree, and the kind of place, that Rubsamen desires. It is also the stillness of the twilight – that zone between day and night – that brings the narrative alive in his paintings. For the scenes he portrays conjure places – even if they are artificially composed – that have been shaped by people and by civilization, and exude a calmness in the way they simply are, and in the way they tell of what might happen and what should happen. Rubsamen shows images of places in the tradition of landscape painting, but the nature they portray is shaped by human hand and marked by civilization, including the discarded and the technologically outmoded. There are trees that often turn out to be not trees at all, but cell-phone towers – merely camouflaged in a way that seems familiar to the eye.

And then there are the billboards in his more recent works: they soar heavenwards, their advertising space seeming to reflect a light that comes from outside the picture – colourful rather than black like the other objects that are Rubsamen's focus of interest. Conceived as carriers of information, they appear in his works as nothing but colourful planes set against the painted sky. Perhaps they reflect the ubiquitous excess of information that merely lurks in order to propose some business transaction that will continue to propel society along its given trajectory. The billboards furnish the space, providing light and bearing witness to the overweening pressures of a society for which no day seems long enough, such that the night must be illuminated as well – so much so that it can be seen from space. Lights and clusters of light, all telling of the sleeplessness of our world.

Mai 36 Galerie has been hosting solo exhibitions by Glen Rubsamen since 2003. His work is shown throughout Europe and America. (Text: Axel Jablonski)

The opening is on Thursday, 14 January from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Glen Rubsamen will be in attendance. Visual materials are available on request (office@mai36.com).

We look forward to welcoming you at the gallery and thank you for your interest.

Mai 36 Galerie
Victor Gisler

January 2016