

TANJA POL GALERIE

VERON URDARIANU: DEPARTE **26/09/08 - 08/11/08**

Tanja Pol Galerie opened on Friday 26 September in Ludwigstrasse 7 in Munich with a solo show by Veron Urdarianu.

Urdarianu, born in 1951 in Bucharest in Romania, has been living in Amsterdam since 1973. His Munich exhibition includes a large number of new paintings, sculptures and works on paper. The exhibition is showing in three rooms, beginning with a classical presentation of paintings. In the last room Urdarianu has arranged sculptures, works on paper and paintings to create an unconventional installation.

Urdarianu's canvases negotiate a field between painterly construction and narrative. In his figurative paintings he mostly uses a pale and subdued palette that gives the impression of a distanced level of reality. Some of his pictures seem to portray landscapes, such as *WAITING FOR BETTER TIMES*, in which a woman is seen from behind as she stands on a jetty and gazes into the sea. But the water is a brown surface with no depth, and the jetty can only really be identified as such because of the boat tied to it – it could in fact be another narrow boat that itself is moored to what looks like a small hillock on which the woman is standing. The lower part of the picture is more like an abstract pattern. The boat seems to be both in the water and on land – on that element of the picture that could be a hillock. Any attempt to engage in classical descriptions of images when looking at Urdarianu's work quickly leads to confusion. At first glance there seems to be a clearly identifiable scene – a woman by the water, a soldier, a caravan in a landscape – but the specific elements of a picture are in fact isolated, the connections between them are both hidden and fragile, so that it seems as if the picture is in a strange state of flux. What at first seemed clearly figurative is thus cast into doubt. The pale colouring of these pictures engenders a subdued, sometimes melancholic atmosphere, and sometimes the "scene" seems to be seen as if through a veil. This corresponds to the themes of the pictures, which are presented as allegories. Urdarianu has developed his own private iconography, in which not everything is explained, and which only partly resembles any known or traditional pictorial language. In the picture *DE VOORDRINGERS* (the forerunners, the avant-garde), the surfers walking into the water also symbolize death; in the picture, in which everything is per se fictional except the paint on the canvas, they commit a kind of collective suicide like proverbial lemmings being drawn into water. But the positive, attractive force of a picture with a youth-culture theme runs counter to this reading.

One important topic for Urdarianu is the existence of the artist, as a hero and perhaps also a loser, motivated by having to constantly work on his own – and to work on his own self, which ultimately always dooms him to failure. The jumping soldier in *REPARATEUR DU MONDE* could also represent a kind of artist: the artist as a hero for a certain group in society.

For the Munich exhibition, Urdarianu has for the first time combined various different aspects of his work into one installation in a small room of the gallery, including architecture, painting, sculpture,

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and works on paper. In this room there are two of Urdarianu's SCHUIFHUIZEN (Push Houses), as he calls them, architectural models made of objets trouvés (wood, cardboard, plastic) that can be transformed in shape by means of simple pushing mechanisms; there are also three canvases, a sculpture, and works on paper. The works on the walls are unconventionally hung, either too low, or too close together; the sculpture looks like it has been shoved into a corner, and all the elements of the ensemble are joined together with masking tape marking out fields on the floor and partially framing the pictures on the wall, thus both forming a kind of frame around all the works and also allocating each single element its place.

Each individual work in this installation clearly shows Urdarianu's interest in existential subjects such as death, the (dark) past, grief, melancholy and hope. Certain interpretations and aspects become briefly apparent only to shift immediately into new fields of meaning, in the same way that each picture by Urdarianu works with ambiguously shifting perspectives and objects, making his art thought-provoking and challenging.