

TANJA POL GALERIE

Tom Howse
Gunnera Bog
12/02/15 - 03/04/15

In his paintings and works on paper, Tom Howse (born in Chester in 1988, lives and works in London) establishes a concept of the image that neither inflates the painted image in a theoretical, conceptual, or esoteric sense, nor does it grasp painting just as a playing field for trashy experimentation. Howse paints "figures" and things that exist in the parallel world of painting, but always remain decisively paint on canvas. The pure materiality of painting, the gesture, the enjoyment of the process are always visible, but never become the content.

Nor do the figures themselves, anthropomorphic or biomorphic, become the theme of his art, but merely serve as an occasion for the painting process, as well as its result. Beings without a gender that consist above all of a rough outline, but nonetheless are surprisingly agile and seem in a certain sense alive, figures of a private mythology presented as whole figures, groups, or in portraits. They are characterless but friendly, interchangeable and yet unique, just like the series of vessels and bottles that the artist "portrays."

The exhibition is titled accordingly: GUNNERA BOG. While having an exotic sound to it, this title remains enigmatic in terms of its precise meaning. A gunnera is a plant with huge leaves, also called mammoth leaf. This reflects the artist's affinity for plants, which repeatedly surfaces in his pictures, but at the same time remains resoundingly empty of meaning. Combined with the term "bog," which not only conjures images of a moor landscape, but also (in British slang) the toilet, the title combines words in a virtually onomatopoeic way in a play of associations.

The exhibition combines very large paintings 300 by 240 cm in size with tiny canvases just 25 by 20 cm along with several midsize works. A tiny vessel with a rudimentary face smiles or perhaps laughs at the visitors, a *Special Pot* in every way. In the entrance of the gallery, two beings climb a latter three meters high. This is serious silliness asserted so confidently and clearly that there can be no doubt: painting needs to pull all the stops, just as is done here.