

Sies + Höke Galerie

Poststrasse 3
40213 Düsseldorf

t +49. 211. 301 43 60
f +49. 211. 13 56 68
post@sieshoeke.com
www.sieshoeke.com



Daniel Gustav Cramer Tales 36 (Lago di Braies, Italy, August 2011) 2012, c-type prints

Daniel Gustav Cramer

KUNSTHAUS , GLARUS, SWITZERLAND

Issue 147 May 2012

Daniel Gustav Cramer's series of 'Works' (2009–ongoing) is spare and elegant, but a closer look at this particular collection of photographs, book works and sculptures reveals the artist's impressive capacity for maintaining contradictory positions. For his eponymous show at Kunsthaus Glarus, two of the three principal spaces were filled with pieces from 'Works', such as Letter to Javier (2011), in which Cramer writes to the mysterious Javier, bemoaning his lack of contact and ending with the contrary statement: 'Until I hear from you and know you are well, I will keep this letter with me.' The photographic images in Tales 36 (Lago di Braies, Italy, August 2011) (2012) show a rowing boat on a lake – and the same lake with a faint trace of the departed craft. An impression builds of an author occupied with personal, romantic responses to his environment, yet who also considers our existence in a grander, cosmic context. The film Untitled (Crater) (2010), as a case in point, is shot from a plane circling a desert crater in Australia – an ambitious undertaking at any time, and one Cramer set out to achieve at sunset. Are the artist's concerns modest, or are his ambitions instead quixotic, testing the balance of the world? Can Cramer truly be both critical and optimistic – a sentimental ascetic?

In Camera Lucida (1980), Roland Barthes wrote of the photograph and its referent having an indivisible duality that 'we can conceive but not perceive' – the very kind of paradoxical state that Cramer likes to unpick. His own photographs – whether their subjects are forgotten park sculptures, a spider's web or a swimmer emerging from water – are unspectacular, often refusing to offer Barthes' punctum, but nonetheless finding fertile ground in their extreme simplification. Their focused observation suggests Cramer's investigative stringency, yet the subjects speak of Utopian faith in something transcendent, from water – are unspectacular, often refusing to offer Barthes' punctum, but nonetheless finding fertile ground in their extreme simplification. Their focused observation suggests Cramer's investigative stringency, yet the subjects speak of Utopian faith in something transcendent, a historic continuity. He frequently returns to the device of the repeated image, in which

doppelgangers reveal slight differences, narrative progressions, or no such resolution, just a hanging question. Cramer's belief in the power of photographs or books as purveyors of proof remains consistent throughout.

The third space in Glarus was taken over by the new work Orrery (2012), a 20-minute film that tells of a narrator's visits to someone called Brian, a maker of planetary models who lives in a suburb of Melbourne. Events are described through text on the screen accompanied by ambient sound, which we are told was recorded by a microphone pointed skyward outside the house, and the occasional impressions of clocks, models or a spider dangling on a wall. Whether Cramer himself is the visitor remains ambiguous throughout. Editing is more apparent here than in any of the other works; there is an elliptical, imperfect convergence between what we read and what we see and hear, with the exception of one final, hand-held shot of Herald, the taxidermied cat that eyeballed the interloper in Brian's living room. If this work combines Cramer's interest in life in the broadest sense with his personal, immediate experience, Brian proves a suitably imperfect subject, an unwilling accomplice off-screen who prevents the film from becoming contrived, or too perfect. And placed centre stage, even though seen only obliquely, is the idea of a life spent creating models that demonstrate man's insignificance in the universe.

In the Kunsthaus foyer, Two Monkeys (2009) was looped on a monitor. A short clip of Super-8 footage that Cramer shot of baboons on a road, it shows the animals walking hip to hip. They separate briefly, then sit down, and one drapes his arm over the other's back. Cramer's accidental observation of this moment and its subsequent elevation within the exhibition is an emblematic closing note. With 'Works', Cramer brings together the familiar and the foreign to confuse, destabilize and find poetry in interstitial spaces, placing an earnest hand on our shoulder to guide us.

Aoife Rosenmeyer