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Frieze
January 2011

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Margarete Jakschik

FOCUS

Los Angeles, colour effects and the abstracted everyday



Untitled From the series 'Pardon My Heart' (2006)

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Margarete Jakschik's 2006 solo exhibition at Galerie Gisela Capitain in Cologne, 'Pardon My Heart', featured photographs taken across the American West by the then 32-year-old Polish-born artist. The show marked a stylistic departure that bore signs of things to come – a single journey that would set the course for a lifelong subject. The images included close-ups of pressed flowers, an open photo album and the corner of a flowered bedspread. In other photos, neon tubes contrast with weather-beaten bricks in a stairway; a dumpster is shown next to a sun-bleached umbrella. These images seem to be taken less to represent than to memorize; they suggest neither a concrete locale nor a distinct narrative but rather a logic of subjective attraction, connecting indoor close-ups with non-descript, outdoor environments.

One photograph concentrates on strands of a woman's hair hanging over a guitar – indeed, music seems to waft through the loosely hung, untitled sequence of images, which range in format from the small and intimate to poster-sized. The exhibition's title, a line from a Neil Young song, indicated an apology: 'My heart has a mind of its own ... what else can I do?' Jakschik had headed for Los Angeles to find traces of the music scene of the 1960s and '70s, but she seemed less concerned with tracking real places than documenting her own feelings and moods. Whether the images were actually taken in the city or on the road trip there is impossible to tell, and doesn't seem important: the Los Angeles that Jakschik was after is a place in our shared imagination, channelled through records and films.

Raised in Germany, Jakschik studied under Thomas Ruff at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf from 2000 to 2005. His influence can be seen in her high production values and careful compositions. At the same time it's obvious that she has absorbed the casual precision and attention to colour that photographers such as Stephen Shore and William Eggleston developed vis-à-vis the American vernacular (Jakschik now lives and works in LA). With 'Westwärts' (Westward), her 2008 exhibition at Gisela Capitain, it seemed as if her original journey to the city had continued, yet had become even more fragmented, the works a mix of abstract and figurative, colour landscapes and black and white close-ups. For example, a large, orange-pink monochrome was hung next to a small, black and white image of hands holding two small, wooden sticks stuck together, which was next to a shot of two tall palm trees rising from a heap of dirt. Dry, red earth fills one photograph; two flowerbeds spilled over with brightly coloured fuchsias and violets in another. In one narrow, vertical-format image the picture plane is left empty, bright and yellow, recalling colour field painting or one of Wolfgang Tillmans' darkroom abstractions.

In her most recent exhibition in Cologne last year, entitled 'It Will

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'Take a Long Time', Jakschik further expanded her visual language with regard to display, material and motif. Images were hung in short sequences, in pairs, or separately. The show included a flat sculpture consisting of five curved, plastic pipes in shades of light grey to black, hung on the wall to form a grisaille rainbow. The motifs here are less connected to particular places (such as LA) than to formal, almost sculptural concerns: the black and white image of a heavily ornamented bedspread surrounded by equally heavily ornamented carpet and wallpaper; a large hillside landscape entwined with psychedelic, orange-red mists sloping into darkness, with power cables and the silhouettes of trees only just distinguishable, hung together with a small, black and white photogram of an almost geometric flower. Anke Kempkes, writer and founder of New York gallery Broadway 1602 (where Jakschik has a solo exhibition opening 12 March), has described the artist's work as 'cool everyday surrealism' – and indeed it's as if in her work everyday reality is at times dispersed like a drop of paint in a glass of water, at times crystallizing into abstract form.

Translated by Amy Patton

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