

## **'The mind was dreaming. The world was its dream.'**

Solstice Arts, Navan

19 January – 25 February 2012



Diana Copperwhite, *An Island from the Day Before*, 2011, oil on canvas, 180 x 251cm



**DREAMS** typically take us into the realm of wonder, horror, or a mixture of both. They leave us feeling elated, pensive, gasping for breath, or shortchanged when we wake. The selection of paintings, watercolours, sculpture, and video, that constitutes Solstice Gallery's 'The mind was dreaming. The world was its dream' reminds viewers of these experiences by immersing us in a series of parallel realities, each one curiously out of sync with our own. Curated by Jacqui McIntosh, the exhibition presents antique boxes haunted by miniature illusions, absurdly proliferative bodies, and numerous instances of shadowy environments and blurring atmospheric effects.

In the exhibition, viewers experience a series of transitions taking them from a bright, light filled area into darkness. The journey begins with Diane Copperwhite's high-keyed canvases that employ various configurations of rainbow-like colours. Here, sequences of prismatic tones imbue cloud forms, obscure detail, and reference objects lodged in semi-realistic spaces. *An Abstraction of You* translates facial features into a vivid atmospheric display, and a descending fog envelopes indistinct figures in *The Scene Stealer*. Viewers must make sense of the distortions and incomplete details, the references to refracted light, and the collections of abstract, natural, and domestic elements: features that often dissolve into one another. Moreover, atypical relationships of time and place, exemplified in *An Island from the Day Before* or *Electronic Fossil on the Beach*, force us to consider their emblematic nature.

The second gallery holds one of Michael Kalmbach's paper-maché sculptures, plus a host of his mysterious figurative watercolours depicting bodies sprouting bodies, scatological excrescences, and other semblances. In *Frau mit mehreren Köpfen / Woman with Many Heads*, the human form becomes a tree-like organism bearing an affinity with the vegetation that surrounds it. The image is at once poetic, primitive, and subtly perverse. His sepia toned *Großer Männlicher Mensch / Tall Male Human Being* engenders similar responses. It features a human smokestack out of which a massive dense plume of swirling heads and limbs ascends, as well as smaller independent figures who are oblivious to the fleshy turbulence above them. Such enigmatic and evocative scenarios conjure up a host of associations. Do they represent nightmarish phantoms, visions of an outsider artist, or family trees? Standing out among the selection is the humorous *Erde Verschluckt / Swallowed up earth*, a

diminutive rendition of a pear-shaped man with a sickly expression across his face. "Oh Scheiße ich hab die Erde verschluckt," (Oh shit I have swallowed the earth) he says. A diminutive female, next to the subject, possibly represents the man's conscience. She retorts "du Saul!" (You pig!). More illustrative than moralistic, this cartoon-like depiction of gluttony offers a marvelous inversion of scale.

The plaintive strains of an accordion and sounding of chimes condition responses to the work by adding a meditational air, and help draw visitors through the exhibition to the third and final space – a darkened sanctum holding Hiraki Sawa's videos, and the source of the soundtrack. Sawa's projections mingle domestic interiors, miniature objects, and outdoor views to create dreamy incantations that induce marvel and restlessness. Regretfully, one consequence of being exposed to a multitude of blurred details and drifting clouds of dust and smoke is an impending sense of tedium. The jerky movement of cogs in *Sleeping Machine 1*, derivative of work by Jan Švankmajer and others, tends to reinforce this impression. But Sawa's contribution still offers many rewards. Some of the surrealistic tableaux, for example, witnessed in the miniscule *Within* are visually stunning. Moreover, the deceptively uncomplicated. For *Saya*, a small two-channel black and white video of a skipping woman that plays in a stereoscopic format, makes an even stronger impression. Rather than enhance the action, the intentionally unsynchronised pair of feeds create a most engrossing disjunction.

The title of the exhibition, a quote that McIntosh borrowed from the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, reminds us that that there are no limits to what can be experienced through dreams. The exhibition, on the other hand, provides a glimpse into this realm. While the works convey a potent dream-like aura, they also make us aware of how difficult it is to come to terms with such illusions. In the memory, dreams exist as visual fragments; their relevance typically remains unclear. The images in this exhibition allow the viewer to revel in the processes of remembering and deciphering. This adds up to a highly rewarding experience.

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