

Janaina tschäpe

Dragoons

Exhibition October 23 – November 29, 2008
Opening Thursday October 29th, 3 pm

Evolving naturally from video, photographs and drawings Janaina Tschäpe's work gives rise to a slow surge of painting amidst the efflorescence of her creativity, like the gold and earth that rise to the surfaces of ample rivers.

Janaina Tschäpe is German and Brazilian. Her work has a certain magic, a rite of possession that is as related to the light of German Romanticism as to the shadows of Afro-Brazilian transe rituals. Her work is rich with signs, body language. There is a spatial shifting imposed by the canvas, but also a shifting of mentality, as if all the works share in common the desire to conjugate all their presents. In her images, the body is often lacking its own will, impregnated by the environment which envelopes and carries it off.

Prompted by her studies at the Hochschule für bildende Künste, Hambourg, at that point dominated by expressive painting, Janaina Tschäpe initially oriented her work towards performance. At the end of the 90's, beginning of 2000, she began a series of projects called "continuous performance:" photographs of herself face-down in landscapes, articulated as small deaths; a blow-up caste of her bed that she carried everywhere she went; exercises for testing space.... Then there came a series of non-linear and unresolved fairy-tale narratives in which a female personage grapples with the elements. Everywhere she went, Janaina Tschäpe was careful to bring along her blue Siren dress, her silicone wings, her ghost-nails, vouchsafing her freedom to create images in all places and in all weather. Without being feminist, her work expresses a feminine aura; at times apprehensive, as in the *sala de espera* (2001) series, where we see a young woman undergo a mysterious transformation; at times sociological, as in her interpretation of dreams about the future in which four mothers living in a Rio Favela are dressed in costumes inspired by their fantasies (*Camaleoas*, 2002).

In keeping with her practice of cross-dressing nature and of creating hybrid creatures with the aid of colorful blow-ups, condoms filled with water, extensible costumes and modeling clay, Janaina Tschäpe is a botanist of the imaginary. In the series of photographs *Mélanotropics* and *Botanicas*, a plethora of hybrid and immodest botanical forms of improbable color and texture crop up in the thick of the tropical forest, bearing names such as *Rosalinda Humida*, *Floribunda*, *Noturna...*, and some of which resemble the drawings of Biologist Ernest Haeckle.

Drawing, and then painting, slowly infiltrated into the heart of Janaina Tschäpe's work. Her canvases represent large floating universes where viscera and algae and stars mingle. Their beauty is captivating and light, slightly Matissian; their colors and textures seem to come directly from the Brazilian forests and mountains of Minas Gerais.

For her first solo show at Xippas Gallery in Paris, Janaina Tschäpe will present a body of new works that were inspired by her residency in the mountainous Dragoon desert in Arizona, the land of the Cochise Indians, that so greatly inspired Max Ernst. This exhibition follows closely the large retrospective dedicated to Janaina Tschäpe at the IMMA, Dublin, for which a catalog on the artist's oeuvre was co-edited by Xippas Gallery.