

F&C WALTER GALERIE

Luzia Simons – Getting Lost Outside

3 series of works: Stockage Jardim Humboldt ist niemals da gewesen
(*Humboldt never went there*)

Fabian & Claude Walter Gallery, Zurich

13 June to 4 July 2015

The photographer Luzia Simons, who was born in Brazil in 1953, lives and works in Berlin. She has spent the last few years investigating floral iconography and adopting an artistic stance on the subject. On tulips for example, whose history can be regarded as a symbol of cultural transmission – a mechanism referred to by the modernists in Brazil as “Anthropophagy” (Oswald de Andrade). After all, as well as transferring goods and technologies, today’s increasingly global market economy also transfers cultures and the meanings assigned to them. The fact that tulips represent life and love in the Persian, Turkish and Iraqi cultures may seem old-fashioned in Europe, but is all the more significant when soldiers killed in the Iran/Iraq war are symbolised there by fields full of red tulips. Luzia Simons’ artistic reading of the transit discourse broaches the issue of shifting locations and meanings with regard to social and individual identity.

The common theme that runs through the exhibition of the three series of works *Stockage*, *Jardim* und *Humboldt ist niemals da gewesen* is the concept of “Cultural transfer”, from three different perspectives:

- the large-format scanograms in the *Stockage* series examine how the tulip is transferred to different cultures (Kazakhstan, Persia, Turkey, Holland).
- in the *Jardim* series, plants that were initially found growing in the wild mark the start of an evolution in cultivation that culminates in today’s European houseplants. Their origins are then generally forgotten and their survival ensured by watering, removing dust and spraying. The artist’s own “personal herbarium”.
- The artist went travelling in person in order to collect the photographic and video material on the Amazon for the *Humboldt ist niemals da gewesen* series. Not only did she document her journey through areas of previously untouched nature; she also recorded the enthusiasm of the local scientists working on the utopia of a complete catalogue of plant species.

Art, as the freest form of communication of all, goes in search of confrontation. This aspect plays a key role in the Amazon work, which looks at the freedom of being able to travel and conduct research, at primeval nature and civilisation, particularly with regard to Alexander von Humboldt, who was only allowed to visit the western Amazon, i.e. the part that is outside Brazil. He came up against resistance in Brazil with his ideas of freedom from the French revolution, and was not allowed to enter the country.

Claudia Emmert (Director of the Zeppelin Museum in Friedrichshafen) writes, “...that the Brazilian artist looks at the Amazon with European eyes. On the one hand, she has allowed herself to become carried away by the strength and beauty of nature, whilst on the other hand, she has tried to analyse and categorise what she sees with artistic tools. Just like Humboldt once did, she has travelled aimlessly through the jungle with a camera dangling from her hand, recording fully accidental pictures. These recordings are shown synchronously in a nine-part split-screen video. The result is a visual metaphor of the searching motion, with constant changes in perspective and direction. It is all about preserving and destroying, uprooting and rootlessness, about native and foreign lands – themes that are just as deeply entwined in her own life. And – as in all Luzia Simons’ work – it is also about the ‘reflected’ view of what is visible, in both senses of the word”.

If you would like further information and photographic material, please contact the gallery.

Best regards,

Claude & Fabian Walter