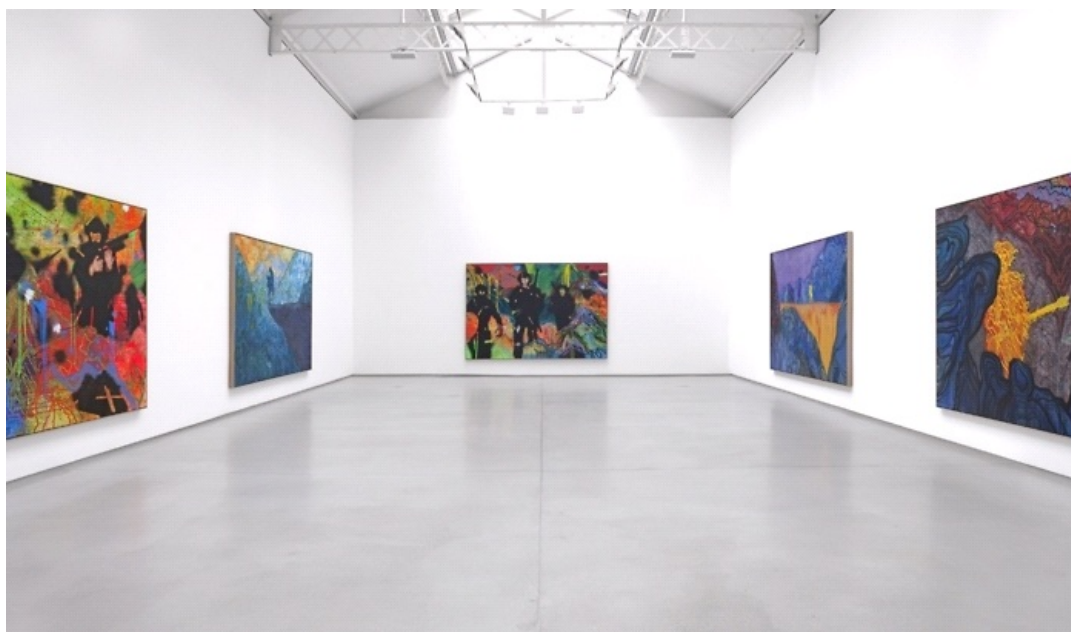

DANIEL RICHTER

VOYAGE, VOYAGE

PARIS MARAIS

04 Jul 2012 - 28 Jul 2012



Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is presenting its second solo exhibition by Daniel Richter and it's his first one-man show in France for more than ten years.

Under the title *Voyage, Voyage*, the exhibition shows works which, against a linear seismographic background, depict mysterious figures bathed in artificial light, typical of Richter's work. Involved in peculiar interactions, they seem like actors on a stage. Richter's new series of works is characterised by a graphic, almost Secessionist style and glazed paint application on the one hand, and by innovative orientation towards the symbolism of the previous turn of the century, towards the mysticism of Odilon Redon and Félix Vallotton's compositions, dominated by contrasting black and white. At the same time, characteristics from cartoons, comics and graffiti are perceptible. In his oil paintings, Richter combines aspects of the history of art with mass media and pop culture. The title of the exhibition is an ironic homage to a famous French hit from the late 1980s by an artist named "Desireless". The figures in Daniel Richter's new works often stand alone in a vast landscape and appear to be experiencing a sublime, contemplative moment. It is left to the imagination, whether these are musicians or warriors; they could be travellers on a long-forgotten quest, the goal of which remains unclear. Some paintings are dominated by dynamic movement, not only of the figures, but also of the colour fields. In other paintings, black figures surround the mountain landscape like spreading ink stains.

In 2004, Daniel Richter commented on his change from abstract to figurative painting – a personal turning-point he effected at the start of the millennium. "Ultimately, there is no difference between abstract and figurative painting, apart from certain forms of their decipherability, but the problems of organising paint on surface always remain the same. In both cases the same method insinuates itself in different forms." From 1992 to 1996, Daniel Richter studied with Werner Büttner – together with Martin Kippenberger, one of the protagonists in the revival of expressive pictorial trends in the 1980s – at the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg and worked as assistant to Albert Oehlen. Initially, he created abstract paintings with an intense psychedelic colour cosmos moving between graffiti and convoluted ornament – equally oriented towards Surrealism and Underground, as well as the elongated, entwined body forms of Italian Mannerism.

Since 2000 Richter has created large-scale scenes with a myriad of figures, frequently inspired by reproductions from newspapers, magazines and history books. They express battle and menace, and at the same time contemplation. Richter's change to the figurative has frequently been celebrated as the revival of history painting. While classical history painting relied on clearly legible pictorial narration and aimed to legitimise the present through historical references, Richter's paintings deal with the failure of social utopias. "I was interested in how one could refer to the world and the image of the world as I want to perceive or describe it", explained Richter in 2007.

The observation of Richter's style to date reveals an artistic practice "which should be about letting the picture drift towards a superabundance of colours and painting" (Roberto Ohrt, 1997), though this has been weakened in the latest work cycle in favour of increased tonality. In this context, the symbolist painter James Ensor and the expressionist pioneer Edvard Munch can be considered as Richter's artistic precursors. At the same time, Richter is indebted to the painting of Albert Oehlen and Martin Kippenberger, demystifying as it does the aura of the painted image. Many of Daniel Richter's works are puzzle pictures, playing with formulae of historical pathos for which the viewer has to provide content from his own knowledge and his ideas of politics and pop culture.

A further aspect of Daniel Richter's painting is that of light. The entire picture is interspersed with white accents marking elevations and highlights. "Richter's pictures are light-painting, though not in the sense of ambient chiaroscuro or plein air painting, but as experiments with contemporary light forms" (Christoph Heinrich, 2007). The representation of artificial light, flash light, thermal and x-ray images evokes an atmosphere of artificiality and nervousness. The topic of total surveillance appears to be an important leitmotiv in Richter's oeuvre; the association with infra-red and thermal cameras in border surveillance is all too obvious, and reveals a paranoid view.

The subjects of Richter's pictures suggest current political topics not defined in detail. Events, "whether they are conveyed through the media or from one's own view, seem to serve Richter more as a projection surface for inner images, the origins of which remain hidden from the viewer" (Fritz W. Kramer, 2002). With evident relish, Daniel Richter plays around with an iconography of radical political gestures.

Richter's socialisation in the politicised atmosphere of the Hamburg squatter scene has clear motivic counterparts in his work, while his great institutional success (major solo exhibitions at the North Rhine-Westphalia Art Collection in Düsseldorf and the Kunsthalle in Hamburg in 2004 and 2007) and his career in the international art market contradict this aspect of his past. Richter's ambivalence between his left-wing beliefs and the middle-class ethos paired with the establishment that he encountered in the art world was an issue that has often been addressed by the press. Daniel Richter's most recent major solo exhibitions were held at the Museum der Moderne in Salzburg (2010) and the Kestnegergesellschaft in

Hannover (2011).

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