

GROUP EXHIBITION

DÉJEUNER SUR L'HERBE

PARIS PANTIN

09 Sep 2017 - 11 Oct 2017



Opening: Saturday 9 September 2017, 2pm-6pm

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac presents *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, a group exhibition curated around notions of lingering. The title is less a direct reference to Edouard Manet's groundbreaking painting than a point of departure to explore the complex span of interpretations related to it. Just like Manet refused to conform to convention and initiated a new freedom from traditional subjects and modes of representation, the works presented in the exhibition deliberately take the landscape genre as a way to capture a contemporary state of being.

The artists in *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* question the appropriation and circulation of this archetype in visual culture. They often adopt a critical approach towards our overstimulated ways of living, either by inviting us to think about recreation and social gathering or by reconsidering the tension between nature and culture. In some cases, the human figure is a mere trace; in others the body is a central element, connected to gender politics. All the works however are informed by personal or social narratives and reassert the role of subjectivity in the contemporary flow of imagery.

The exhibition will feature works by Jules de Balincourt, Stephan Balkenhol, Georg Baselitz, Miquel Barceló, Cecily Brown, Jean-Marc Bustamante, Matali Crasset, Elger Esser, Antony Gormley, Adrian Ghenie, Secundino Hernandez, Alex Katz, Anselm Kiefer, Richard Long, Farhad Moshiri, Patrick Neu, Imran Qureshi, Daniel Richter, Gerwald Rockenschau, Sturtevant, Wolfgang Tillmans and Erwin Wurm. New works by Yan Pei-Ming and Miquel Barceló have been especially commissioned for the exhibition.

The metaphorical use of body imagery as landscape is fundamental in the history of Western art. It culminates in 'pornotopia', a term first coined by American literary theorist Steven Marcus in 1966 to describe 'that vision which regards all of human experience as a series of exclusively sexual events or conveniences.' The works of **Daniel Richter** or **Wolfgang Tillmans** overtly explore the idealised, imaginative space of sexuality. **Georg Baselitz's** large-scale painting *Bild drei* (1991) stresses the ambiguous presence of bodily decay manifested in the obliteration of any sexual characterization - the two figures seem to merge to create a genderless landscape of their own.

Richard Long's floor installation *Blue Stone Circle* (1995) reconfigures the way we apprehend space and time. Bringing together the unevenly shaped pieces of slate in the geometric structure of a circle, the sculpture illustrates a major theme in Long's work, the relationship between man and nature.

By reducing elements to a few essential forms and structures, **Gerwald Rockenschau** creates visual codes that aim to change the perception of architectural, social and cultural spaces. Linear structures, individual geometric forms and colour fields suggest a narrative level, for which the viewer has to draw on his own stock of images to decipher. **Matali Crasset's** participatory furniture creates a recreational environment that invites the viewer to take part in various activities, including meditation and creative collaboration. Each item is designed as a spatial intervention that encourages us to interact with the object.

The vast deserted expanses of **Yan Pei-Ming's** *International Landscape* (2006), dotted with solitary trees, depict a neutral scene, a non-place. The broad black and white brushstrokes give the setting an uncanny atmosphere. Similarly, the overwhelming effect of **Elger Esser's** photographs is one of stillness. Nature and the tradition of the landscape genre are the backbone of his work, beneath the surface of his large-format photographs lie an eeriness and a sense of the sublime.

There is an iconoclastic rapture about **Adrian Ghenie's** presence in his own pictures. In *The Picnic*, he takes a traditionally relaxed and idyllic subject and turns it into something convulsive and visionary. The landscape flares up around him, in volcanic overdrive, scarred with tormented curves while he crouches over his barbecue and sprouts a satyr-like face and a paw. Presenting a world that pulses with excess, **Cecily Brown** explores the emotions associated with touch, pleasure, and passion in her tactile oil paintings. She often paints with a flesh-like treatment of forms, which she nearly abstracts to such an extent that they dissolve into pure chromaticity.