

MUSEUM FRIEDER BURDA
SALON BERLIN

THE VOID (February 9–March 23, 2019)
Gregory Crewdson – Isa Genzken – Chris Jordan



I am a forest, and a night of dark trees: but he who is not afraid of my darkness, will find banks full of roses under my cypresses. Friedrich Nietzsche, Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Opening: Friday, February 8, 2019

Dark streets and lonely houses, hardly anyone on the move. The literally “eerie” pictures of the American photographer **Gregory Crewdson** (born 1962) from the series “Beneath the Roses” could have been taken from an old Hitchcock film in the best Hollywood manner. Here, the places and scenes also become mirrors of the soul – and an oppressively sensed emptiness of existence. A house as the home of a searching, lonely soul, mysterious and disquieting: Crewdson stages his large-format images with the greatest cinematic effort and lets abysses cautiously shimmer through everyday facades and their delicately illuminated windows. What exactly happens inside these houses? Are the ever-so-common skeletons in the closet produced here, then lying dormant, omnipresent? Crewdson's father was a psychotherapist. The artist was familiar with interpreting the things that surround people as expressions of their inner beings, immersing himself in the depths of the soul and making subconscious processes visible early on. Beyond the conciliatory surfaces, his pictures thus function as perfectly staged metaphors of fears and desires.

Melancholy – or in medical terms, depression – has always been associated with the canon of existence and sensibility of the artistic. Creativity, the dialectic of suffering and creation, which culminates in the myth of genius, feeds from it and the doubt about the meaningfulness of one's own actions and being. It has been known since Dürer's *Melancholia*: she is one of the artist's best friends, not infrequently his or her alter ego. From the romanticism of the lonely man in Caspar David Friedrich to the encapsulated modern city dwellers in Eduard Manet to the disillusionment of the American Dream in Edward Hopper: Often enough, the stylization of the productive cliché suppresses a fatal proximity to the clinical picture of illness. But ancient medicine had already clearly diagnosed its anatomical findings: black bile.

Anyone consuming the media battles surrounding spectacular celebrity suicides that take place under a spell of loneliness and intoxication, depression and dependence can only guess how widespread the phenomenon is in all social classes to this day. Anyone who examines his or her personal environment suspects that the “fatal illness” is perhaps more widespread than ever. Nevertheless, suffering under depression is still stigmatized - or mythically stylized. But what could a contemporary approach to the subject look like? Whether ascribed to black bile or transfigured as black dogs, as Winston Churchill called his depressions: The darkness of the soul is the subject of the Salon Berlin of the Museum Frieder Burda's current exhibition. In addition to works by Gregory

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Crewdson, it also presents sculptures by the Berlin-based artist **Isa Genzken** (born 1948); all stem from the Frieder Burda Collection. At the same time, this exhibition project also questions the relationship between the traditional artistic topos and social reality.

Isa Genzken also uses Horror Vacui as an image motif. Her work always plays with questions of (in)stability, a threatening aimlessness, a lurking emptiness. Concrete as a material is hermetic, the view out of the window leads nowhere, the rose blossoms – and, emerging from an aluminum pedestal – simultaneously freezes in the emotional moment forever. The rose in particular thus becomes a fragile mirror of the artist herself – after all, she was born in 1948 as “Hanne-Rose Genzken”. Oversized flowers – symbols of love and affection – have had a consistent presence in her work like a red thread for 25 years. Manifestations of the simple, the poetic, the human – but also of the needy.

The window motif is no less prevalent; Genzken has been working on it for many years. It consists of two cast concrete parts and is unglazed. Isa Genzken herself said: “Every person needs at least one window” as an opening to light, as a connection to the outside world. And yet the window motif also reflects contradictions of the soul: Everyone looks at the world with their very own eyes. The window as a motif thus stands for a reflection of one’s individual existence and experience. At the same time, the emptiness into which one may look is also a space of possibilities from which something new can emerge or significant be created. Because emptiness is the sister of creativity.

As a further position, the American photographer and environmental activist **Chris Jordan** (born 1963) closes the circle. He captures melancholic moments in a nature void of people, which is threatened by humanity despite its absence. To do so, he has captured a primeval forest landscape in Bohemia in large-format photographs. Thus each individual tree, in all its individuality, faces the viewer like a living creature, like a mirror of its own self, and raises silent accusations as an expression of its endangerment. Behind each trunk lurks supposed death, decay and emptiness – and at the same time, their sublimity and imperishability are captivating. A mixture of sadness, beauty and reverence speaks from the pictures – and simultaneously a hard reality: A fragile ecosystem has long been in danger of losing its balance.

The artistic director of the Salon Berlin, Patricia Kamp, on the project: “In a variety of ways, the works exhibited by Gregory Crewdson, Isa Genzken and Chris Jordan revolve around emptiness and not least around the theme of humanity. The works have the ability to activate this charged nothingness in the viewer’s mind – in order to feel part of a larger whole when viewing and experiencing art. Whatever the shape of emptiness is, its image has the power to draw the viewer into it, absorb his or her whole essence and transform it from within”.

The project TALK! by the photographer Tom Wagner – together with Freunde fürs Leben e.V.

The Void is the latest in a series of exhibitions and workshops at Salon Berlin dedicated to the curatorial task of exploring how artistic forms of expression can contribute to social, political and ecological debates. The exhibition will therefore include a panel discussion at the beginning of March and a presentation of a selection of works from the initiative TALK!. The project was conceived by the photographer **Tom Wagner** and **Freunde fürs Leben e.V.**, an association that aims to use creative projects to shed light on depression and suicide by initiating enlightened conversations for a wider political debate. The photographer Tom Wagner portrayed contemporary artists and then asked them to design their portraits and reveal the part of their personality that is often difficult to talk about. **Uli Aigner, Pola Brändle, Tom Grundmann, Jeppe Hein, Chris Jordan, Michal Kosakowski, Michel Lamoller, Sarah Lüdemann, Daniella Midenge und Maximilian Magnus, Jaybo Monk, Markus Neufanger, Veronika Olma, Marek Polewski, Annina Roescheisen, Diana Sprenger, Melissa Steckbauer, Michael Streun, Mathias Vef** and numerous other artists have already worked on their portrait. The founders of the association, Diana Doko and Gerald Schömb, were awarded the Federal Cross of Merit last year for their commitment.

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Opening hours

Thursday to Saturday, 12 noon – 6pm

Concurrently at the Museum Frieder Burda in Baden-Baden

DIE BRÜCKE 1905-1914 (until March 24th, 2019)

BANKSY, Love is in the Bin (February 5th – March 3rd, 2019)

Preview

ENSEMBLE. Centre Pompidou – Museum Frieder Burda (April 6th – September 29th, 2019)

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Image

Gregory Crewdson, *Untitled (Summer Rain)*, 'Beneath the Roses', 2004, digital pigment print. Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden © Gregory Crewdson Courtesy Gagosian

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