

Stefan Hoenerloh

Melancholia March 18 – April 29, 2006

The title of Stefan Hoenerloh's one-man exhibition, "Melancholia", calls to mind Jean Clair's exhibition at the Grand Palais in Paris, in which he showed that architectural ruins are a visual form of the expression of melancholy.

The starting point of Hoenerloh's artistic vocation was his first sight of East Berlin in the early 1980s. The sense of history that struck him then fills every one of his paintings and drawings.

Hoenerloh's paintings remind us, sometimes with a memory of unbearable pain, of the dramatic and tragic events of the past and present centuries.

They show a city devoid of any human presence, a scene that conjures up all our worst fears in one – the ancient and present day fear of the Apocalypse.

At first sight his cityscapes appear to be faithful views of urban scenes, whereas in fact they are pure fiction. Hoenerloh manages to produce this impression of reality thanks to his infallible sense of urban spaces and architectural compositions. For all that a closer look at his pictures shows us how close they are to the limits of the subject, the limits of what is plausible, both from the architectural and town planning point of view as from the point of view of color and light.

His subject is not so much architecture as the passage of time that materializes in the motionless medium of painting through the dilapidation of the buildings. His architectural styles, the density of his urban spaces and the monumental nature of the buildings suggest a powerful society that has fossilized.

Even in the absence of human witnesses or of any sign of daily life, a return of life to the scene seems imminent. The crumbling stucco shows a city that is superficially degraded, but with a structure that remains perfectly viable. In spite of appearances, Hoenerloh does not leave us without hope of a revitalization of the metropolis. He always leaves us with a choice of several escape routes from the Kafkaesque confinement of the scene.

By showing us an advanced civilization that has collapsed, Stephan Hoenerloh warns us against man's vanity and the dangers of his craving for power, while at the same time leaving man free to choose his own destiny.

Stephan Hoenerloh, born in 1960, has been exhibited in seven art galleries in several European countries; his works are regularly shown at the great contemporary art fairs as well as in several exhibitions in art centers in Germany.