

HADASSAH EMMERICH: Seance

Opening: Thu, June 10, 6 – 8 pm. The artist will be present.

June 11 – July 17, 2010

Wed – Sat, 12 – 6 pm

Open House Weekend Zurich: Saturday & Sunday, June 12/13, 11 am – 5 pm

We are delighted to announce the solo exhibition „Seance“ with new works by Hadassah Emmerich. The artist was born 1974 in Heerlen (The Netherlands); today she lives and works in Berlin. After her studies at Academie voor Beeldende Kunsten in Maastricht and at Hoger Instituut, Antwerp, Emmerich obtained her Master of Fine Art at London’s prestigious Goldsmith’s College. Over the past years, her paintings, drawings, prints, and murals were exhibited in international museums and institutions, including Erasmus Huis, Jakarta; Museum für Gestaltung, Zurich (both 2010), Centraal Museum, Utrecht (2009); National Gallery of Art, Warsaw; MOCA Miami; van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Kunstverein Wolfsburg; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; Bielefelder Kunstverein (all 2008), Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht (2007); Museum of Contemporary Art, The Hague (2005).

In her works, Hadassah Emmerich investigates the phenomenon of Exotism, by definition “the charm of the unfamiliar“. This Eurocentric view on faraway lands and people concentrates on the exotic aspects of „the other“ and stylizes natives into „the noble savage“. As an artist with German, Chinese and Indonesian family background but born and raised in The Netherlands, Emmerich examines her own existence in-between diverse cultures, without really belonging to one of them. While researching epochs, cultures, and persons on account of her interest in Exotism and Orientalism, she often assimilates their methods and styles. Some of her works give the impression of having been created in Bali 1960 or Jakarta 1920. Thus, Emmerich challenges our interpretations and expectations of certain visual images and iconographic styles.

Typical for her work are the curvy, downright sensual lines that define Emmerich’s drawings, paintings, murals, and prints. Blossoms, heads, bodies, books, or African masks are ensnared in ornamental abstractions. The palette of the artist has changed in the last few years: from a seemingly feminine and garish gaiety into darker, more muted tones. For this reason, new works evoke thoughts of Old Master paintings; an impression underlined by the fact that Emmerich now often stages her exhibitions as a kind of salon with ochre-brown walls and all-over salon hang.

I am overjoyed that Hadassah Emmerich integrates prints into her oeuvre, a medium often underestimated by contemporary art. It might be thanks to her deep involvement with past art epochs – think of prints by German Expressionists and Paul Gauguin and their enthusiasm for “primitive” cultures – that Emmerich has re-discovered the ultimate expressiveness of this medium and uses it for her work. In this context it should be pointed out that Hadassah Emmerich’s lino- and woodcuts are monotypes: the plates are covered by different colors and then printed by hand. This means that they are not editions but unique works – not one sheet is like another. It should also be kept in mind that Emmerich does not only use her printing plates for single sheets but also employs them in larger paintings or drawings. Consequently, she uses the same motives but places them into a new self-referential context.

It is wonderful to see how, even though Hadassah Emmerich is a researcher of past epochs and an investigator of the “big” themes of colonialism and globalization, she is nevertheless able to keep her work playful and full of fantasy. In the end, her works radiate a mystical enchantment and with a slight shiver you seem to catch a glimpse of a “dark alluring world” somewhere within the jungle-like vines of her abstract arabesques.

Christiane Büntgen

This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Elisabeth Kaufmann (1948-2010), founder of this gallery, mentor, and friend.