

Strychnin Gallery Berlin presents

Waldkammer. New works by American artist Madeline von Foerster. Opens November 7th at 7:00 p.m.

Incredible intensity and vividness of color are characteristic features of works by the old Dutch Masters such as Jan van Eyck or Hans Memling, who are among American artist Madeline von Foerster's main sources of inspiration. Paintings of this time period achieved a great sense of touch through carefully applied light effects, which especially shows in the realistic, tactile display of folds of cloths and drapes. The basis of these astonishing works was the discovery of a new technique: oil painting. Von Foerster studied the so-called Misch technique in Austria under Philip Rubinov-Jacobson. This technique uses an elaborate method of layers to form the basis of the painting, and employs with oil as well as egg tempera. As one of very few artists today, Madeline von Foerster employs this complicated technique in her breathtaking work.



Von Foerster's new series titled "Waldkammer" invites the viewer into the bewitching, claustrophobic realm of the Cabinets of Curiosities, or Wunderkammern. The concept of such cabinets was originally an invention of the era of Enlightenment and the Baroque, where wealthy lords and patricians created collections of a wide variety of objects displaying the multi-faceted "wonders" of God's creations (and especially the offerings of newly discovered, exotic territories). Coral, minerals, taxidermy, and the like - were lovingly and often fetishistically contained and displayed.

The "Waldkammer" series consists of nine paintings that explore humanity's often destructive relationship with nature and the crisis of deforestation in particular. These painted wooden cabinets allude to the once-living trees that were their source: Some are carved into the shape of women personifying the trees as living things. Meanwhile, the "curiosities" displayed are actual species, dependant on the trees for survival.

The omnipresence of cabinetry or other wooden framework becomes a symbol for man's way of relating to nature: within the cabinets, nature is controlled, compartmentalized and cataloged according to a specific collector's spirit. This same framework forms a barrier between nature and ourselves that prevents an immediate, uninhibited experience of nature.

As carved wood is a symbol for the tree it came from, it is also a reference to man's disruption of natural cycles and the history of nature's exploitation through man. This "martyrdom" of nature is implied in the carved figures, which echo the reliquaries and saint grottos that were the medieval antecedents to the Cabinets of Curiosities of the Age of Reason. By correlating these two types of collections – the scientific "Wunderkammer" of early Enlightenment and the deep devotion of reliquaries – von Foerster endeavors to create a vocabulary for a new possible relationship to the natural world.

Madeline von Foerster was educated at the California College of Arts and Crafts and the Freie Kunstschule Mannheim, Germany. Born in San Francisco from an Austrian-German-Russian background, she now lives and works in New York. The "Waldkammer" series can be seen at Strychnin Gallery Berlin from November 7th until December 7th.



Madeline von Foerster: Waldkammer.
Opening night: November 7th at 7 p.m.
Show runs from Nov. 7th – Dec. 7th 2008
Strychnin Gallery
Boxhagenerstr. 36
10245 Berlin

Painting above: "Amazon Cabinet", 2008
76 x 152 cm; Oil and egg tempera on wood
PR Contact: Iris Bitter
production@strychnin.com
Phone: +49 160 915 15 965
www.strychnin.com