

Éric Poitevin

20 November 2010 – 22 January 2011

The Galerie Nelson-Freeman is pleased to present its second solo exhibition by Éric Poitevin.

Over the past twenty years, Éric Poitevin has been exploring the classic artistic themes: landscapes, still lifes, portraits and nudes. He uses these themes to form groups, to which photographs can be added or removed at will. Whether the subject is human beings, animals or plants, the artist uses the same working method: any affectation is stripped away. The absence of expression, the use of close-ups, soft lighting and monochrome backgrounds all contribute towards the extreme neutrality of the images. Each photograph strives to depict a moment suspended in time. At first glance, the images appear silent, yet in spite of this a dialogue is created with the spectator – it is this paradox, which makes the images so powerful. Eric Poitevin's choice of subjects (the forest, animals, the naked body) allow him to play with our collective imagination (our fears, fascinations and desires).

For this new exhibition, Éric Poitevin has extended his work on the human body and on the ground floor of the gallery he is presenting a series of female and male nudes. The nudes are captured lying down, sometimes from behind and sometimes as busts and from the point of view of the spectator, evoke a series of landscapes. Despite the attention to detail and the abandon of some of the poses, there is absolutely nothing medical or voyeurist about these images. Also present on the ground floor are two medium format still lifes – a lamb and a conger eel –, which are in direct reference to paintings. For instance, the lamb is inspired by Zurbarán's *L'Agnus Dei* (1598-1661). In the original, the white lamb is lying on a black table with its legs bound together. In Éric Poitevin's version, the lamb is black and is presented on a pedestal against a white background. This inversion seems to function like a negative. The act of photographing the scene is thus akin to the development of the image. The lamb, which was offered up as a sacrifice, frees itself from its bonds and begins to move. We also find another group of still lifes: a series of medium format photographs of skulls. They are presented on pedestals with no further ornament. This theme also finds its origins in the history of painting.

On this floor, there is also a group of two black and white images, each composed of two extremely large format photographs. The images show tortured branches interlaced and overlapping against a background of the winter sky. The impression of austerity is compounded by the covering of snow on the branches. Facing these trees are five large-scaled photographs of dense woods in the french region of « La Meuse ». Paths look like drawn lines making a clearing through the woods. The far-away light that can be seen down these paths guides our eyes. The photographs were shot from a frontal point of view, and yet rarely within Eric's works has the perspective been so distinctly shown.

Éric Poitevin was born in 1961 in Longuyon, France. He lives and works at Mangiennes in the Meuse region. Between 1989 and 1990 he was in residence at the Villa Medici, since when he has enjoyed a number of solo and collective exhibitions. In 2004, the Frac Ile-de-France/Le Plateau (Paris) presented a solo exhibition of his work. In 2007, he exhibited his photographs taken at the Domaine de Bel-Val at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature (Paris). His œuvres can be found in numerous public and private collections such as the Centre Pompidou - Musée national d'art moderne (Paris), the Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (Paris), The MAMCS (Strasbourg), the MAMCO (Geneva), the MUDAM (Luxembourg) and the Fundação de Arte Moderna Contemporanea (Lisbon).