

## IN REVIEW

## CORRIDOR PLATEAU II

EASTSIDE PROJECTS, BIRMINGHAM, UK

26TH NOVEMBER 2011 – 25TH FEBRUARY 2012

By Anneka French

*Corridor**Plateau II* is a small

but quietly powerful exhibition tucked away in Eastside Projects' secondary gallery space. Evoking a creeping sense of the sinister, it comprises work across a range of media by artists including Seb Koberstädt, Peyman Rahimi, Detlef Weinrich, and Markus Karstieß. The exhibition is set up as a somewhat seedy domestic interior and is the second part of a project conceived by and simultaneously shown at, Kunstverein Schwerte, Germany.

Buzzing with a repressed energy one cannot quite define, *Corridor Plateau II* references both the surreal and the cinematic to build a disquieting total environment. The exhibition challenges the viewer to engage with the works on display by offering teasing invitations for closer scrutiny. Works are positioned to face away from the viewer and physically block their path, drawing on notions of the uncanny and the unheimlich. *Howard Doe*, 2009, a sprawling plant in a sculpted ceramic pot by Markus Karstieß is the most explicit example of this as it obstructs the entrance (and exit) to the gallery. Accordingly, the viewer has to make a conscious decision to enter the space and is forced to react bodily and psychologically to the exhibition from the very first encounter. The discovery

of a compelling and highly charged exhibition awaits those who cross this threshold.

Coloured by a subdued palette of brown, grey and black, the exhibition contains overtly filmic qualities. It is lit by six bare light bulbs suspended low in the space which throw long shadows across the gallery. Operating as a kind of gesamtkunstwerk, *Corridor Plateau II* integrates several items of furniture that both function as stage props and reinforce the domestic, including a beaten leather sofa and several wicker chairs awkwardly positioned too close to a wall, or facing away from an artwork. These simple acts subtly draw attention to these inanimate objects and introduce the impression of the exhibition being inhabited by or affected by unseen forces.

Several key works dominate this unsettling exhibition. The first and most obvious is *ZORN*, 2011, by Seb Koberstädt, a threatening painting which entirely covers two of the gallery walls with cocoa and beer. Its brown, muddy smears are strangely reminiscent of both Richard Long's wall paintings and the 'dirty protest' of prisoners during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Large white triangles interrupt the surface of Koberstädt's painting, aggressively slicing through the marks and creating tension within the space. *ZORN* remains in the corner of the viewer's eye throughout the duration of the viewing experience, forming a menacing wallpapered background to the exhibition, on top of which other works are hung.

The exhibition's haunting qualities

are emphasised by a sound work by Detlef Weinrich. Entitled *Corridor Plateau*, 2011, this music permeates the space and heightens its troubling atmosphere. The artist's work influences the encounter with every other piece in the exhibition, forming a vinyl soundtrack to accompany the viewer at every turn. Even more disturbing is *Wesen*, 2011, a series of George Condo-esque lithographs by Peyman Rahimi. These ghostly black and white portraits seem to shift and mutate before one's eyes and are bizarrely suggestive of mirrors as they are of a similar size to one's own head. Rahimi's works bring fleeting impressions of people into the space, a notion echoed by the Doe Family series of ceramics by Karstieß which seem darkly to refer to funereal urns.

*Corridor Plateau II* is so much greater than the sum of its parts. The exhibition is remarkable not only for its cohesiveness, and one's surprising physical and psychological reaction to it. It is a bleak, lonely and powerful exhibition which draws on aspects of the theatrical and the cinematic to imply a narrative and a cast of absent characters. The viewer is compelled to investigate and participate in this brooding tableaux through simple curatorial gestures that build suspense, challenge the visitor's expectations and carefully manipulate their experience. 



Photography: Markus Karstieß, courtesy Eastside Projects