Mirjam Varadinis

David Chieppo

Collection Cahiers d’Artistes 2007
Pro Helvetia
Swiss Arts Council / Schweizer Kulturstiftung
Edizioni Periferia
We Die Alone
The Day the Mountain Wasn't Feeling Well
Untitled
Untitled
Untitled
eternity 4-ever...
vampires suck.

literally.
The conversation amazingly consists on both sides of mainly one word!
Untitled
Who Let the Black People In!
I'm not here for you to just kick around.
Ronald McDonald's Forefather
Untitled
I Thought You Liked Yellow…
Coca-Cola
high heels came
high heels came around

Untitled
He made it! He was a great success.
A young man wearing a white T-shirt stands in front of the microphone, smiling confidently, obviously happy to inform the press. But about what? The exact details and the background of the story remain unclear. Our only clue—the title HERO FOR A DAY (2005)—provokes contradictory associations. Calling someone a hero is one of the most hackneyed epithets conceivable, especially in the United States. Could this young man be one of those US soldiers in Iraq, incessantly dubbed heroes by the American media in order to gloss over the catastrophic trajectory of the war and to shore up the fighting morale of the people? Or is he the exact opposite, one of those young Al Qaeda terrorists who are such a threat to American society and, having been arrested, are proudly flaunted for the media? The two men in the background underscore the ambivalence of the scene. They could as easily be upright politicians as sinister CIA agents, depending on how we interpret the story of the “hero” in the foreground. As so often in David Chieppo’s art, the scene is full of menace. The two “heavies” are standing much too close to the young man, as if they were guarding him (which in turn supports the thesis of a prisoner). Their faces are odd as well. One is yellow, the other brown, and that of our young hero in the foreground is white. Could this imply the symbolic unification of all peoples on earth and therefore explain the young man’s status as a hero? Or was the artist’s palette motivated quite simply by questions of composition? Chieppo consistently unites formal, abstract considerations with elements of content and narrative. Press photographs, which he often uses as the source material for his paintings, are reworked to such an extent that the distance between the two can no longer be bridged. He is not interested in the documentary replication of events but primarily in the composition of pictorial situations, in which short, encoded stories invite viewers to draw their own conclusions and embellish the stories at will. Chieppo cuts figures out of his source material, rearranges them and adds purely
nothingness characterises much of David Chieppo's work, in other words, existential concerns—covering half of the entrance. But why is the window in critical contemporary with no qualms about addressing big issues in his usually small-format pictures. Not only social and political questions but also love, passion, war and death—in other words, existential concerns that prevail not only in this painting but throughout Chieppo’s oeuvre. The ominous mood is apparent even in his landscapes (e.g. LANDSCAPE, 2005) or in works with such harmless titles as SETTLE DOWN (2005).

David Chieppo’s works are bathed in feelings of melancholy and loneliness. His protagonists seem to be hopelessly introverted and incapable of communicating with others. Even couples cannot escape the loneliness. On the contrary, Chieppo often underscores the sense of mutual isolation, as in the diptych MEET YOU THERE (2005). A woman to the left is running after a man to the right but they are separated by an unbridgeable gap between the two panels. Instead of meeting and offering one another mutual support, they are each almost entirely absorbed by the abstract background of the composition. This vulnerability on the brink of nothingness characterises much of David Chieppo’s work, and the drawings are no exception. There the vulnerability of his protagonists is, in fact, heightened by the fragility of the pencil work and brief personal jottings or texts. Like the paintings, the drawings vary substantially in form. Some look like the scribbles of a child, others include comics-like elements. The childish, naïve appearance of the formal idiom is often subverted by inflammatory content. Chieppo clearly functions as a poet, and the drawings are no exception. There the vulnerability is apparent even in his landscapes (e.g. LANDSCAPE, 2005) or in works with such harmless titles as SETTLE DOWN (2005) or in works with such harmless titles as SETTLE DOWN (2005). In his landscapes (such as LANDSCAPE, 2005) or in works with such harmless titles as SETTLE DOWN (2005). Chieppo clearly functions as a poet, and the drawings are no exception. There the vulnerability is apparent even in his landscapes (e.g. LANDSCAPE, 2005) or in works with such harmless titles as SETTLE DOWN (2005).


in temporary housing? This would explain the infinite sadness imparted by the two protagonists. But, as usual, the artist does not provide clues that would answer our questions; instead his representation has a timelessness and a profound, deeply moving humanity. Somehow one sadness imparted by the two protagonists. But, as usual, however, Chieppo is thoroughly contemporary; he works techniques and intimations of surreality clearly set his work on small-format panels of wood that he sometimes even salvages from the street.

Born in New Haven (Connecticut) in 1973, the artist has been living in Switzerland since 1998. This aspect of his background is reflected in thoughts on the national identity of his native country that are processed in his work. His imagery draws on the cultural background of the United States, but also addresses issues of racism or ostracism, as in Who Let The Black People In?! (2005), as well as the war in Iraq. The artlessness of his formal idiom, the use of comics techniques and intimations of surrealism clearly set his work off against the sensation mongering of the media. Chieppo’s works have a distinctive urgency all their own that shows the absurdity and senselessness of this war. We Die Alone and We Die Alone (Part 2) (2002) are near iconic representations of the madness of war.

Chieppo is undoubtedly a sensitive portraitist of our times, who succeeds in relating current social and political phenomena to the overarching history of humankind without ever losing sight of humanity. Chieppo is sensibler Porträtist unserer Zeit, dem es gelingt, aktuelle gesellschaftspolitische Phänomene mit der grossen Geschichte der Menschheit zu verbinden. Seine Darstellungen sind zeitgenössisch und zeitlos, politisch und poetisch, abstrakt und figurativ zugleich und stets von grosser Menschlichkeit geprägt.
David Chieppo

Lives and works / lebt und arbeitet in Zürich, Switzerland / Schweiz

ART STUDIES / KUNSTAUSSCHULUNG
1998/99 ............ Hochschule für Gestaltung, Zürich
1997/98 ............ Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia
1996/97 ............ Art Students League, New York, NY
1995/96 ............ Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington
1992–94 ............ Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio

SOLO EXHIBITIONS / EINZELAUSTELLUNGEN
2008 ............ Manor Kunstpreis Kanton Zürich, Kunstmuseum Winterthur
2007 ............ Foie Gras, Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris
2006 ............ Projektraum Enter, Kunstmuseum Thun
2005 ............ Home for a few, Galerie Brigitte Weiss, Zürich
2004 ............ You better find god because the devil doesn't want you, Galerie Brigitte Weiss, Zürich
2003 ............ Waiting Room, message salon, Zürich
2002 ............ Study of former times (and different places), Kunsthaus Glarus
2002 ............ One Year Anniversary. Remembering Operation Infinite Justice
(with a special tribute to cowboys and indians), Kunsthalle Basel
2002 ............ Trying to make things right again, Galerie Brigitte Weiss, Zürich
2001 ............ Whole in one, message salon, Zürich
2001 ............ Heroes also Attack, Ausstellungsraum Taubenstrasse 13, Hamburg

GROUP EXHIBITIONS / GRUPPENAUSTELLUNGEN
2007 ............ A Fantasy for the Moment, Kunsthalle Bern
2006 ............ Bad Moon Rising, k3 project space, Zürich
2006 ............ Präsentation Neuankäufe der Grafischen Sammlung, Kunsthaus Zürich
2006 ............ Galerie Moeller (with / mit Masanori Suzuki), Bonn
2006 ............ la luna la diva, Likeyou projects, Zürich
2005 ............ don't worry me and i won't worry you, Hinterconti, Hamburg
2005 ............ Sixpack – Kramhöller – vor der Information, Hinterconti, Hamburg
2005 ............ Bekanntmachungen (Announcements), Kunsthalle Zürich
2003 ............ Durchzug – Draft, Kunsthalle Zürich
2003 ............ Feine Ware II, Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Harburg
2003 ............ Galerie DWLV, Vevey
2003 ............ which side are you on?, Kunstraum Walcheturm, Zürich
2003 ............ PAINT, Galerie Bob van Orsouw, Zürich
2002 ............ out of (limes), Vier 5, Frankfurt a.M.
2002 ............ dreihundert näuse, Shedhalle, Zürich
2001 ............ Binz39, Zürich

GRANTS AND AWARDS / STIPENDIEN UND PREISE
2008 ............ Manor Kunstpreis, Kanton Zürich
2007 ............ Cahier d'Artiste, Schweizer Kulturstiftung Pro Helvetia
2005 ............ Werkbeiträge Bildende Kunst, Kanton Zürich
2000–2002 ............ Atelierstipendium, Stiftung Binz39, Zürich

Mirjam Varadinis, art historian has been a curator at the Kunsthaus Zürich since 2002. She has published numerous catalogues and artist’s books. In 2005 she and Annie Wu launched the Internet art project www.azple.com (a-z public limited editions), and in 2006, she curated the fine arts program of the "Printemps de Septembre" under the management of artistic director Jean-Marc Bustamante. / ............ ist Kunsthistorikerin, seit 2002 Kuratorin am Kunsthaus Zürich und publizierte mehrere Kataloge und Künstlerbücher. 2005 gründete sie mit Annie Wu das Internet-Kunstprojekt www.azple.com (a–z public limited editions). 2006 kuratierte sie unter der künstlerischen Gesamtleitung von Jean-Marc Bustamante das Festival «Printemps de Septembre» in Toulouse.
Settle Down  
2005  
Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz  
34.5 x 52 cm  
Private collection / Privatsammlung

We Die Alone  
2002  
Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz  
30.5 x 22 cm  
Collection / Sammlung  
Kunsthaus Zürich

We Die Alone (Part 2)  
2002  
Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz  
30.5 x 22 cm  
Collection / Sammlung  
Kunsthaus Zürich

Hero For a Day  
2004  
Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz  
40 x 30 cm  
Private collection / Privatsammlung

Merry Little Tune  
2005  
Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz  
34.5 x 52 cm  
Private collection / Privatsammlung

Who Let the Black People In!  
2005  
Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz  
34.5 x 21 cm  
Private collection / Privatsammlung

I Thought You Liked Yellow…  
2006  
Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz  
21.5 x 29.5 cm  
Private collection / Privatsammlung

Tell Me  
2006  
Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz  
30 x 36 cm  
Private collection / Privatsammlung

Untitled  
2006  
Pencil, crayon on paper / Blei-, Farbstift auf Papier  
21 x 29.5 cm  
Galerie Brigitte Weiss, Zürich

Untitled  
2005  
Pencil, crayon on paper / Blei-, Farbstift auf Papier  
21 x 29.5 cm  
Galerie Brigitte Weiss, Zürich
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Collection/Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Day the Mountain Wasn't Feeling Well</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz</td>
<td>123 x 80 cm</td>
<td>Private collection / Privatsammlung</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portrait</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz</td>
<td>29.5 x 21.5 cm</td>
<td>Galerie Brigitte Weiss, Zürich</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ink, pencil, text on paper / Tusche, Bleistift, Text auf Papier</td>
<td>21 x 14.8 cm</td>
<td>Galerie Brigitte Weiss, Zürich</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landscape</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz</td>
<td>34.5 x 52 cm</td>
<td>Private collection / Privatsammlung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There's No More Beer Here – Queer</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz</td>
<td>25 x 31.5 cm</td>
<td>Private collection / Privatsammlung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald McDonald's Forefather</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Oil on wood / öl auf Holz</td>
<td>32 x 25 cm</td>
<td>Galerie Brigitte Weiss, Zürich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet You There (Diptychon)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz</td>
<td>29.5 x 21.5 cm</td>
<td>Private collection / Privatsammlung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coca-Cola</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz</td>
<td>20.5 x 31.5 cm</td>
<td>Galerie Brigitte Weiss, Zürich</td>
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<td>Untitled (Bellini Detail)</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz</td>
<td>38 x 28 cm</td>
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<td>Ghostface</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz</td>
<td>29.8 x 21.5 cm</td>
<td>Private collection / Privatsammlung</td>
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<td>Portrait</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Oil on wood / Öl auf Holz</td>
<td>25 x 31.5 cm</td>
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<td>Portrait</td>
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