

IMAGES OF ANOTHER NATURE

In the beginning there was nature.

For the nearly 10 years between 1985 and 1994, Catherine Gfeller explored the theme of landscape in far away countries.

It was a question of pure, rigorous, perfectly framed composition that tried to avoid any falsehood. In the beautiful sensual curve of a golden hill, accompanied by furrows in a freshly plowed field and presented in sumptuous colors, there was beauty and perfection. It was, perhaps, too beautiful.

Now, Catherine Gfeller is in New York. She has chosen to confront the city fully and it is in this that she has become a complete artist. She reflects on the human condition by means of her camera and gives us her vision of the world.

On the verticality of immense stone gorges, she opposes horizontal friezes. What a discovery! Now she can begin to tell their stories amidst chaos and disorder with surprising color. She has structured them all, poeticized them with simple pictorial strategies. She shoots quickly and the image is then repeated and spatially organized so that lively variations come to light.

Her special technique of printing on etching paper transforms the aggressive information of the city. Her debuts in this series were almost abstract in form and color, drawn as they were from flat architecture, but little by little these sceneries were populated with people. They paraded before us, parallel to the picture most of the time, from left to right or vice versa.

These are the bearers of daily history. After them, Gfeller quickly progressed in the elaboration of ever new friezes.

Very controlled and restrained in the beginning, these friezes have been liberated for some time. They have become more chaotic, and the more chaos has penetrated them, the more they have uncovered a successful creator bursting with new subjects. The urban friezes have been transformed into urban rituals. The human figure, this time, is represented as important. It moves towards us alone or as a unit. It makes the image dynamic and lets the arrangements of the different parts be made in a more and more complicated manner. Interspersed with images one within the other, are bold superpositions, and reflections, now often taking vertical form.

The epic rhythm of the friezes of the mid-nineties is left behind; the work takes on an accelerated cadence. Catherine Gfeller tells us now of unleashed stories. These are multicolored, rich stories putting into existence that which we are, we poor city savages with all our joys and all our pains.

This time Catherine Gfeller is totally on the side of life. She has learned to mix the refined European culture she inherited with the violent chaos of the big new city.

Walter Tschopp, July 1999

Curator of plastic arts

Museum of art and history of Neuchatel (Switzerland)