

Christopher Gerberding's paintings are in sensitive limbo between figurative painting and abstraction on the one hand and between painting and object on the other.

Gerberding's references are seemingly unambiguous: One recognizes references to William Turner, the late Monet, the late Rembrandt, the late Goya.

Yes, it is above all the late works of the old masters that fascinate Gerberding. As they grew older, they had to abandon their technical virtuosity in favor of an intense expressiveness, a more intuitive form of painting that partially anticipated Impressionism.

The Romantic period is also essential for understanding Gerberding's artistic method. Romanticism referred to unattainable states of longing, such as childhood, natural idylls and unfulfilled love. These themes also appear superficially in Gerberding's paintings as pictorial motifs, but this is not the romantic aspect of his art. Gerberding strives for a painting that seems to have fallen out of time. Gerberding's longing refers to the painting itself, in each of his paintings he tries to find this painting again. This fails, and this failure is modern, contemporary romanticism.

This romanticism also forms the core of Gerberding's painting. Completely free of irony, he enters into intense emotional states in which he creates the paintings. These emotional states serve him as a source for his paintings. The role of the viewer is not clear. Should one lose oneself in the paintings, engage with the feelings, or regard the paintings as objects, as relics of a spiritual action, similar to relics of Fluxus actions?

In this field of tension - between feeling into the pictures and viewing them from a distance - the pictures unfold their greatest vitality.

This is supported by the fact that Gerberding shows his paintings in object frames or showcases, and they are thus shown simultaneously as objects and pictures. This makes one think of worshipping relics, or of the presentation of artists' letters in larger retrospectives.

Similar to letters, Gerberding's paintings also have a lot to decipher, a lot to feel and interpret. They require close examination, which can be both clarifying and enigmatic. Can a figure be recognized in the water? Are the persons portrayed in the throes of death or in love play? Is the effect of the landscape threatening or idyllic? Gerberding strives for the depiction of longing, for uncertain certainty, for the absolute desire to show something that cannot be represented. This attempt is on the one hand absolutely serious, on the other hand, it is to be understood performatively.

As if Rembrandt and Mike Kelley were to form an artist duo.