

**The Master of Wind, Ink and Water**

**Tobias Pils' Cycladic Drawings**

**By Seungduk Kim**

Tobias Pils went to Antiparos for a solo show at Eva's gallery at the Kastro. He brought a few mid-sized paintings for the gallery space comprising only one room.

Eva Presenhuber has been visiting the island of Antiparos for several years now. The Cyclades found their way into her "to-go" list again and again.

Antiparos has no freshwater, therefore drinking water must be brought by trucks in tanks on a daily basis. The situation is difficult.

Tobias Pils took advantage of his stay on the island to draw, using black ink on white paper.

Nowadays, a painting can take any shape, according to the artist's desire and mood. Are paintings becoming circumstantial works, depending on where they are made?

Are location and season replacing the artist's usual topics, or do they only trouble them minimally, by adding details of the local surroundings (such as landscape and light...)?

For instance, the *MARFA paintings and works on paper* (2016) bear quadratic shapes and are characterized by having more right angles than curves and more shapes, as in Donald Judd's art. These works were created during a residency in Marfa (Texas), upon invitation by the Chinati Foundation. So, yes, paintings can be circumstantial, as long as they are made outside of the matrix of studios.

Putting together a small number of paintings for a solo show on an island required a presentation capable of creating the right mood. The gallery space was not especially made for this exhibition, which is why it was all the more important to carefully select works that could inhabit the walls up there and to take the time to make new works during the journey.

Bringing Viennese paintings under the special light of Antiparos to share with friends and locals is a summer exercise, a pure pleasure. As a curator, I always like to play with context, in order to look at the works with a little sidestep — not a huge one, but big enough to play with chance. As an artist, Tobias will probably do likewise.

Choosing Eva Presenhuber's joint up in the Kastro also offers the opportunity to pair with Los Angeles' DoPe Press, who will publish a series of pamphlets in the form of an artist's book instead of the usual catalog.

Each pamphlet delivers readymade ideas of what kind of imagery a Greek island can provide — intense colors, minimalist details of landscapes... — but no human.

Clichés, but powerful ones. Tobias' pamphlet will focus on artworks: the ones that will be on the wall as well as the new series of drawings created on location during the spare time after swimming, partying at the Beach House, dinner at Pipino's or another restaurant, after children's hours.

Black, grey, white on raw linen canvas; the economy of signs and forms is rather controlled, forming a series of lines, grids, with superimposed curvilinear characters.

Black ink on white paper: the economy of signs and forms is rather minimal in this series of lines with some characters. The question the drawing poses is: does the line come first or does it come at the end?

Does the narrative dictate the arrival of graphic elements or is the narrative developed out of the spontaneous lines?

One and the other are at work and succeed in constructing a set of humans making love on the paper...

The quotes of the landscape are remarkable in that the recurrent elements of mountainous horizons, sea fronts and waves are at the service of humans — couples in action, standing figures or faces.

P. 13: concentric circles coming from the center, heading for a cheeky face blowing wind through them: the God Aeolus, master and ruler of the winds, appears here and makes me think of the strong *Meltemi* wind which bothers the new settlements on the north-west side of the island, erected by star architects on amazing sites looking onto the sea, where nobody ever built a house due to the roaring winds!

Drawings on pages 7, 8, 11 and 31 depict landscapes horizons, sea waves, mountains which are partially distorted by poorly defined animals or humans; on page 17 a standing male character bears the tectonics and the genitals of an arm-cut sculpture, thereby mixing a Picasso-type face with Alfred Jarry's hero *Ubu* whose belly is covered by a spiral; characters are at work similarly in some of the other drawings: on pages 24 and 25 humans raise their arms horizontally, hands are carefully drawn, on page 26 a couple makes love doggy-style under a radiating sun ... Nude people, hands, bosoms, exposed genitalia: the drive behind the composition are couples upon whom lines and deletions are superimposed, bringing imbrications and complexity. The lines could be organized into grids or crosses on which a female has been attached (page 47); on page 43 a naked woman with long hair is holding the two parts of a cut out board or the negative shape of a cross — a reminder of Gestalt theory and the perception of imbricated (positive and negative) forms.

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At first sight, Tobias' drawings are spontaneous, but a closer look brings all the complexity of the composition to the fore; in contrast to the paintings, the drawings depict inextricable situations.

The paintings, on the other hand, are layered hierarchically, in a way that sets apart the foreground from the background, main characters form secondary elements, all of which are well positioned on the surface of the canvas.

Temperatures were not that high thanks to the cooling breeze this summer in Antiparos, but comfortable enough to add quietness and silence to Pils' Antiparos series.

Summer drawings are like that.