Johnen Galerie

Stefan Bertalan
De Natura Rerum

27 April - 23 June 2012

Opening: 27 April, 6 - 9 pm
Gallery 2

Stefan Bertalan: Network, 1975, 49 x 34,5 cm - 19 x 13.5 in., coloured pencil on paper
"The general social state of poverty, complacency, degradation and disengagement, together with the material and the cultural decay is probably the most striking characteristic of the Romanian environment during the ’80s. [...]
Stefan Bertalan, thanks to his previous idealist, rationalist and constructivist attemps, is the best illustration of the trauma generated by the fall out of love with the depressed and depressing reality endlessly, propagating itself through the local society and civilization, in the last years before Communism. Bertalan migrates from the abstract clean-cut structures and assembles designed to mirror and echo the utopian aspirations for a society built up on ’pure relationships’, a former dream of the rationalist avantgarde, to the most regressive and mind-blowing type of irrational art, regarded as the last port of call where he can take cover against compensatory self-delusion, escapist and illusory ideals, shared still by all those artists caught up with the idea of creating spiritualist or technical and constructivist utopias. [...]
The moral approach of his perspective is blatant and very insightful. A far-fetched ethics of demoralisation and debunking, spans itself throughout the whole of this study. Surviving as a skeleton, as well as surviving as a potato, as a bean-stalk or a sunflower, is equivalent to existing within different relationships of dependency that unavoidably end up in disappearance." (p. 189-193)

"He withdraws in a vegetal Eden, where he can be away from the authoritarian pressure of a violent power that threatens his existence all the time, as he, in turn, refuses to recognise its authority, and confronts it by opposing it with the paradise of the plants, a space where protest, delight, understanding and happiness find a meeting point." (p. 212)

Stefan Bertalan (b. 1930) attended the Institute of Fine Arts "I. Andreescu" (Cluj, Romania) until 1962. Bertalan was co-founder of Group 111, the first community for experimental art in Romania.

De Natura Rerum is organized by Erwin Kessler and Victor Man.

Quoted from: Erwin Kessler (ed.): The Self-punishing One (...). The Art and Romania in the 80s and 90s. Romanian Cultural Institute, 2010.

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Tuesday - Saturday, 11 am - 6 pm