



GALLERIA CONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA

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MANUELA SEDMACH

Passare al bosco

Opening: Friday September 25th 2015, Arco dei Becci 1, 6pm-midnight
Until 24.10.2015, Monday-Saturday, 10am-1pm, 2-7pm

Galleria Continua is pleased to once again host a show by Manuela Sedmach in its exhibition spaces. Entitled *Passare al bosco*, (The Forest Passage), it comprises a series of works covering part of the most recent pictorial output of the Trieste-born artist.

In the years immediately following the Second World War, Ernst Jünger wrote an invaluable guide to freedom, which came out in 1951 with the enigmatic title *Der Waldgang*, published in English as *The Forest Passage*. The German writer describes the forest as an intricate, secret space, full of "interrupted paths", a sacred space in which humans encounter themselves, rediscovering the primordial forces of life. "Passing through the forest, that is what I am doing, with my life and therefore with my work, which is the image of it," Sedmach affirms. "The forest Jünger refers to is transformed for me into a desert, the place where we encounter our own life. Being in the forest, being in the desert or in the middle of an ocean... travellers of the soul know it, Novalis knew it, when he stated: 'We dream of traveling through the universe - but is not the

universe inside ourselves?'"

Sedmach's work explores the secret of the human condition, the sacredness of our relationship with nature, and thus with ourselves and our own freedom. It recounts what Jünger, in *The Forest Passage*, calls *Heimlich*. The artist explains that this is one of those words in the German language that also contains its opposite: "*Heimlich, secret, is the intimate, well-protected hearth, the bulwark of security. But at the same time it is also what is clandestine, very close, in this meaning, to Unheimliche, the disquieting, the perturbing. When we come across roots like this, we can be certain that in them is an echo of the great antithesis and of the even greater equation of life and death, which the mysteries are devoted to solving. Every horizon achieved gives rise to another journey. When I asked Elio Grazioli: 'Elio, what am I doing?', he came up with a great response: 'You mustn't worry about understanding what you're doing, keep moving forward, grow and reach it, then start out again.'*"

The subjects populating Sedmach's canvases are distant, indefinite and

unknowable places – fogs and vapours, marine atmospheres, endless horizons, deserts, cosmoses and stars. The artist transforms her paintings into testimonies of the essential. The forms, transparencies and veilings yield to the imagination, emptiness invades the canvas. The concept of the infinite or nothing lies at the centre of her works.

Even in the moment in which it appears complete, Sedmach's work allows the viewer to intuit the possibility that it is still open, as seems to be borne out by the repetition of the same themes, which, by remaining unchanged for long periods, result from time to time in cycles of canvases with the same title and subject. The large number of variations making up each series points to the equally broad possibility of new solutions for its completion. It is in this multiplicity of probable cases that the difficulty of perceiving the definitive state in this artist's work lies. It moves towards the immutability of what is perfect, but must engage with the precariousness of all things subject to the passage of time

Manuela Sedmach was born in Trieste in 1953. After gaining her diploma from art school, she made her debut in the 1970s with a series of works that helped her to find her own identity. The decade was then characterized by experiments with large, materially dense canvases featuring volcanoes, amphitheatres and lake mirrors. At the beginning of the 90s she drastically

reduced her colour range and tackled a cycle of mixed technique works, *Il cibo degli dei* (The Food of the Gods), with pencil-drawn figures in profile. With *Meridiano Zero* (Zero Meridian) and *Sopra il mare* (Above the Sea), the canvas became so smooth, compact and without any trace of a brushstroke as to seem photographic. The pictorial weave is built up through a slow process, starting with the dark black of the ground and then with the addition of glazes and layers of colour – two aside from black, white and Sienna earth. In this way, the artist manages to obtain a very wide range of greys, reflections and light sources. It is the light that appears behind these transparencies combined with light from the setting and its mutation during the day that makes Sedmach's 'landscapes' atemporal and ever-different places. Over the years her work has explored inscrutable spaces and dilated time, until the recent cycle of works, *Occhi bianchi* (White Eyes). In these new pieces the artist uses what she herself describes as "*an alien gaze that always sees things for the first time... a gaze that I feel I must keep up in looking at the world, the gaze of a child: the eyes of children and the elderly are dimmed, they are milkier, but they are also eyes open to looking in order to see, and not with our habit of seeing.*"

The artist has shown her work in many exhibitions in galleries and museum spaces in Italy. In 1999 she won the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, New York. She has contributed to collective shows in Switzerland and China, and held solo exhibitions in Belgium, Austria, Germany, France and Hungary. Works by her are held in important private European, American and Japanese collections, and at the SMAK in Gent.