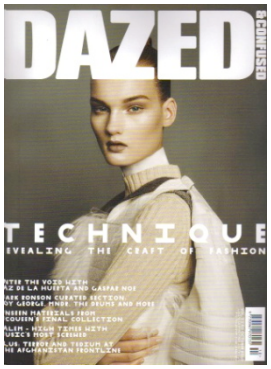
Dazed and Confused

Dark Nature. Mysterious Occult Art

Jack Hutchinson, October 2010



The moody, atmospheric month of October is an ideal time to unleash your darker side, and artist James Aldridge's sidestep into curation at Poppy Sebire is a good place to start. The group show he has put together, entitled Dark Nature, explores death, gothic aesthetics and apocalyptic themes. Aldridge is an artist renowned for his intensity, and often works in complete isolation in a Swedish forest with nothing but Black Sabbath records to keep him company. "I am just drawn to the darker side of human nature," he says. "Those elements that are uncontrollable and mysterious. That definitely informed the selection of artists for the show."

Dark Nature features the work of four artists obsessed with the murky side of the human psyche. "There is an underlying sense of the macabre," says Aldridge. "The work has been described as Gothic – a term used originally to describe the turbulent late 18th century. However, it can definitely be applied to the way artists are reacting to our chaotic times."

Expect to be unnerved. Roger Andersson's watercolours reference fairytale stories – through the use of a renovated antique saw. "The work is really imbued with another presence – one that is pretty haunting," says Aldridge. "The rust from the saw was turned into paint, and the blade used to sculpt a mysterious figure in wood from an old piano… absence and presence resonate through the work." In contrast Justin Bartlett's drawings delve into the occult – through detailed works featuring dark chasms, piles of skulls and heads floating in rancid pools. "All the work in the show has a strangeness to it that isn't contrived," comments Aldridge. "That is exactly what nature is like."

TOP 10 EXHIBITIONS

DARK NATURE
MYSTERIOUS OCCULT ART

Dark Nature suggests both the artists' relationships to the natural world, and to the intangible way information is transformed through the creative process. "I am constantly amazed by what I see in the nature around me. It just opens you up to a different way of looking at things."

Sept 17th – Oct 30th, Poppy Sebire, poppysebire.com

Above : Give Me That Old Time Religion, House Wreck In Wood, 2009, Mats Adelman; Watercolour in Paper, 2010, Roger Andersson.

Below : Dark Folke, 2009, Justin Bartlett. All images courtesy of Poppy Sebire Gallery