

STAVANGER, NORWAY, 1970. HE LIVES AND WORKS IN NORWAY.

Torbjørn Rødland photographs or shoots scenes, remnants and details of the Norwegian North, occasionally female presences in everyday reality snapshots, lost and melancholic, appearing to pursue their own paradise. Mysterious portraits lost in nature or being parts of it, girls absorbed in their own thoughts or in activities incomprehensible to any observer. Among the dark landscapes and delicate figures he often places—in ostensible naivety—images of intense graphic style, in between postcards and magazine commercials disrupting the continuity and appearing to criticise the lightness, the lost 'nothing' of the past decade. In that way, he subverts the heavenly, pre-Raphaelite atmosphere, whose distinctive component is the vague boundaries between the innocence of the theme and voyeurism, with objects on a first glance released by any symbolic or conceptual content. Such an arrangement and alteration has a double effect. On one hand it highlights the stereotypical character of representation of the female body and of innocence, which perforates contemporary iconography. On the other, it suggests the context of romanticism and its devotion to the individual, personal element as the origins of contemporary

deadpan, serial photography. It is all about an anthology of images of sophisticated beauty, which charge each other as they gradually dismiss their particular contextualisations, allaying in their arrangement every photograph's punctum in order an iconographic ensemble to emerge. As Hillary Raphael mentions in her book *Torbjørn Rødland: White Planet Black Heart*, 'he transforms the entire world into graceful girls (apart from the graceful girls who are being transformed into beginners, soldiers through his lens)...'.

In the video ♥ *all This and Dogg* (2004) that Rødland presents at the 1st Athens Biennial, he undermines the heavenly, unhistorical time of narrative, where we observe the ethereal, abstract, melancholic figures of the girls with unexpected, elusive scenes under Eminem's and Snoopy Dogg's soundtracks.

The contrast between the arcadian, serene world of the girls, and the violent music of urban hip hop does not however result in the opposition of these two worlds. On the contrary, it denotes their critical affinity as consumerist objects as well as their symbolic inter-dependence.

K. M.

♥ *all This & Dogg*, 2004

Video 14' loop

Film stills

Courtesy: Standard, Oslo

