

ASA NISI MASA

Galerie ISA is proud to welcome back iconic German painter Michael Kunze. His spectacular new show is titled '*Asa Nisi Masa*.'

The title comes from a popular catchphrase in Federico Fellini's 1963 film *Otto e Mezzo* (8 ½). Fellini never explained the meaning but many consider the phrase a magical intonation, a spell in childhood games meant to conjure up a connection between Guido, the main protagonist's past and present.

In Fellini's films, Kunze (b. 1961 Munich, lives and works in Berlin) finds a worthy proponent of the shadow line of modernism, referring to reality being interrupted by an enigmatic counter narrative, a movement that also defines the artist's oeuvre. In Kunze's interpretation, '*Asa Nisi Masa*', can be considered analogous to the Vedantic '*Tat Tvam Asi*', loosely translated as '*Thou Art That*', the refrain-like realization that unites the self (atman) and the universe (brahman) in the search for a higher truth.

Several of the large format works directly show the link between scenes from the film. Others (four different landscape compositions) blur the boundaries between these two chants while retaining the metaphysicality that interrupts the action in the scene. Take for example, '*Late Spring, Early Autumn*,' where resplendent autumnal hues are shown in a singular tree in the midst of a bright summer day. Kunze raises the query—'Is this simply the result of a technical error by an inattentive narrator, who failed in the continuity of his narrative (in line with cinematic techniques)? Or does this break from the scene represent a lapse in the viewer's memory?' In another work, '*Late Autumn, Early Spring*,' Kunze adds in a new element in the form of a peacock, throwing a googly to his initial query by posing: 'What does continuity then mean when it contains elements that imply a shift in space or time?'

Thematically and stylistically, Kunze is absorbed in this concept of narrative interruptions. As a young student of art, Kunze, chose to counter his peers by focusing on the anachronistic medium of painting reinforcing his belief that in this digitally obsessed world, older mediums serve as a correction; paintings bringing to the naked eye a form of storytelling that no other medium can replicate.

Kunze's works are highly complex, layered in meaning and metaphor. His architectonic landscapes are meant to induce shock and awe. His use of light, inspired by Italian artist, Giorgio de Chirico (whose edges of light and shadow also seem to break up a narrative) is transcendent in chiaroscuro. Celestial bodies radiate in multiple directions and the ensuing rays follow a surreal perspective of meaning, creating an image-forming geometry that

provides awe-inducing perspectives and composition. This combination of intrinsic and extraneous light also serves to intensify the layers in narrative that separates the real and fantastic.

The perceptions of Kunze's works range from futuristic to apocalyptic (his references criss-crossing in a labyrinthine loop from Swiss painter Arnold Böcklin to provocative Danish filmmaker Lars von Trier), and in these disparate interpretations, Kunze finds a close connection between time that is ending and the emergence of a new beginning; the moment of change both as doom and dawn.

The turn of an era, the artist believes, will be accompanied by a far-reaching and almost obsessive rediscovery and reinterpretation of ancient forms. The cities of the future will emulate ancient civilizations worldwide and landscapes of the world will blur boundaries that were once drawn between ideal and reality, no matter how consciously or unconsciously one follows the pull of time.

- *Priyanka R Khanna*