



The Last Mohican

A red waterfall pours down the empty ledge in a dense and secluded forest. On the middle platform of this natural spectacle the 'native', a female warrior, gives a pugnacious expression; as if she had been sent by mother earth. Fog, water, blood, loneliness and stillness evoke the emotion of the sublime. In lieu of a painting of the Hudson River School, here stands a performance-based photograph.

The Last Mohican is a reply to Thomas Cole's iconic painting, Kaaterskill Falls (1820-ies) that depicts one of the most celebrated sites of 19th century America. Located in Eastern Catskill Mountains of New York, the Kaaterskill Falls appear in most of the prominent books, essays, poems and paintings of the era.

The waterfall appears natural but contrived. The color red evokes a deep wound, the meddling of humans with nature, a war between flora and fauna, and in a more abstract sense, the bloody history of America. At the same time it can be associated with the aspects of feminine procreation; Red as a metaphor for blood, fertility, life in general; red as a metaphor for a different perception of blood and pain.

By stepping into the role of the 'native', the artist is placing herself metaphorically on the spiritual side connected to willpower, belief, consciousness and nonconformist existence. Marcin questions what the word "native" means and introduces doubt for the seemingly lost and helpless "native" seen in Cole's painting. She points at the ambiguity of Cole's mission. He actively rallied and wrote against the development of the railway in the Catskills, praised the preservation of nature; at the same time, through his paintings, people became attracted to the Catskills and tourism flourished. Through "The Last Mohican," Marcin subtly critiques the fear of God reflected in Cole's representation of nature, revealing prevailing power and belief structure of Cole's time. Ironically, Marcin's warrior is also quite small and seemingly harmless, yet the massive gesture of the red water gives evidence that she is supported by a natural source of power.

In "The Last Mohican" the cultural classic is given a twist. The female 'native' is the one who is announcing a change or a starting point. Instead of a romantic representation, the landscape literally becomes a signifier for the expressed emotion, and the icon acquires a new actuality and purpose. Behind its beauty, the image disarms the hierarchy and myth around the idea of the male painter and creates awareness for the propaganda effect of any representation. Marcin confirms again her profound research about historical and psychological contexts, displayed to the viewer through the performative act in a playful and captivating way.

Nadja Verena Marcin is represented by 532 Gallery Thomas Jaeckel New York. The artwork "The Last Mohican" will be presented at VOLTA 9, Basel by 532 Gallery Thomas Jaeckel.