

## Samuel Herzog Dogs and Flowers in Cape Town



“BEWARE”, reads the unmistakable message on a signboard with serrated edges. And as if this was not explicit enough, the upper half of the signboard shows a watchdog baring its fangs. If the brute has any eyes it does not show them – it is all bulging muscles and teeth. Not far from this warning the most beautiful blossoms present themselves to the gaze: hyacinths and bougainvilleas, gerberas and imperial roses. The eye roams in peace over this floral splendour – but within seconds is brought short by another display of snaring teeth.

During a visit to South Africa, Markus Schwander developed a striking technique for tracing drawings from photographs. This technique appears to blindly combine incommensurate, even irreconcilable elements: floral idylls on the one hand, aggression on the other. But this perfectly matches the impressions gathered by a stranger on a walk through Cape Town’s Southern Suburbs: The observations are paradoxical. Flowers suggest a front garden atmosphere, friendly and inviting. At

the same time these very premises bristle with signboards and fences, which – like Flowers of Evil – evoke an atmosphere of intimidation and violence. Living conditions here are marked by contradictions, which the mind struggles to resolve. But the hand, tracing the blue carbon paper almost mechanically, forces the paradox to the surface in an unmitigated manifestation of its mutually superimposed and overlapping elements.

In: Jo Ratcliffe & Markus Schwander, B. Bell-Roberts Gallery, Capetown, edited by Pro Helvetia

Translated by Richard Bertelsmann



Dogs & Flowers, Installation view Gallery Brendan Bell-Roberts, 2002



Dogs & Flowers, Installation view, Kunsthhaus Baselland, 2004

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