

BARCELONA

Christopher Mir

GALERIA SENDA

The ten paintings displayed in Christopher Mir's exhibition "The Dream of You Is Real" are tightly executed, smooth works of Photorealism representing sexy women, a lone caveman, galloping horses, flying birds and insects, and so on, all inserted into landscapes and often projecting a feeling of the uncanny and the exotic. Such an iconography recalls a surrealist discharge of imagination: A rich dream space profoundly mirrors often nightmarish psychological scenes. However, the serene or stormy skies that belong to Mir's world also include additional visitors: planes and helicopters, functioning as emphatic new archetypes of an age defined by contemporary military conflicts and their consequences—messengers, perhaps, delivering a warning that humans are unable to learn from the past. In *Arrival*, 2007, a helicopter hovers somewhere between a background of palm trees and a blond girl in the foreground. The site looks alien and forlorn, but the child seems familiar, like a next-door neighbor from an American suburb; the helicopter is paralleled by a large black bird, perhaps a hawk or an eagle. Curiously, a group of colored patches crosses the image like an accumulation of feathery clouds generated by a computer, apparently a glitch in the representational system, an abstraction that prevents our reading the scene as either a dream or nightmare.

For his sources Mir uses pictures from magazines, calendars, and the Internet, as well as photographs he himself has taken. The collaged and staged aspects of his works produce a feeling of distance, so that the viewer immediately grasps that the scene is unreal. In *Sudden Sun*, 2006, a romantic moment is brought into question by the presence of huge dragonflies that hover near a man approaching a sunlit seashore through a passage between two barren rocks. The juxtaposition of such seemingly unrelated images, and the lack of synchronicity among them, creates the distinct sensation that what we're seeing is not quite what was actually happening. This imagery might be generally described as digital surrealism for the post-9/11 era. Yet the meaning of such tragedies for Mir is unclear, as are their psychological consequences, clouded as they are by

his paintings' explicit prettiness and cryptic mysticism. Instead of conveying clear meanings, his works transport us into a wasteland of imagination, a technological jungle with archetypal human presences in it.

Like other contemporary artists working in this vein, Mir attempts to capture an evasive sublime, locating awe and terror not only in nature but also in the hyperreality of the Internet. This new technological wilderness originates in the sense of isolation epitomized by the solitude of an individual sitting in front of a computer. With the electronic world mentally accessible yet physically absent, emotional short circuits occur with growing frequency. The return of pretty women, prophets, stallions, insects, and birds in Mir's painting might, in fact, register the growing slippage between our feelings of hopelessness and anxiety in the face of a digitally controlled world and the desire to recapture some corporeal presence in art.

—Marek Bartelik

Christopher Mir,
Arrival, 2007, oil on
canvas, 15¼ x 20½".

