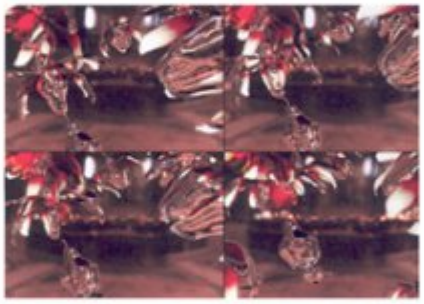
haluk akakçe

Cosmic Galerie

Paris

For his first Paris exhibition, Haluk Akakçe spun a sequel to his enigmatic sci-fi tales in digitally animated video. Standing before the seductive glow of *Birth of Art* (2002) one might just imagine this to be the richly poetic vision of an alien race demonstrating its genetic origins. In the first episode of this mesmerizing four-minute narrative, an original single, gracefully undulating vertical line becomes two, and then multiplies into a tangle of twisting cables, reminiscent of DNA's double helix. A series of brightly silhouetted forms—buds, flowers, hybrid creatures with humanoid hands and mouse tails—tumbles down this vine of life. As species diversify at an increasingly rapid rate, the vine gets crowded, chaotic, and then finally disappears behind a wash of blinding white light. Fast-forward to part two: a utopian vision of the flower-forms that have survived and prospered. They float slowly upwards, propelled by their own spontaneous blossoming. Technology and nature seem to have cross-pollinated, producing an intelligent community of balletic travelers. Hovering at the top of the screen, the cluster waits for one last late-bloomer to join them, closing this quiet drama of ascending spirits. Using simpler formal elements and more open-ended narratives to hypnotic effect, the parallel projections *Black on White and White on Black* and *Blue and Black on White* (both 2002) each begin like an animated version of a Barnett Newman painting. Thin vertical zips zoom down the screen's surface. First, absolute flatness, and then suddenly, infinite depth. What initially looks like grooves scratched onto the surface emerges as a fully three-dimensional sculpture of tangled cords. With surprisingly minimal means—just line and two colors—Akakçe manages to evoke a complex voyage through a self-contained universe. The vine-like structure opens, suddenly, to bring us inside the network of its tendrils. The strands quiver with a restless energy that has a strangely calming effect. Just when they seem on the verge of cohesive organization, they burst into chaos. These two works create an engrossing riddle of perception that demands total immersion, but with a kind of gentle, effortless grace that is quite rare, and all the more beautiful for being so.

Ellen McBreen



Haluk Akakçe *Birth of Art*, 2002, single channel/modular digital video, b & w and color, sound in collaboration with Michael Vecchio.

annika larsson

Cosmic Galerie

Paris

The fist solo show in Paris by Annika Larsson develops with a flawless spatial rhythm through two rooms with rigorously white walls. The first, very large and in semi-darkness, accommodates the projection of a video that lasts a little more than sixteen minutes; the second, of smaller dimensions, presents a single cibachrome that, taken from the video, emblematically synthesizes its essence. This double articulation is aesthetically necessary in order to determine the peculiar space-time nature of the artist's work, connoted by an exceptionally refined fusion between the virtual dimensions of the visuals and the physical space in which the viewer perceives the work. This new video, never before seen and entitled *Pink Ball*, possesses the fascinating and disturbing enigmatic quality of the Swedish artist's preceding works, characterized as usual by the presence of totally inexpressive and affected male figures who are the protagonists of an event that has ambiguously erotic aspects. In this work, the three main characters stage a distressing, disquieting, and mysterious ritual on a deserted "tourist's dream" beach. The first man, dressed in trousers and a shirt, indisputably plays the dominant role; the second, a muscular young man in a bathing suit, acts as his assistant, while the third, naked except for a singular fluorescent fuchsia bathing cap is the passive presence, apparently consenting or unconscious, the object of interest for the other two. At the start of the video, a little robotic dog plays with a ball, the same fuchsia color as the bathing cap. The dominant character takes the ball, puts it in his mouth, and then spits it out onto the ground. The naked man is lying down on the sand, defenseless. We see a hand grope his head, then he is carried to the sea's edge where, after having small flotation devices strapped to his limbs, he is left to float on the waves only to be carried back onto the beach and become, once again, the object of silent attention. From the point of view of aesthetic intensity, everything in the video hinges on the action's calculated slowness, on the sharp and obsessive accuracy of the framing, and on the emphasis accorded to the details, as well as on the soundtrack's alienating suggestion, electronic music composed by Tobias Bernstrup.

Francesco Poli



I Annika Larsson *Pink Ball*, 2002, still from DVD.