

ARTFORUM

Paolo Chiasera

MUSEUM MARTA HERFORD

Goebenstr. 4-10

May 9–June 27

“Under the Open Sky,” Paolo Chiasera’s exhibition in the MARTa Herford museum, is a captivating response to the beauty and the absurdity of the Frank Gehry–designed building that houses it. Gehry’s structure is a mass of exposed brick and seashell-like forms, and like the building’s oscillating exterior, Chiasera’s work initially recalls the natural world. But in actuality, the Bologna-born and Berlin-based artist’s show is a layered meditation on the often-fraught relationship between artists—including Gehry—and the nature they seek to represent or emulate.

Adjacent to *Wald* (Forest), 2009, another site-specific installation by Chiasera, is a fifteen-minute video titled *Trilogy*, 2006. Recalling Paul McCarthy’s *Painter*, 1995, a spoof on de Kooning, *Trilogy* includes depictions of Chiasera wearing rubbery masks and enacting allegorical stories that depict the creative torments of M. C. Escher, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, and Vincent van Gogh as they struggle to make art that relates to the natural world. Yet the most provocative work on view is *Berg* (Mountain), 2009, a winding gray structure that Chiasera constructed to fill the remaining three rooms of his show. The sculpture is a steep arrangement of loosely woven linen, wood, and oil paint. In one room, its peaks fit into the ceiling’s orifices, and a portion of the piece seems to poke out through a wall. The work’s real impact is experienced while walking underneath the structure, where one becomes engulfed in the smells of wet paint, turpentine, and plywood, calling to mind Chiasera’s own intense creative effort. At its core, *Berg* is less a representation of natural surroundings than a self-conscious monument to artistic attempts to understand and portray the splendor of nature itself.

— Ana Finel Honigman



Paolo Chiasera, *Berg* (Mountain), 2009, oil, canvas, wood. Installation view.

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