

Landscape: Abstract – Figurative

What is figurative? What is abstract? It seems the question is easy to answer.

In a figurative work of art, illusionistic figures and objects stand in relation to one another; in an abstract work, on the other hand, geometric shapes or also colours stand alone. The painter Peter Tollens writes,

whereas in figurative art, a brushstroke, a line etc. means an arm or a field, in concrete art, a line or a colour is liberated from immediate meaning and can evoke a memory of nature or something that is lying dormant in the beholder.

The difference that is only obvious when looking at – rather than producing – a work, blurs when seeing or representing a landscape. Is the sea abstract or figurative? Are the autumnal leaves, the rays of sunshine in a clearing, the sole tree on a hill, the rising mist abstract or figurative?

For painting, but also for photography and drawing, landscape offers a marvellous opportunity for evolving. The brush strives towards freedom, and if it only once gets the chance to paint what has been seen not true to detail, but in the way it was subjectively experienced, it can move on the canvas unrestricted by any obligation to represent the figure or object illusionistically. The photographer can without difficulty fulfil his desire to lend eternity to a brief moment, the drawing artist can make use of the whole range of his pen, because nobody prescribes how he should represent grass, trees, hills, and valleys.

The exhibition “Landscape: Abstract – Figurative” brings together five artists who in their work oscillate between abstraction and figuration: the painters Eric Cruikshank, Silke Leverkühne, and Peter Tollens, the sculptor and drawing artist Johannes Beyerle, and the photographer Michael Kenna. Each of these five artists sees nature in his or her own way and emphasises what is important to him/her. For Silke Leverkühne, it is the expressive: trees and branches that interweave in our gaze, or the always changing play of light and shadow reflected on rocks or in the water. For Peter Tollens it is the dormant, resting, plane: fields, rock formations, fog, a landscape as a colour field that is assembled in layers as it is being looked at. Michael Kenna sees in it the beauty, vulnerability and transience of the world, and makes it visible at the most inconspicuous places in his black-and-white photographs. Eric Cruikshank does not just make beauty visible, he also lets us experience the joy that he feels when he sees the numerous colours of the sky at sunrise and sunset, during a thunderstorm, or other natural phenomena. His pictures are an apotheosis of light and what it gives to the eye and one’s emotions. The drawing artist Johannes Beyerle sees the landscape like a scientist: down to the smallest detail. He ventures forth with his sketchbook and captures it with both sketches and words. Back in the studio, he draws what he has seen as a continuous representation. We are showing both kinds of works by him: sketchbooks and individual works. We will also show, in addition to his paintings, sketchbooks and studies by Peter Tollens.

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Poster
Reverse
Eric Cruikshank, *Unitfeld 2*, 2020, oil on paper, 28 x 19 cm
Silke Leverkühne, *stehendes Gewässer*, 2020, oil on canvas, 170 x 140 cm

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Johannes Beyerle, Eric Cruikshank, Michael
Kenna, Silke Leverkühne, Peter Tollens

February 26 – April 24, 2021

painting, drawing and photography



