



Dieter Hall and Hans Witschi

The human figure is at the center of a lot of art in this time of disease and perceptual fragmentation. Yet there are few artists who approach it in a manner as direct as the two Swiss painters Dieter Hall and Hans Witschi. Their work shows a remarkable degree of independence from current art practices and, despite their shared interest in the body, a very different artistic approach.

It is interesting to compare the work of **Dieter Hall** to Alberto Giacometti's early still lifes. Giacometti either could not or would not paint apples as large as they appear in reality, for, he said, to him they appeared tiny in comparison to the space surrounding them. In Dieter Hall's paintings, figures and objects regularly burst over the edge of the canvas. Contrary to the artist's intention, his subjects always turn out slightly larger than life size. Figures are portrayed with limbs cut off, windows without frames, bathtubs without rims. The fragments that result from this truncation reflect the artist's almost physical desire to get hold of the core of the person or object in front of him, regardless of spatial consideration. The intensity with which people and objects are captured puts them on a similar level. The trivial as well as the meaningful are recorded with equal respect, at once humoring and bestowing dignity on our lives and the material conditions under which we lead them.

The distance between painter and subject--so painfully present in Hall's work--is overcome in **Hans Witschi's** virtuosic scenarios. Human figures and animal creatures appear in profusion. It seems the painter, without hesitation, chameleon-like, at one with nature, has assumed all identities, is horse and horseman at once. When depicting the artist's studio, the model, traditionally part of this topos, is absent and the artist's persona assumes the whole space, eliminating any conceptual fractalization. With an energy and speed that is reminiscent of Francis Bacon, Witschi stakes out the terrain of his action. Within these parameters, there is no limit to the mind's skurillous, often bizarre wanderings. Witschi's work is a study of the boundaries and limits of the human body, both in a literal and a metaphysical sense. The figures he paints are often on the move, freeing themselves from the conditions of gravity, emerging from elements like water and earth, air and light. They are bodies in a perpetual state of transition.

Carin Kuoni
Director

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