

LANDSCAPE CROSSOVER

Galerie Klüser

9 February – 29 March 2023

Almost 50 years ago, our publishing house Schellmann+Klüser published Eva Beuys-Wurmbach's examination thesis at the State Academy of Art, Düsseldorf. Entitled 'Landscapes in the Backgrounds of Leonardo's Paintings', it was written in 1959 and supplemented by analytical, schematic drawings by Joseph Beuys, who had married Eva Beuys that same year.

The first painting discussed in the text was an early work by the 20-year-old Leonardo, painted in 1470: 'The Annunciation'. For a man like Leonardo, who was continually researching, the landscape (synonymous with nature) was not simply a background foil for central depictions of people, but an organic component of his artistic ideas, even in the early Renaissance. Capturing the forces of nature and introducing them, transformed, into his art – in other words, achieving a synthesis between science and art – was vitally important to Leonardo, as it was to his admirer Joseph Beuys.

It may sound surprising for the history of a contemporary gallery, but in 1984 Leonardo's 'Annunciation' once again played a significant role. We had suggested to Andy Warhol that he create a graphic series on details of Renaissance paintings as a contrast to his typical American Pop Art motifs. The shortlist included paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, Paolo Uccello and Sandro Botticelli.

In the case of Leonardo, the choice fell on the 'Annunciation'. Graphic portfolios were created for all the motifs, each with four colour variations, drawings and two large-format canvases, each measuring 122 x 183 cm. One of these paintings is the focus of our current exhibition.

Through his choice of detail from the 'Annunciation', Andy Warhol radically changed the painting's original meaning. Only the right hands of the two key figures are still visible at the edges of his painting. Warhol's focus is on details of the landscape background, which thus mutate into the main motif.

The exhibition also includes many older landscape-related works that were stored in our recently sold house in France. We are showing them as an exception to our contemporary gallery programme because landscape plays a primary role in these examples, and they thus illustrate the development of landscape depiction.

A group of mezzotint etchings using sepia ink is dedicated to the work of Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), the great landscape painter and draughtsman of the first half of the 17th century. In his 'Liber Veritatis' he produced a catalogue raisonné of his own paintings in 200 drawings – not least to prevent potential forgeries. In 1774-1777, Richard Earlem succeeded in reproducing these drawings satisfactorily and making them accessible to a broader public using the printing technique he had developed.

Drawings and sketches by artists such as Franz Kobell (1749-1822) and Johann Georg von Dillis (1759-1841) from the sphere of German Romanticism add pastoral, arcadian and lyrical variants of an ideal or real landscape to the images on show.

In addition, there are two 19th-century oil paintings. Christian Klengel (1751-1824) was a representative of Dresden landscape painting, which reached its peak with Caspar David Friedrich. A pupil of

Bernardo Bellotto and Ch.W.E. Dietrich, and later a professor at the Dresden Academy, he was a successful pioneer of Romantic landscape painting.

Louis Auguste Auguin (1824 Rochefort - 1903 Bordeaux) is little known in Germany, but in France he is a well-regarded landscape painter of his native region in the southwest of the country, near the Atlantic coast. As a close friend of Camille Corot and Gustave Courbet, still uninfluenced by Impressionism, he painted landscapes defined atmospherically by the light of Jakob van Ruisdael and Claude Lorrain. Our painting shows the forest area of Cesté, while in the background you can see Arcachon Bay with the famous Dune of Pilat.

In the contemporary section of the exhibition, the large early 'Niederrheinlandschaft' ('*Lower Rhine Landscape*') (1984) by Tony Cragg is dominant, alongside the painting by Andy Warhol. A comparable wall-mounted work ('Tarry Landscape') is currently on display in the extensive Cragg exhibition by the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung in the Pinakothek der Moderne.

The printed motif of the folding sculpture by Olaf Metzger quotes the iconic leporello 'Real Estate Opportunities' by Ed Ruscha. A dystopian American cityscape by Nix/Gerber based on a diorama built by the artists indicates the possible disintegration of an overdeveloped, turbo-capitalist structure.

There are also three early small-format works by Alex Katz: New York façades at night, a forest path and a seascape. Sean Scully is represented by a large-format C-print showing a transitional situation from land to sea – evidence that his photographs of nature or architectural details have a close link to his abstract paintings. Glen Rubsamen alienates a US landscape with the sculpture 'Mae West' by Rita McBride, a huge outdoor sculpture dominating a central square in Munich.

One important drawing by Joseph Beuys, dating from 1962, is worthy of mention alongside his prints. Cross-shaped sculptures grow out of the earth or sink into it – a combination of nature and culture.

The spectrum is rounded off with two works by Karl Bohrmann and four drawings by Jonathan Bragdon. This philosopher and draughtsman spent several months a year in the Swiss Alps in order to capture the monumental mountain landscape in the wild, employing an innovative form of drawing.

The beauty of natural, idealised or designed landscape has been a consistent theme in the visual arts since Giorgione and Leonardo da Vinci. At the same time, human exploitation is endangering landscapes and nature more than ever. The consequence is a threat to natural habitats, not least due to increasingly frequent and severe weather phenomena such as storms, floods and fires. Our exhibition also aims to draw attention to this.

Bernd Klüser