

In Florian Maier-Aichen's second exhibition at 303 Gallery, the artist continues to sublimate the rigid constraints of conventional landscape photography, contextualizing his imagery according to the constant tension between its specificity and theatricality.

Often using elevated perspectives as a starting point, Maier-Aichen reconfigures elements of the landscape into a new kind of formalism. Incorporating the hidden beauty in the utilitarian model of pioneer photographs with the gestural beauty of natural line and separation, the in-camera framing and effected montage of his subjects become symbiotic. An untitled image taken near Andermatt in the Swiss Alps imagines a plow as a paintbrush, tearing into the negative space of the snow covered alpine pass. The antiquated notion of photography as document ebbs into larger notions questioning rationalism versus romanticism, and how machines relate to nature. In an image such as "Salton Seas (I)", the dry, topographic efficacy of the vantage point gives way to an almost cubist study of form as layers of earth are shown to ripple in and out of themselves.

The work also examines the relationship and friction between the surroundings of the artist's dual residencies in Germany and California. Maier-Aichen's California landscapes spill over with immediate gratification, the artist's subtle interventions often difficult to fully discern. Contrarily, the European vista of "Der Watzmann", a photograph referencing Caspar David Friedrich's most iconic painting, is sent into a world where the colors of the sky are spun into a vacillating color gradient with echoes of Jack Goldstein's airbrush paintings radiating through the polar fields of light. The suggestion of a certain stoicism in the German aesthetic, even as it extends to the natural world, lends itself to a kind of maximalist imagination that might seem superfluous amidst the undaunted grandeur of California's panoramas. The ways in which one's natural surroundings can equate to an overarching manner of thought is, by extension, the cause of progress, movements and history. By tinkering with and reshaping these environments from the inside out, Maier-Aichen raises some of the most elemental questions about the world we inhabit.

Florian Maier-Aichen was featured in a solo show in 2007 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. A solo exhibition in Madrid at Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza opened in 2008. Each of these exhibitions was accompanied with a fully illustrated catalogue. He was also included in "Damaged Romanticism: A Mirror of Modern Emotion" in 2008 at the Blaffer Gallery, Art Museum of the University of Houston, Texas; the 2006 Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial and "Particulate Matter" at the Mills College Art Museum in Oakland, California in 2006. Maier-Aichen lives and works in Cologne, Germany and Los Angeles, California.

*(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)*