



Robert Zandvliet - «TRUNK»

Parallel #14:

Marcia Hafif, Judy Millar, Patrick Rohner - «Works On Paper»

4.3. - 16.4.2017

Since his participation in shows in the years of 2002 and 2003, the Dutch artist Robert Zandvliet (born 1970 in Terband) returns to the Galerie Mark Müller with a solo exhibition. The focus herein lies on a loosely developing group of paintings depicting tree trunks, which the artist has pursued since 2016. Zandvliet's main interest lies with landscape paintings, or rather a certain image types which he reflects in single works or groups of paintings.

Both European and far Eastern models from this painting genre may serve as sources of inspiration. For the „trunks“ for instance, the trees and undergrowth motives by Vincent Van Gogh have been incentive.

But it would be a mistake to name Robert Zandvliet a traditional landscape painter. His paintings are construed much more intricately.

Zandvliet's paintings surpass the emotionally or romantically tainted interpretation and also - as an approach not uncommon in art history - the ironic parody.

When he is not grinding against readily articulated pictorial solutions from past artists and developing these further, he paints landscapes freely from his imagination. Zandvliet immerses himself in the painterly gesture and the composition of the picture, in order to better understand the structure of a painting and the character of a landscape respectively; and to push painting further as a discipline, as well as the traditional genre of landscape painting - which is not always considered as modern or substantial with regards to content - by the means of his individual, contemporary practice. In this manner, he achieves a linking of the past, the present and the future, orientating painting with all its cultural heritage in the history of art, towards something upcoming. There lies an almost subversive, intractable potential in the way Zandvliet treats landscapes in his works, opposing the classic aesthetics and motifs of the genre. This aspect particularly shows in the usage of the vertical format for the „Trunks“, as a contrast to the classic horizontal alignment of landscape paintings; it shows in the size of the paintings, which correspond to the human scale; in the decisive paint-setting on raw linen that allows us to see the proceeding build-up of layers, enhancing the luminosity of the sheer, punctual colour applications; in the seemingly uncompromising manner paint is applied through rollers and the radical reduction of the motif: One does not see anything but a tree trunk, a fragment, with neither leaves nor roots.

Furthermore, these paintings are missing a dividing horizontal line, which promotes an even more imminent confrontation between the viewer and the motif.

In the history of art and culture, 'landscape' has not only been connoted with the neutral, emotional, romantic or the nostalgic, but often also with the hierarchical, the territorial, in- or exclusiveness, and has thus been power-politically interpretable. A chosen segment of a linearly aligned picture with a central perspective is space-defining and creates clear boundaries. But the natural human gaze into the landscape does not know a rigid horizontal line or a definite demarcation, because the eye roams, is constantly in motion and the edge of the horizon whirrs in the light, diffusing into the atmosphere. It is this natural, free, boundless gaze that Robert Zandvliet is offering, his nurtured outlook, manifested in his paintings.



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An enriching and inspiring dialogue with Robert Zandvliet's paintings is opened up through the works on paper shown parallel in the adjoining room of the gallery, featuring Marcia Hafif (two seldom displayed, large scale watercolours from 1995!), Judy Millar and Patrick Rohner. Without difficulty, one can detect associative similarities with organically-vegetal (Millar), flowing and sedimented (Hafif, Rohner) forms, and hence with landscape sceneries in the works of the three artists.

Moreover, there is another correspondence with Zandvliet's paintings, even though each of the artists follows an individual, pictorial concept. Like in many of Zandvliet's works, here also, a picture-defining horizontal line is missing, drawing the viewer up-close into the pictorial realm, right into the landscape.

Dr. Invar-Torre Hollaus - Basel, im März 2017

**aus dem Deutschen übersetzt
von Annalena Müller**