



Silke Schoener

Galerie Ahlers

WEISSER RAUM



Die Bilder in diesem Katalog sind alle mit Öl auf Leinwand gemalt.

Der Anruf, 220 x 240 cm , 2011



In der Weide, 220 x 240 cm, 2012

nachfolgende Seiten: Für sich allein, 180cm x 190cm, 2011

Weide, 180 x 160 cm, 2012





Nirgendwo anders

Dunkel wirft die Bewaldung der Aue Schatten auf den Fluss. Das Buschwerk der Sträucher verschwindet im Dunkel, hier und da wählt die Sonne aus ihren Blättern leuchtende Farbflecken. Gegenüber scheinen die Grüntöne von Olive, Tanne, Pinie, Apfel, Pfirsich und Limette versammelt aufzuleuchten, gemustert mit Walnuss, Bernstein, Zimt und Siena. Das Gebüsch ist dicht belaubt, das Licht flirrt auf seinem Blattwerk. Im Unterholz rauscht das Wasser über die freigelegten Wurzelstöcke, bricht sich an Zweigen und herabhängenden Ästen.

Ab und an verfängt sich etwas Angeschwemmtes zwischen den Ästen, zieht nächstes nach sich, die Schlieren der Wellen verbreiten sich über das Wasser. Es ist kühl hier, mal halbdunkel, mal glitzern golden einzelne Lichtstrahlen durch das Geäst und tanzen auf den Wellen.

Es rinnt und rieselt, rauscht. Zwischen diesen Ufern strömt breit der Fluss in seinem Bett. Er muss im gleißenden Sonnenlicht daliegen, majestätisch langsam schweben bei ruhiger Oberfläche. Doch dort, wo der Fluss liegt, setzt Silke Schöner in ihrem Gemälde „Alone“ ein Leerzeichen. Sie lässt den Fluss weg, die weißgrundierte Leinwand bleibt stehen, nur hier und da verweist ein Bleistiftstrich auf eine Vorzeichnung, die noch ein Stückchen weiter ging. Wenn Silke Schöner malt, hört sie immer irgendwann auf, der Rest bleibt weiß. Sie lässt das, was sich für sie als unwesentlich darstellt, weg. Nur das Interessante, der Ausschnitt der sie anspricht, anspringt, findet sich in ihren Gemälden wieder. Landschaftsmalerei, das ist immer die Wahl eines Ausschnittes des Blickes auf Natur und Lebensraum. Der Ausschnitt, den jemand beruft, zeigt sein Interesse an. Malerei an sich ist Auswahl, ist Ausschnitt, ist Sichtwinkel, Perspektive.

Der Fluss ist trotzdem da, markierend eingerahmt von zwei schönen Auen, setzt den Betrachter ins Bild, er führt den Gedanken weiter. Die Leerstelle vermerkt den Freiraum, innerhalb und doch jenseits des Quadrats, des rechteckigen Bildgrundes, das eigene weiterzudenken. Der Leerraum bezeichnet in der Wissenschaft von den Kristallen einen Platz in der regelmäßigen Anordnung von Atomen, Ionen oder Molekülen, der unbesetzt ist. Hier wird die perfekte Symmetrie für einen kleinen Moment aufgebrochen, die punktuellen Abweichungen verändern alles und doch bleibt die eigentliche Struktur erhalten. In den Lücken stoßen die Grenzen von Momenten aneinander. Die erwartbare Geordnetheit ist unterbrochen. An dieser Stelle ist der Betrachter gefordert, zu verknüpfen, zu vernetzen, in Beziehung zu setzen oder mit etwas Mut, stehenzulassen, was ist. Diesen Mut hat Silke Schöner fraglos. Sie gibt die Beziehung der Elemente im Text zueinander nicht vor. Ähnlich dem Schüler, der dem Aufsatzthema, was Mut sei, mit einem einzigen Satz klug

entgegnete: „Das ist Mut.“ Freiraum wird in der Architektur, in der Landschaftsplanung, in Denkprozessen oder bei selbstverwalteten Organisationsformen als größte Möglichkeit und schönster Spielraum interpretiert. Die eigene Identität kann hier wahrgenommen und entwickelt werden. Wie schmeckt die Freiheit? Mit Kant könnte man über die Grenzen des Freiraums reflektieren, denn freie Räume an sich haben klare Bedingungen und stehen in Bezug zueinander. Ihre Ebenen schieben sich übereinander, hier und da glitzern golden neue Tragweiten über die Flächen, statt still zu schweigen. Silke Schöner setzt die Beziehungen, indem sie die Malerei abbricht. Ähnlich funktionieren auch gesetzte Texte. Gleich einem Leerzeichen, einem Leerschritt grenzen sich Wörter und andere Informationen voneinander ab, die Größe der Leerräume innerhalb eines Fließtextes verändert die Wahrnehmung. Bei Gedichten ist es selbstverständlich, dass der Leerraum mitspricht, eine eigene Aussage trifft, die den Text entscheidend gestaltet, verdichtet.



Auch in der Malerei sind die Zeiten vorbei, in denen vermeintlich leere, brach liegende Leinwand als unfertiges, unfruchtbares Terrain wahrgenommen wird. Freiraum ist zivilisatorischer Überschuss und geistige Freiheit, ein Weißraum ist keine Chiffre der Leere, sondern eine des Zugewinns. Als ginge man barfuß über einen bei sommerlicher Hitze kühlen, schattigen Steinboden, setzt sich die Wahrnehmung von unterschiedlichen Seiten des Denkens zusammen.

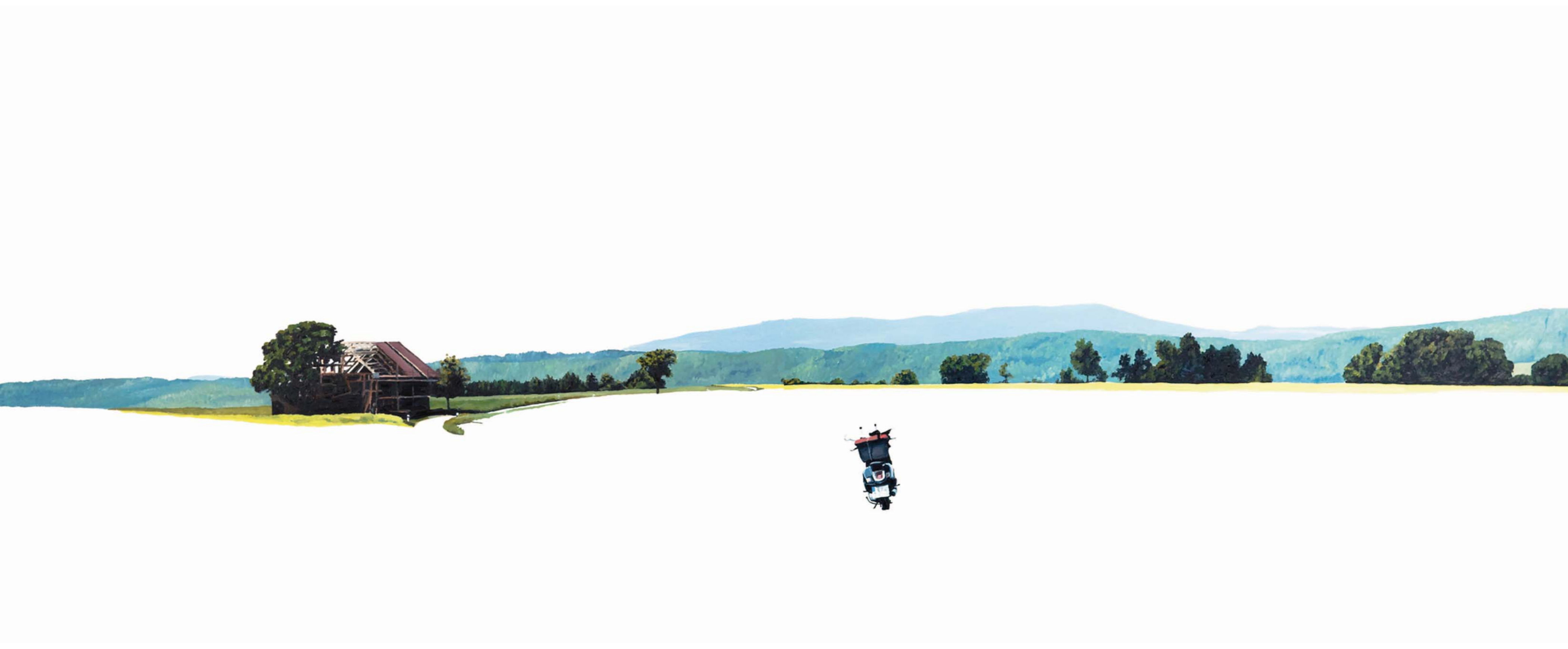
Diese Seiten können weit auseinander liegen. Aufklärung und Romantik. Weißraum und Waldschrat. Die romantische Landschaft, die als Metapher und Sehnsuchtsort den Wald seit Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts überhöhte, zielte auf einen inneren Dialog zwischen Bild und Betrachter, der Wald Silke Schöners ist anders. Unweigerlich befindet man sich darin, zugleich aber ist er so episch, dass das naturhafte Nachempfinden, Mitfühlen aussetzen kann zugunsten des Denkens. Wie mit Kreide gezogene Theaterlandschaften Räume gebären, zeichnen die leeren Stellen eine Dramaturgie des Ungesagten nach. Weiße Flecke auf der Landkarte. Gebiete, wo noch niemals jemand war. In Beziehungen, in Familien, sind die ungesagten Dinge oftmals die wichtigsten, manchmal die schmerzhaftesten. Das, was zu sehen ist, ist das, was gerade noch auszusprechen ist. Was unter den weißen Flächen liegt. Was darin. Mehr als Unwesentliches.

Die Welt ist nicht genug. Der Moment des malerischen Beendens des Bildes ist zugleich ein Moment des Innehaltens. Die Welt ist für einen Augenblick im Gleichgewicht, mit ihr die Malerei. Eine gewisse Stabilität ist eingetreten. Was zu sehen ist, ist jedoch mehr als ein stationärer Zustand. Ein Stück den Fluss hinauf schwimmt etwas, jemand im Wasser. Weiter hinten, später, erscheint jenseits der Büsche an der Flussbiegung hell, lichtblau in der Ferne eine Reihe von Hügeln. Darüber ist der Himmel, seine Fläche ist weiß belassen.

Nicht auf allen Bildern sind die Freiräume so bedenkenlos mit Eigenem zu füllen, sind nicht jederzeit so beredt selbstredend. Schillern zwischen Himmel und Erde, Hüpfen zwischen Himmel und Hölle. Jede der wunderbaren, feinen Texturen Schöners spiegelt eine im malerischen Sinne realistische Oberfläche, ideelles Entgegenkommen. Der diskursgeschuldete Riss zwischen Natur und Kultur, der seit seiner Konstruktion die Antagonisten immer schroffer formt, spielt in die Auseinandersetzungen um Landschaftsmalerei, in jede Landschaftsmalerei, hinein. Ist sie zur Disposition gestellt? Verliert sie mit der immer größeren Brüchigkeit und Verletzbarkeit der Natur

ihre Berechtigung? Verliert sie sich auf der Suche nach der Form? Ihre Märchen und Mythen brechen ab, erneuern sich, fallen in die Leere - wo ist mein Ort? Schöners Antworten führen in eine zeichenhafte Natur. Schnee und Wasser, der Himmel und die weiten Felder grundieren ihre Orte manchmal, andernorts ist es das Licht allein, Fassaden, Strauchwerk. Die schöne, präzise Malerei formt den Moment bis zu seinem Höhepunkt, sie wählt aus ihm die Funken und beharrt auf ihm. Keinen Schritt zurück, nicht weiter. Hier oder nirgendwo.

Tina Lüers



vorige Seiten: En route, 160cm x 240cm, 2011

Müritz, 160cm x 240cm, 2008





Bootshaus, 160 cm x 240 cm, 2008



Land, 160 x 220 cm, 2009



vorige Seiten: Mein Vater, 160 x 240 cm, 2008

rechte Seite: Illusion, 160cm x 240cm, 2010





Illusion II, 110cm x 140cm, 2010

Dark shadows on the river from the trees on its banks. Shrubbery and bushes vanish in the dark – here and there the sun highlights radiant patches of color among the leaves. On the opposite bank, shades of green like olive, pine, apple, peach, and lime seem to light up in groups, patterned with walnut, amber, cinnamon, and sienna. The close cover of leaves on the bushes shows flickers of light. Water gurgles in the undergrowth and over the exposed roots, breaks on twigs and low-hanging branches. Now and then, a piece of flotsam gets caught in the branches, gathers more of its kind, and streaky wavelets spread over the water. It is cool here, sometimes in half-light, sometimes single golden rays of light flash through the branches to dance on the waves. Trickling, rippling, rushing. Between these banks, the river flows in its wide bed. It lies calmly in the bright sunlight, flowing majestically and slowly with a peaceful surface.

But there, where the river flows, Silke Schoener leaves a space in her painting “Alone”. She omits the river, the white undercoat of the canvas remains visible – only here and there, a faint pencil line indicates a previous detail that would have revealed more. When Silke Schoener paints, she always stops at some point – the rest remains white. She leaves out everything that she feels is not essential or necessary. Only the interesting, the part that appeals to her, jumps at her, finds its way onto the canvas.

Landscape painting is always the selection of a partial view into nature and habitat. The detail, which an artist chooses, indicates a corresponding interest. Painting in itself is selection, detail, point of view, perspective.

Nonetheless, the river is still there, marked and bordered by two beautiful wetlands – it places the observer into the painting, guides his thoughts onwards. The white space denotes the emptiness within, but also invites viewers to project their thoughts beyond the painting’s rectangular surface. In the science of crystals, an empty space describes the vacancy within the regular arrangement of atoms, ions or molecules. Here, the perfect symmetry breaks up for a brief moment; the selective deviations change everything although the actual structure is maintained. Within the vacancies, the limits of the moments touch each other.

The expected orderliness is interrupted. At this point, the viewer is challenged to combine, to cross-link, to put into relation or – with a bit of courage – to leave it as it is. Without doubt, Silke Schoener has this courage. She does not specify the mutual relations of the elements in the text. Something like the schoolboy whose answer to the essay subject “What is courage?” was the single intelligent sentence: “That is courage.”

In architecture, in landscape gardening, in reasoning processes or in self-administered organizations, empty space is interpreted as the greatest freedom and most attractive possibility. Here, one’s own identity can be perceived and developed. How does freedom taste? One could reflect on the limits of freedom with Kant, because free spaces have clear conditions and stand in relation to each other.

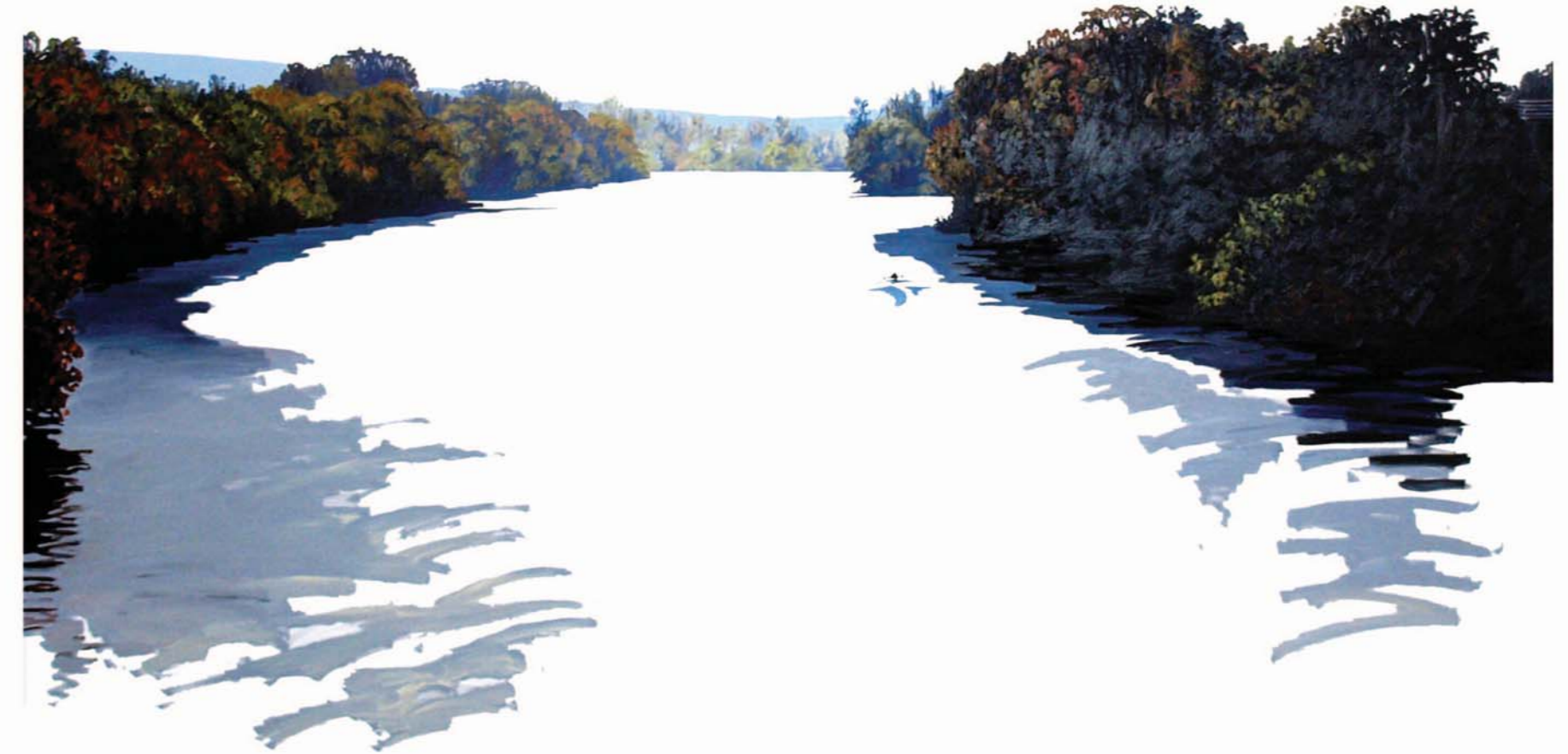
But her levels are superimposed – here and there, new golden implications glitter across the surfaces instead of remaining silent. Silke Schoener defines the relations by terminating her work.

Similarities are found to typeset texts. Words and other items of information are separated or delimited by empty spaces; the size of the empty spaces within a piece of copy changes one’s perception. In poems, it is self-evident that the empty space also speaks, makes an own statement that shapes the text decisively, condenses it. Also in painting, the times have passed, in which seemingly empty canvas is perceived as unfinished, infertile terrain. Free space is civilizing surplus, and intellectual freedom – a white space is not an index for emptiness, but for added value. Like walking barefoot across a shady, cool stone floor in the heat of summer, awareness is composed of different levels of perception. These levels can be widely separated.

Enlightenment and romanticism. White space and forest troll. The romantic landscape, which has idealized the forest as a metaphor and a place of yearning since the early 19th century, was intended as an inner dialog between painting and viewer – Silke Schoener’s forest is different. Inevitably, one becomes immersed, but at the same time it is so epic that natural empathy or sympathy can be suspended in favor of reasoning. In the same way that theatrical landscapes drawn with chalk can create spaces, the empty spaces generate a trace of the unstated. White areas on a map. Regions, in which nobody has been before. In relationships, in families, things not said are often the most important, sometimes the most painful. The visible is that which can only just be vocalized. Which lies below the white surfaces. Which lies inside them.

More than the unimportant. The world is not enough.

The moment that ends the creative act of painting is simultaneously a moment of pause. For a fleeting instant, the world is in balance, and with it the act of painting. A certain stability has been established. But that which is visible, is more than a stationary condition. At a small dis-

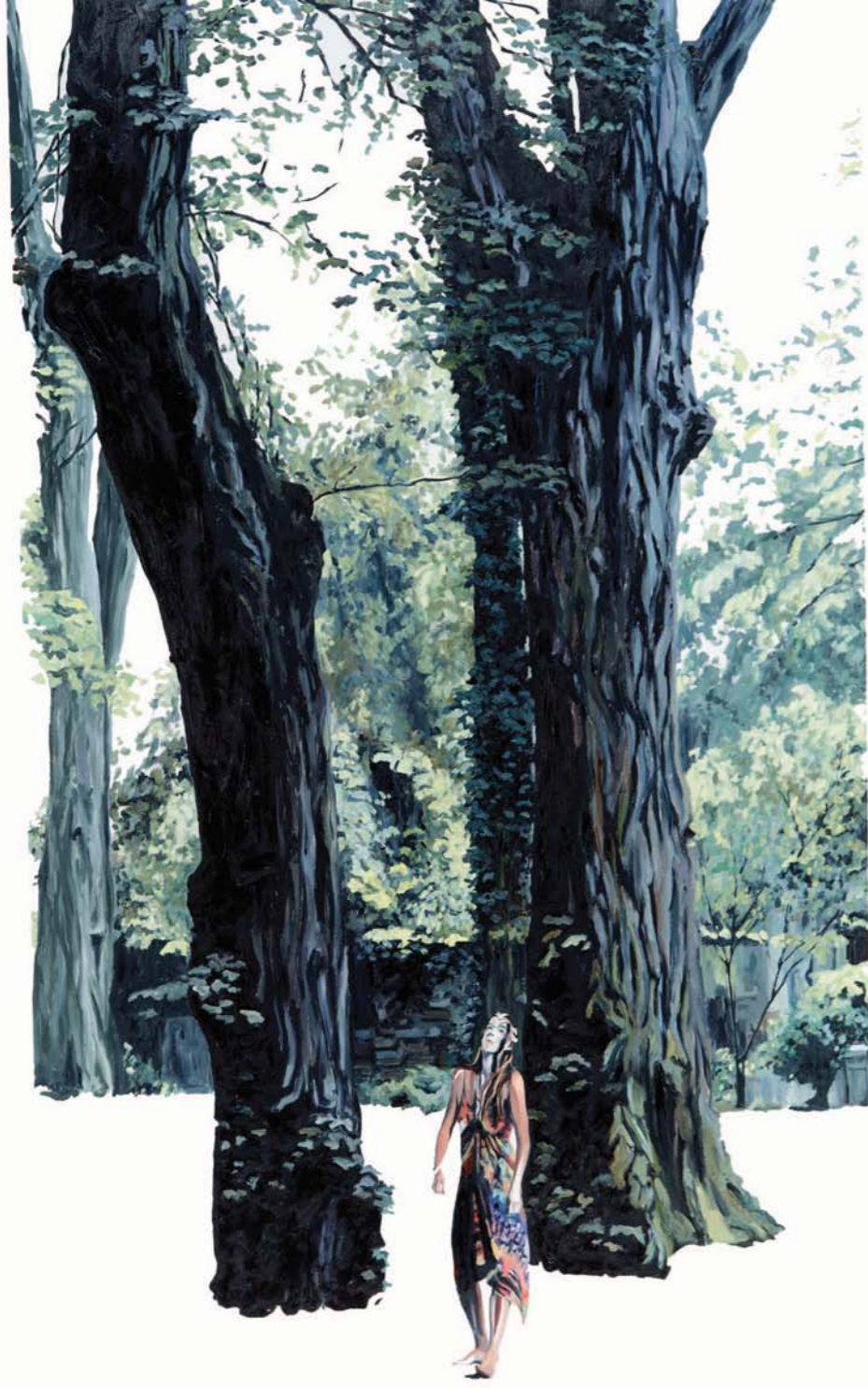


tance, here is something in the river – someone in the water. Further back, later, beyond the bushes at the river bend, a line of hills is visible in the distance, bright, light blue. Above is the sky, its surface left white. It is not possible to unhesitatingly fill the empty spaces with own content – they are not always so clearly self-explanatory. Shimmering between sky and earth, bouncing between heaven and hell. Each of Schoener’s wonderful fine textures mirror a realistic surface in the artistic sense, an idealistic concession. The discoursed fissure between nature and culture, which has shaped its antagonists increasingly harshly ever since its inception, plays a role in the dispute about landscape painting, and in every landscape painting.

Is it debatable? Does the increasing vulnerability and fragility of nature cause it to lose its entitlement? Does it go astray during the search for shape? Its fairy tales and myths break up, are renewed, fall into emptiness – where is my place?

Schoener’s answers lead to a symbolic nature. Snow and water, the sky and wide-open fields sometimes form the undercoat of her places; elsewhere it is the light alone, facades, shrubbery. The beautiful, precise artwork shapes the moment up to its climax, it picks out the sparks from it and dwells on it.

Not a single step back, no further. Here or nowhere.



o.T.
220cm x 160cm, 2010



o.T.
220cm x 160cm, 2010



We passed last night, 100cm x 100cm, 2009



Looking inside, 100cm x 100cm, 2009



Ich fahre durch die
Landschaft.
Halte an, steige aus
und fotografieren.

Meistens zwischen
zwei Aktionen.
Schnell und keine
Zeit.

Fast mit Wut,
weil alles so schön
ist und ich nicht
da sein kann.

Das Gegenteil im
Atelier - endlich
ich bin in Ruhe,
mache laut Musik an

und male.





Autobahn, 160cm x 240cm, 2009



My Place, 70cm x 90cm, 2009



Black Hole, 110cm x 130cm, 2007



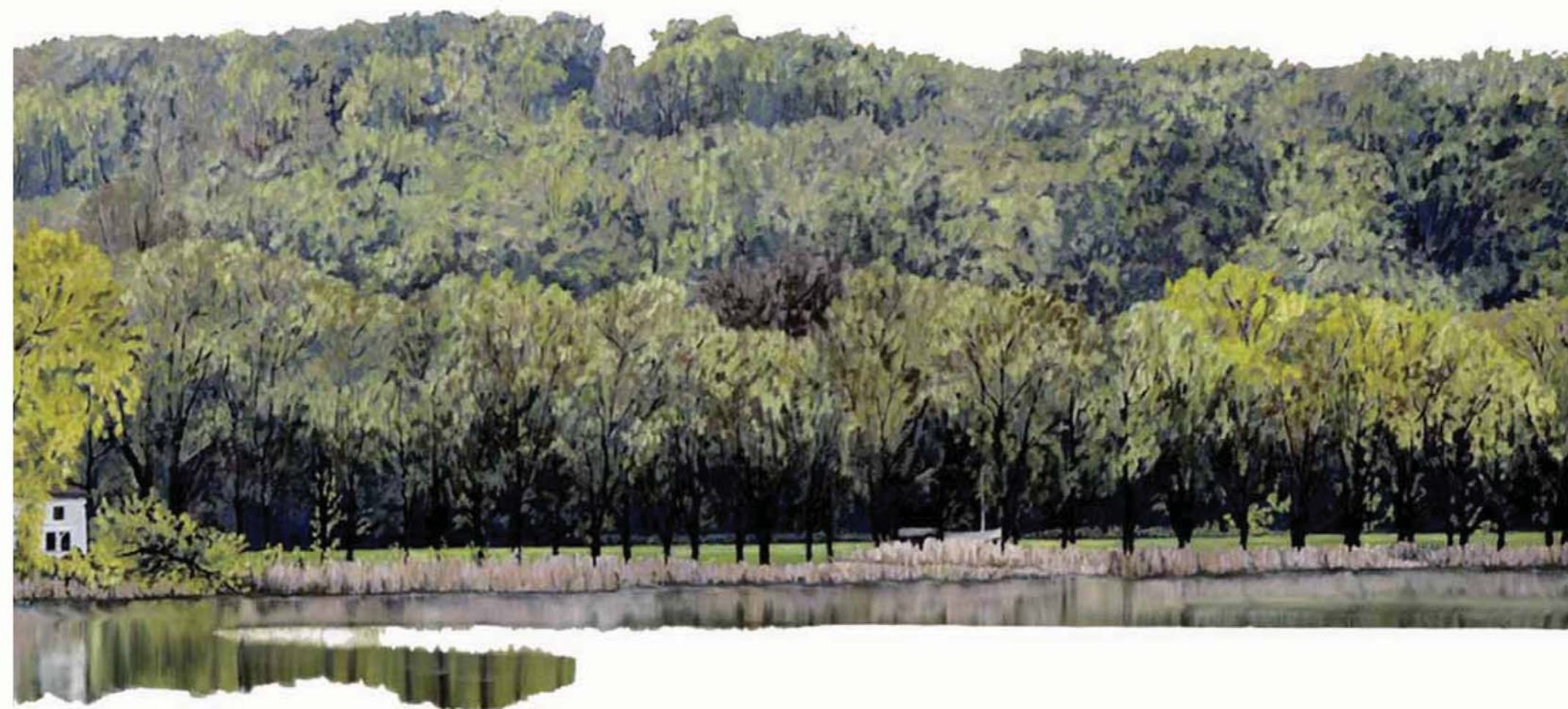
Vergängliche Zeit, 100cm x 130cm, 2010



Im Verlauf der Zeit, 100cm x 130cm, 2010



Gestern, 110cm x 130cm, 2010



Haus am See, 160cm x 180cm, 2009



Schlafende Kühe, 160cm x 180cm, 2008

The Power of White Space

Kirsten Hummelmeier

One painting shows a group of people, seemingly chatting to each other about something you couldn't know, standing in an empty space, the place dissolved in white. I am in the studio of artist Silke Schoener in Kassel, a city in Germany. About 20 to 30 paintings are placed on the paint-spattered, formerly gray concrete floor, leaning tidily against the wall.

Only a few weeks are left to the presentation of Silke's newest paintings in the United States – first at the international art fair "Art Chicago" from April 29 to May 2, 2011, and immediately afterwards at Dillon Gallery in New York. The opening day of her solo exhibition in Chelsea will be on Thursday, May 5, 2011, accompanied by a catalogue.

Silke places some brush strokes on one of the last pictures for the exhibition. Holding a small # 2 brush in her hand, she sits so close to the body-high painting that I wonder how she can see the whole picture while painting. Silke mostly creates landscapes, oil on canvas, in a realistic and clear but yet poetical style. She indulges in all tones of green, which are embedded in powerful white spaces.

From time to time, Silke rolls back and forth with her old wooden chair between the easel and the table, where the paint tubes lie, to mix new colors. Especially in the last eight months, the forty-two year old single mother worked exclusively for her solo show in New York – soon all the paintings will disappear overnight and travel from Germany around the world. The light shines bright and strong in the spacious loft, the high ceiling invites to take a deep breath.

Silke and I go for a walk. We leave the studio-loft, which is situated in a former rope factory in a poor and old district of Kassel, and pass a prison in the neighborhood. A few steps further on, Silke points to a weeping willow at a parking site near to a main road. To my surprise I don't recognize the tree as the subject of one of her paintings of 2008.

How does she go about painting? To find the right subject, she cruises around the countryside in the car. If a specific view strikes her – a fleeting happy moment – she makes a photograph, glad that she can return to her studio and the brush. Sometimes, she chooses her immediate and familiar surroundings, and sometimes she discovers unknown and foreign places. But in general, her paintings represent the landscape of North Hesse, which is her way to connect with the world, to ask "Where am I?" and to feel less alienated. Landscape and empty space are metaphors for the world.

The idea of landscape as a piece of world is manifested in "Homage to Caspar David Friedrich" from 2006, where the earth transforms to a globe. Caspar David Friedrich, one of the most important 19th-century German painters, inspired her not only because of his allegorical Romantic landscapes, but also because his equally prominent contemporary, Realism artist Adolph Menzel, is one of her ancestors. Menzel is best known for his paintings dealing with the life and achievement of the Prussian king Frederick the Great. Silke comes from an artistic family. An uncle is the German composer, conductor, and keyboardist Eberhard Schoener.

The seventy-two year old synth wizard creates music from the most unlikely sources, both natural and electronic. When people look at Silke's work, they often say: "This place looks familiar to me." There is something at once unique and potentially universal in her paintings. What is not painted has a special significance. In an intuitive selection process, she composes the picture by only painting what she feels is essential and necessary, leaving out the other parts. Thus, by means of extraction and the use of white space, she attempts to represent a mental and spiritual world. On the one hand, her paintings stay in the natural world because she paints projections from her photographs on canvas in a realistic technique; on the other hand she creates an empty white space and gives the real objects room to expand. It is up to the viewer to fill in these empty areas.

Her realistic landscape paintings deal with the power of white spaces. As a result, and although the paintings appear precise, strong, distant, and cool, viewers associate with the wideness, the stillness, the clarity and serenity. Once an exhibition visitor remarked, "Often, what I don't see is far more interesting than what is explicitly stated. Silke's art constructs white space in a powerful way. I am drawn to white space, both, visually, verbally, musically, and in writing."



Homage to Caspar David Friedrich, 220cm x 240cm, 2006

"When I paint, I am fascinated by the dreamy tranquility of this act, a clear state between being awake and asleep. There is no resistance", Silke says. "Highly sensitive, as I explore and express my own inner world, I describe what happens, a quiet, intense and internalized space." She likes to spend this precious time with herself. In the 90's, as an art student, she experimented with different styles, and for several years she worked with ornaments and shapes because she liked the movement of the brush so much. To concentrate only on lines and patterns seemed to be the essence of painting. "I love painting", Silke adds. It's all about the act of painting itself; painting is her natural state. She feels at home while painting.

In 2007, Silke flew 3855 miles to New York to open her first solo show at Dillon Gallery. In February 2008, she joined the opening party for a solo exhibition in a gallery in Tokyo. In 2009, she came to New York again for her second solo exhibition. Although it was an effort to undertake these long trips, she only stayed a few days. The experience was still intensive. "It seemed longer to me", Silke confesses. Gradually, and represented by galleries in Germany, New York, and Japan in solo and group exhibitions, and at international art fairs in Chicago, Cologne, Amsterdam, Karlsruhe and elsewhere, the world is becoming aware of her work.

Some of the new paintings are winter pictures, which Silke painted when Germany was facing one of the coldest winters in a hundred years. Stillness and a soft mantle of snow cloaked everything. The summer atmosphere of many of her paintings and the green tones disappeared from her palette in favor of darker colors. Perhaps there's also a new tendency to include more buildings and architectural elements. The separation from her husband changed her life, so did her work.

In this freezing cold winter she visited some friends and passed the "Orangerie", a 300 years old classicist building. She decided to capture this view. "Tides of Time" from 2010 guides the eye from historical buildings in the foreground over the roofs of the city and the industry to the landscape in the distance. In a figurative sense, the beholder looks over the past in form of the Orangerie into the direction of present city life, and to the open and wide landscape of the future. The past seems to have a special significance, because the Orangerie represents the central motif that is illuminated and surrounded by dark areas. The transition and the far away hills and valleys are shown in dark but friendlier pastel shades. "The past reaches closer to the present than an uncertain and undefined future", Silke explains. In this heavy, calm and sad painting she plays with strong light-dark contrasts and with concepts of time.

Some paintings include Silke's daughter. A mystic series from 2009 shows the girl and her best friend dressed up in costumes at the Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe. In "Freedom", two children jump into the air, holding each other's hands, footloose and free in space and time. Silke emphasizes that these paintings deal not so much with her daughter, but with a loved state between dream world and reality. Her daughter, being a child, reminds her strongly of this state, which she also calls no-man's land. In these paintings, the child also stands for the past, and to



hold and process the associations Silke mentions that she started to paint a self-portrait, which shows her sitting in front of a stone lion that is part of a war memorial. She tried various poses and added her own figure later to the picture. Usually, and with an instinctive certainty, Silke knows weeks and months in advance what she wants to paint. Now she is searching for new forms of expression, new motives, and new subjects. She proceeds from one picture to the other. But the landscapes still maintain her; she's a little surprised at herself. "What do you like about Kassel?" I ask. Without hesitation Silke answers: "I particularly enjoy the omnipresent landscapes." With its 195,000 inhabitants, Kassel is located in the middle of Germany with no other large cities near by. Even in the heart of the city, there are wide and long streets everywhere, which permit nice views to the gentle undulating hills all around. "I can stay here and look out", she describes, gazing into the distance. Needless to say that the round arch windows of her studio also offer outlooks to the picturesque panorama. She is inspired by the idyllic low mountain ranges of North Hesse, the river Fulda, and the city of Kassel with its green open spaces in the form of parks, tree-lined streets, and forests.

iated emotions. Silke knew very early that she wanted to be an artist. She grew up in Willich in the Lower Rhine Region in Germany, close to the river Rhine, Düsseldorf, and the Dutch border. I can very well imagine a young girl jumping around in a landscape that is mostly flat green grassland with wide views to the horizon. The far-away must have seemed to be so near. She described a happy childhood which she spent in the company of an older sister. The family took frequent trips to a weekend house on a nearby lake, where they sailed in view of the Eifel mountains. "I miss the happy time when we all sat in our car, singing and laughing while driving to a session with our shaman", her mother Gisela remembers with a smile. In the 80's, parallel with the development of the new age movement in Germany, Silke's parents became interested in spiritual practices and the healing of body, mind and soul. Perhaps during these meditations in silence,

Silke learned very early that what you seek is within you. As a young girl, Silke loved to sit at a table or in bed, doing nothing but dreaming. After school she often met a friend for painting, playing, and crafting together. Later, when she passed the Abitur, the German qualification for university entrance, it was already clear that she would study oil painting in Kassel, where the documenta, the world's leading exhibition of contemporary art is held. At student parties, it was not uncommon that she left early to go back to her brush.

In 1990, one year after the fall of the Berlin wall, Silke studied at the Dresden Art School in East Germany under professor Johannes Heisig. His father is the painter Bernhard Heisig, a member of the Leipzig School and one of the most important representatives of GDR art. In this stronghold of oil painting, Silke wanted to hone her craft, and she did that in the melancholic allure of coal smoke in the sky and derelict buildings, a situation between departure and decline, beauty and ugliness. The rent was dirt cheap, and the large studio promised freedom.

At the same time, the New Leipzig School formed a stone's throw away. Shortly after the reunification of the country and the collapse of communism, the practices of this loose movement of male painters like Neo Rauch were influenced by the history and the art tradition of this specific place in East Germany. Contrary to the trend, the New Leipzig School rediscovered figurative art and conquered the international art market with paintings that reflected nostalgia and a sense of unease about one's place in the world.

The stroll through Kassel comes to an end, Silke turns the key and opens the door of the studio. While I ask my last questions, she carefully arranges her brushes, which she had already cleaned thoroughly before we left. For cleaning, she first used turpentine, then soap with water to wash out the hairs. Finally, she applied some cream on her hands, also greased the brush with it and reshaped the tip. "I want to make them last", Silke says. "Nevertheless the brushes are worn out at the latest after two paintings."

Silke likes the idea that her paintings go out into the world, to Chicago and New York. Relief is gaining ground, a process of letting go. Suddenly, her studio will be empty, a wide space to fill in again. "Recently, a gallery in Delhi called me. They are interested in my paintings, too. And of course there will be an exhibition in Germany this year", Silke mentions. She is curious about what people will do with her paintings. Perhaps she will have the opportunity to find this out. The artist will be present at the opening day celebration in Dillon Gallery.

"What do you think about New York? Doesn't the 'city that never sleeps' stand in a huge contrast to landscapes?" I wonder. "No", she shakes her head. "I experience the city as absolutely open. Its size, vastness and height doesn't cramp me, on the contrary, I see it as a special value." She loves New York precisely because of its dimensions and its global aspects.

Classical music fills the room. I recognize Verdi's requiem with its dramatic and melancholic chorals. "I don't connect requiems with death", Silke explains. "I like to paint while listening to these floating sounds." Order and chaos: There are two sides in Silke's paintings. On the one hand, there is an area where a lot happens and which is packed full, and on the other hand there's an area that is wide and empty.



Gespräch, 130cm x 100cm, 2011

Dark shadows on the river from the trees on its banks. Shrubbery and bushes vanish in the dark – here and there the sun highlights radiant patches of color among the leaves. On the opposite bank, shades of green like olive, pine, apply, peach, and lime seem to light up in groups, patterned with walnut, amber, cinnamon, and sienna. The close cover of leaves on the bushes shows flickers of light. Water gurgles in the undergrowth and over the exposed roots, breaks on twigs and low-hanging branches. Now and then, a piece of flotsam gets caught in the branches, gathers more of its kind, and streaky wavelets spread over the water. It is cool here, sometimes in half-light, sometimes single golden rays of light flash through the branches to dance on the waves. Trickling, rippling, rushing. Between these banks, the river flows in its wide bed. It lies calmly in the bright sunlight, flowing majestically and slowly with a peaceful surface.

But there, where the river flows, Silke Schoener leaves a space in her painting "Alone". She omits the river, the white undercoat of the canvas remains visible – only here and there, a faint pencil line indicates a previous detail that would have revealed more. When Silke Schoener paints, she always stops at some point – the rest remains white. She leaves out everything that she feels is not essential or necessary. Only the interesting, the part that appeals to her, jumps at her, finds its way onto the canvas.

Landscape painting is always the selection of a partial view into nature and habitat. The detail, which an artist chooses, indicates a corresponding interest. Painting in itself is selection, detail, point of view, perspective. Nonetheless, the river is still there, marked and bordered by two beautiful wetlands – it places the observer into the painting, guides his thoughts onwards. The white space denotes the emptiness within, but also invites viewers to project their thoughts beyond the painting's rectangular surface. In the science of crystals, an empty space describes the vacancy within the regular arrangement of atoms, ions or molecules. Here, the perfect symmetry breaks up for a brief moment; the selective deviations change everything although the actual structure is maintained. Within the vacancies, the limits of the moments touch each other.

The expected orderliness is interrupted. At this point, the viewer is challenged to combine, to cross-link, to put into relation or – with a bit of courage – to leave it as it is. Without doubt, Silke Schoener has this courage. She does not specify the mutual relations of the elements in the text. Something like the schoolboy whose answer to the essay subject "What is courage?" was the single intelligent sentence: "That is courage."

In architecture, in landscape gardening, in reasoning processes or in self-administered organizations, empty space is interpreted as the greatest freedom and most attractive possibility. Here, one's own identity can be perceived and developed. How does freedom taste? One could reflect on the limits of freedom with Kant, because free spaces have clear conditions and stand in relation to each other.

But her levels are superimposed – here and there, new golden implications glitter across the surfaces instead of remaining silent. Silke Schoener defines the relations by terminating her work. Similarities are found to typeset texts. Words and other items of information are separated or delimited by empty spaces; the size of the empty spaces within a piece of copy changes one's perception. In poems, it is self-evident that the empty space also speaks, makes an own statement that shapes the text decisively, condenses it. Also in painting, the times have passed, in which seemingly empty canvas is perceived as unfinished, infertile terrain. Free space is civilizing surplus, and intellectual freedom – a white space is not an index for emptiness, but for added value. Like walking barefoot across a shady, cool stone floor in the heat of summer, awareness is composed of different levels of perception. These levels can be widely separated.

Enlightenment and romanticism. White space and forest troll. The romantic landscape, which has idealized the forest as a metaphor and a place of yearning since the early 19th century, was intended as an inner dialog between painting and viewer – Silke Schoener's forest is different. Inevitably, one becomes immersed, but at the same time it is so epical that natural empathy or sympathy can be suspended in favor of reasoning. In the same way that theatrical landscapes drawn with chalk can create spaces, the empty spaces generate a trace of the unstated. White areas on a map. Regions, in which nobody has been before. In relationships, in families, things not said are often the most important, sometimes the most painful. The visible is that which can only just be vocalized. Which lies below the white surfaces. Which lies inside them.

More than the unimportant. The world is not enough.

The moment that ends the creative act of painting is simultaneously a moment of pause. For a fleeting instant, the world is in balance, and with it the act of painting. A certain stability has been established. But that which is visible, is more than a stationary condition. At a small dis-



tance, here is something in the river – someone in the water. Further back, later, beyond the bushes at the river bend, a line of hills is visible in the distance, bright, light blue. Above is the sky, its surface left white. It is not possible to unhesitatingly fill the empty spaces with own content – they are not always so clearly self-explanatory. Shimmering between sky and earth, bouncing between heaven and hell. Each of Schoener's wonderful fine textures mirror a realistic surface in the artistic sense, an idealistic concession. The discoursed fissure between nature and culture, which has shaped its antagonists increasingly harshly ever since its inception, plays a role in the dispute about landscape painting, and in every landscape painting.

Is it debatable? Does the increasing vulnerability and fragility of nature cause it to lose its entitlement? Does it go astray during the search for shape? Its fairy tales and myths break up, are renewed, fall into emptiness – where is my place?

Schoener's answers lead to a symbolic nature. Snow and water, the sky and wide-open fields sometimes form the undercoat of her places; elsewhere it is the light alone, facades, shrubbery. The beautiful, precise artwork shapes the moment up to its climax, it picks out the sparks from it and dwells on it.

Not a single step back, no further. Here or nowhere.



Silke Schoener

- 1968 geboren in Krefeld/Hüls
- 1988 - 1994 Studium an der Kunsthochschule Kassel bei Dorothee v. Windheim
- 1990 - 1991 Gaststudium an der Kunsthochschule Dresden bei Johannes Heisig
- seit 1994 freischaffende Künstlerin

Ausstellungen

- 2012 Dillon Gallery, New York (E)
zur documenta 13 im Foyer Opernhaus Kassel
AU Gallery, Boston (E)
- 2011 Dillon Gallery, New York (E)
Galerie Oliver Ahlers, Göttingen (E)
- 2010 Messebeteiligung
- 2009 Dillon Gallery, New York (E)
Galerie Strenger, Tokyo (E)
- 2008 Galerie Strenger, Tokyo (E)
- 2007 Dillon Gallery, New York (E)
- 2005 Galerie Oliver Ahlers, Göttingen (E)
Galerie Ulrich Gering, Frankfurt (E)
- 2000 Galerie Fondermann, Holst. Schweiz (E)
- 1999 Galerie Hafemann, Wiesbaden (G)

Messebeteiligungen

- Art Fair, Chicago, Dillon Gallery
- Art Fair, Miami, Dillon Gallery
- Art Fair, Tokyo, Galerie Strenger
- Art Fair, Amsterdam, Galerie Ulrich Gering
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