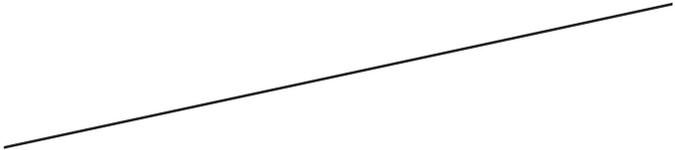


**KUNSTMUSEUM
THUN**



**ALBRECHT SCHNIDER
PATHLESS LANDSCAPE
29 MAY – 15 AUGUST 2021**

ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION

The Kunstmuseum Thun is presenting works by one of the leading protagonists of Swiss painting: Albrecht Schnider (b. 1958 in Lucerne, lives and works in Hilterfingen near Thun). The solo exhibition features for the most part new works, some of them created explicitly for the show. A concentrated ensemble of figurative and landscape motifs enter into a dialogue here, conveying an illuminating overview of the artist's current oeuvre. The focus is in particular on the theme of landscape, a motif Schnider has returned to again and again and which with his return to Switzerland in the spring of 2018 took on new relevance for his work.

ACRYLIC LACQUER PAINTINGS ON RAW CANVAS (ROOMS B, G)

A distinctive feature of Albrecht Schnider's works is the emptiness that shapes his compositions, expressed in areas left blank but also in the indeterminacy of the colour surfaces, which appear as if printed. The artist grapples in this way with the difficulty of making pictures and the question of what constitutes a picture in the first place. The empty canvas as the starting point of each work attains the status of a subject in its own right, challenging the meaning and necessity of each and every brushstroke. At the same time, however, Schnider leaves room for reflection and, in view of the emptiness that leaps out at them, invites viewers to fill the canvas themselves with their own thoughts, ideas and associations.

The contrast between the smooth painted surfaces and the rough canvas creates a visual tension, at times giving the impression that the painted fields are floating above the canvas and opening up a second pictorial space (Untitled (Anselm), 2020 → 1). Sometimes the raw canvas recedes into the background, and at other times the texture of the canvas practically jumps out at us or insinuates itself into the pictorial motif. The interplay of foreground and background, paint and canvas, form and void, turns the static-looking structures pictured into animated objects in the mind's eye of the viewer. This effect is particularly striking in the work "Untitled (E), 2020" → 2). We unmistakably recognise figures, animals, letters or numbers in some of Schnider's paintings – despite their abstract appearance. Through colouring and sometimes in his titles, the artist provides vague hints that point to familiar motifs (Untitled (Self), 2020, 3; Untitled, 2020, → 4).

ACRYLIC LACQUER PAINTINGS (ROOM A, B, G, H)

The larger lacquer paintings with their abstract formal compositions are reminiscent of the smaller acrylic lacquer paintings on raw canvas (Untitled (Löu), 2021. → 5). The difference is that in the former the viewer is denied a view of the painting ground, although the white-filled areas certainly allude to the empty canvas. The grey-metallic background seems to want to hold onto the patterns and keep them from seemingly jumping back and forth (Untitled, 2021 → 6). In this way Schnider is able to intensify the contrast already described between the immobility of the picture and the imaginary dynamism of the forms. This divergence is also reflected in the handling of line. While the curved, round lines suggest movement, the straight lines appear like interruptions that attempt to capture and hold fast the viewer's wandering gaze (Untitled, 2020, → 7). Whereas in the smaller acrylic lacquer pictures there is a clear distinction between foreground and background due to the contrast between canvas and paint, in the larger lacquer paintings the impression of depth is thwarted by the uniform surface texture. The two-dimensional forms nevertheless seem at times to take on volume, even giving the impression of sculptural patterns (Untitled, 2016, → 8).

STUDIES AND DRAWINGS (ROOM A, H, G)

The relationship between drawing and painting is of great importance to Albrecht Schnider. His studies in sketchbooks, study books and on board are like drawn thoughts and form an important key to his works. They thus allow for a more in-depth examination of his art.

"It's not about visualising a thought or realising a precise form that you already have in mind.... It's really just

OVERVIEW



about being open and being willing to say 'yes' when a form appears." This statement by the artist illustrates the virtuosic interplay of chance, intuition and composition in his works (see acrylic lacquer paintings on raw canvas). The use and reworking of a randomly occurring form – the creation of an image from an indeterminate line, which can also be described as animating a moment – requires a highly open and sensitive faculty of perception.

For Schnider, who is always on a quest for that special moment when the picture "looks back at him" and is able to trigger something, the drawings represent a method for finding his way to the right composition, and thus indicate the appearance of the later picture. The solution is always found through repetition and coincidence.

An exception to this rule is the artist's graphic work on the subject of landscape. His extensive study material includes initial sketches that become more and more precise until they finally serve as an exact template for the final picture. They thus appear almost mathematical in their finished appearance (Vitrine (display case, →9; Room A).

In the painting, choosing the right colours to underscore the expression of the picture is then paramount. This is most evident in the acrylic lacquer paintings (Untitled, 2020, →10). But the landscape studies as well show how thoughtfully the artist plans his images. For example, each picture has a similar number of different shades.

LANDSCAPES (ROOM C)

Schnider's landscape paintings are rife with contradictions. The green hills and mountains could be anywhere or nowhere – because the viewer is denied any natural feature that would suggest a specific landscape. Are these gently undulating mountain ridges covered by meadows or forests? The indeterminacy of the landscape suggests that we are perhaps seeing a blurred view. And yet there are perfectly delineated silhouettes outlining each plane, dividing one from the other to allow a landscape to emerge building block by building block. How can a landscape appear so familiar and yet so foreign at the same time?

The evergreen mountain ranges know neither season nor time of day. Only the mountaintops on the horizon, bathed in delicate violet hues, may perhaps remind us of the existence of the sun and the transition between day and night. The viewer is veritably pulled into this inexplicable brightness – into dissolution, into the nothingness that gives the impression of infinity.

The lush, exuberant green contrasts with the apparent abandonment and emptiness of the landscape. We feel uncommonly lost, as if left behind all alone. A feeling of unease and apprehension sets in, and yet Schnider's depiction of nature also evokes a reassuring feeling of bucolic security. All the while, the artist's treatment of the pictorial motif remains invariably abstract. His landscapes seem like painted memories, illustrating for us the vagueness of what we see when we look back and the neutral gaze associated with such reflections.

The exhibition's title, *Pathless Landscape*, incisively describes the pictures' timeless air. We cannot find any pathway into them and instead remain floating above these unreal, even supernatural landscapes, letting ourselves be enveloped rather than walking through them. Despite their demonstratively excerpt-like character, the images thus appear both boundless and complete. The word "pathless" underscores the impression of a pristine landscape that betrays neither paths nor brushstrokes, while the German word *entwegt* is of Swiss origin and

therefore alludes subtly but unmistakably to the artist's "coming home" to Switzerland.

BIOGRAPHY

Albrecht Schnider (b. 1958 in Lucerne, lives in Hilterfingen near Thun, and works in Hilterfingen and Zurich) grew up in Sörenberg. After studying at the School of Design and the University of Bern from 1982 to 1987, he travelled abroad for extended stays in Follonica (1989–1990), Rome and Florence (from 1990–1992 as Membro dell' Istituto Svizzero), and Brussels (1992–1998). In 1998 Schnider moved to Berlin, where he lived until his return to Switzerland in spring 2018. Schnider has been a lecturer in painting at Bern University of the Arts (HKB) since 2005.

He has received numerous awards and grants and is represented in prominent galleries both in Switzerland and abroad. His works have been featured in numerous international solo and group exhibitions and are part of many renowned art collections.

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication: *Albrecht Schnider. Entwegte Landschaft*, Kunstmuseum Thun (ed.), with a foreword by Helen Hirsch and texts by Angelika Affentranger-Kirchrath and Susanna Koeberle, Edizioni Periferia, Sarnen, 2021. ISBN 978-3-907205-24-2

EVENTS

Sun, 20.6., 11.15 a.m., Talk with Helen Hirsch, Director and the artist Albrecht Schnider.

Cost: admission + CHF 5 –, registration required. For further information and events please visit our website kunstmuseumthun.ch

1 Albrecht Schnider: *WAS BLEIBT – Albrecht Schnider*, documentary by Rita Ziegler, produced by point de vue ©2019.

IMPRESSUM

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