

## Cloud Nine

Heike Negenborn is a landscape artist. For over 30 years her topic has been the observed habitat with its complex nature, captured through subjective perception. In general, it deals with the human appropriation of nature through an aesthetically sound and artistic process. Hence, landscape does not exist itself, but is experienced and structured in different ways by the observer, such as “*through imagination, in accordance to a specific perception, emotional sensibility as well as intellectual world view of the subject, cumulated in the notions of the point of view and direction of pursuit and judgement.*”<sup>1</sup> Our habitat is shaped by natural forces and human’s impact; in other words, the interference of human in nature. Thus, the relation between nature and art is presented in a fundamental sense simultaneously.

Indeed, focusing on matters of nature is not uncommon. There has been depiction and inquiry since humans have first expressed themselves through images. Ultimately these concentrated on the search of archetypes in art, as exposed in nature. Certainly, the natural object is not the focal point of a mere abstract adoption of reality but is the origin of the artistic reinvention and approach. In this way, the relationship between nature and art are addressed. The dual aspect of nature, moreover, the analysis of the controversy of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* becomes apparent in every artistic study of landscape. Therefore, the artistic arrangement of Negenborn’s landscape painting orbits an extremely complex scenario in art emerging parallel to nature.

Heike Negenborn adores cumulus clouds and especially dramatic mountains of clouds, which do not play a minor but significant role in her artwork. She is, as well as many other artists<sup>2</sup> are, fascinated with clouds, the elemental formations composed out of water and air, the world of fleeting, located “*between earth and infinity.*”<sup>3</sup> To her clouds are a heroic stylization of the landscape, they are considered the symbol of inner scenic dramatic art. Negenborn’s art is influenced and inspired by the Dutch landscape painting of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, particularly Jacob van Ruisdael, who introduced the genre of flat landscape with low horizon and domineering sky with clouds into European painting. His *View of Haarlem*<sup>4</sup> (ca. 1670) exemplifies this unique pictorial construction combined with a novel and near-natural depiction of landscape. Beginning with Ruisdael and his compatriot Jan van Goyen (Abb. p. 11), Negenborn is in the specific tradition of recording reality in landscape painting, which in its crisp, realistic, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Eckhard Lobsien, *Landschaft*, in: *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*, Bd. 3, Stuttgart 2010, p. 620.

<sup>2</sup> A glance into the subject matter: *Wolken*. Welt des Flüchtigen, Ausst.-Kat., Leopold Museum, Wien 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Cf., p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Jacob van Ruisdael (ca. 1628 – Haarlem – 1682), *View of Haarlem*, ca. 1670, London, Guildhall Art Gallery.

scenic concept reminds of the landscape painting of German Romanticism or New Objectivity as seen by Georg Scholz.

The Bezirksverband Pfalz honors Negenborn's contemporary landscape painting with the award of the Pfalzpreis. In 2018, she was awarded the Pfalzpreis for Bildende Kunst in the category of painting for her recently generated series of landscape paintings with the title *Net-Scape – Landscape and Its Change*. With *Net-Scapes* the artist embarks, regarding form and content, on partly new and modified paths. While the motif of clouds has long been part of her creations, they now become overpowering mountains of clouds. They adopt a new quality, almost cover the scenery and blur the horizon. The traditional interpretation of clouds as a symbol of a veiled and a secret place of the divine becomes evident. The dialectical pair Earth-Heaven is emphasized more strongly, becomes more present and at last shown in a more directly.

The scenery depicted in linear perspective evolves into digital pixels, virtually a landscape of networks, thus the *Net-Scape*. Heike Negenborn's landscapes deal with the relationship between nature, the depiction, and visual processing possibilities. In this way, she positions herself in the growing takeover of analog reality by the digital image, "*The fact that both, the landscape and painting are experiences, which cannot be conveyed virtually, but require the immediate encounter, especially enables landscape painting to raise such issues.*"<sup>5</sup> Negenborn's artwork depicts the scenery as a construct. It is not the original unaltered landscape, but the cultural landscape, which is not created through natural forces, but through rational planning of human thought. Alongside the Rhenish Hessian *terroir* and wide Rhine valley of the Southern Palatinate, she passionately paints the sun-kissed landscape of Southern French Languedoc. The rather clear linear perspective in her work focuses on an eminently far away vanishing point in addition to metaphysical implications. The image in linear perspective communicates through the relationship between viewpoint and vanishing point, "*a feeling of empowering subjectivity, the observer experiences himself as an individual.*"<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the color scheme of *Net-Scapes* is fundamentally changed. Negenborn's familiar intense and colorful palette is radically reduced to black, white, and blended shades of grey, evoking an atmosphere of an almost, realistic black-and-white-photograph. Possibly a habit adopted after long years of nature photography, the camera is Negenborn's permanent companion during her encounters with clouds and their formations. Photography next to

---

<sup>5</sup> Preface, in: *Ausst.-Kat., Wilhelm-Morgner-Preis, Soest 2017*, n.p.

<sup>6</sup> Jochen Schulte-Sasse, *Perspektive*, in: *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*, Bd. 4, Stuttgart 2010, p. 770.

preparatory drawings is sketch, design, and archive simultaneously, thus a realistic set piece, which she integrates and adds into her paintings. Reality and illusion become inseparable in her work.

Heinz Höfchen