

ELISABET NORSENG "THE W17 SERIES"

Technical specification:

A series of so far 10 works, each consisting of one work on paper 130 x 200 cm and one photography 50x70 cm, the later placed below to the left and a little to the side. (ca 1/3 protrude)

Technique:

Photographies: C-print in Facemount Paper works: Aquarelle Windsor and Newton on Windsor and Newton cotton paper LANA

Project description:

The project was made during my artist-in-residence stay at W17 atelier project, Kunstneres Hus, Oslo, Norway, 01.09. - 31.12. 2009, on invitation by Maaretta Jaukkuri.

The project combines non-figurative works on paper and photographs of vast arctic nature landscapes from Spitzbergen, Svalbard. The intention is to open new rooms between these two forms of expression and to make use of their different properties to point at same things from different positions. The gaze freely wanders from the one to the other, transferring their immanent and different ways of being regarded. The interaction sphere affects our ability to see and comprehend in general. I do not intend to translate from one medium to the other, neither to establish parallel worlds. I try to emphasize and crystallize themes, but still let them stay open to be experienced with no answers or overstated explanations given.

Obvious similarities between the forms are that both could be perceived as types of landscapes into which one may enter. One could call them an inner and an outer landscape, where the inner has been given more space. Further similarities might include aspects of rhythm, constellations, planes, the way the observers' gaze wanders as well as space and time qualities.

Another apparent contradiction I explore is that I on one hand aim at something with a strong and clear identity, character, a sort of independence, something which is resting in itself. I see this as a presupposition for rich interactions and meaningful relations, and in that sense identity is not at all limiting. In my view that even goes for artistic practices. On the other hand, if it is the other side, - is the open, that which is not unambiguous or to be understood in only one way, which does not immediately reveal all its significance or neither where it is headed. Which we perceive could have been different. On this side nothing is boiled down to simple answers, and there is no handing out of a single key to meaning, telling what to look for and how to understand it: That type of simplified mentalisations we constantly are met with in our society, which constitutes the basis for manipulations, and even leads to reduced receptivity. All problems which point back to a general awareness of how we see and perceive, and to our level of openness. Whether we are able to receive something as it is, before we almost instantly start to categorize and define, and sort into sympathies and antipathies. Before we even have got to know it. We always conceive what we can describe, explain, depict, which we can have a grip on, as being more real. That is an illusion since in reality everything changes and everything is linked. And where do we sort the unexplainable. How do we react to questions where we have got no answer? This has to do with tolerance. Fast comprehension might be important in life, but staying open beyond our own conceptions perhaps even more so, if we are not to misinterpret reality. This created space encourages a direct reception of what is there. Clarity, precision and strong presence makes it easy to relate to. And there are no explications to take our attention away. A space left open to discover more sides of things, be open to new interpretation, change perspective, or even to discover discovering sides. Included insignificant and withdrawn qualities; the fine and subtle and more transient levels we so easily ignore. And hopefully find courage to let things move freely before we start using the ability of words and classifications to maintain it permanently fixed, and isolated from its contextual relations: Normal language tends to define generalities, but the specific is always in addition what it includes and its relations as well. I do consider reflections and awareness to be a possible way forward, which not necessarily includes deadlocked answers or blind heading towards end goals. This project tries to let the eyes of the

beholder stay in motion, towards to the picture(s) as well as its own self-insight. Further, the intention is to unite these apparent contradictions in such a way that they may be seized collectively and very direct, as a kind of a cognitive entity. It might be easier to see that the paper works could have been differently made; they point more clearly at their own potentiality. They expose to a lesser degree their inner logic, they have less references, and they have complex inner relations possible to read in many ways; they are more open. The photos will be read as more concrete, questionable, but changes the regarding attitude. More important is that such landscapes supply a time - space infinity, constitute a larger continuum, a broader view. Like in Taoism, where depiction of mountains are linked to the eternal. In turn the perspective of the ego might change for more tolerance of interpretations.

When stating that something is what it is, I don't only refer to a quality of clarity in the sense of distinct properties (opposite clarity as one-sidedness) but also to a sort of presence close to Carl Andre's idea of the specific site, with qualities making it a possibility to relate directly, grasp instantly, being there, now. On this basis Carl Andre opposes any reproduction of his works. I have always been conscious of this view in my non-figurative works, that they are what they are, and nothing else. A coloured circle is a coloured circle, which you can watch as such, and not only nothing else, but even nowhere else. There. But still changing and re-readable. For my part it has even been important that the works hardly could be reproduced, and thus be transported away from this vibrant and volatile here-now, even if only into a reproduction. In this project I try, rather paradoxically, to transfer all these qualities into photography. And even if photography initially is referential, I believe this to be possible by already described issues, but a substantial insight into visual means, and a highly trained awareness in the view through the camera is as important. Not in terms of moving the photography-moment into the viewing-room, but by giving the photography the same visual grip and the same awareness of limits as in the paper works. In other words, the photographer has to step down as an interpreting subject, which also mean to refrain from highlights, underlining, close-ups, effects, odd perspectives; quite simply withdraw, but she/he has still to be present as an aware, seeing, choosing and responsible subject, (compare Wim Wenders: "Lisbon Story") leaving choices open are more dictated by an awareness for contextual relations and perception. An openness of mind at once judging and not judging; not done subjectively, but done by a subject, as the only possible.

By this reasoning I always let the perspective refer to the "viewpoint" of a/the seeing subject. A photographer, who sees in this particular way, may be able to transfer a compressed presence to the works, not a presence of the photographer, but as a quality in itself, giving revealing things its quality, a unifying quality on both synthesizing and perceptive levels. Properties which go beyond the given moment and subject do contribute here, either as a recognized affiliation to something larger than oneself, such as nature or assessing constellations, which is already within us,- or by transporting the photo away from the moment in which it was taken and into a larger time perspective, either spatial or open, or into another unity, to achieve something which was not there-then, but always, and thus a potential here-now for the observer.

I wish to thank the W17 atelier program and Maaretta Jaukkuri for the invitation to participate. I wish further to thank BKH, (Norwegian Artist Support Foundation) which not only supported my travel to Ny Ålesund, Spitzbergen, where to photos are taken, but even finances the W17 project ateliers. Three works were succesfully exhibited during the end show at that stay, the number due to space limitations. I look forward to an opportunity where more works could be shown together. My ideal objective would be from the existing 10 and up to 20 works. (even 30)

Elisabet Norseng

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