

GALERIE NÄCHST ST. STEPHAN ROSEMARIE SCHWARZWÄLDER

HERBERT BRANDL
2023
Spirit Lead Me

26 MAY – 1 JUL

Opening: Friday, 26 May 2023, 6 p.m.

Introduction at 7 p.m. by Thomas D. Trummer, Director of Kunsthaus Bregenz

In his latest series of pictures in his current solo exhibition at the gallery, Herbert Brandl unfolds a fascinating sense of infinity. The presentation becomes a journey between Earth and space with changing dimensions and viewpoints and is represented through observations of nature with unexpected perspectives and wild, psychedelic color experiments.

Apollo 17, the last manned flight to the Moon, showed us the first complete view of Earth from outer space to be captured by a human in 1972. Brandl has taken this spectacular perspective as the starting point for his new series dedicated to the Pacific Ocean, the largest and deepest of body of water on Earth. Pictures taken from outer space as seen in space night, a legendary program on German television, served as templates for Brandl's paintings. From an altitude of several hundred kilometers, we can see the vastness of the Pacific Ocean. While impossible to comprehend in its entirety, presented in a detail view, its blue hues of color fill the entire pictorial space, overlaid occasionally by patches of light color and red hues. These sketchy structures are reminiscent of cloud formations, swarms of fish, or delicate reflections of sunbeams. Brandl uses these extraordinary images for a delightful play between figuration and abstraction: Due to the altitude and perspective, the images from space let the Pacific Ocean appear like an abstract composition, which Brandl seems to have translated without alteration into his paintings. The process of abstraction thus does not begin on the canvas, but occurs already in the context of highly developed technologies.

The ambiguity between the micro and macro level, between close-up and distant view, is continued in Brandl's latest abstract works as well. These expressive, gestural paintings in bright acrylic paint prompt associations of water, fire, and landscapes – or of a view of the universe. Sometimes the works remind us of radio astronomical images that are outside of the visible spectrum of light and must first be transformed into colors, so that we may see them.

After constant, surprising changes in perspective – geographical as well as associative – Brandl finally takes us to a subject depicted in a calm view that he has represented in countless ways: mountains. His new series shows a mountain in a frontal view as a solitary shape that barely fits in the picture frame. Like all the pictures in the exhibition, this subject is also a translation of the power of nature and its uniqueness that must be preserved.

HERBERT BRANDL was born in Graz in 1959; he lives and works in Vienna. 2004–2019 Professorship at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. In 1989 Herbert Brandl took part in the São Paulo Biennale and, in 1992, the Documenta IX in Kassel. In 2007 he represented Austria at the Venice Biennale.

Solo exhibitions (selected): Kunsthaus Graz; Kunsthalle Graz; Belvedere 21, Vienna (2020); Museum Franz Gertsch, Burgdorf (2017); Haus der Kunst St. Josef, Solothurn; Osthaus Museum Hagen (2016); Kunsthalle Emden; Altana Kulturstiftung, Bad Homburg; Bank Austria Kunstforum, Vienna (2012); Albertina, Vienna (2010); Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2009); Künstlerhaus Graz; Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz (2002); Kunsthalle Basel (1999); Secession, Vienna (1998); Museum Haus Esters, Krefeld (1994); Museum Van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent; Kunsthalle Bern (1991).

Solo exhibitions at Galerie nächst St. Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, Vienna: 1997 (with Adrian Schiess), 1998, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023.

Museum collections and Foundations (selected): Albertina, Vienna; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Kunsthaus Zürich; Kunstmuseum Bonn; Sammlung KiCo, Bonn; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich; Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris; Museu Serralves, Porto; Reina Sofia, Madrid; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Jorge M. and Darlene Pérez Collection, Miami; Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna; Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz; Strabag-Kunstforum, Vienna; The Renaissance Society, Chicago.