

LANDSCAPES OF PAINT

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Immense mountain ranges seen from the sky are the subject of Stefan Peters' latest paintings. As if they were appearing through the window of an aeroplane, our eye wanders through them and becomes lost in the distance...

But do these paintings really present landscapes for us to contemplate? Or, more precisely, has Stefan Peters truly depicted mountain vistas? Admittedly, the painter's impeccable craftsmanship may definitively provide us with the illusion thereof. However, the great pleasure that these paintings provide seems to me to derive from something other than the representation of mountain ranges. It rather has to do with the pleasure we find in landscapes of paint...

Like all the important painters of today, Stefan Peters explores what painting can do. No doubt, painters have always sought and found new possibilities for painting. But the question of what is special about painting is particularly relevant to our time. Considering all the modern techniques of reproduction, what does painting have to offer that is so unique? This seems to me to be the question of painters today; and Stephan Peters is indeed particularly concerned with it.

It would therefore be very simplistic to consider Stefan Peters' latest paintings as mere landscape paintings; they are, rather, landscapes of paint. Indeed, it is first and foremost a question of paint, paint that becomes landscape...

A classic distinction in philosophy opposes *natura naturans* to *natura naturata*, i.e., nature as the active creative principle of all natural things, as opposed to nature as the totality of these created natural things. It seems to me that we could, with some degree of liberty, apply this distinction to painting by differentiating between the *pictura picturans* and the *pictura picturata*. The expression *pictura picturans* would refer to the creative character of painting, whereas *pictura picturata* would rather point to painting as a means. Let us be clear, it is not a question here of opposing the painter's work to his output on the canvas, but of distinguishing between paintings that are the result of a

process that is guided and dictated by the pictorial technique itself, and paintings where the pictorial technique merely serves the result.

Based on this dichotomy, the paintings of Stefan Peters belong wholly to the *pictura picturans*. Indeed, the landscapes of Stefan Peters present themselves as pictorial creations: born from the painter's brush, they fully express their pictorial origin. These landscapes never hide their essence as paintings to express anything other than this very essence. As beings of paint, these landscapes are therefore neither realistic, nor symbolic, nor ideal, nor anything of any extra-pictorial reference...

As landscapes of paint, the paintings of Stefan Peters, while embodying all the artistry of the painter, simply present the beauty of the paint...