

Susanne Knaack – Tableau and Solitaire
January 26 - February 24

Bubbles and splashes, floating, flowing and sliding strokes, fogs and surging waves can be discerned in the 40 x 30 cm small picture created in the alchemist kitchen of Susanne Knaack, who convincingly demonstrates great mastery of various painting techniques and presents the according results based on a self-developed pouring technique: she moves the painting surface, dancing with the canvas, as it were.

Formed to a tableau, her pictures mirror the exhibition title *Tableau & Solitaire*, functioning equally together and separately, in concert and as individual works.

Immersing oneself into these pictures, we define what is to be seen there – unconsciously comparing with what life and experience have inscribed into the matrix of our pictorial memory. We wander around with our eyes, exploring landscapes, beaches, mountains, hills or moorlands, find ourselves sitting in a boat surrounded by crashing waves or overlooking the firmament from a cockpit high up in the sky. These are pictures which we have created ourselves, reassembled and reinterpreted, as there is nothing to be seen except a solidified stream of animated paint. Black and white are combined and nuanced with blue and brown. No brush has ever directly touched the canvas-covered hardboard, no brushstroke betrays its creator, and yet it is the genuine work of one and the same artist and we conceive it as a classical painting.

When the matrix of our pictorial memory fails, we are still with Susanne Knaack and her works and are amazed at the shift her imagery makes into pure abstraction. However, a novelty has sneaked into the concert of familiar forms, which has established her reputation as creator of the *Sehstücke/Visual Works* more than 20 years ago; suddenly, her works lack a clear horizontal line, we struggle to tell where top and bottom is, foreground and background; there is no reference point in the landscape. The visual claim has become visualized. The paint flow has been stopped prematurely. The artist has outwitted herself and has just 'let it happen'. In search of a new picture, 'guided chance' has now become a 'courageous accident'.

'Guided chance', a term I have coined in relation to her work, refers back to the fact that the artist cannot see what goes on the other side while enacting her 'dance with the canvas'. She can only direct her movements from behind the wooden frame of the canvas, guided by her experience, and can also conceive the emerging image only from behind. Thus, the painting is created before her inner eye and thanks to her experience. And yet, or even therefore, coincidence serves as a factor of creative intervention. Not everything is predictable!

The future looks promising, as the 'courageous accident' may turn into 'guided chance' again. Just as in the beginning, when during priming the canvas she knocked over a pot of black paint and things followed their course, today's experience of an accident will enter the artist's future pool of possibilities. Accidentalness may and should even be considered a strategy, as it prevents from stagnation and boredom.

The artist has also been working with the classical large format for 15 years. For the exhibition she has created two new paintings in the format of 240 x 160 cm. When compared to former works, these are reduced, emanating concentrated calm and restrained in the formation of supposed landmarks. Nevertheless, it is her visual spaces which expand into infinity, which draw us in, allow us to forget the flow of time, inspire us to imagine our own place of longing. Plunging into the vastness of the canvas generates a sense of sublimity: I, the observer, in the midst of a new, foreign and yet somehow familiar world.

The image personnel known from paintings of Caspar David Friedrich are, in this case, placed outside, in front of the canvas.

Semjon H. N. Semjon
January 2018