

The special role of Tsend's Colours

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The Paintings of Gan-Erdene Tsend are wide, deep and boundless. They look like we imagine the artist's Mongolian homeland: lonesome, flat landscapes without alternations, without dramatic views, without thrills. As far as classical (European) landscape painting is concerned, only a few incentives are offered: no trees, no rivers, hardly any human being, only desert and steppe. This is no pattern for the European "heroic" landscape. But anyway, the well balanced composition of foreground, middle ground and background as the foundation of a refined picture dramaturgy in relation to the arrangement of the perspective plane, has lost its validity for contemporary artists. What can interest you then, is the difference of the image and the empirical reality. Thus, the question of all valid art has to be: What does exist only in the painting itself? Where, in what form ever, does the painted work distinguish itself from just optically perceived reality?

Even if it is somehow justified to think of German Romantic painting, the difference, nevertheless, is obvious. There, the presence of grandeur in painting, on the one side, occurs in the mode of radical form, inserted as representative into the landscape - take, for example Caspar David Friedrich, or - as it is the case with Philipp Otto Runge - in the mode of a radical symbolism. But always, in German Romantic painting, nature is the model you can follow even in detail, how artificial it ever might be. In Tsend's contemporary variant, however, painting itself is a factor not to be overlooked, which leaves behind all naturalism of the plain eye's impression - an experience of 20th century's abstract-concrete art.

Such a barrenness of motives, which Tsend has taken as a starting point for himself, has another, artistically quite fruitful charm. Even landscape itself creates a consciousness of the relation between illusionary space and the concrete painting sphere. The differentiation mainly occurs on the two-dimensional canvas as a tackling with painting and its possibilities of variation, whereas colour plays a special role in this process. Colours of nature are consequently replaced by artistic colours, and even overdone up-to artificiality. In the same time, the individual handwriting is cultivated, by consciously leaving each brushstroke visible. It shows landscape structure like grass, stone, sand, as well as the trace of an artistic personality who has not so much worked on an idea of reality but of image. The extinction of landscape through colour in favour of the abstract effect of colour creates an inner landscape of soul. Thus, the proof of the human being is not so much to be found in the motive but in the way of painting itself. It is not a mere naturalistic one which tries to copy a certain experience of reality. In fact, experience of landscape is transformed into a specific experience of painting.

It seems as if human beings do not belong into this imagery landscape. In case they become a motif, they seem to be more appearances, as if their existences are only possible as such. Where there is nothing, one has to invent something. So, fancy replaces the sparing reality with imagery, myths.

(...)

In such a way, tradition and modernity, painting and reality, homeland nostalgia and cosmopolitanism merge in Gan-Erdene Tsend's works, into a very special, peculiar and, nevertheless, actual, i.e. valid painting.

(Translation from German: Doris Götting)