

On the Exhibition
 „hier und da“
 between BBK Düsseldorf and the Welsh Group
 BBK-Kunstforum in Düsseldorf , 18. 6. to 12. 7. 2015

As soon as we enter it, this unusual show surprises us. The works are hung low, very low - some provocatively so. One has to bend or squat to see them, and straighten up again before going on. Up and down, and then onward. Perhaps this choreography of looking is a spur to mental flexibility.

We relish the challenge set by the curators, Hanne Horn and Irmgard Kramer, who have successfully interpreted the theme, “Here and There” in various ways. The accepted arrangement according to content and form has been abandoned in favour of a gathering together of disparate elements.

The many themes, techniques and formats interact constantly; hanging on every wall, or in front of it, here strong colour and there delicate drawing, portraits here, and there, a number of landscape panoramas. Large works hang beside or above small ones. Abstracts are placed next to realism.

The show is a bridge between here and there, nations and artists, whose works are, for now, neighbours. The dense presentation is not a forced one. It is a conscious principle giving rise to tension, where strong elements withstand each other and reticent work can find its quiet niche.

Let us make a tour of the show and look closer.

We begin with small views of warm, sunny summer, whose horizons extend down to the sea, the meadow or to the wood. Then a fluttering and soft rustle of tracing paper takes the eye to the particular, the special detail of a leaf or a twig, as the impression of a space and its articulation evolves from delicate layers of matt pigment.

Intriguing watercolours made with coffee stains are the inspiration for fantastical goblins and horses drawn from them in pencil. A cryptic object wittily observes how “money makes the world go round” - and could lead to personal ruin. We can't always stay in the next exhibit's tiny house on its little island.

European and Oriental symbols meet in images of cross shrines – the square forms on which they are set, washed with the colour of ginkgo leaves.

We return to the spectrum of the human condition. From a cosy loft home, women contemplate the meaning of life lived in a piano nobile. Some may dream of a robe of night studded with stars – but not this one, whose beauty is clogged by the weight of heavy tar. What would Joseph and the hare talk about, if they could, or felt inclined? The friendship of mankind? Another hare stands in a mini-museum in front of a sculpture, which could also be his own skull-bone.

Ground plans reveal the fundamentals of living -space and the sense in places.

Behind glass, scratched layers reveal masks, - eerie faces, their eyes and mouths glimmering from the dark, and laid out like a game of “Memory” - but without cards which match.

Not only Beuys wears a hat. Have women become so liberated that they can wear their grandmothers' knitted bloomers on their heads? Or do the old rules still carry too much weight?

As counterpart to the dress at the start of the row, - her eyes closed, a lucent, rose-tinted girl also on dark ground completes it.

Three abstracts detect in various ways, and interpret visually the unseen structures which prevail around us.

In a casually connected process of synesthesia, the sound of silence is heard as tentatively it rises from us, tuning into the cosmos, like the white relief on white paper. All is connected through the tiniest of structures, whose sharp filigree grids form a whole, only perceptible to us in isolated details. Upright fans of metal fabric offer sparse glimpses of light. solid but flexible woven mesh gives tiny views of the world.

Now we return to concrete natural perspectives.

How might a landscape be spelt-out, yet forfeit nothing of its fullness?

What adventures might begin if we bend to the meadow under the trees in the park? Maybe we will be lost in precious moments like the boy in the green brook, in the slow completion of his actions; or in the glimmering, shimmering flicker of spots of sunlight before closed eyelids. Or perhaps taking our worry and concerns to Nature will make us aware of our inherited responsibility for the land- and to our fellow human beings.

Shared, but indefinable feelings bind, and separate the clown and monkey, who gaze upward with awe at soap-bubbles; a variation of the Man and Beast constellation – a theme by which the hanging links so many works throughout the exhibition.

Now back to the enigma posed by the “bad girl” in the huge sun-glasses and the ear defenders. Next, we are greeted by winter and summer sisters from the family album and meet our own childhood memories.

A photographer seeks precious Bohemian glass in courtyard windows, to discover the forces that prevail between things.

Wild, aspiring strokes entice us into the rhythm of an unknown landscape. Then we enter the purple yard with its pecking hens, and the cottage where another story awaits us.

The bright delicacy of flowers on a column detains us a little longer - art has a special facility to capture ephemeral moments. It can also unify. Each of the two aspects of the Janus head, composed of earth and air, in its foliate wreath, tries to espy the other. The leporelli with their creative double perspectives excite the need to open them, to look, to read, and contemplate in depth.

The richly contrasting materiality of bronze is highlighted in the warm copper gleam of moulded surfaces and the contrasting cold, rough green patination of unformed areas of “flow”.

Finally, a shattered sarcophagus and the last remaining stones in a wall remind us of our own fragility and that of our heritage.

We do not remain here, but walk on in spirit, in the passage, cheered by small posies ranged against the pressures of the everyday, an ebullient waterman (not only of Celtic myth) and his no less lively daughters.

In the small gallery, we continue in the direction of reading- from left to right. We encounter the perfect representation of a Baroque still-life with one small intervention- the portrait of the current artist as a bitter orange! The next step leads us to a Welsh mountain landscape. In its sandy frame it recalls an exotic oasis in a faraway desert.

From a diffuse dream-sequence, a hare-headed woman looks at us as she hurries by. Big black birds, disturbed, besiege a row of terraces. Are they blotting out the traces of the title, “Murder..”?

Disquiet gives way before the naturalistic truth of an elephant's head, tempts one to touch it. Just lay your hand on the scarred grey skin of the trunk. Compact assemblages from pieces of

discarded wood pleasingly come to fruition through an interplay of forms and surfaces, reminding us of the fate of all once-cherished objects.

Each of these impressions leads us to wider areas of observation, association, reflection, and emotion, and if this overwhelms too much we can look through the window and see the real world outside, then turn back to art with refreshed curiosity.

With their sense of unease, before and after the storm; two girls with dolls look up at the sky. One stands before a dark sky, behind the other bright light ascends.

The aesthetic of a drain cover as a gate to the Underworld between gleaming wet, or dry, crumbling asphalt and sprouting weeds. A colourful accumulation of unidentified elements demands our closer inspection.

Below is a bit of the London Underground station, named after the Angel Inn nearby. For the observer, bending low, a winged being actually ascends. A guardian angel, too, leans against a wall as though he might be taken here or there, wherever he might be needed.

In sultry hours in a Spanish garden blossoming forms dissolve into arabesques of growth while floral elements entwine on railings. And only “the day before yesterday” it happened... in the banality and mystery of a room, which appeared to have been submerged in an ocean's depths.

Who is the Tillerman who scrutinizes us so intently from the green of his coat through a withered branch? And whose waxen hand stretches against blue?

A collage overpainted in striking red-gold takes up the theme of the devil and money, and offers ideas for debate in fragments of text. The theme of moderation continues round the corner in the two idealised males, and one unidealised one - a nude on a beach, a Barbie-boy and a passer-by in trousers and a checked shirt. Do we desire the first two when we meet the third?

The end of the tour itself is a “Here and There”. An intensely coloured drawing flows around an empty vortex of flight beside the imposed restriction of a tightly limited space - an allegory of the exploration of inner compulsion.

The show offers a wide variety of forms of aesthetic expression and intentions, a wealth of beauty and meaning. Its discovery will impart a legacy of enjoyment.

Let a little of the spirit of the opening night remain between the works - the receptive ease and mutual openness that appertain to those whose lives are lived in art; passed on and enjoyed in happy celebration.