

ON LANDSCAPE

Balthasar Burkhard — Tony Cragg —
Alberto Garutti — Joel Sternfeld

8 November 2019 - 11 January 2020
Opening: Friday, 8 November, 7-9 pm



BALTHASAR BURKHARD
Mexico City, 1998
silver gelatin on baryta paper,
vintage print by the artist, with
artist steel frame
250 x 250 cm / 98½ x 98½ in

Tony Cragg once formulated perfectly that one can look at a landscape for hours, immerse oneself in it, without the possibility of touching it.

The four artists in this exhibition, Balthasar Burkhard, Tony Cragg, Alberto Garutti, and Joel Sternfeld, encounter landscape and space in their works in very different ways.

Aube (Dawn) is a sculpture by Tony Cragg from 1987 that belongs to the group *Villages or Landscapes*, whose starting point is often a used table, which the artist then combines with stylized houses with gabled roofs made of simple industrial wood, mostly chipboard. The table, object of the human center of life, creates an architecture in which the houses are arranged on different levels like in a terraced landscape. With a black wax crayon, Tony Cragg has covered the individual elements densely with a strong wave-shaped drawing and removes the individual objects from their boundaries. He transforms them into a new, sculptural quality. Interesting is the title, which refers to the dawning daylight but also evokes the horizon, which creates a spatial boundary that lies outside the sculpture.

Like Tony Cragg with the table, Alberto Garutti also shows in his work *Piccolo paesaggio domestico con occhio di Luca* that the idea of a landscape can include what is inside a house or room. Alberto Garutti drilled a wall mirror with holes of the same diameter. The positioning of the holes corresponds to the outlines of the furniture in his apartment and of a person, Luca, reflected in the surface. The holes capture the moment of the artist's observation and keep alive the memory of a reflection. The *Specchi forati* connects the past and the spatially there with the present and here, superimposing temporal and spatial levels. The viewer, reflected in the surface, completes the work with his imagination and sensation.

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Joel Sternfeld also traces a kind of exploration of reality in his three large-format color photographs from the *Oxbow Archive* group of works. In 2006 and 2007, the artist photographed at short intervals and in changing seasons on the meadows and fields bordered by the striking river knee of the Connecticut River near Northampton in the US state of Massachusetts and Interstate 91. An interesting reference to Sternfeld's work is the famous painting *View from Mount Holyoke* by Thomas Cole, who painted the same river plane in 1836 as a heroic landscape. Sternfeld dispenses with drama and exaggeration. In subtle photographs, he documents the uniqueness of the seasons in this unspectacular piece of nature but also shows the clearly visible effects of human intervention in nature.

The effects of human intervention and landscape design are most clearly visible in the vast structures of megacities. At the end of the 1990s, Balthasar Burkhard dealt with the endless landscapes of houses extending to the horizon in spectacular black-and-white photographs. Photographed from a helicopter, the artist blurs the individual houses in grey gradations into a vibrating abstract structure that dissolves in a cloud of haze on the horizon. Burkhard, however, partially omits the horizon completely and thus removes any boundaries from the city. He transforms the Moloch into an almost sublime lightness or graphic abstraction. We are part of concrete reality, embedded in physicality and materiality and forms. In his works, however, Burkhard manages to let this world of things emerge from the usual horizon of meaning.