

About The Poetry Of Nature

Sabine Brand Scheffel's painting art is devoted to the rich variety of the cosmos, her canvases being primarily shaped by the elements water, light and air. The approach is always taken from what has been perceived - although not depicted in a traditionally naturalistic way. The connection to the visible world is generated by coloration and the rhythm of forms. Often landscapes and natural structures are retraced and thus related to the horizon or other spatial references. Flowing colours and lines create an atmosphere of livelihood and movement. Situations and places of transition such as river banks, bridges and windows play an ever important role. In Sabine Brand Scheffel's paintings the intense colours and opulent forms of the tropics, but also the mildness of European landscapes veiled in mist find a visualization that allows the observer to take part in the moments experienced by the artist. Often her canvases appear to the alert eye as magical visions of nature and landscape.

A longer stay in Great Britain and extensive trips to South-East-Asia, Indonesia, New Guinea, Central and South America, to the USA, South Africa and Southern Europe have left distinctive marks in the painter's memory. Being on the road can be considered as constituent for her art. The works come into being from what she has seen and experienced in a successive interweaving of forms and colors. The painter builds up her color composition by choosing closely neighboring colors from the range and carrying them out in the most subtle shades so as to swing "in one tonality". In order to enhance the color effect even more, part of the canvases are grounded in the complementary color to the dominant one of the painting. Often Aquacryl is used, watercolor paint with an acrylic binder, which allows an extensive color application and obtains an effect of great lightness, underlined by rather graphic means such as Indian ink, gouache or chalk in the same canvas.

The painter moves very close towards her subjects, risking a certain lack of focus which on the other hand generates a high pictorial quality. Plants and waters are often important, also rain, growth and ever again the light which conquers its space in narrow beams. The moving patterns of waves or grass blades lie over a colour surface background which can be read as a water surface or an earthen ground. Ultimately many works of the artist seem to bring forth noises and sounds, one seems to hear the rustling of the wind in the leaves or sometimes the observer has the impression to hear water babbling. Sabine Brand Scheffel has studied at the Karlsruhe academy with Peter Dreher. In connection with this artistic tradition the exact visual perception of the world, which can be considered a common element, especially comes forth. In a consequent and tenacious way Dreher goes to the core of things and phenomena and thus cultivates a realism that already found an early expression in the Upper Rhine region around 1500 and maybe expressed - and still expresses - a particular fondness of landscape and its

more or less naturalistic rendering. Sabine Brand Scheffel's work is to be seen and understood in this context, too.

The contemplation of a few chosen paintings is intended to elucidate these ideas. In the canvas "Window (river bank VII)" (p. 15) dark and light zones meet in vertical sequence and in irregular partition of rich contrast. Flowing colour streams whirl across the canvas, circulate like amorphous strata of air. The phenomenology of these works reminds us of the ecstatic colour scenarios of the English painter William Turner, who translated the landscape into a dynamic pictorial event around 1800. With his atmospheric portrayals he was considered a programmatic forerunner of the impressionist tendencies of later decades of the 19th century. In contrast to Turner, who mostly gives a suggestion of the horizon, Brand Scheffel approaches the eye so closely to the subject in a sort of blow-up procedure, that it cannot recognize the situation concretely - one could rather speak of an estrangement effect. By setting darkness and light vertically next to each other, she makes an allocation of above and below and consequently a reference to earth and sky impossible. Instead a direct connection to nature experience is opened when the observer abandons himself to the soft circling and oscillating of the colours, almost feeling mist, haze and veils on his face.

The painting in oblong format "Frog Prince" (p. 11) leads the eye onto a water surface that seems to move slightly. Different tender shades of green seeming to dissolve at the edges overlap, while the overlying graphical structures can be read as lines of movement and ultimately as the gliding traces of a living creature. This painting reminds us of a haiku of the Japanese poet Matsuo Bashô (1644-1694). The probably most famous Japanese poem says:

furu ike ya
kawazu tobikomu
mizu no oto
The old pond
A frog jumps in -
sound of water!

The haiku, a short poem, outwardly extremely reduced with an utmost inward intensification, is devoted to fine perception of nature. Its mood reflects the irretrievable, a momentary image in the steady flow of time. The marks of the rings in the water fade out, also the sound of splashing water dies away. The words of the haiku, a literary form of art, evoke images and feelings. In Sabine Brand Scheffel's painting art colors and forms unfold the poetic charm of what has been seen and heard. Reduction and intensification are further crucial elements of her form language. This and the proximity to nature reveal an affinity to the specific spirit of the haiku.

In the broader sense pantheistic thoughts, which have been playing a role in fine arts since the time around 1800, are touched upon here. The concept of the omnipresent divine principle expressing itself in the richness and variety of nature, connected with feelings of origin and unity of all things, expresses itself in works of our time, too. Sabine Brand Scheffel's paintings open this field of significance and lead to a mental connection between Man and Nature.

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(Translation by Susanne Keßler)