

Nicola Schrudde in conversation  
with Florian Blaschke and Michael Krajewski

MK: You once mentioned that when talking about Paul Cézanne, Fra Angelico and Caspar David Friedrich it is possible to say something about your work. What relationship does this installation have for example with the most famous painter from the era of Romanticism?

NSCH: Friedrich painted nocturnal works with colour nuances of darkness that are quite fascinating, and he constructed his images and worked out the positioning of the objects with an amazing amount of precision. I find this extremely interesting. During the preparation stage I worked with the layout and tried to visualise the effect of the elements in the darkened room. A really important point is the room organisation that comes about intuitively and that at first you don't feel so strongly. In terms of Friedrich's spirituality, I don't think I'm related to it, for me he's a bit over the top in that sense.

FB: He was a painter, so your works, installations, objects and videos, at least at first glance, have nothing in common with painting.

NSCH: I developed a lot of my works by grappling with painting, and basically, painterly elements have been transformed in the space. This transformation of the objects that takes on an immaterial character has a lot to do with that.

MK: Perhaps that's where you also see a connection to Paul Cézanne, or is it rather his work with nature and within nature that is important to you?

NSCH: I see a relation in Cézanne's whole basic attitude: he was a real worker in his paintings; it wasn't about quick flicks of paint as with his counterpart Claude Monet. In my case it's the same, I almost develop a manic intensity when my ideas evolve. And what also interests me is the variable levels of perception with his paintings. Cézanne's works progress a great deal

when you look at them, in a sense growing over and above their real size. That's something that happens with this installation if you stay in it for a while and discover different ways of perceiving it. Once your eyes get used to the darkness then you edge in closer to the objects and the phenomena as well. The analogy to nature, the most familiar criterion for Cézanne, is obviously important for me in my aesthetic decisions. If I see that something looks like graphite – it's not graphite, it's not supposed to represent graphite, but there is a touch of graphite to it – then that's a confirmation for me that I'm going down the right path.

FB: In connection with painting, I think it's striking that you do handle frames and surfaces that are reminiscent of canvasses.

NSCH: The rectangle of course reminds us of the metaphor of the image as a window, and the videos exist two-dimensionally, although I use all sorts of possibilities to fetch them into the space itself, like working with reflections and transparency for example. I create the videos by scanning areas of foliage with the camera. That's roughly comparable to the motion of a brush going over the canvas.

MK: I find it surprising that in connection with Caspar David Friedrich you dismiss spirituality as a content of your work. You previously mentioned Fra Angelico as a reference.

NSCH: Yes, Fra Angelico is really important for me here, a soft, distanced and sensuous spirituality. I seem to sense more distance to the matter than with Friedrich; Fra Angelico – that's painting that you want to go up to, to stand in front of it and become totally still. I'm deeply touched by this level of inwardness. If I can locate some of it in my works, then that certainly makes me glad.

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