

La Datcha, Berlin
September 15, 2019

It is a warm July evening in London in the year 1717, when a full orchestra of fifty musicians embarks an open barge. King George had commissioned George Frederic Handel to compose a piece of music that would accompany him and his royal entourage on a boat ride on the River Thames - a grand gesture, in true baroque fashion.

Drawing, in essence, is a small gesture, an intimate yet transformative act: Just as the line, guided by the hand, becomes a path, a path can become a shape, and a shape can become an image. The pigment in watercolour, when watercolour is applied wet in wet, finds its own way on the paper within a delineated boundary, a coast line, so to say, that separates the water in its unpredictability from dry areas, from the safety of the land.

On January 14, 1896, again in London, a small handful of spectators witnesses the second only public screening of a film in England (only four days after the first, and only two weeks after the world's very first public movie screening that had taken place in Paris on December 28, 1895 - the beginning of cinema as we still know it). The film that was projected at the Royal Photographic Society was only 39 seconds long, black and white, and silent: *Rough Sea at Dover*. It was made in 1895, the year before its public premiere, by Birt Acres and R.W. Paul, and showed a short sequence of waves crashing against a pier in Dover. Water, and especially water in motion, was seen as a particularly cinematic subject in the early days of filmmaking, as it provided the film camera with a direct image of movement.

The watercolours shown at La Datcha are literal water colours: Images of water (or the proximity to water), rendered in full colour. All of the water imagery is sourced from moving pictures: *Barque sortant du port* [Boat Leaving the Port] (Louis and August Lumière, 1895), *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982), *Jacquot de Nantes* (Agnes Varda, 1991), *Rough Sea at Dover* (Birt Acres and R.W. Paul, 1895), *Sans Soleil* [Sunless] (Chris Marker, 1983), and *Weekend at Bernie's* (Ted Kotcheff, 1989).

-

Manfred Naescher (*1973, Liechtenstein) is a Berlin-based visual artist, writer and lecturer. He studied at Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver, Canada, at Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, USA, and at the University of Berne, Switzerland. His work encompasses drawing, video, artist books and editions, design, and writing. His subscription-based edition *Collected Works* is currently in its second iteration. Recent group exhibitions include *Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland* (2015), and *Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein* (2015). His artist book *Still* (2014) is in the Artist Book Collection of the MoMA, and he is a member of the PEN Club Liechtenstein.

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication in English and German versions, titled *Water Music (Overture)* and *Wassermusik (Ouverture)*, respectively, with prose poetry by Manfred Naescher, co-published by Naescher and La Datcha, Berlin 2019. These texts and the works shown at La Datcha are both excerpts from the forthcoming book *Der geheime Kinosaal der Bibliothek von Alexandria* [The Secret Movie Theatre at the Library of Alexandria].

manfrednaescher.com

ladatcha.de

Artist Statement

There is a paradox at the core of my drawing practice: What I do is both image-making and the avoidance of image-making. I hesitate adding to the continuous flow of visual material that we are subjected to daily, hourly, near-permanently. The creation of images, in my practice, is an intentional side effect of my interest in reflecting on existing imagery: What is the image? Where does it come from? Why do we make it? How does it change in time? My work starts and ends with source material (usually from art history, that is, from the history of image-making or its margins): The source imagery remains clearly visible in the drawings, often placed at the center of the composition, isolated from its context, with an outline – a simple handdrawn line – providing clarity and sharp contours against the background of an indistinct cloud, inside of which digital image production is increasing at accelerating pace.

The proliferation, malleability and mutability of images and data in the digital era within the structure of the internet impel a perpetually expanding visual cosmos (with many a black hole, too). I use digital imagery and the internet as a collection without end, as a metaphor for collective memory in a constant/ongoing state of revision.

To create my work I am drawn to the medium of watercolor. Traditionally employed for preparatory sketches (for “finished” paintings in oil, for example), for plein air painting or for other quick renderings, watercolor strikes me as carrying fertile and widely underexplored conceptual and metaphorical properties. In the watercolor process, the joined forces of materiality and gesture work in analogy to the process of memory: water and pigment leave traces on the paper that provide the subject with legibility, while simultaneously questioning that very legibility. The resulting image, like a memory, is characterized by distortions, cessations and redistributions. Aspects of the subject are being reprioritized according to the subtle tectonics of the paper and the uncontrolled flow of the watercolor. It is the image itself that changes in real time, and it is the image itself that continues to change as long as it is being interpreted, which in itself is a practice of image-making.

Manfred Naescher, 2019

manfrednaescher.com

info@manfrednaescher.com