



Silke Otto-Knapp / Carl Fredrik Hill Questions Of Travel (Wien) 12/3 – 25/5 2014

Press conference: Tuesday, March 11, 2014, 10 am

Opening: Tuesday, March 11, 2014, 7 pm

Kunsthalle Wien opens its Karlsplatz program for this year with the exhibition *Silke Otto-Knapp / Carl Fredrik Hill. Questions of Travel (Wien)*. The exhibition brings together selected works by two artists who, each within their own genre and time, have focused intensively on the artistic representation of landscapes, stages and theatrical spaces.

Taking a poem by the well-known American author Elizabeth Bishop as its point of departure, the exhibition *Silke Otto-Knapp / Carl Fredrik Hill. Questions of Travel (Wien)* examines questions of spatial perception and the interweaving of body and space. For Silke Otto-Knapp, who regularly draws her inspiration from literature, it is verses such as these that mark the poetic relationship between painterly art and the written word: "Is it lack of imagination that makes us come to imagined places, not just stay at home?" – asks Elizabeth Bishop in her poem *Questions of Travel* (1965) and in doing so anticipates questions that are also valid for the paintings of Otto-Knapp with their interest in the mechanisms of scenography, representation and visual imagination.

In an interplay with the codes of modern dance and the stage-like character of the glass exhibition space, the artist's works and the urban outdoor space together create a frame of reference that quotes and reflects the architecture of the site in a multi-levelled manner. In this sense Otto-Knapp's landscape images, reminiscent of stage scenery, are concentrated zones of both nature and culture in which gardens expand to fill the picture and clusters of buildings form atmospheric scenes.

In line with her discursive approach to the medium of painting, in her multi-layered, almost monochrome-seeming works the artist examines the aspects of surface and depth, contours and physicality, visual space and stage design. The countless layers of black or grey watercolour paint that Otto-Knapp applies to the canvas, repeatedly washes out and then reapplies ultimately create negative spaces and contours that resemble photographic negatives.

The interweaving of body and space, together with the stage-like elements in the works of Silke Otto-Knapp, are aspects equally to be found in the selection of drawings by the Swedish artist Carl Fredrik Hill and which complement the exhibition *Questions of Travel (Wien)*. Seven small-format chalk drawings by Hill are presented, or indeed staged, within the protective space of a cabinet, simultaneously in the heart of the large transparent exhibition space.

Hill lived in France for several years during the last third of the 19th century and there, inspired by Corot and the Barbizon School, he devoted himself chiefly to landscape

painting. He too, like Otto-Knapp, worked intensively with the stage space and used this to create a scenography of expressive self-inquiry. In his own lifetime his works met with incomprehension from culture critics, the public and artist colleagues. Resigned and in a mentally instable state, Hill withdrew from society and, isolated in his own world, created a fascinating work that draws from memory and conducts an intensive examination of stages, ephemeral ballet scenes and landscapes.

Parallel to the Vienna exhibition, a further exhibition by the artist Silke Otto-Knapp entitled *Questions of Travel (Fogo Island)* is being presented at Fogo Island Gallery in Newfoundland, Canada. The two exhibitions in Vienna and Fogo Island are linked by an exhibition catalogue published by Sternberg Press, examining the works of Silke Otto-Knapp and containing texts by Vanessa Joan Müller, Susan Morgan and an interview with the artist by Nicolaus Schafhausen.

Silke Otto-Knapp (*1970) studied Cultural Studies at the University of Hildesheim and graduated from Chelsea College of Art and Design, London. She teaches at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and since the start of 2014 has lived and worked in Los Angeles, where she teaches at UCLA. Her solo exhibitions include: UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (2011); Kunstverein München, Munich (2010) and Tate Britain, London (2005).

Carl Fredrik Hill (1849–1911) studied painting at the Stockholm Academy of Arts and continued his studies in France, where he lived and worked for several years. A large part of his legacy is contained in the archive of Malmö Art Museum, Sweden. Solo exhibitions include: 777, Bawag Contemporary, Vienna (2003), Carl Fredrik Hill. *Hill Hill Hill Hill Hill*, Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2013).

Curator: Martin Walkner