

BARBARA NICHOLLS

« AMALGAM »

WATERCOLOUR (AQUARELL)

Torhaus Rombergpark

Städtische Galerie Dortmund

25. 8. bis 15. 9. 2013

Tourhaus Dortmund presents a series of large watercolours produced by UK artist Barbara Nicholls made in response to an artists residency by the river Rhine, in Nord Westfalen 2012.

These works continue established themes of geology, mapping and topography. They are in part investigations into the scientific properties of watercolour whilst also being instinctive reactions to the process of using watercolour. The paintings are poured, cajoled, blown and left alone to become records of colourful events reflecting the relationship between the artist and the materials.

The paintings of Barbara Nicholls have the visual appearance of both an aerial 'map' and at the same time a magnified, almost 'microscopic detail' appearance. They are painted on the floor horizontally with the artist both over-seeing the entirety but also, at the same time closely scrutinising the process. Each droplet, mineral grain and movement is studied.

The watercolour paint settles onto the thick sheets of paper creating a geological terrain, climate and topography of paint and ground. Water soaking into the fibres causes natural tensions across the surface of the paper un-restricted by the usual glued tape and pre shrinking. These undulations become a 'landscape' of 'rolling hills' with the paint acting like river sediment flowing gently along valleys, creating swirl pools and flowing out into broad reservoirs. Occasionally, as with a storm, the shear weight of liquid causes a break out. Then a sea of paint rises over ridges, bursting through dams of previously dried sedimentary pigments. Areas of colour merge variously, depending on the balance between the colours' mineral weight and the water. Through the long process of evaporation, sometimes with the assistance of a breeze from an electric fan, this systematised use of colour mixed with a chance element merges colours to create a soft blending of geographies.

In other areas, after each 'artistic drought' allows a drying out, a new 'monsoon' causes a spreading and further covering of existing territories. These emerge in layers each with a new outline appearing like rings in a tree or the depth on a map of the sea. Puddles of pigmented water have gradually receded to reveal lines reflecting time through an actual sedimentary history. Chromatography is in action.

Barbara Nicholls lives and works in London. She has exhibited widely, both in the UK and internationally, including USA, Brazil, Germany. Her exhibitions include *Residue* Winsor and Newton London 2013, *Telpost* The Netherlands 2013, *Specular* KARST 2012, *In Front of Behind* ArToll Germany 2012, *Dok25a* Dusseldorf 2012, *Projektraum-bahnhof25* Kleve Germany 2012, *Turnaround* Pavillon am Milchhof Berlin 2011, *Borderlines* ArToll Germany 2010, *Borders, Codes and Crossings* APT Gallery London 2008, *The Trench*, Imperial War Museum London.

Though based in the UK Nicholls has increasingly worked abroad in recent years, taking up artist's residencies and collaborations in The Netherlands 2013, Berlin 2009 and Bedburg Hau Germany 2012 and 2010, each of which was accompanied by a solo and group exhibition. In Germany Nicholls began a series of collaborations with artists and curators that continue to this day, including exhibitions, discussions and international exchanges. She is currently co curating a three part exhibition for Emerson Gallery Berlin. 3rd August- 15th September 2013

Barbara Nicholls has been the recipient of a number of bursaries and awards, including grants from Arts Council England and the British Council. Her works are in many private and corporate collections in Britain and abroad.