

Salle 3-4: Alois Lichtsteiner. It Is Not What It Is

Introduction

The Swiss painter and graphic and object artist Alois Lichtsteiner premiered a group of monumental paintings at the Museum Franz Gertsch, which mark the key moments in his painterly quest. Comprising a selection of works from the past forty years, the show also revisits the beginnings of the artist's exploration of this theme in the 1980s and follows his journey from colour to shades of grey and back to colour.

Room 3

Lichtsteiner, who is primarily known for his series of “Birch” and “Mountain” paintings in shades of grey with white backgrounds, created very colourful paintings in the 1980s. In a time when painting was written off in favour of other, new forms of art, he continued to pursue his desire to paint by looking for conceptual forms of expression and an individual way out of this situation.

The programmatic piece “Tot aufgefunden (AL1983.002)” [“Found Dead (AL1983.002)”] as well as the works from the group “Inhalt der Gefäße” [“The Contents of the Vessels”] (1980 to 1990) are dedicated to Lichtsteiner's exploration of his role as an artist, the medium of paint as skin on the canvas, and his perception of the image as a metaphorical “vessel”. When is painting purely painting? At which point does it become representational? While a picture might inspire reminiscences in viewers, to Lichtsteiner it is a metaphor

for the questions he has been exploring in painting for decades. We think we are looking at paint buckets, flowing colours or a branch in “Ast (AL1994.018)” [“Branch (AL1994.018)”] (1994). The artist, however, was not attempting to represent anything in the traditional sense.

Room 4

In 1997 Lichtsteiner made a radical, uncompromising shift from colour to shades of grey, to the realm of non-colour. He created series which are often interpreted as pictures of birches or mountains. But once again, his focus was not on birch bark or specific mountain ranges, but rather on producing experimental arrangements, declinations of his explorations with paint and ground.

After creating various smaller pieces, he captured the solutions he deemed valid on large canvases (244 x 320 cm). The evolution in this series becomes apparent when viewed in chronological order. Lichtsteiner developed this plan early on – in 2006 he procured the materials he would need for eight paintings. He completed the last two works with this exhibition in mind.

The course of time, but above all, his intensive exploration of relief printing led Lichtsteiner back to colour: Since 2010 he has been following up the group of “mountainscapes” with polychrome paintings. The parts viewers might interpret as snow remain predominantly white, the occasional “skies” are pale, while the “rock formations”

appear in oscillating, soft to intense colour modulations. Hence, the seventh and eighth monumental formats are also polychrome and summarise this development.

Struck by the contrast between the seemingly figurative works and the metaphorical, conceptual essence of the ruminations on painting that inspired them, viewers will feel compelled to take a closer look and to question their first impressions.

We would like to thank our lenders, and above all, the artist Alois Lichtsteiner and his assistant Ursula Pouly, who actively supported this project every step of the way. We are also grateful to all those involved in the production of the exhibition and this catalogue and to our sponsors.

The exhibition was curated by Anna Wesle in collaboration with the artist.

The catalogue published by Modo Press in Frankfurt a. M. is available in the museum shop.

(text contribution by Anna Wesle, shortened from the catalogue of the exhibition; translation: Katharine Lewald, Cologne)

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Biography

Born 1950 in Ohmstal, Lucerne (CH)
Lives and works in Murten (CH) and Paris (FR)

until 2004 President of the jury of Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Design and Fine Arts on the Schule für Gestaltung Wallis (ecav), Siders / Sierre (CH)
1994-97 Lecturer on the Ecole Cantonale des Beaux-Arts du Valais in Sitten/Sion (CH)
1989/90 Stay in Paris, studio grant of the canton Berne, Berne (CH)
1979/83 Eidgenössisches Kunststipendium
1978 First one man show at the Berner Galerie, Berne (CH)
1978 Graduated from Kunstgewerbeschule Zürich, Zurich (CH)
1974 Stays in Northern and Central Africa
until 1973 Work in several handcraft jobs
until 1970 Schools, graduated as teacher

Selected solo exhibitions

2022 "The Spirit of Mountains", AroundSpace Gallery, Shanghai (CN)
"Alois Lichtsteiner. Neue Arbeiten", Galerie Kornfeld, Bern (CH)
2019 "Alois Lichtsteiner. Tosa Shoji", Schlossmuseum Greyerz, Greyerz (CH)
2016 "Alois Lichtsteiner. Malerei auf dem Grat", Galerie Kuno Fischer, Luzern (CH)
2014 "Alois Lichtsteiner. Peintures", Galerie Farideh Cadot Associés, Paris (FR)

2014 "Alois Lichtsteiner. Farben und Formationen", Galerie Kornfeld, Bern (CH)
2012 "Alois Lichtsteiner. Traces des traces", Kunsthau Grenchen, Grenchen (CH)
2011 "Alois Lichtsteiner. Weisse Nacht", akku Kunstplattform, Emmenbrücke (CH)
2008/09 "Alois Lichtsteiner. Paintings", Galerie Jamileh Weber, Zürich (CH)
2008 "Alois Lichtsteiner. Menschenbilder – Visionen", Galerie Ferdinand Oberholzer, Bern (CH)
"Alois Lichtsteiner", Galerie Kornfeld, Bern (CH)
2005 "Alois Lichtsteiner", Galerie Jamileh Weber, Zürich (CH)
2003 "Alois Lichtsteiner. Bergbilder", Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern (CH)
2001 "Alois Lichtsteiner. Birken und ein Berg", Neues Kunstmuseum Luzern, Luzern (CH)
1996 "Alois Lichtsteiner", Galerie Anton Meier, Genf (CH)
1995 "Perlenbilder von Alois Lichtsteiner", Galerie Hannelore Lötscher, Luzern (CH)
1993 "Quelques travaux au sol... et une peinture", Kunstmuseum Wallis, Sitten/Sion (CH)
"Bild des Monats", Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern (CH)
"Alois Lichtsteiner", Kunstverein Freiburg im Breisgau, Freiburg i. Br. (DE)
1992 "Alois Lichtsteiner", Kunsthalle Bern, Bern (CH)
1988 Kunstraum Toda Bechstein, Burgdorf (CH)
1984 Galerie Corinne Hummel, Basel (CH)
1982 Galerie Toni Gerber, Bern (CH)
1978 "Alois Lichtsteiner", Berner Galerie, Bern (CH)

Selected group exhibitions (latest)

2025/26 "Les grands espaces", Kunstmuseum Wallis, Sitten/Sion (CH)
2023/24 "Blanc de Chine International Ceramic Art Award", Hangzhou Winland Center, Hangzhou (CN)
2022 "Alpensinfonie. Der Berg in der Kunst", Hans Erni Museum, Luzern (CH)
2021 "Hans Emmenegger (1866-1940)", Fondation de l'Hermitage, Lausanne (CH)
2020/21 "Jeder Schnitt etwas Bestimmtes. Meinrad Peiers Werk im Dialog mit Holzschnitten von Alois Lichtsteiner, Scarlet Mara, Josef Felix Müller und Selina Zürcher", Kunstmuseum Olten, Olten (CH)
2018 "Wendepunkte. Von Nolde bis Oppenheim. 100 Jahre Schweizerische Graphische Gesellschaft", Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich, Zürich (CH)
2017 "Collective Individualism IV", AroundSpace Gallery, Shanghai (CN)
2016 "Collectionneurs. Werke aus der Sammlung des Kunstmuseums Luzern und einer Genfer Privatsammlung", Kunstmuseum Luzern, Luzern (CH)
2014 "Blütenlese. Werke aus der Bundeskunstsammlung", Schweizerische Nationalbibliothek, Bern (CH)
2010 "An die Natur. Die ALTANA Kunstsammlung", Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig (DE)
2008 "Top Of Central Switzerland", Kunstmuseum Luzern, Luzern (CH)

More information:
www.aloislichtsteiner.com

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