

## The Psychology of Landscape

On the photographic images of Knut Wolfgang Maron (text of the exhibition catalogue "Bilder über Landschaften", Stadtmuseum Siegburg 1991, by Ralph Hinterkeuser)

In everyday life, myths are not around every corner. At least not the serious ones. They have their favourite places elsewhere, far outside the city. Sensitive as they are, they are easily dispelled. It is the chaos as well as the uniformity, the lack of face and history, the banality and intemperance that make life difficult for the myths in the world of civilisation, threaten them with extinction. With them, other strange elements leave our neighbourhood: more or less animated forms of minerals, of flora and fauna, archaic sounds from other times, atmospheric energies, sounds and smells as heralds of distant simultaneities, mystical co-mingling and confusion and many other supposedly spooky creatures more. All swept away by an exceedingly friendly uninvolvedness of the new inhabitants and their busy little pretensions. The grand old majestic myths willingly give way to all the many new colourful myths of everyday life. Perhaps it is art that is preparing a new one for them.

But that too seems uncertain. Perhaps the exodus of myths suits art just fine, since it is no longer obliged to find a deeper meaning or even meanings for which there is no longer a clientele. In this, it is supported to the best of its ability by one of the newer media: photography. Where visions are scarce, it offers a substitute in the form of sheer reality. Now, the newly armed eye is offered an inexhaustible reservoir of motifs, the world lies at the feet of the photographer in democratic equality. Now, at last, everything is art. And every artist. And already the battle of opposing parties for the mastery of their discipline begins. The enemies of fidelity to the image are the illusionists, who, like their opponents, naturally believe themselves to be the only true artificial-artistic artists. There are also the advocates of small and large formats, the black-and-white and the colour clique, the purists and the decorative, the clans of realists and those of utopians. There are dogmatic fighters and peaceful individualists. Everything as in real life. All on the stage of art, that of our venerated photography.

Knut Wolfgang Maron's works move in each of these categories at the same time. He shows nothing but reality, albeit a seemingly intact landscape long thought lost. At the same time, he gives them speaking characters. His nature's mortes seem to be revived, revitalised. The formats of his pictures are large, but their pre-images are their embryos: the classic, palm-sized SX-70 colour instant pictures. The cibachromes that emerge from them reconstruct the aquarium-like self-sufficiency of the originals with their mirror-smooth surface. Colour or black

and white are unsuitable criteria for Maron. He manipulates the colourfulness of his motifs and supports monochrome moods. The object thus experiences an iconic reduction. Maron's dramaturgy of colour and form heightens the metaphorical meaning of his motifs, creates archetypal situations. The artist declares himself a realist who bases knowledge on memory, but at the same time a utopian who projects horizons beyond rationality and the present.

In addition to the earthly physique, it is the psyche of our home planet that Knut Wolfgang Maron is on the trail of. What he unearths are the elements that make up the earth, its energy flows and conglomerations, but also the myths of its inhabitants, the self-assurances of doubting humanity by means of higher forces. The Burning Bush appears next to Mount Moses, a White Cross appears and a pre-Christian praying man. Ancient and modern religions were founded here, painters found inspiration there. But these places, mostly outwardly unspectacular meadows, forests, coastal strips, have a strong attraction even without mythological attributions. An aura becomes perceptible that has made people pause at these places and continues to do so. We are confronted with a natural presence, this other life, which perhaps eludes our influence, but does not bend. What can make us shudder, apart from the variety of forms and the obvious complexity of the connections, is the perceptible simplicity of the principles that underlie this structure. And the smallness of our own appearance in this world. It is primarily traces that are visible, long since given over to the erosion of weather and oblivion. Man is a transient constant, and so are his supposed remains. He is, if he is humble, a witness. As an unassuming co-inhabitant and attentive observer, he has his equal place. It is probably a utopia to which Knut Wolfgang Maron's art is dedicated. But its pre-images are actually there. Utopia is real for those who see it.