

DETRITUS & ART / A personal point of view on Environment and Art by Rainer Stegmann

Artists seldom provide an interpretation of their own work; they leave this to the observer. Each of us will have his/her own individual view of a specific piece of art, seeing different contents and experiencing a range of own feelings and emotions. Bearing this in mind, I created this page where you will find regularly selected masterpieces from different epochs and I express my thoughts on what the work conveys to me personally. My interpretation will refer specifically to the theme "Environment". Any comments or suggestions regarding this column should be addressed to stegmann@tuhh.de.



KARL KLUTH / 1931 Coast in Northern Schleswig.

My first impression looking at this artwork was somehow spooky or mystic; dark sky with huge clouds partly illuminated by the full moon, dark sea with white foam waves and a green landscape dominated by a high dike in the moonlight. Looks like that at the foot of the dike are some buildings, surrounded by grassland and water areas. The high dike retains the water and hinders it from flooding the land below sea level. Perhaps the water areas down on land originate from sea- water overflowing the dike during stormy weather.

For very long time humans have an impact on nature; this is also the case when protecting land from the sea. In times of climate change this impact experiences a new dimension: extreme weather conditions appear more frequently and ice is melting in the pole areas, which leads to continuous rise of sea water levels (1901 – 2010 from 1,7 mm/a - 3,2 mm/a). Until end of this century humans can

expect a sea-level rise of 26-55 cm if appropriate actions are taken (otherwise 45-82 cm) (IPCC (International Panel of Climate Change)). Wide areas of countries like the Maldives may be flooded. As a consequence existing dikes will be raised and new ones have to be constructed. High amounts of resources as sand, clay and plastic liners will be necessary associated with enormous costs and high environmental impact.

When Karl Kluth painted this picture in the year 1931 climate change was not an issue. He would be surprised establishing a connection between his painting and climate change, interpret his artwork as a kind of eye opener for the danger of further sea-level rise. The dike dominates the painting, it enables the safety of people, land and habitats, but the big dark clouds around the moon create a bit scary atmosphere reminding us of the risks of stormy weather and further sea level rise. For me this artwork underpins the necessity to take more immediate actions against global warming to reduce sea-level rise and extreme weather conditions like big storms.

Humans have to control nature in the future to a much higher extent; by these means world will become more vulnerable, more artificial. We all have to make a bigger effort to reduce these increasing risks.

But despite these thoughtful reflections we can see also the beauty in this painting for enjoying and encouraging us.

Next issue: I will present the famous sculpture "Bull's Head" of Pablo Picasso, which he created in 1942. Picasso is one of the most well known artists of our time; he was born in Malaga, Spain in 1881 and died in Mougins, France in 1973. He used different expressions and techniques in his around 50 000 paintings, drawings, graphics, ceramics and sculptures. Picasso influenced substantially art of the 20th century.