

Bushes, Horizon, Clouds

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Jaroslav J. Alt's most recent works were made in Trstěnice, the village near Litomyšl where he has lived since leaving Kutná Hora 15 years ago. He paints and draws his relationship to his new home, the relative isolation, the proximity to nature, the transformation of the landscape during day and the year, the growing sense of belonging and (mutual) understanding. He has decided to call this exhibition in his hometown Bushes, Horizons, Clouds.

Bushes. Not just the biblical burning bush, but also an actual barberry bush in a little garden that changes over the course of the day. In the morning, when the sun comes out, it is transparent (on a large composite painting of the bush there are gaps in the shape of a cross). At noontime it shines red, and it turns black in the evening. It (supposedly) is capable of breaking free from the earth. Bushes are messengers of the landscape. Clouds – seemingly tangible but at the same time fleeting, ephemeral, white puffs that perish in the azure blue sky – are a message from the gods. Between the bushes and the clouds lies the horizon. Clear and yet intangible, the line of the horizon is a place we can never reach; as long as we exist, we remain on this side of the horizon. And only a goal that cannot be reached is worth the effort.

There is no such thing as final knowledge, nor can faith give us a final answer. If it did, then our grand experiment of living would lose all meaning. We are always asking, always waiting for an answer. But we do not know any more about the fundamentals of life than our ancestors, and our descendants will probably be in the same boat. What is the point of art?

For Jaroslav J. Alt, art is of fundamental importance. The act of creating provides him with moments of calm, nonpain, and non-fear. He tries to capture and to preserve these emotions and states of mind. His message is not to be found in words, colors, and shapes, but beyond them – beyond the painting or drawing. Beyond the horizon. He has constant doubts. In his yearning for the absolute, for perfection, and in the impossibility of fulfilling this desire – therein lies our suffering and the greatness and meaning of art. How can a painter free himself from doubt? By not remaining outside of his work of art as its mere producer or observer, but by stepping into it and letting himself be carried along by the process of painting. Every touch, every line and fleck of color is still unsure, but they open up further and further spaces.

We want to believe – and sometimes can feel it – that the energy put into a painting or drawing stays inside, that it is not lost. All activity loses meaning if we do not believe in something outside of us, in the existence of order. Therefore, by our thoughts and actions we all contribute to shaping or denying order. One can produce without faith, but one cannot create. Faith does not free us from uncertainty. The painter learns something from new paintings and drawings, but he also asks more questions. What should art look like, what is it allowed to look like? Are these subtly colorful shapes works of art or are they the result of chance? What do they tell us, and can they ever speak to anyone else?

A work of art is not complete just because we have painted a picture. Not only people, animals, and plants, but even things have an aura. They retain the energy (I don't know how else to describe it) invested into them. Unlike other forms of energy, it does not dissipate.

And the viewer? If he can manage to be open, he too will experience moments of calm, non-pain and non-fear, quiet joy and satisfaction.

Introductory word to the exhibition
Kutná Hora, 14 November 2015