



Jean-Marie Biwer

D'après nature
07 Mar – 24 May 2020

Curator:
Christophe Gallois
Assisted by Nelly Taravel

Exhibition design:
Polaris Architects

Media partners:
Luxemburger Wort, RTL
Luxembourg

D'après nature presents a selection of paintings, drawings and prints by Jean-Marie Biwer (b. 1957, Dudelange). Spanning fifteen years of production, these recent works reflect his exploration of landscape, nature and the everyday environment.

Over the past four decades, Biwer has developed a body of figurative work that reflects a sensitivity to the world around him: both in terms of his immediate environment – the Ardennes countryside in the north of Luxembourg – and in relation to society in general. His works address subjects that are well established in the traditions of painting including landscape, the body and still life. Yet they also question the role of painting within a world that is dense with images and information. Faced with the proliferation of screens and moving images and the acceleration of the pace of life, Biwer seeks to make paintings that hold the intensity of the present moment, creating a space for contemplation.

D'après nature highlights various themes and subjects that run through his work since 2005: the studio, everyday life, trees, the sky and the changing seasons in the landscape that surrounds him. 'These things are there,' the artist explains, 'we just need to look at them. They are simple, but today they have the power to bring so much to people.' *D'après nature* reflects the artist's concern with both craft and conceptual thinking – two aspects that converge in a quest for beauty.

The exhibition begins with works that forge connections between the studio – a place of experimentation – and the external world – a place for contemplation that offers a seemingly infinite variety of subjects. *Atelier 2* (2007–8) reflects the fluidity between these two spaces: with the views through the windows, the reflections on the glass, and the interplay of light and shade, the studio and the countryside merge in one composition. In *Squatting a Museum with Trees n°3* (2006–7), which derives from a series of paintings depicting fictitious exhibition views, it is the museum space itself that opens out into the natural world, while the painting and group of sixteen drawings that make up *Atelier* (2004–5) – part of the Mudam Collection – provide a humorous exploration of the relationship between art and life.

At the heart of the exhibition is *A Wooden Sketchbook*. This is an ongoing collection of 157 small-scale paintings on wood of uniform size and format that Biwer began producing in 2005. In this piece, which the artist has described as a real 'laboratory of painting', scenes of everyday life, natural motifs, human and animal figures are interspersed with words and abstract elements. The product of observations made in the flux of life, each part is a fragment forming part of an expansive work. Together, they represent a 'multiplicity of perspectives' in time and place, reflecting the plurality of directions and styles of contemporary life.

D'après nature draws attention to the role of motifs associated with the natural world in Biwer's oeuvre. Trees, foliage, skies, stones, landscapes are subjects that provide a means for an ongoing series of experiments. As such he may repeatedly revisit the same motif, the same landscape, the same composition, in order to take his work in new directions. *Last Waltz* (2017) exemplifies the experimental nature and the quest for simplicity that so often characterises his approach to painting, at times taking him towards a form of abstraction.

This is a direction that can be seen in three major pieces created between 2008 and 2010, in which representations of skies criss-crossed by the branches of trees become the starting point for ethereal, spatial and luminous images. 'I was trying to express an attempt to capture happiness, or a moment in life,' Biwer says of *Ciel n°2* (2010). In *Ciel n°3* (2008), the space represented opens onto other dimensions: 'I'd been painting branches in winter,' he explains, 'and all of a sudden, these branches seemed to me like the connections in a brain, like interconnected rhizomic elements, or like earth seen from the sky.'

Also on display in the exhibition are several works produced as commissions for public institutions and private collections, which constitute a significant aspect of the artist's work. In comparison with other aspects of his work, these paintings appear to adopt a more conventional approach to landscape, yet they are also part of the artist's experiments with composition and the representation of space. Two paintings showing the village of *Holler* (*Holler n°1* and *n°2*, 2016), for example, are the products of a true 'compositional conundrum', while *Grand paysage* (2015), created for the City of Troisvierges, embodies, according to Biwer, the 'feeling of absolute grandeur'.

Biwer's most recent work is characterised by an emphasis on the density of natural space, inspired by the landscapes of Luxembourg. In *Before the Flood* (2016–18), 'The dog', the artist explains, 'represents the carefreeness of everyone as they go about their business. And the dark sky, which seems to herald a storm, says that in life anything is possible, at any time.'

Biwer worked on this painting for two and a half years. It is presented here amongst a collection of 82 watercolours produced in 2019 to illustrate the translation into Luxembourgish of the *Tao Te Ching*. Credited to the 6th-century philosopher and writer, Lao-tzu, the *Tao Te Ching* is one of the pillars of Chinese culture. A number of the themes addressed in this 'universal text' – such as the relationship between humanity and nature – resonate in Biwer's work.



Jean-Marie Biwer. D'après nature | Teaser

Related events



06 Mar 2020 17h00 – 18h00

Lancement du catalogue : conversation avec Jean-Marie Biwer et signature

Dans le cadre du lancement de catalogue à l'occasion de l'exposition "Jean-Marie Biwer. D'après nature".

Opening Jean-Marie Biwer. D'après nature



07 – 08 Mar 2020 10h00 – 18h00

Mudam Studio

MUDAM GO ! Jean-Marie Biwer – A Wooden Sketchbook