

Art and Nature.

How artists are returning to the landscape and nature as subject matter.

In the glory days of Modernism there were few artists engaged with nature as a subject matter. When 'masters' of modernism have alluded to the natural world, like Pollock with *Autumn Rhythm* it caused critics great concern as any such reference was outside of what the critical debate at that time.

It took the unlikely art form of Minimalism to re engage some artists with the natural world albeit in a highly conceptual way. Richard Long took the conceptual experiments and performance work out of the studio into the landscape. Robert Smithson and Andy Goldsworthy used the simplified abstract language of minimalism on the landscape itself creating huge pieces of 'land art' by shaping actual pieces of landscape and creating temporary sculpture from natural elements.

Anselm Kiefer began to use the Landscape to add to his explorations of politics and culture. The landscape became a vehicle for examining complex issues such as the recent history of his native Germany. In this sense the process begun by the Romantic Movement was re activated- the landscape and depictions of nature were again being used to explore very particular human issues.

The idea of landscape as territory emerges in many artists as does the idea of identity and history. Michael Raedecker, Tim Eitel, Blaise Drummond and Peter Doig are examples of artists who work with these themes.

The idea of the sublime (what the philosopher Edmund Burke described as fear and awe before nature) is explored by artists such as Elger Esser, Tania Kovats and Mariel Nuedecker who look at the implacability of nature and our increasingly fraught relationship with the natural world. Their installations and tableau recreate the grand sweep of landscapes from the Romantic era.

Glenn Brown and Ulrich Lamsfuss also explore this theme as well as using the history of landscape painting to discuss ideas of skill and to play with viewer's expectations of contemporary art by producing flawless photorealistic landscapes.

Artists such as Jennifer Pastor use systems of cataloguing and assessing natural things as a basis for their work. Artists such as Laura Owens and Gary Hume use the decorative possibilities of natural forms in their work.

Artists such as Juneau:projects and Simon Starling approach nature with the mindset of experimental researcher/philosophers. Juneau projects have linked works such as *Walkman/lake* (where a walkman playing Strauss is lowered into the beautiful setting of

Lake Coniston) to ideas from painters of the sublime in landscape such as Friedrich.



Edwin Aitken, "Life and death"

A lecture by Andy Parsons, 2007.