

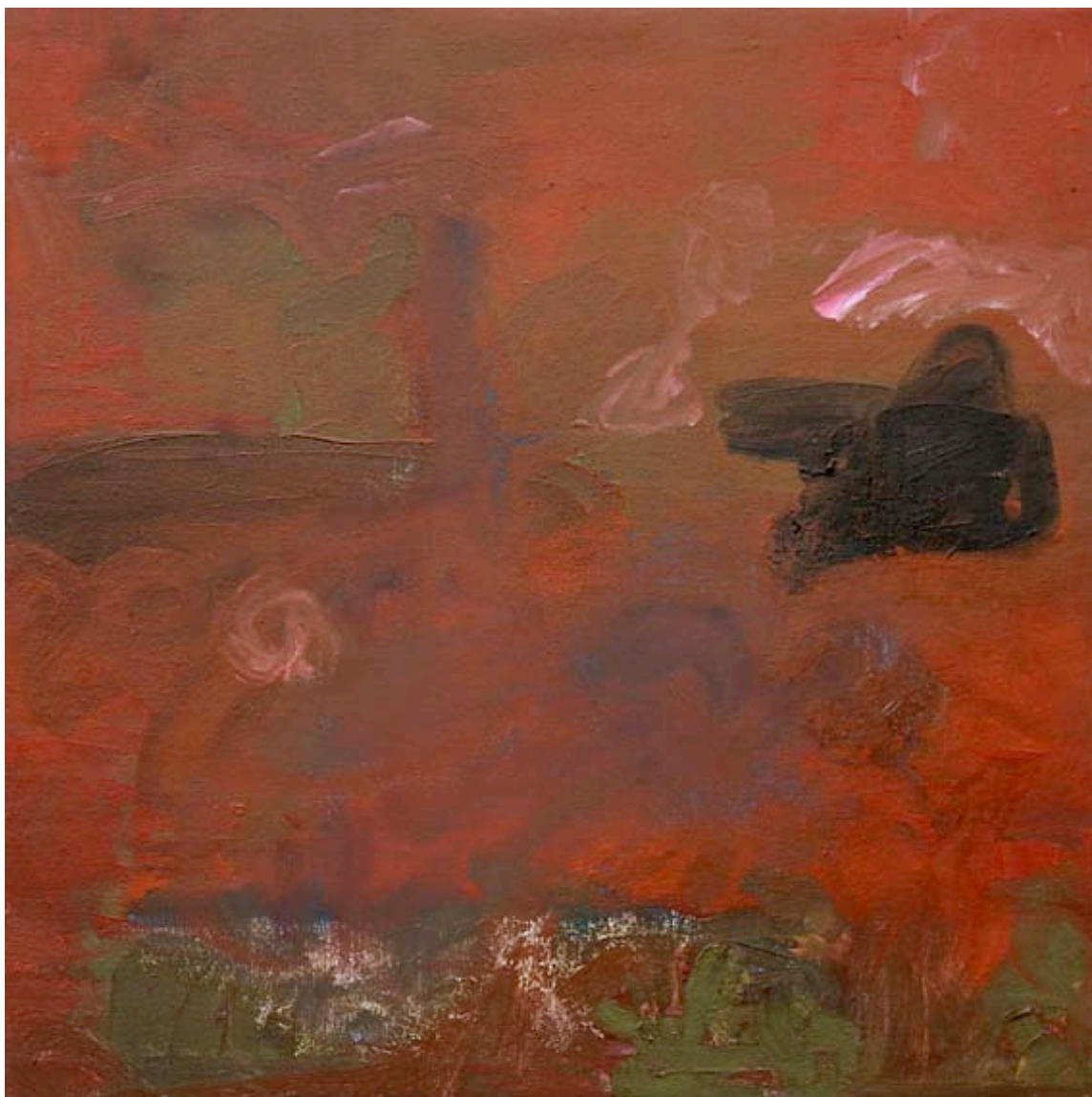
## Thierry Diers

*Facing the depths of time* - landscapes 1974/ 2014

May 15th – June 21th, 2014

Opening, Saturday May 17th

Johannes Wetzel's, Daniel Dobbels's, Alain Daill's, texts



« Sans titre », 2014, oil on canvas, 50 x 50 cm

When, together with the artist, we start on looking at a selection of his works dealing with landscape over 40 years, an expression often reappears : in his paintings he says he is searching for “the thickness of things”. It seems to convey the thickness of the painting : all of them are born from a long process of work. Coats of paint are laid upon the others, colours blend together, threaten each other, get soiled, interfere. One has to be aware of the thickness in touching the surface of the canvas which is recovered with his favourite paint, oil paint, thick and smooth : “It is essential to touch the canvas”, he says. There is a “pleasure in the material”, one has to smell the painting : “When I enter an exhibition which touches me, I visit it with my nose and tears come up to my eyes. It shines, it stirs up”. He even turns his back to the paintings – “ and I am listening”. That is how the thickness of things is rediscovered.

The artist gladly describes his method of working : he puts his marks “at the four corners”, then he starts painting, with the large and wide strokes of his brushes which characterize most of his paintings. The difference with the drawings – which “ lighten the spirit” and allow to develop a “vocabulary” – is that oil paint dries off slowly. Using oil paint obliges you to go back to the painting the following day and the day after. So there is sometimes an overbid “ of elements of writing” he will finally recover as with a veil in order to leave only a few remaining essential signs which he “confirms”. “It seems to be thrown, just like a cry, but it is very long to come”, the artist says. Through this slow sedimentation of many months of work, time itself is present in the painting.

Then, “all of a sudden”, the work is finished. It “works”, Thierry Diers says, as if he talked about an artificial heart. A few decades later, it is still working. “During the rereading of my work and thanks to distance, I have noticed that this writing is still alive”.



*« Souvenir de paysage, 1979, oil on canvas, 97x130 cm*

The appropriation of the canvas is slow and difficult. These canvasses are already a space in themselves which needs to be controlled : one of his paintings is precisely called “ Til the end” – because this painting leads to physical exhaustion. In order to have the same intensity in the large canvas and the little drawing, you need to fight, “ a match”, you need to climb up a ladder, draw back, move forward, look, take back. You also need to be psychologically well : “You leave your life there”, Thierry Diers says. So, for two years (1995-1996) he stopped painting : “ I made a survey of my paintings, I tidied up the workshop...”. Because “ in painting, you are on a string. People which say that painting is pleasant have never painted”. Pleasant, no, “necessary” yes. Thierry Diers remembers a recent reading, a passage from a book by Jean d’Ormesson whose title is melancholic : *“Un jour, je m’en irai sans en avoir tout dit”*. Thierry Diers underlined in it a few sentences : “ I have known jubilation and I have known anguish. I have spent most of my life to scribble pages and pages which I threw away as I blackened them. I was desperate. I fell asleep on my work. I hated what I was doing and I hated myself. And then, all of a sudden, I rose above my lowness. I was inhabited by some sort of grace. The words came to my mind by themselves. They followed naturally. They did not even come out of me. They came from somewhere else. They came through me. They used me to be written on the paper”. This jubilation and this despair, the painter says, he knows them : “It hurts you, you are afraid but you know you must do it. There is something which seizes you, you feel like being on a wave, you are surfing and it comes out, it comes out...but it doesn’t come out of you, that is the mystery of it. That is the depths of things”.

This neverending come back in front of the canvas creates a space on the canvas. Space is the theme of the exhibition which this book illustrates. Moreover a few paintings are entitled “space”. One can often set apart a foreground from a background. Sometimes one identifies the upper part and the lower part, the sky, the ground, the sea, a skyline, as in “landscape” (1979) or “remembrance of a landscape – yellow” (1979). In other paintings, these quick lines are maybe traces of grass, of boughs, of birds in the sky. Thus they are “landscapes”.



*« Intense, jusqu'à l'épuisement », 1997, oil on canvas, 97 x 130 cm*



The “landscape” is the painter’s constant concern. In order to realise it, you just have to leaf through the latest book and the previous catalogues, which were published in 2001 and 2010. You can already find in them respectively an essay entitled “the world is a landscape” and a chapter “space and landscape”.

Where does this love of his for landscape originate from in him ? “ I was born in a town which is far from being pleasant, bombed and rebuilt too hastily and whose soul is coming back along the years”. On one side, there is industry, spread over kilometres”, on the other the border with Belgium, “which you have to cross”. Behind, “a landscape which I like, a belly which has been ripped open and which is not particularly beautiful, the plain of Flanders”. And finally, facing it, “you look at the sea, a magnificent sea. I have always taken delight in walking along it, on these boundless sand beaches. The sand prickles your skin when you, as a kid, are in your bathing costume. The sky is grey, the sea has ebbed back, and the glistening sand is grey and merges into the grey sky, the temperature is cool, there is the wind, the smell and bliss. When you are anguished, you just need to go to the beach in order to relax. When you fail your driving test, when you are in love, you go to the beach to shout out. That is where I feel well. And you walk, you walk in your head. The landscape is the one you have in your head, it is the one I paint”.

At the age of 18, Thierry Diers paints the landscape he can see from the terrace of his grandparents’ house (1973) : “It is a vast plain with a wood in the far distance and behind it there is the town of Hazebrouck...”, the artist says. But painting is but “the evocation” of it . They are “mental” or “reconstituted landscapes”, which can sometimes be decipherable, like “strolling in the landscape” (1979), which, with its shadows of armchairs, reminds you once more of a terrace. The artist sometimes even identifies them : it is the case for “great canal” (1999) or “ rowing on the great canal (1999), which are remembrances of the years he spent in Versailles. Even if, as the artist says, these titles are attributed to the paintings a long time after they were created.



*«Grand Canal», 1999, acrylic on canvas, 146x114 cm*

He arrived in Paris at the age of 24, and then begin the “uneasy” years when he paints “in a grey empty room devoid of any view”, “remembrance landscapes” which recall the “style” of the Northern painters whom he was acquainted with, Yvan Theys, who was very close to the Cobra movement, his teacher at Saint-Luc in Tournai, Eugène Dodeigne, Eugène Leroy, Marc Ronet. Besides, he is “influenced by expressionism and by a tradition in Flemish painting”, though he makes it clear that there “was a cultural border” at that time : “When you lived in Dunkerque, people mentioned Paris...”. As a teenager, alone he discovered James Ensor, Paul Delvaux, (his neighbours in Ostende and in Furnes), then followed Constant Permeke, Léon Spilliaert, Roger Raveel. The “neo-expressionists” Georg Baselitz or M. R. Penck remain references for Thierry Diers, just like Pollock’s abstract expressionism whose 1982 retrospective left its stamp on him. Then the Robert Ryman’s, Cy Twombly’s and Philipp Guston’s exhibitions will follow suit.

Thierry Diers knows perfectly the painters who preceded him. The Art historians explain that it is in particular landscape painting which gave birth to abstract art. The tree motif, which often recurs in Thierry Diers’ paintings but reduced to its outline or just to a trunk, a branch, a leaf, works like a wink at this origin. Even if Thierry Diers’ personal mythology links this sign to the tree-emblem of his grandparents’ brewery.

*Johannes Wetzel, Paris, March 2014*



*«Sans titre», 2014, oil on canvas, 27x35 cm*

The painting of T.D. moves forward – without breaking the angles but not flattening them either to the point where his silence and his grand gesture, a sound could emit, from a bush or a desert zone (complex zone). A sound, a shrill voice, no a cry, not even a lovers' breath, but a latent clause, his virtual revival. The paintings come forward board by board ... and it is thanks to its possible deconstruction that a painting composes itself. The painting organizes itself, but as the force to quieten the force of order (too quickly uttered). The painting conjugates the arc and the boomerang, the smile and the freezing of the start. It seeks and finds the address. It is sufficient for us, today, to note down this in order not to forget.

*Daniel DOBBELS - Paris, May 1988, Choreographer and art critic*



*«Instabilité d'une certitude », 1989, acrylic on canvas, 200x150 cm*

« The gray of the North falls like a screed. But the gray, the simple gray is not enough to tell, to tell everything, to capture what is unleashed and never will it be enough. The gray of all grays bursts out of the night, nights of disorder, always nights of high times, the tumult of the formless that still obscures, when great boards of these thick nights between the banks stops connecting only darkness, and the dawn arrives.

Neither white nor black, the great gray of all the grays lands, enters and floods the canvas. The gray of dawn and the collapse of the world, the gray of the cities that glow in the rain, the gray of ports and seas, of marshes and skies, the gray of words and invented memories that built the imaginary, those of the North and elsewhere, now or aforesaid, the gray of a bird's song and its suspended notes, the gray of the invisible colors, light as a breath awaiting its time, lurking in the memory of the painter.

The gray that comes from chaos and leaps like lava when the painter puts his life in it, for painting is a perilous adventure.

The day arrives : every morning is the beginning of the world. ».../...

*Alain Daill, extract of Thierry Diers's monograph, 2010*



*«Sans titre », 1986, acrylic on canvas, 162x130 cm*





*«A la recherche», 2010, oil on canvas, 50x60 cm*



Thierry D I E R S

1954 à Dunkerque France  
Lives and works in Paris

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Training :

1971-1978      Painting, Architecture and Design :  
Institut supérieur Saint Luc de Wallonie- site de Tournai- Belgium

Workshops : Paul Roland et Yvan Theys.

### **Group exhibitions**

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13			
Galerie Duboys	Paris		
Galerie Convergences	Paris		
11			
Galerie Duboys	Paris		
10			
Galerie Duboys	Paris		
06			
Pernod- Ricard	Paris		
Galerie Détour « Double jeu »	Namur	Belgique	
05			
Private Art Collector	Cork	Irlande	
VanRam Art Galleries	Gand	Belgique	
Pernod- Ricard « Open encounter »	Paris		
04			
Private Art Collector	Cork	Irlande	
VanRam Art Galleries	Gand	Belgique	
03			
Private Art Collector	Dublin	Irlande	
VanRam Art Galleries	Gand	Belgique	
Label Friche « les galerie éphémères »	La Perrière		
02			
Galerie Léonardis/ Kriessler	Oberursel	Allemagne	
01			
Galerie Apicella	Cologne	Allemagne	
00			
Collection de l'Université (ULB)	Bruxelles	Belgique	

## Personal exhibitions

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12	Galerie Duboys « Dess(e)in »	Paris	
10	Galerie Duboys « Bleu, jaune, rouge »	Paris	
08	VanRam Art Gallerie	Gand	Belgique
06	VanRam Art Gallerie	Gand	Belgique
05	Private Art Collector	Cork	Irlande
04	Le Monde à l'envers « Le son que j'ai vu » Marciac L'Oréal (siège social) « Le son que j'ai vu » Clichy		
03	VanRam Art Galleries Galerie Apicella « A la lisière » Private Art Collector « Rencontre »	Gand Cologne Dublin	Belgique Allemagne Irlande
02	Galerie Léonardis/ Kriessler Deutsche Bank (siège social)	Oberursel Franckfurt	Allemagne Allemagne
00	Galerie Bruno Delarue	Paris	

## Collections

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AUTOMOBILES PEUGEOT	Paris, Sochaux
BNP PARIBAS	Strasbourg, Singapour, Velizy
CARAT	Paris
CABLECOM	Paris
CROSS international	Gand
EVEREST	Nanterre
Fond National d'Art Contemporain	Paris - La Défense
FIRMENICH	Neuilly sur seine, Genève
FRANCE TELECOM	Paris
GALDERMA	Paris
HERTA, Nestlé	Emmerainville, Hambourg
INSCAPE	Tokyo
KLEBER PALACE (Costes)	Paris
KPMG	Lille
MARTELL & CO	Cognac
NATIONAL GALLERY	Alaanbaataar - Mongolie
NELLENS	Knokke le zoute
PERNOD RICARD	Paris
ULB (Université)	Bruxelles
VIVENDI	Hong Kong

### Galleries and private individuals :

Area, Appicella, Claire Burrus, Boulakia, Bruno Delarue, Duboys, Montenay- Delsol, Yvon Lambert, Private Art Collector, Jacob, Vanram.

Allemagne, Belgique, Chine, Canada, Etats-Unis, France, Hollande, Hong-Kong, Irlande, Italie, Japon, Liban, Luxembourg, Mongolie, Russie