



Pictures Of The Month

A picture for each month

Johann Widmer

Volume 2
2016 - 2022

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Illustrations

Photos of works by the author from 2016 - 2022

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Foreword

Already a well-known representative of the “Arte Povera” movement, in the late 1990s Johann Widmer began to explore the field of abstract, informal painting.

His credo was that all the arts (including music and literature) are important pillars of our civilisation and should therefore be made accessible to everyone by various means.

In addition to his extensive artistic output, Johann Widmer has always written short stories for young and old. But he avoids the term “writer”. He sees himself more as an art mediator and is pleased when his books are read.

Starting in August 2009, he dedicated a picture to each month, which he accompanied with a matching text.

Volume 2 is a collection of these “monthly pictures” from 2016 to 2022.

The texts are not intended to influence the viewer’s own imagination when looking at the pictures, but they may suggest a way of looking at the picture.

These monthly pictures were published each month on the internet at www.johann-widmer.ch.

His books are available at www.epubli.de and in bookshops.
Zurich, July 2022, Johann Widmer Junior

Pictures 2016 Freedom

January 2016



Freedom, a big word with many aspects.

A human dream which is repeatedly trampled on. A utopia which continuously destroys itself. Freedom from the shackles of slavery, only to be enslaved again in new entanglements. Freedom of opinion, provided the opinions are compliant.

Freedom of the press, provided it speaks in the interest of the backers and powers that be.

Freedom of thought, if one can think at all.

Freedom of lifestyle, provided that economic issues have been resolved.

How much freedom can a man cope with without penning himself in with laws, rules, regulations and orders?

Freedom, is it just a delusion?

And art, how much freedom can it cope with? Since the 20th century, "art" has been a very broad term, so broad that I could sign any old object and declare it art.

Art was always linked to freedom, even if it was just the freedom of the artist to starve, at the time when a Van Gogh could still be had in exchange for a sandwich.

That was then! Nowadays we have the freedom to pay millions for a genuine Van Gogh.

Nowadays no one has to starve any more (if you don't count mental and emotional starvation).

That this picture is entitled "Freedom" may perhaps surprise you.

But it is not an allegory, there is no intellectual edifice behind it.

It is one of the artist's vivid dreams.

It is the colours' music which aims to convey the broad, elusive concept of "freedom". It is just one of endless ways of portraying his feeling of what "freedom" is.

And if anyone doesn't like the title, they can change it as they wish:

that is their freedom

Heroic Landscape

February 2016



If we turn our gaze outwards, we initially perceive the surrounding area, then a little further outwards, as the background or backdrop, the view, fades away into the landscape; then the outer landscape, a photograph of the background, which usually ends with a horizon.

If we look inward, we can perceive an inner landscape, the landscape in our head which consists of dreams, imagination, emotion, intuition and aptitude. It is not a landscape of which one can take photos. And usually this landscape is hard to describe in words, it works much better with music or painting.

The Arabic world traveller Ibn Battuta (14th century) thought that the landscape - i.e. geography, topography and climate - shapes people; so that in comparable, similar

areas, similar human characteristics develop, and cultures resemble each other, with similar customs and traditions. The land of our childhood, the landscape which we grow up in, has a big influence on us. The Dutchman in his flat land often takes a different view of things, values things differently from someone from the Engadin in the Alps where high mountains form the horizon all around. A resident of the Mediterranean coast has a different opinion on winter from a resident on the shore of Lake Baikal. Where the one feels safe, the other feels threatened.

And then there is the sky above the horizon. At the North Sea, the vast canopy of heaven spans the landscape, reaching down as far as the low-lying dividing line between air and water. Man lives in the sky, so to speak.

In stark contrast - our cities. Sometimes you can sense the bright strip of sky above the deep street canyons, but mainly our gaze discerns concrete, asphalt, glass and some kind of flashing lights. Man can barely move spontaneously, he is moved around and often forgets that there is a sky high above his stone dungeon.

Considering that the inner landscape which we carry inside us is greatly influenced by the outer one, one might well ask where the present urbanisation is leading to.

Can it be counteracted with landscape paintings? That would please the painter

Still Life

March 2016



A still life is a kind of landscape. Artificially created topography that looks randomly generated. In reality, everything is neatly and deliberately arranged. Composition, shape and colour have to be right. Sometimes, the collection of fruit, vegetables, flowers, glasses and other objects seems to have a common denominator, but often it is difficult to comprehend how a dead chicken, a tobacco pipe and a bunch of roses are linked with each other. A fantasy of the artist.

What does the painter actually want to achieve by painting a still life?

Nowadays one would probably think of Gauguin's still life with ham as a commercial for farm produce. Was it a study for a painting? The result of hunger? (Could have been understandable with Gauguin.) The French term "nature

morte" points in a different direction, here we have not only immovable objects lying still, but also the concept of "dead nature". A picture of plucked flowers, empty bottles, dead birds and pigs turned into sausages. Allegory.

So our picture "Still Life with Dead Fish" is not for vegetarians. Understandable if you think that the fish is watching with unblinking eyes as he is eaten bit by bit. This needs strong nerves. *Memento mori*.

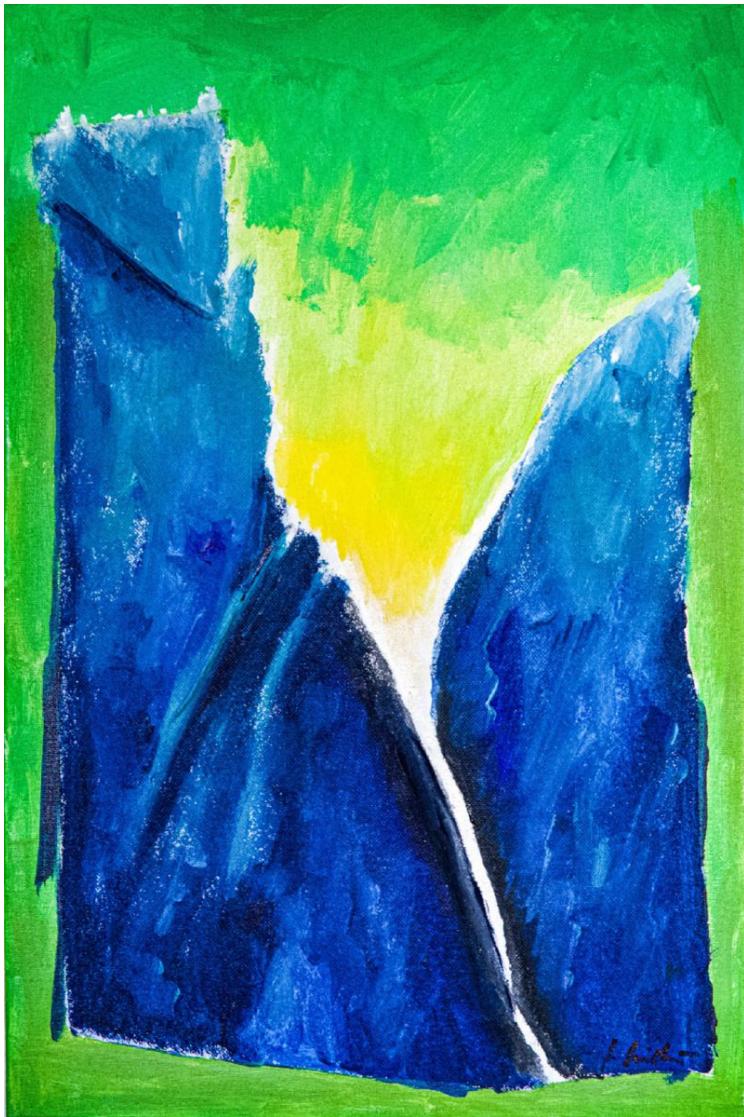
Today's eating culture is also celebrated as "still life" in the form of nouvelle cuisine. Here you aren't just given a big spoon any more so that you can scoff it down in a hurry. Instead a grand culinary work of art is first presented to the eye as a small portion and then relished with great pleasure. "Food Art".

Postmodern still life.

Art rarely fills your belly, but there are the kebab stalls to do that.

Resurrection

April 2016



Resurrection. Reincarnation, or whatever you might call it, is always hard to comprehend. It is as if the iron laws of nature cease to apply, because death all of a sudden does not seem to mean dead anymore. Being dead as the definite endpoint of life.

But the thought of resurrection is a fascinating concept. It is the core of many religions, because it offers solace and

hope that, after our short guest appearance on Earth, there is an answer to the anxious question "Was that it?" The eternal cycle of nature consists of "being born, living and dying", "spring, summer, au- tumn, winter and spring ...". From the dry flower bulb, a magnificent lily emerges, the seed turns into a green, living plant, what was thought to be lifeless is reawakened to new life, death and life become the cycle of immortality. There is no place for everlasting disappearance into Hades. Death is not the absolute end and birth is not a unique be- ginning.

There is always a before and an after. Resurrection as a lifeline.

Hope for all those mortals who work determinedly on their immortality. Reincarnation means immortality, too. Hope for a revised version of a botched life.

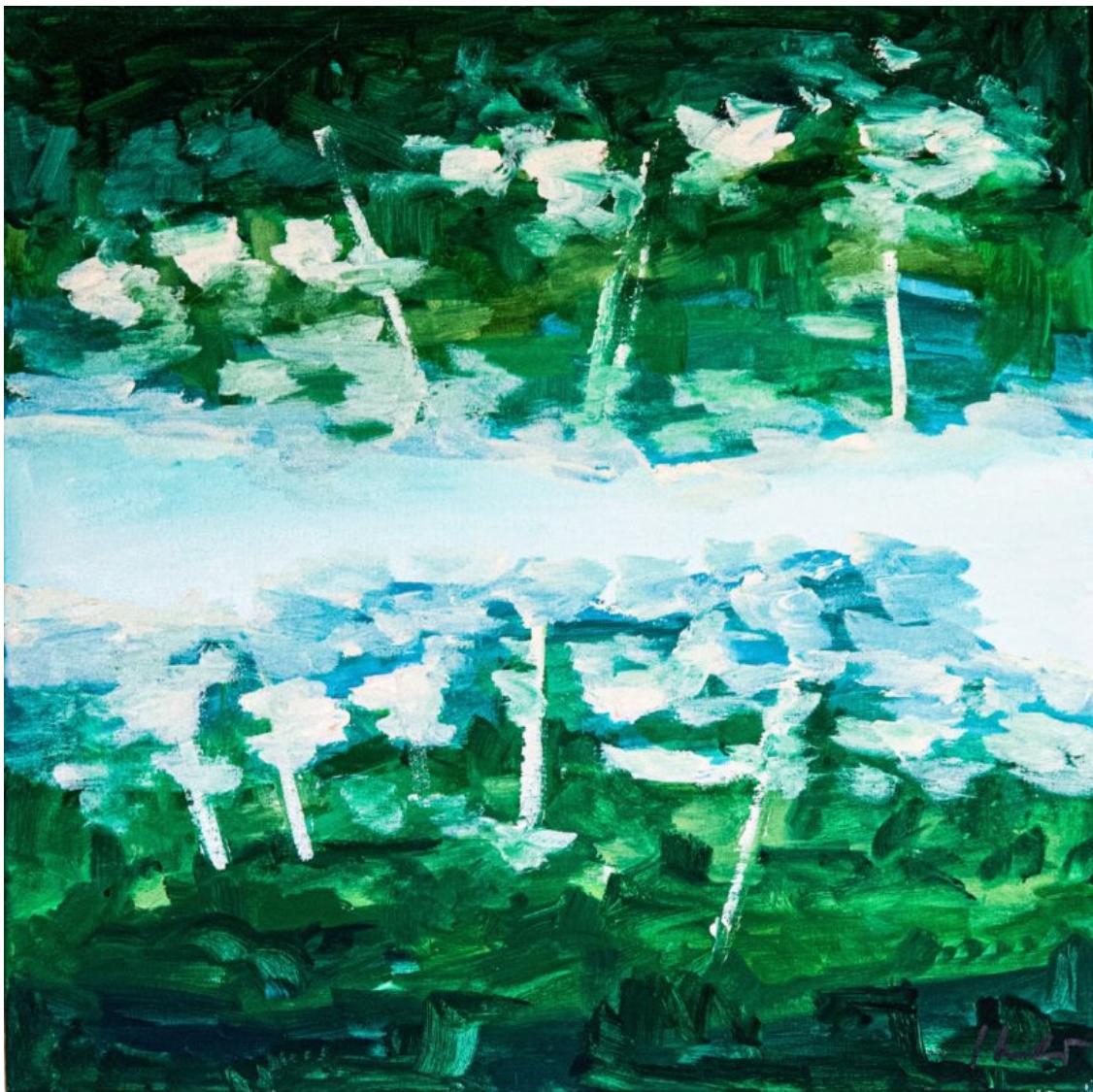
Hope for eternal life for lost souls, the living dead who crowd the pedestrianised zones of our cities. Is there any room left for spiritual belief amongst all that con- sumerism and obsession with distraction and fun?

The certain knowledge that, sooner or later, my thread of life will also break has to be somehow suppressed, so let us amuse ourselves to death.

Have fun!

Garden

May 2016



“And the Lord God planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.”

How we forfeited this garden, everyone knows and ever since we have probably been dreaming of the lost paradise, despite our planet offering a wonderful and extremely nice exile. A bright, life-sustaining oasis in dark, endlessly life-threatening surroundings.

Admittedly, most of us have to earn our daily bread by the sweat of our brow, as promised, and this evokes in many a longing for a lovely little Garden of Eden, for an oasis of calm and leisure, a gentle landscape, quiet, harmonious colours, a garden of inner equilibrium and tranquillity. Green is the dominant colour. Green is easy on the eye and the soul. A bright glimmer hovers above it, a clear light envelops us, flooding through us like soft, inaudible and yet perceptible music. The longing for inner peace and harmony.

In a Sufi community in the Sahara desert each family owns a small palm tree grove enclosed by high walls to which old people retire after having handed over their business to the young, and there they will spend the rest of their days, reading the Koran, discussing and philosophising with their neighbours and enjoying their small gardens until they are able to move on into Allah's big garden. Allotments, too, the hobby gardeners' plots at the edge of the city, are for many people like little paradises - which can easily turn into a green hell if your awkward neighbour does not like you enjoying a cool beer instead of killing off weeds and caterpillars. Then we realise that maybe, on this planet, we do have to surround our paradises with high walls. The light and dark sides of earthly Gardens of Eden. Often in the dark shadow lurks a nasty garden gnome. Many do not feel like frittering their precious time away in a garden, but even they will find their gardens, albeit their final ones, flourishing on the mounds of earth atop their coffins.

Whether they will really be able to enjoy this garden then, I do not know. There would be no shortage of (precious) time any more anyway.

Naturally, a garden is not all about leisure and contemplation, it also involves lots of the sweat and tears to which, after all, we are ultimately condemned. But again, the fruit of this effort is a return to the lost paradise. This miniature world that still knows the seasons, where the