

Another attempt to draw nearer to art through inadequate means...

By Rupert Gredler

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Artspace Viehhauser

Two artists, two sisters, two artists

Ngaio Macfarlane, Helen Macfarlane, two artists, two sisters, are exhibiting their work here in the Vierhauser Art Space and I believe they are doing this together in this concentrated way, for the very first time. The notion "two" is programmatic/binary in this case, as they both confront us with the diametrically placed poles of their existential orientation/perspective. Both carry this topography inside, both formulate their artistic point of view, each at one end of this pole: each at opposite ends of the pole:

Ngaio and the pastoral

Helen and exposure

By postulating "pastoral" I would like to express the following: Ngaio Macfarlane shows us in her painting and in her photographically worked pictures, large surfaced landscapes, views, perspectives, fantastically painted overviews and extracts. Constant, vivid, thoroughly structured, cultural landscapes, resembling a map comprised of small, finely ordered geographical elements. With particular emphasis on order and structure, the artist spans a fantastic colour space cupola, as I would like to call it, over this landscape, swathing this small world as an idyll, in an incredibly delicate and sensitive way. I would have to sit next to the artist and look over her shoulder to see which tools she uses to allow the alienated elements to flow into this picture, for these alienations are present quite obviously in this Tiger, perceptible but subliminal. This leads me to the second central concept, which is of

considerable importance for me in the works of Ngaio Macfarlane.

The concept of the "threshold".

We feel the longing for expanse, for open skies, space and limitlessness and at the same time the artist fixes limits and blurred elements for us: as if she wanted to send us out into the unfathomable distance and at the same time bring us back to the fenced, walled square of meadow, to the field of sheep or the little country lane with the pub. I think it is quite clear to the artist if she has stepped over the threshold to the unfathomable or into the confines of civilized spaces. In this field of conflict, Ngaio gives us some wonderful support, she releases us into the labyrinth of our own desires, with a tent of all colours on our back. It makes no difference where we are: I give you your colour and you are at home.

These thresholds are of course dependent of respective cultural circles in which these works are presented, this threshold will probably not be able to be perceived by everyone – it is very cautiously, and cleverly set, a seriously risky endeavour in today's such loud times. Cautiousness and sensitivity are not exactly current key concepts and yet the cautiously set threshold is exactly what makes these works so incredibly alluring.

Helen and exposure | the sister at the other end of the pole.

If you cross this threshold, if you set off on a journey, if you wish to explore order, if you go abroad, you expose yourself, you have to reckon with the fact you may only understand a part of the language, that you may misunderstand the subliminal messages or wrongly interpret them. That is the price to pay for the unheard new things which arise on journeys. It is not surprising that

Helen Macfarlane, in her artistic style, reacts with personal trepidation. For these small pictures with their incredibly vulnerable charm, are personal trepidation. Intoxicating in their immediacy and directness, and at the same time destructive. Dear Helen, where is your filter, where have you left your protective mask? What you are showing us is no less risky than the game your sister plays with the threshold.

And yet, this private framework, this protected space is so suitable for you to bring your little theatrical pieces to people, challenging them to hear you say: look here – look at what I see, that I suffer and above all that I draw and paint and do so much better than some may like! We may already have seen some of these works in the Garagengalerie and can thus appreciate how changeable good art is, dependent on the location where they are being shown. The vulnerability in private settings can be thoroughly accusatory and even cutting in a semi-public space. Whether private or public there is a jolted (not shaken) dimension of poetry in all works by Helen Macfarlane and Ngaio Macfarlane. There is also a poetry of lightness in some works.

Any bait laid by these sisters will entice the observer and captivate them for moments.

Allow me to speak about the poetry of longing in both sisters. It is expanse, it is the idyll, it is the dream of colour, it is peace, it is light or tranquillity. At the best, all of it and now and always. And yet so difficult to hold.

And this is why both are perpetually moving, drawing, painting, photographing and allowing us to join them a little, tramping in their tracks on the landscape of Somerset and the light of dusk on Crook Peak .

Dear audience, don't let me confuse you, hang on tightly to the source, hold on tightly to the artists Ngaio and Helen Macfarlane, to both sisters, and you will get all that art can do.

Thank you

Speech by Rupert Gredler