



Nature Studies is a two-part, semester-long group exhibition which presents the landscape/nature genre in contemporary painting and photography. Nature Studies I, on view from September 9 through October 20, features paintings by David Bierk, Michael De Jong, Catherine Murphy, Joan Nelson, Alexis Rockman, Rick Shaefer, and Brenda Zlamany. On view from November 3 through December 15, Nature Studies II presents photographs by Peter Campus, Gregory Crewdson, Eldon Garnet, Andreas Gursky, Zoe Leonard, John Pfahl, Gary Schneider and Hiroshi Sugimoto. Both parts of Nature Studies will address the ways that we construct our view of the landscape, and the exchange that often occurs between the mediums of painting and photography.

The majority of the artists included in Nature Studies I are not as involved with the observation of nature or even its representation as much as they comment upon art historical styles and painterly devices by which nature has been perceived--the tradition of representation. These styles have become rooted in shared memory by means of illustrations, various reproductions, photographs and films contributing to our expectations of what landscapes "look like" and, consequently, what they signify. Pure landscape first emerged as an original subject matter during the 16th century and became especially popular in Holland during the 17th century along with the still life genre. Both landscape and still life are typically void of figuration and narrative, yet have the strange ability to carry feelings full of psychological suggestions or to imply cultural perspectives. In their absence of any isolated and obvious content, landscape and still life subjects have also been seen as forerunners of the formal and painterly concerns of abstract art.

Inspiration for the works on view run a rich gamut in sensibility from the intense mini-dramas of Otto Marseus van Schrieck's (Dutch, 1619/20-78) woodland scenes, to the pristine yet atmospheric pastorals of Jacob van Ruisdael (Dutch, 1628/29-82) to the nostalgic panoramas of Frederick Edwin Church (American, 1826-1900). The range of perspectives presented to the viewer is also broad: One has both feet firmly planted on the ground in Catherine Murphy's severely cropped and concentrated depictions of non-spectacular scenes, has bird-like flight in the softly glowing paintings of David Bierk, and is engulfed in Rick Shaefer's surreal magnifications of overgrown foliage and insect dynamics whereas the simple compositions of Brenda Zlamany's free-floating creatures make for visual

disorientation. In making their work, all of the artists tend to be studio-based and proceed from using a combination of memory, sketches, photographs, and invention, and, express true originality in the creative modernization of traditional formats and principles.

In conjunction with Nature Studies I, the Gallery has planned three related events. On Friday, October 13, Tony Hiss, a nationally known writer on the science of place, will present a slide talk about the way we look at and deal with our urban and rural environments. A staff writer at The New Yorker for over 30 years, Mr. Hiss has contributed to a variety of other publications and is also the author of six books, the most recent of which is The Experience of Place (Knopf, 1990). The talk will take place at 7:30 p.m. in Herter Hall 231. This event has been generously supported by the Department of Landscape Architecture and the College of Humanities and Fine Arts.

Annaliese Bischoff, Director of the Environmental Design Program, Department of Landscape Architecture, will lead a workshop the following day, Saturday, October 14, exploring how places shape us and how we are motivated to shape them. Participants will meet at the Gallery for some preparatory remarks, and then will reconvene at sites in Shelburne Falls and Buckland. Although this event is free of charge, it is necessary to call the Gallery by September 29 to reserve a place and to receive further information. The workshop is limited to 30 participants.

The film Zoo (USA 1993; 130 minutes) by Frederick Wiseman will be screened on Wednesday, October 18 in Bartlett Hall 65. Zoo is a documentary about the Miami Zoo that shows the interrelationships between animals and people, whether staff members or visitors, as well as a variety of issues involved in operating such an institution. Carolyn Anderson, Associate Professor, Department of Communication, will provide a short introduction to the film. Dr. Anderson is the co-author of Reality Fictions: The Films of Frederick Wiseman (Southern Illinois Press, 1989). The talk and screening will begin at 7 p.m.

The exhibition and related events have been supported in part by the generosity of the UMass Arts Council and the University Alumni Association.

The University Gallery, located on the lower level of the Fine Arts Center, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. The Gallery is also open during evening performances held in the Concert Hall of the Fine Arts Center. For further information regarding Gallery programs, please call (413) 545-3670.