MATRIX 213

Some Forgotten Place

Karin Mamma Andersson
Amy Cutler
Makiko Kudo
Saskia Leek
James Morrison
Aaron Morse
Wilhelm Sasnal
Amelie von Wulffen

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University of California
Berkeley Art Museum
Karin Mamma Andersson
Loiter on the Way Home
Landscape painting used to be categorized, along with still life and paintings of ships and animals, as decorative—pleasing backgrounds to civilized living. In keeping with the MATRIX tradition of facilitating new, open modes of analysis, *Some Forgotten Place* presents the work of eight contemporary international artists who explore landscape as an intellectually and emotionally charged space: Karin Mamma Andersson (Sweden), Amy Cutler (United States), Makiko Kudo (Japan), Saskia Leek (New Zealand), James Morrison (Australia), Aaron Morse (United States), Wilhelm Sasnal (Poland), and Amelie von Wulffen (Germany). These artists challenge the principal historical types of landscape painting (symbolic, factual, ideal, pastoral, and artificial); in the process they incorporate a range of unexpected elements including myth, dreams, imagination, personal narrative, abstraction, and the psychological.

Landscape has been variously defined as everything that is not society, what you see when you go outside, and an expanse of scenery that can be witnessed from a single view. Alexander Wilson, considered the father of American ornithology, suggested that landscape is a type of “activity,” defined as “a way of seeing the world and imagining our relationship to nature.”¹ What motivates the desire to connect with a physical space? Art historian Lucy Lippard writes, “The lure of the local is the pull of place that operates on each of us, exposing our politics and our spiritual
legacies. It is the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere, one antidote to a prevailing alienation." Perhaps as a means of countering widespread “bad news, war reports, and devastating images of terror,” artists and others begin to search out or, if need be, create for themselves “places offering refuge and protection.” As the desire becomes increasingly pronounced, the yearning becomes focused on “an ideal world”: “The symbolically charged beauty of nature becomes an adequate expression of mood.” Some of the artists in Some Forgotten Place capture the uneasiness and gloom of current realities while others offer hopeful alternatives—places where we might someday have an opportunity to be.

Some Forgotten Place is the first group exhibition in the MATRIX Program’s twenty-six year history. It comes at a time when painting is experiencing a resurgence, exemplified by several important survey exhibitions including Painting at the Edge of the World (2001) at the Walker Art Center, Painting on the Move (2002) at the Kunstmuseum and Kunsthalle Basel, and The Undiscovered Country (opening October 2004) at the UCLA Hammer Museum of Art. In the 2004 Whitney Biennial, painting comprised nearly a fifth of the exhibition. Seemingly unperturbed by questions regarding their relevance, importance, and function, painters and paintings abound globally.

In a thoughtful essay that considers how to curate an effective group show, critic and curator Ralph Rugoff argues for exhibitions that encourage the viewer to “actively seek out uncertainty.” For, he writes, “it is precisely when we are unsure of something that our curiosity is aroused, and that we then tend to regard it more closely, consider it more carefully, and in the end, experience it more intensely.” Lippard writes that landscape can be seen only if you are looking; she states a goal for art and artists to “give’ places back to people who can no longer see them.” Some Forgotten Place is as much about looking, seeing, seeking, and remembering as it is about place, paint, and history.
Makiko Kudo
Going Out for Ramen
Amelie von Wulffen’s large-scale watercolor and collage works on paper convey a space that is simultaneously imagined and recorded. The main character in her projected world is the artist, surrounded by what she admires: old paintings and furniture, John Travolta and Solzhenitsyn, trees, lakes, and sunrises. Moody, evocative, quintessentially romantic, her works employ colorful planes of gestured brushstrokes to mesmerize the viewer. In one work, an image with a few people at a beach almost imperceptibly transitions into a body of water rendered in brushstrokes. Here it is only the rip in the paper that signals an awakening from what is otherwise arranged just as it might be in a movie, mind, or dream space. In the middle of Untitled (Sunset/Fax Machine/Schiele) (2003) is a photograph of two surfers sitting on their boards as the sun begins to set. Von Wulffen mirrors and extends the colors of the sky and the corresponding reflection on the water into a fantastical grotto space overlaid with a henna tattoo–type flower and floating art and antiques. The odd accumulation of the familiar, discombobulated, creates a suspended reality.

Amy Cutler’s original myths feature women, most of whom have the face of the artist, engaged in arduous, surreal activities. Attempting to escape a task, a place, or the stereotypical assignment of feminine roles (bearing children, doing household chores), her characters exist amid a dizzying collection of references. Magic and grotesquerie, European castles and Shaker dresses are rendered in minute perfection. With the action surrounded by a great mass of blank white paper, these paintings initially seem dreamlike. However, the absence of location ultimately feels punishing, a type of purgatory devoid of time and space: a landscape of stagnation and futility. In Preceding (2004), the women huddle, alone or in pairs, to form a loosely organized group. They wear hats, coats, and snowshoes, tote crops, and are accompanied by snowmen riding sleds. Some have cloth bands tied around their upper arms. There are no apparent relationships, no clear-cut activity, and no goal in sight. While their actions and
Saskia Leek
Dust and Water
placement could be voluntary, the harshness of the barren white landscape conveys a sense of outside directive, forced labor, and involuntary movement. The women pictured in Waders (2003) convey the opposite psychological state: they appear to be on their way somewhere, and their actions seem fierce, innovative, and collaborative, their outlook determined and hopeful. Their freedom will also be hard won, but their chances of survival seem high.

The paintings of Mamma Andersson address the complex relationship between the individual and history. They are set in a mythical northern landscape where things previously thought familiar morph to reveal themselves as frightening. Ghosts—of people, places, and events—wander in and out of the works, generating an atmosphere that is both alienated and magical. In Loiter on the Way Home (2002), male and female figures radiate out over the landscape. Their heads point downward, as if all are looking for the same lost thing. What is missing, however, appears to be more substantial than an earring or a wallet—something simultaneously more essential and more abstract: one’s past, soul, or connection to the earth. The quest itself becomes a distraction—something to do, something that must be done—before returning home. The home depicted in In the Waiting Room (2003) is not the calm domestic space it initially appears. Two female figures, one reading and the other possibly painting, are being observed or guarded by a man whose presence is barely perceptible in a dark shadow just outside the window on the far right. The dissolving, pervasive whitish blob that seeps in from outside and permeates the intended safety and peace of the interior compounds the eeriness. Here the landscape, a symbol of awe-inspiring power and indeed the masculine, invades the domestic.

Aaron Morse’s vision of nature combines nineteenth-century romantic epics about the wild western frontier with contemporary popular sources and a futuristic vision of reality. In Hawkeye #2 (2004), five elongated vertical panels present landscapes,
close-ups, and abstract passages to form an action-based narrative sequence. Evocative of color field painting, the work’s historical narrative could easily be missed, allowing it to be read visually as pure abstraction. *The Beach* (2004) presents both an evolutionary and devolutionary range of life and land. In the ocean, the only element in the painting that is the color it “ought” to be, a parent shark swims surrounded by its young. The sand is brown, the sky maroon, and the haze off the mountains pink. A large sandpiper and crab fight over the remains of a human skull, and a perfect fish specimen lies belly-up. Here Morse presents an apocalyptic vision of nature in a society devoid of conservation policies and environmental protection. America the beautiful?

Claude Levi-Strauss wrote, “If you were to ask an American Indian, he would most likely tell you that [myth] is a story of the time before men and animals became distinct beings. This definition seems very profound to me.”

*Makiko Kudo*’s paintings featuring a girl/bird figure call to mind this observation. The central form in *Migratory Birds* (2001) visually morphs between a large blue bird with a pointy beak and a blue-faced girl with a red scarf and white hands. It/she floats above a simply rendered gray boulder and a fruit tree. The landscape elements are all depicted in the super-flat style typical of contemporary Japanese painting. The girl in *Going Out for Ramen* (2004) rides on the back of a bird nearly as large as she is. Anthropomorphic trees and clouds look on happily as she soars by. Like *Going Out for Ramen*, all of Kudo’s paintings are infused with the sweet longing of memory. In large-scale works characterized by abstract, monochromatic areas, she combines daily experience and observation, fantasy and imagination—a river seen while walking, her home, a cat, a floating moon in the night sky, a dreaming girl—into pictures in which multiple stories coexist. They radiate psychological depth and aesthetic flatness.
James Morrison’s gorgeously painted figurative works ooze narrative. In them, an eerie “wrongness” predominates. *Shawnee Oklahoma* (2004) juxtaposes a fall landscape and a foreground alive with burgeoning spring flowers. In *Northwest Territory (Canada)* (2004) an arctic fox prowls a snowy terrain beneath a blue parakeet. In *The Council* (2003) a variety of birds—tropical, domestic, endangered—meet with a monkey and a bear as if to decide on the fate of logging rights for their jungle. Morrison’s improbable scenes seem to question conventional histories and truths as well as the stories told by the canon of landscape painting. The places they depict hover between fantasy and reality, where we encounter the extremes of several seasons, generations, and species simultaneously. Morrison is interested in the history of how the natural world has been shown as well as in what has been left out by traditional Australian painters such as Namatjira. Acknowledging these “cultural complexities,” about his own work Morrison has said, “Now I am thinking that the absence [of an indigenous presence] is more telling than any trite symbolism I could conceive.” The worlds Morrison imagines are truly more imbued with opportunity for unexpected evolution and happy surprise than is everyday life.

Wilhelm Sasnal’s works can be so aesthetically varied the viewer might assume different artists had painted them. But it has been said that there are as many ways to paint the vast number of images in the world as there are ways of seeing and apprehending them. Inherent in Sasnal’s “everystyle” is an authorial sensibility that reflects his political, moral, and aesthetic response to reality. Sasnal’s subjects come across as isolated, in a state of suspension, waiting for something as if interrupted. The paintings are, in some respects, formal exercises, playing with the conventions of representation and using perspective and focus to disrupt our expectations. With an exacting set of personal rules, central to his practice is the idea that “little can be done to render something faithfully and accurately.” Sasnal works with a reduced language
Wilhelm Sasnal

Untitled
of color and shape, retaining only essential elements like light and shadow, and he toys with duality that is basic to abstraction: a black circle on a white background evolves into a supernatural phenomenon as a result of the painting's title, *Untitled (UFO)*, and dark gray swirls on a light gray canvas evoke organic forms because the curator includes them in a show about landscape.

In another untitled work, horizontal blue lines and assorted dots provide the faintest detail to represent a tomb, depicted in an odd and reductivist color-role reversal: what is usually blue (the sky) or green (the grass) is gray, and what is usually gray (the tomb) is blue.

The paintings of Saskia Leek also question accepted tenets. Challenging the notion of “good” painting, she works on a small scale on board, attempting to enhance a raw and humble quality. Occupied by a quirky array of mountains, horses, and houses, her paintings elicit a strong nostalgic response. The scenes remain anonymous and mostly vacant but suggest things from Leek’s past—things left behind but not forgotten. The bleached palette she employs recalls the faded colors of memory—pastel yellows, faint blues, washed-out greens, and hazy pinks. Landscapes of erupting volcanoes, snow-capped hills, and crystal blue lakes, while potentially generic, evoke the unparalleled natural beauty of New Zealand, where they were painted. The simple vernacular of the houses she includes is sufficiently reduced to facilitate the overlay of a personal narrative by either the artist or the viewer. Absent any human figures, Leek’s landscapes are closest to the historical tradition. Her means of depiction, however, complicates this canonical categorization. It is in these works that the unadulterated power of the land to communicate essential truths, the heavy hand of the divine, and transcendent possibilities is most keenly felt.

"Landscape's most crucial condition is considered to be space, but its deepest theme is time." Charged with art-historical references and shadowed by individual, collective, and imagined memory, the
Amelie von Wulffen

Untitled (Green Landscape with Hole)
places seen here may have existed, lingered, vanished, or been forgotten. Or, they may not have. What can we know about who and where we are by looking around? Seduced by the muse, in search of refuge, courting the simple, artists and others find themselves wandering around in the landscape, looking.

Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson
Phyllis Wattis MATRIX Curator

2  Ibid., 7.
3  www.schirn-kunsthalle.de/data/news/1082996537_romantik_lectures.e.rtf.
4  Ibid.
7  Lippard, 292.
13  Ibid.
18  Rebecca Solnit, quoted in Lippard, 14.
Karin Mamma Andersson
In the Waiting Room

Amy Cutler
Waders

Makiko Kudo
Migratory Birds

Aaron Morse
Hawkeye #2

Amelie von Wulffen
Untitled (Sunset/Fax Machine/Schiele)

Amy Cutler was born in Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1974. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Cooper Union School of Art, New York City, in 1997 and studied at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine, in 1999. Selected solo and two-person exhibitions include the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri (2004); Dialogues: Amy Cutler/David Rathman, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2002); the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2002); and Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York (2002, 2004). Selected group exhibitions include the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2004); Adventure and the Contemporary Miraculous, Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland (2003); and Selections: Summer 2000, The Drawing Center, New York (2000). This is her first exhibition on the West Coast. Cutler lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Makiko Kudo was born in the Aomori Prefecture in Japan in 1978. She graduated from Joshibi University of Art and Design, Department of Painting, in 2002. Kudo had her first solo exhibition at Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo, Japan (2003). Selected group exhibitions include Tokyo Girls Bravo 3 at Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York; Time of My Life: Art with Youthful Spirit, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo (both 2004); do hope for the future, Laforet Museum, Tokyo (2003); and Tokyo Girls Bravo 2 at NADiff, Tokyo (2002). This is her first museum exhibition in the United States. Kudo lives and works in Tokyo.

Saskia Leek was born in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 1970. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Canterbury School of Fine Arts, Christchurch, in 1991. Selected solo exhibitions include Be My World at the Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Australia; Kindle Me Protect My Barren Matter, Room 401, Achilles House, Auckland, New Zealand; and Forget the dead, you’ve left, Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland (all 2002). Her work has been included in numerous group exhibitions throughout New Zealand since 1996. This is her first museum exhibition in the United States. Leek lives and works in Auckland.
James Morrison
_Cow Parsnip_

James Morrison
_Meteorite in the Flinders Ranges_

James Morrison
_Plotting_

James Morrison
_Northwest Territory (Canada)_

James Morrison
_The Council_

Wilhelm Sasnal
_Untitled_

Wilhelm Sasnal
_Untitled_
James Morrison was born in Papua New Guinea in 1959. He received a Diploma of Fine Arts in 1979 and a Post-Graduate Diploma of Fine Arts in 1996, both from the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne, Australia. Selected solo exhibitions include Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Australia (2000, 2002, 2004); Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne, and Rebecca Hossack Gallery, London (both 2002); and talk art initiative, Melbourne (1999). He has shown extensively in group exhibitions throughout Australia since 1995. This is the first exhibition of his work in the United States. Morrison lives and works in Sydney.

Aaron Morse was born in 1974 in Tucson, Arizona. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Arizona, Tucson, in 1996, and his Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1998. Selected solo exhibitions include ACME, Los Angeles (2003). Selected group exhibitions include International Paper, UCLA Hammer Museum of Art, Los Angeles (2003), and New Art from LA, Marvelli Gallery, New York (2002). Morse lives and works in Los Angeles.

Wilhelm Sasnal was born in Tarnow, Poland, in 1972. Selected solo exhibitions include Anton Kern Gallery, New York; Wilsa, Contemporary Art, MUHKA, Antwerp, Belgium; Sadie Coles, London; Kunsthalle Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland (all 2003); Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw, Poland (2001, 2002); Everyday Life in Poland between 1999 and 2000, Galeria Raster, Warsaw (2001); and Board Game, Galeria Potocka, Krakow, Poland (2000). Selected group exhibitions include 4ever Young, Sommer Contemporary Art, Tel-Aviv, Israel, and Hauser & Wirth Gallery, Zurich (both 2003). This is his first museum exhibition in the United States. Sasnal lives and works in Tarnow.

Amelie von Wulffen was born in Breitenbrunn, Germany, in 1966. She completed her studies at the Kunstkademie, Munich, Germany, in 1994. Selected solo exhibitions include Greene Naftali Gallery, New York (2004). Her work has been included in numerous museum group exhibitions throughout Germany since 1994. Additional group exhibitions include Dreams and Conflicts, Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2003); HIER IST DORT Z, Wiener Secession, Vienna, Austria (2002); and Hey, International Competition Style, TENT, Centrum Beeldende Kunst, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (2000). This is her first museum exhibition in the United States. Von Wulffen lives and works in Berlin.
Saskia Leek
*Put to Sleep*

Saskia Leek
*Sunken Things*

Saskia Leek
*Some Time of My Own*

Saskia Leek
*Bells*

Saskia Leek
*Shadow*

Saskia Leek
*Telepathy*

Saskia Leek
*Untitled*
Karin Mamma Andersson

In the Waiting Room, 2003
Oil on panel
33 x 48 in.

Loiter on the Way Home, 2002
Oil on panel
48 x 60 in.

Saskia Leek

Bells, 2004
Oil on board
9 7/36 x 12 3/6 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Dust and Water, 2004
Oil on board
9 7/36 x 12 3/6 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Shadow, 2004
Oil on board
9 7/36 x 12 3/6 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Some Time of My Own, 2004
Oil on board
9 7/36 x 12 3/6 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Sunken Things, 2004
Oil on board
9 7/36 x 12 3/6 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Telepathy, 2004
Oil on board
9 7/36 x 12 3/6 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

James Morrison

Cow Parsnip, 2004
Oil on canvas
18 1/8 x 18 1/8 in.
Collection of Del Kathryn Barton, Sydney; courtesy of Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Meteorite in the Flinders Ranges, 2004
Oil on canvas
11 15/16 x 11 15/16 in.
Collection of Amanda Rowell and Fergus Armstrong, Sydney; courtesy of Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Northwest Territory (Canada), 2004
Oil on canvas
19 7/8 x 16 1/8 in.
Collection of Art and Australia, Sydney; courtesy of Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Plotting, 2003
Oil on canvas
12 x 16 1/8 in.

Shawnee Oklahoma, 2004
Oil on canvas
20 1/16 x 16 1/8 in.
Collection of Art and Australia, Sydney; courtesy of Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

The Council, 2003
Oil on canvas
12 x 16 1/8 in.

Amy Cutler

Preceding, 2004
Gouache on paper
41 1/4 x 60 in.
The Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection; courtesy of Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York.

Waders, 2003
Gouache on paper
40 x 60 in.
Collection of Nancy and Stanley Singer; courtesy of Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York.

Makiko Kudo

Going Out for Ramen, 2004
Oil on canvas
Diptych, each 63 3/4 x 51 3/8 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo.

Migratory Birds, 2001
Oil on canvas
76 1/4 x 102 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo.
Aaron Morse

*Hawkeye #2, 2004*
Oil and acrylic on canvas
39 x 53 1/2 in.
Courtesy of the artist and ACME, Los Angeles.

*The Beach, 2004*
Oil and acrylic on canvas
55 x 75 in.
Courtesy of the artist and ACME, Los Angeles.

*The Deep, 2004*
Acrylic, watercolor, and pencil on paper
90 x 22 in.
Collection of Chip Tom and Michael Rabkin; courtesy of ACME, Los Angeles.

Wilhelm Sasnal

*Untitled, 2001*
Oil on canvas
23 5/8 x 27 1/2 in.

*Untitled, 2002*
Oil on canvas
43 1/4 x 51 7/8 in.

*Duel, 2001*
Oil on canvas
15 x 19 1/4 in.
The Rubell Family Collection, Miami.
Not illustrated.

*Untitled (UFO), 2002*
Oil on canvas
13 7/8 x 13 in.
The Rubell Family Collection, Miami.
Not illustrated.

*Untitled, 2002*
Oil on canvas
13 7/8 x 13 7/8 in.
Collection of Robert Harshorn Shimshak and Marion Brenner; courtesy of Anton Kern Gallery, New York.

Amelie von Wulffen

*Untitled [Green Landscape with Hole], 2003*
Photo and acrylic on paper
58 11/16 x 92 3/8 in.
Collection of Burt Aaron, Detroit; courtesy of Greene Naftali Gallery, New York.

*Untitled (Sunset/Fax Machine/ Schiele), 2003*
Photo and acrylic on paper
47 1/2 x 83 in.
Collection of Dorothy and Martin Bandier; courtesy of Greene Naftali Gallery, New York.

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