

Wolfgang Wirth

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Born in Innsbruck in 1966. Studied painting at the Mozarteum in Salzburg with Peter Prandstetter and lives and works in Vienna.

Hardly distracted by hectic activities in art institutions and exhibitions, Wolfgang Wirth has been able to concentrate silently on developing a collection of paintings that all seem to resonate with a similar tone.

With the exception of one piece, the observer finds himself looking with or over the shoulders of figures seen from behind at landscapes strangely reminiscent of picture postcards, great landscape paintings by old masters or American advertisement boards from previous decades and detailed nature studies. Spatiality and surface relate to each other in a strange hybrid way, with the painter's positions constantly shifting. Allowing for spontaneous orientation, the motifs are taken from photographs or postcards that Wirth often transforms into panorama-like, stage-like pictorial constructions that (supposedly?) provide an overview. Yet where does Wirth place the observer, to where is the path leading with already reproduced imagery being transformed into the „most auratic“ of artistic forms of expression, namely painting? What can painting still (or again) add to a found photographic view?

The faces of Wirth's figures that have turned their gaze away from the viewer „evoke the question as to vision“ (Gisela Steinlechner, 2003), the viewing of landscape as well as viewing the depiction of a landscape. The viewing individual creates nature as an aesthetic object and along with himself as the viewer. Through the „presence of faceless figures“ (G.S., 2003) our perception of the depicted pictorial worlds is changed. And we are asked to look closely and to focus on our perception and our interests in gaining knowledge about something. How can we go about this? Wolfgang Wirth tells us how in the title of the only picture in which the figures look at us: „Come closer“.