

"It's unbelievable..."

The exclamation is a sigh, often expressed in amazement when the reality is more than you have expected. When you can hardly get the sublime phenomena you're witnessing that very moment. When 'it' is beyond words, bigger or stronger than yourself. That is when it's unbelievable.

This fits the work by **Aquil Copier** in more than one way. His paintings are an exploration in paint, each time again the unpredictable pleasure of the eye. But even more than that, his canvases challenge to calibrate your judgement, rationalism, perception, thoughts and senses, if at all possible. In his works, Copier is testing the viewers position, a test referring to that one question, doubt or exclamation: "it's unbelievable..."

The subject in Copier's paintings is landscape. His motive is classical. The Dutch landscape painting has a long and rich tradition. However, where in the works by Jacob van Ruysdael and Jozef Israëls a single horizontal line divided the surface in two, where the old masters worked the landscape under a heavy grey sky, in Copier's paintings a direct human activity is hardly noticeable. Moreover, the horizon by Copier is not stable or a stabilizing factor. His point of departure is constantly moving, his horizon tilts and shifts.

This is not a strange phenomena. In relation to the seventeenth or nineteenth century, today's human beings are limitlessly more mobile. For little money we fly in no time to Rome, Paris or Tokyo. With a click of the mouse we find ourselves, while traveling from one place to another, with a laptop at our finger tips, at the same time in Beijing, as well as in New York. We think to have been in Rio, in Dakar or Atlanta, but our knowledge is based on television and internet images. Our experiences exist of more or less fictional topographic coordinates, cartographic details, we zoom in and out.

Nowadays, contact offers a multifold of possibilities, it's endless and always in motion. Silence is not existing; we are restless: nomads. Distances are bridged, anyway. The technical means with which we communicate, will have a more advanced variant tomorrow. Today's view on Holland, which has unmistakably changed a lot since the era of Van Ruysdael and Israëls, therefore is the result of an illusion. A contradiction in term. Or, a landscape resulting in an image in which the technical evolution can be sensed. And is even visible for those who look closely.

Aquil Copier's paintings are of this kind. In his contemporary nature, one navigates oneself, with Google Earth or Tom-Tom. Or, one either travels through by super fast train, or flies over in a jet. In Copier's paintings, one recognizes the clear lines of squares in the land, cut by canals and straight roads. However, his 'super fast' images are painted: paint on canvas.

When approaching Aquil Copier's paintings, one reads through the endless layers of his work, the careful way this landscape has been created. Copier works in oil, again reference is made to the ancient painting tradition. However, considering the way he applies the paint, Copier is stepping ahead. Parts of the canvas, oaks and awls, hedges, the green borders of a meadow, consist of filigree threads of oil paint overlapping zigzag. For this, Copier uses a piece of paper rolled into a funnel. The fine lines remind one of embroidery, the reason for which his work sometimes is compared to that of Michael Raedecker. However, Copier feels more related to a painter like Robert Zandvliet, because of his 'fundamental' way of subjecting the painterly medium to discussion with his own means: canvas and paint.

Where Zandvliet only takes nature or landscape as a starting point for a research of contemporary painting, Copier also queries our relationship to the quantity of images, our vision of the world around us. Unconstrained, nowadays, various realities are existing simultaneously. The illusion of a separation between fact and fiction has disappeared. Copier slows down the speed of clicking or flying from here to there, from then to now and tomorrow.

He actually offers resistance. Making a painting is time consuming. This way the omnipresent, rushed zapping behavior has been brought to a halt. In his paintings the viewer is forced to consider and reflect on what he sees. Through the excessive number of sometimes uninterrupted, zigzagging movements of threads of oil paint being mounted, trees, birches or beeches rise up from the surface. Leaves appear to be fragile paint matter, giving them meaning. At the same time the question arises whether paint is at all able to give meaning. Through the process of applying paint, the 'originally' flat surface carefully changes, slowly, into a three dimensional object. Does the work cease to exist as a painting? Can the painting convey something about a world bigger than itself?

By tilting the exact bird view, at least two types of perspective are being combined in one painting. This typical characteristic of Copier's work, the mixing of distances, points of view and vanishing points, can also be found in the roofs of farms, greenhouses and sheds, depicted too large in relation to the fields they are located at. In veil haze or a huge jet engine. In a road that should have been a barely noticeable line related to the bird view used. These sometimes bizar sizes on one hand make the viewer recognize a tree, a house, a street; on the other hand the detail in this way alienates itself from its painted surroundings. This approaching and vanishing of perspective is emphasized by the air brush technique Copier is using in his recent paintings. Through this procedure, mainly used in advertising, a smooth surface is obtained. The canvas absorbs the paint. Visually, the viewer is drawn to the canvas, whereas the emerging bushes and trees make one step back. From a distance one can view the trees in the image and looked at closely, like in vast woods, one gets lost.

Copier's large canvases consist of several panels. The dividing line between the parts bluntly cuts the drawing, the pattern, the grid of roads, yet also enables to get oriented, like the needle of a compass, or the meridian on an map. In his paintings, Aquil Copier reaches out. But at the same time stimulates to get lost in the carefully depicted details, beautiful, subconsciously known, since almost forgotten or hardly noticed. Allotted land are polders, very Dutch, orderly, you would think. But still you're not sure what you're looking at: It's unbelievable.

Ilse van Rijn (September 2008)

Expositie Aquil Copier, "I haven't sent you any air mail", 2x2projects, Amsterdam 25 okt t/m 29 nov. 2008

www.2x2p.com