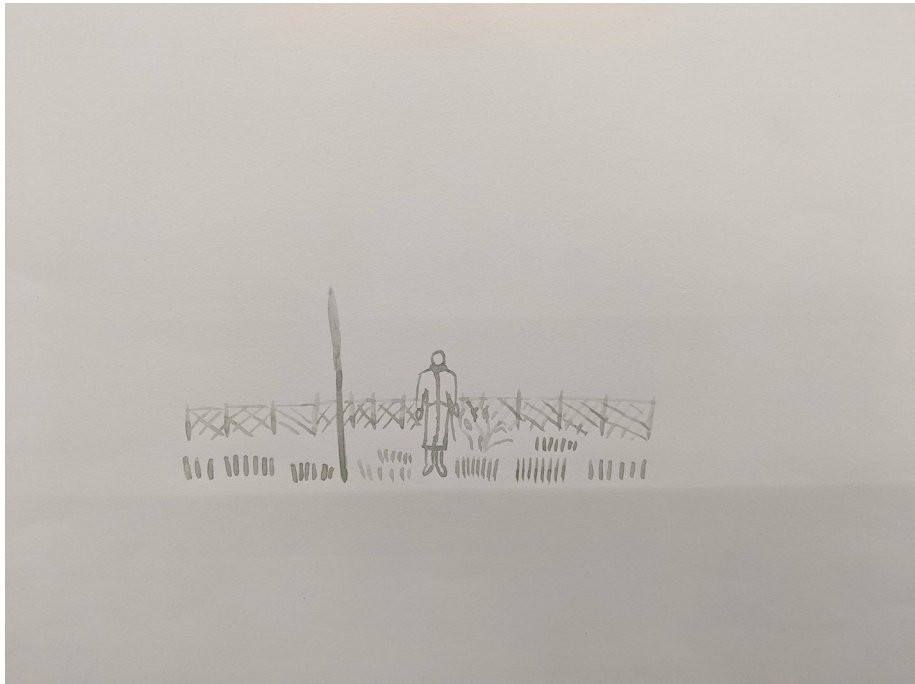


Bethan Huws

Works on Paper

17 April – 5 September 2021



Bethan Huws, *Untitled*, 1992

The watercolours of Bethan Huws, born in Bangor, Wales in 1961, are characterised by subtle tenderness and vulnerability. At the same time, they are always determined settings in the pictorial field. In Bethan Huws' work, the act of drawing is always one of personal memory. This can be a reminiscence of certain places, such as her childhood home, of things, such as a found shell or a grass boat, or of animals, for example grazing sheep. However, she disassembles and simplifies these private memories to such an extent that they still remain tied to her individual experience, but concomitantly acquire something universal. This is exemplified in the work *Untitled* from 1992.

With a few brushstrokes in watercolour, an everyday scene is developed on this delicate page: In the centre of the sheet is a figure standing in front of a garden fence. A few parallel strokes in the foreground may suggest vegetation; the setting is concentrated in the lower half of the sheet, with only a vertical staff protruding into the emptiness of the pictorial space. At first glance, the watercolour seems almost childlike in its naivety, but on closer

inspection it reveals a highly concentrated statement, as Josef Helfenstein so aptly described it: 'The emptiness of the paper reinforces the reduction of gesture, of expression, and also compensates for it, accentuating its sparse presence. The emptiness is an equivalent for the vagueness of space and the intangibility of time. It is also the result of textual and formal precision as well as extreme economy.'

For all the radicality of the questioning of art-historical traditions in her text works, an immediate intimacy remains palpable, especially in her drawings. In this medium, which has been described as ephemeral, Bethan Huws changes the perspective: away from the purely art-immanent discourse, which always seems to emerge playfully in works such as *Marcel Duchamp's Turn* (1996) or *Carl Andre* (1999), towards reminiscences of a comprehensible, familiar world – the world of her childhood and her Welsh countryside with its hilly landscapes, its people and animals... Yet the sheets seem strangely immediate, their strokes as spontaneous as they are determined. In the watercolours, outlines are hinted

delicately as traces of memories, concentrated on their essence, mostly isolated in the square of the paper, as if the objects of her youth needed a shelter from the bustling art world. Despite all formal subtlety, the calculated approach to the use of drawing techniques is striking: The sheets never seem illustrative; for this, the pictorial language is too open, too ephemeral. Bethan Huws seeks to undermine the conventions inherent in the medium with a certain formal elusiveness, refusing a linear reading. In gentle hints, the drawings reveal those spaces of perception and thought that are so crucial for her work. It seems almost as if the artist wished to use her drawings in an intimate format to affirm her origins and thus her identity, as an attempt at a 'construction combining a subjective part of the world and the concept of artistic possibilities into a unity' (Julian Heynen).

Bethan Huws repeatedly reduces her forms to such an extent that they are on the borderline to abstraction, often even crossing it. Her watercolours can certainly be read as abstract structures that occupy the pictorial space or structure it as a whole.

As a supplement to the work commissioned by the Galerieverein, *Untitled (A WORK OF ART WITHOUT EMOTION IS NOT A WORK OF ART / ARE YOU SURE?)*, 2020/2021, the Kunst Museum Winterthur presents an exhibition of her Works on Paper and the so-called *Word Vitrines*, connecting the two museum buildings on either side of Winterthur's Stadtgarten.



Bethan Huws, *Spring*, 2008

Public tours in english

2 May 2021, 1 pm – 2 pm, starting at Kunst
Musum Winterthur | Beim Stadthaus

22 August 2021, 1 pm – 2 pm, starting at Kunst
Musum Winterthur | Beim Stadthaus

Opening hours

Reinhart am Stadtgarten
Tue to Sun, 10 – 17 Uhr, Thu, 10 – 20 Uhr

Beim Stadthaus
Tue, 10 – 20 Uhr, Wen to Sun, 10 – 17 Uhr

Other Exhibitions

- Bethan Huws. *Word Vitrines*, 17.4. – 5.9.2021 | Reinhart am Stadtgarten
- Ensor – Picasso. *Maskeraden*, 13.3. – 20.6.2021 | Reinhart am Stadtgarten
- *Etiquette and Masquerade – Miniature Portraits of the Baroque*, 13.3.2021 – 16.1.2022 | Reinhart am Stadtgarten
- *Moment.Monument. Aspects of contemporary sculpture*, 8.5. – 15.8.2021 | Beim Stadthaus
- *Expressionism Switzerland*, 10.7.2021 – 16.1.2022 | Reinhart am Stadtgarten