

## Chapter 23

### Images and Imaginations

#### *The Perception of German Landscape*

Nils Büttner

Ecological thought does not belong to the core domains of art historical work. In 1983, Henry Makowski and Bernhard Buderath edited a volume on *Ökologie im Spiegel der Landschaftsmalerei (Ecology as Reflected in Landscape Painting)*, Makowski/Buderath 1983). It was their claim to uncover the historical roots of the contemporary “*Raubbau an der Natur*” (ruthless exploitation of nature). This politically motivated book has not been followed up with further research. Nevertheless, there has been no lack of attempts to read landscape paintings as sources of environmental history (cf. Schubert 1994). Landscape paintings have also been interpreted as documents of climate history (cf. Suchtelen 2001). However, as any other historical source, visual images are not direct but only indirect indicators of historical truth, as Reinhart Koselleck points out (2013: 206). Koselleck emphasizes that a source never tells us what should be said about a historical context but rather testifies to what cannot be said. Makowski and Buderath were confronted with this problem already, conceding in their introduction that it remains doubtful “whether, and if at all, the painters saw their landscapes ecologically” (Makowski/Buderath 1983: 8). Regarding the general relation between the arts and nature in the discourses of the early modern period, art historians have primarily focused on the historical contextualization of their objects and their corresponding research perspectives (Welzel 2000). The discourses of ecological thought in the arts have therefore almost exclusively found attention in art history in studies of photographic environmental images since the 1930s (cf. Parak 2015) and studies of contemporary art (cf. Sabor 1998). Against this background, it is the aim of this chapter not to project contemporary ecological thought onto historical works of art, but to demonstrate, in a short survey, in which contexts landscape paintings emerged, without unproblematically claiming them as sources for the ecological thought of earlier times.

## THE FIRST LANDSCAPE PAINTER

One of the pleasant experiences that Albrecht Dürer noted in his diary during his travels through the Netherlands was an invitation: “Likewise, on Sunday before rogation week master Joachim, who is a good painter of landscape, invited me to his wedding and thus honored me.” (Rupprich 1956, vol. 1: 169; see also Busch 1997: 206–213; Unverfehrt 2007: 171–172; Sahn 2002) Visiting Joachim Patinir on May 5, 1521, was the occasion that prompted Dürer to coin a term for his Antwerp colleague’s scenic specialties. The characterization of Patinir as being a good landscape artist is the earliest German evidence of the nowadays self-evident expression. It should still take a long time before the respective generic term was universally established. Around 1650, for example, Edward Norgate wrote in his book *Miniatura or the art of limning*, “Landscape or Landscape is an Art soe new in England, and soe lately come a shore, as all the Language within our fower Seas cannot find it a Name” (Norgate 1919: 42).

The fact that the depiction of the nature that surrounds people had not yet been summarized under a generic term does not mean that what is nowadays subsumed under the concept of landscape was not captured in paintings.<sup>1</sup> Not only Joachim Patinir’s paintings, which were already praised by Dürer, are



Figure 23.1 Albrecht Dürer. Die Drahtziehmühle (“trotsichmüll”), around 1490/95, watercolor, 28.6 x 42.6 cm, Berlin, SMPK, print room. In: Friedrich Lippmann (ed.). *Drawings by Albrecht Dürer: reproduced in facsimile*. Berlin: Grote, 1883, pl. 4.

counted among them but also some of Dürer's own works (figure 23.1; cf. Hess and Eser 2012: 409). A remarkable example for this is a watercolor that was composed outside the city-gates of Nuremberg between 1490 and 1495. It belongs to a whole bundle of papers in which Dürer captured topographic views and parts of nature. He himself never commented on the function or the meaning of these papers, but they are undoubtedly connected with his contemporary humanists' endeavor to geographically describe the land which, in Germany, is inextricably linked with the name Conrad Celtis (cf. Robert 2012: 74; Büttner 2006: 86–91). With the rediscovery of writings by the antique geographer Ptolemy, an intense occupation with an illustrative world description began.<sup>2</sup> In the context of the cartographic survey of the Earth's surface, geography, which is interested in measurable distances, and chorography, which is dedicated to the documentation of small segments of the Earth's surface, were distinguished according to Ptolemy. Even the descriptive task suggested that the drawing up of these special maps should be handed over to artists. The fact that the chorographies were made by artists, the subjects taken from nature, and the depiction followed the laws of human sight and perspective makes the line between chorography and landscape painting appear to be blurred.

### THE RISE OF A NEW GENRE

Depictions of the natural environment quickly became popular, and particularly images of identifiable localities were in increasing demand (cf. Michalsky 2011: 199–216). The inquiring interest in the nature that surrounds people became a universal phenomenon toward the end of the fifteenth century. Albrecht Dürer and his contemporary Hans Sachs, for example, climbed up church towers simply to look into the distance.<sup>3</sup> Someone who traveled and was good at drawing would capture the gained impressions in sketches, and people who could afford it would have them painted.<sup>4</sup> Drawings and paintings that are kept in museums and collections all over the world bear witness to this increasing enthusiasm. At the same time, they tell us something about the type of interest that was behind the production of these views which—in case of the numerous drawings of fortifications—was probably military because such chorographic views, as the cartographic recordings of nature were called, were indispensable in order to document the height of ramparts and fortifications.<sup>5</sup> However, they were also used to visually record one's own property. For this reason, the drawing of landscapes became part of a prince's education in the sixteenth century. It is not without reason that the militarily useful overviews of areas led to the expression “cavalier perspective.” As the territorial state gained more importance during the sixteenth century, the European royal courts became bigger. As part of the steadily

growing courtly demand of visual representation, depictions of specific territories and seigneuries were, and still are, a substantial task of artists.

However, landscapes that did not show a specific or identifiable place, like the ones Patinir painted, enjoyed great popularity all over Europe as well. It was around this time that the first collectors appeared, such as the Augsburg merchant Lukas Rem whose emblem can be found on several of Patinir's works. They did not only find their way to South Germany; even in Venice, traces of his paintings can be found.<sup>6</sup> Insofar as early modern collections and their classification criteria can be reconstructed, a steadily growing interest in artistic style and specific characteristics of individual artists can be seen. This interest becomes tangible, for example, in a handwritten comment from Albrecht Dürer who noted on one of Raffael's drawings that he had sent to him to "show his hand," "sein Hand zw weisen," Rupprich 1956: 209). Likewise, the surviving inventories of collections demonstrate this awakening interest in artistic virtuosity at the time. The composers of these inventories – such as Paulus II Praun, Basilius Amerbach, Willibald Imhoff and others – did not get tired of emphasizing the single-handed workmanship of the artists (cf. Achilles-Syndram, esp. 125–126; Landolt 1991: 131–132; Jante 1987: 10).

## THE GERMAN LANDSCAPE

The fabulous landscapes by the Regensburg painter Albrecht Altdorfer, who developed the inspirational aesthetics of his markedly fantastical visions of landscapes in a way that is distinguishable from Dürer's depictions of nature, were part of this newly established collectors market (figure 23.2; cf. Roller and Sander 2014: 20–21, No. 52; Hess and Mack 2012; Büttner 2006: 83–90). The history of art, which became established as an academic discipline during the nineteenth century, claimed that Altdorfer's artistic style aims less at an exact characterization of individual natural structures and more at capturing the overall picture in paint, which is defined by shimmering reflections of light (cf. Friedländer 1891: 75–76). In 1923, the art historian Hans Tietze considered Altdorfer's paintings to be a descriptive visual expression of the German character and admired his "ability to listen to the forest murmurs and to subdue the palette of a thundery sunset." (Tietze 1923: 17).<sup>7</sup>

Back then, Germans insisted on a very special relationship with nature which the writer Rudolf Borchardt traced in his anthology *Der Deutsche in der Landschaft* in 1927 (cf. Borchardt 1927; Benjamin 1980: 91–94; Beyer 1997: 194–209). Not only the connection between humans and landscape but also the manner of artistic realization was understood and construed as an expression of the national character. This specific interpretation is visualized in the *Zeichenbüchlein*, published by Gustav Wolf in 1921 (figure 23.3, Wolf



Figure 23.2 Albrecht Altdorfer. *Landschaft mit Brücke*. 1516. Oil on parchment, copied onto wood, 41.2 x 35.5 cm, London, The National Gallery.

1921: 18–19). In this book, Altdorfer is assigned to be an exemplary witness for “how a German illustrates a tree,” with a woodcarving—newly created but with Altdorfer’s initials and the date 1512 carved in—functioning as an illustration. The woodcarving displays the spirit of the time, which is also a crucial element of the texts, and shows what people in 1921 saw in Altdorfer’s landscapes.

### PICTURES AND IMAGES

Here it also becomes clear how problematic pictures are seen as sources of feelings for nature of any kind whatsoever. This is grounded in the fact that “the picture” has never existed and never does. “There are unchangeable and changeable determinants that constitute this. The manner of their interaction



Figure 23.3 Gustav Wolf. *Das Zeichen-Büchlein*, Karlsruhe: Müllersche Hofbuchdruckerei, 1921: 18–19.

is consistently redefined. Therefore, the medium by itself already has a history. However, since the medium is a requirement of the artwork, we have to know the specific forms of historicity in order to understand the painting” (Warncke, 1987: 10). In every painting, the valid conception of media at the time, which is, quasi in close interaction and exchange, influenced by the produced pictures, is being materialized. Unlike the tangible painting, the perception of what it is, how it should be made and looked at, what to expect of it, and what is being expressed by it, admittedly stays without physical substance but is still substantial in all respects. However, it is not timeless. Instead, it is consistently renegotiated and developed, based on and in interaction with physical objects. Verbal discourse is characterized by tangibly manifested paintings, just as the paintings are characterized by the discourse that is connected to speaking and thinking. The material form is shaped by medial discourse which is likewise expressed in the physical substance. In order to make it available to conceivable vision, a language is required which is also equally form and content of the respective temporary media discourse. Only in the interaction between the tangible object and the respectively valid conception of media, a painting becomes what it appears to be. It only gains its international meaning within the discourse in which and out of which it was made.

It is unquestionable that a distinct change can be seen in the way that landscapes were illustrated which came along together with a steadily growing mimetic quality toward the end of the Middle Ages. In the light of this observation, the stylistic development and differentiation can be outlined. Beside the objects' formal differences or relations of similarity, one should, however, also take the connections and contexts into consideration within which the landscapes were depicted and viewed. From this perspective, continuities emerge next to the stylistic differences.

### CONTINUITIES

One such continuity can be recognized in the unique pleasure that humans have been extracting equally from observing nature as well as from looking at paintings since ancient times. Unfortunately, this highly subjective phenomenon can hardly be described in a generalized way, particularly because the frequently used expressions in literary accounts—even though they stayed the same throughout many centuries—were subject to changes in their meaning, some of which were profound. The term “landscape,” for example, was not connected with any aesthetic concept for a long time (cf. Büttner 2000: 9–19). This is different today; if we are talking about landscape, an aesthetic experience is connoted. However, not every perceived extract of nature is landscape—only “when the human faces it with a ‘free,’ enjoying view, to be him- or herself in nature. With his or her going out into nature, it changes its face. What otherwise is the used or the useless wasteland, or what stayed unseen and unobserved for centuries, or what used to be the hostile, unwelcoming outland, becomes the great, exalted, and beautiful: it becomes esthetic landscape”—as the philosopher Joachim Ritter phrased it (Ritter 1974: 151).

Travel accounts of those days evince how far away people of the premodern era were from the “free,” “enjoying” vision of nature described above. In the eyes of a traveler, the world did not appear to be a unity of landscapes but rather a sequence of places; itineraries were employed which described the journey and determined the travel route according to the order of places (Büttner 2000: 213–214). It would not have come into the mind of any traveler to leave the thus defined course because only on those streets one was reasonably safe from endangerments. To take a shortcut off the major traffic roads was extremely dangerous. Traveling alone—an epitome of contemplative nature visions ever since Friedrich Schiller's *Spaziergang* from 1795—hid unpredictable risks (cf. Schiller 1992). To expose yourself to the dangers of a long journey would have appeared to be absurd just a hundred years before, since nobody liked to travel alone, amidst an “inhospitable population, through countries whose language they hardly understood.” Arnold

Buchelius—from whose diary these sentences come—felt compelled to take a huge detour in 1587 (cited from Keussen 1907: 16).

### PRETTY OR UGLY

A diary about a trip to a spa in 1580, composed by Michel de Montaigne, which does not only extensively report how the various waters affected his bladder but also described the landscapes he traveled through, provides a deepened insight into the visions of nature in those days. If he describes an area as being “beautiful,” then the fields are tilled, the grains are ready to be harvested, or the grapes are delicious and promise good wine.<sup>8</sup> What was of use for humans was considered to be pretty; what was harmful was apostrophized as ugly (cf. Büttner 2002: 26–34).

Indeed, voices were already raised during the premodern era that warned against the clearing of woodlands or overfishing of waters, but these statements should not be interpreted as ecological awareness *avant la lettre* but only as a kind of economic thinking owed to utilitarianism. Since there was no Christian conception of the protection of nature, the biblically commissioned acquisition of creation was possible to the point of overexploitation of nature, and where need demanded it, the respect for God’s creation faded (Schubert 1994: esp. 42–47). People who wrote about landscapes usually made use of traditional topoi and firmly established literary forms, like Montaigne did, which hardly allowed for conclusions about his emotions when looking at the nature that surrounded him.<sup>9</sup> The only emotion that can sometimes be perceived is, for example, fear when crossing the Alpes, which mostly appeared to be ugly to the traveler of the early modern age.<sup>10</sup>

Particularly because they invited a journey for the eyes and a virtual exploration of the world from within the safety of a home, landscapes were very popular (cf. Büttner 2000: 166–171). Since time immemorial, approval of such paintings, which were praised to be equivalent or even superior to nature, can be traced. In return, as already mentioned in ancient literature, the beauty of a viewed section of nature is revered by describing it as being equal to or worthy of a painting.<sup>11</sup> Sections of nature, which are perceived as beautiful to a greater or lesser extent, and landscapes, as pieces of art and aesthetic objects, could at the same time carry substantial content, which was mostly even to the fore. Already in ancient times, a landscape—and this is also undoubtedly a constant in reception—could stand for something and could be understood, for example, as an allegory of the divinely pervaded nature or as a spiritual reference to the transcendent bliss of Elysium or paradise. In Christian terms, this is not the only context of interpretation that stayed alive after the end of the Old World. Every depiction of nature that surrounds people could be read as a manifest reference to creation and the creator.

## UNDERSTANDING PAINTINGS

Both the artists of early modern times and their audience usually assumed that a painting was always “an in itself meaningful entity” (Büttner 1994: 27), that it was made as a visual message, and that it should be understood this way. At the same time, the translation of a painting into words did not nearly appear to be as much of a problem as modern cultural sciences and the science of art see in it. In the early modern times, the word and the picture were equally understood as figures of concepts that represent a set of facts (cf. Warncke 1987: 17). The epistemic value, which according to contemporary perception can be conveyed solely by words, was also admitted to paintings back then. Strikingly, the congenial expectations came to be expressed in the frequently cited words from Horace’s *Ars poetica*: “ut pictura poesis” (“as is painting, so is poetry”). The expectation with which people faced the medium of painting was generally oriented on rhetoric, according to which a good speech was supposed to delight, lecture, and move the listeners in order to convince them as effectively as possible and to contribute to their ethical, moral, and religious improvement. When, for instance, the Dutch painter Jacob van Ruisdael displayed the German Castle Bentheim, he at once also created an allegorically readable educational picture with this topographically interesting veduta (figure 23.4; cf. Buvelot 2009). Thus, the broken tree on the right picture margin, for example, was for his contemporaries an

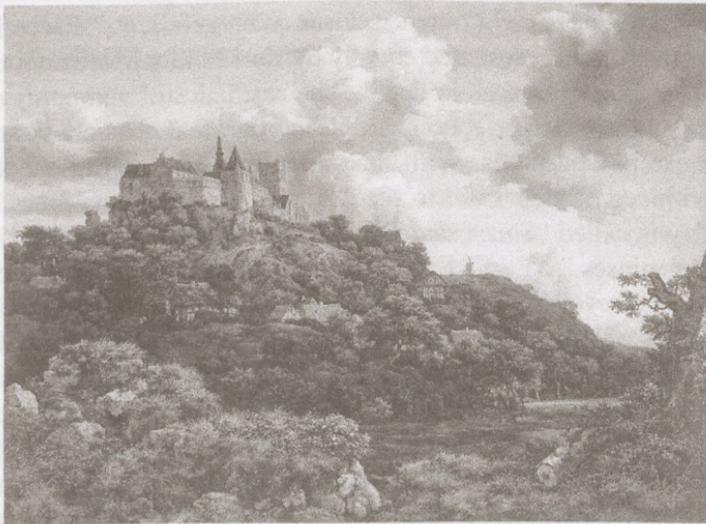


Figure 23.4. Jacob van Ruisdael. *Ansicht von Burg Bentheim*. 1653. Oil on canvas, 110.5 x 144 cm, Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland. In: Émile Michel. *Great Masters of Landscape Painting*. London: Heinemann, 1910, pl. 9.

easily understandable symbol of evanescence, for which numerous evidences in emblematic literature can be found, such as in Jacob Cats's or Roemer Visscher's works, and also in Jacobus à Bruck's work in which the slogan "*Nihil solidum*" reads as "nothing remains" (Unverfehrt 1993: 84–96). However, the toppled tree was not simply an image of death. In fact, this motive could also hold a moralistic explanation such as "Pride comes before a fall." This idea is, for instance, mirrored in the Aesopian fable of the oak tree and the reed, which is widely read in the Netherlands: the haughty oak tree is broken by a storm while the humble reed bends and survives unbroken. In this connection, it is surely no coincidence that Ruisdael has long blades of grass growing right next to the broken tree. The theme of the castle could also be interpreted in the context of *vanitas* (cf. Unverfehrt 1993: 96–100).

### NEW PERSPECTIVES

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the understanding that was underlying such paintings, which considered the "speaking picture" as "visible words," was replaced by an image concept which subsequently became dominant and to which form and content appeared to be an antinomy (Warncke 1987: 19). With the beginning of aesthetics being an autonomous discipline, established by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, the rejection of any external purposes of an artwork started to assert itself increasingly (cf. Böhme 2001: 7, 11–12). The theoretical discourse that began here experienced an early peak in Immanuel Kant's determination of the aesthetic verdict as an expression of "disinterested pleasure" ("*interesselosen Wohlgefallens*," Paetzold 1983: 82–85). At that time, represented equally by Karl Phillip Moritz, Goethe, and Schiller—despite differences in detail—the aesthetics of autonomy emerged which seek an intrinsic perfection in a piece of art that does not comply with any other exterior purposes. With this, the aesthetic effect of a holistically understood piece of art moved to the center of observations. Since this era, which today is called "*Sturm and Drang*" and which was characterized as a "period of geniuses," an artistic expression no longer counted as a means to an end but as a revelation.<sup>12</sup> The artists—the "geniuses"—became the norm of their pieces of art; it was from their perspective, and no longer from the recipient's, that the evaluation of art was made. Around 1800, autonomy became an ideal, both as far as the social position of art and artist were concerned and the effect of the piece of art on an observer. A result of these endeavors was the dogma that the content of an artwork had to be conveyed formally descriptively, free from any allegorical conveyance of meaning. It is certainly not a coincidence that, for example, Goethe developed some of these deliberations about the allegedly mindless works of Jacob can Ruisdael,

who he acknowledged as a “poet,” in this regard (Goethe 1897: 162; similar: Schopenhauer 1982: 280–281).

The depreciation of the medium of the image since Lessing and the simultaneous rejection of allegorically reasoning meaningfulness by the classical aesthetics of autonomy gave rise to the romantics’ effort to help provide a new, subjectively motivated allegorical significance to images. This revaluation of the image was especially advocated by artists such as Caspar David Friedrich, Philipp Otto Runge, and others who felt that there was a gap and a loss of meaning resulting from that depreciation (cf. in more detail Scholl 2007; Büsing 2011). Caspar David Friedrich’s contemporaries’ lack of understanding of his paintings, which is literarily abundantly documented, also laid the foundation for the monopolizing of his art by the representatives of abstraction and artistic avant garde of the twentieth century, and in retrospect he is stylized as a prophet of the modern age and the timelessness in his paintings is emphasized (cf. Schmidt-Burkhardt 2005: esp. 94–96). During the last years, however, a media-historical reasoning history of art has increasingly taken into account the historical context of creation and the horizon of understanding of those paintings that are about much more than depictions of nature (cf. esp. Scholl 2007).

### ANTI-ACADEMIC LANDSCAPE ART

For the painters of the romantic age, sentiment was the most important basis of artistic activities which found its perfected expression in the new, anti-academic landscape art. Accordingly, for Caspar David Friedrich and the artists of the romantic age, painting was no longer merely a question of artistic experience but of the artist’s inner ethical and religious constitution. A well-known statement of Friedrich says that a painter should not only paint “was er vor sich sieht, sondern auch, was er in sich sieht. Sieht er aber nichts in sich, so unterlasse er auch zu malen, was er vor sich sieht” (Friedrich 1999: 116, “what he has in front of him but also what he sees inside himself. If he sees nothing within, then he should stop painting what is in front of him,” trans. Nils Büttner). It was not only this new, subjective viewpoint on art and artists that opened new perspectives to depictions of art but also an increasing appreciation of the aesthetic potential of these paintings.

Traditionally, the *Prix de Rome*, a scholarship for several years of residence in Rome, was awarded to the most talented historical painter at the Parisian *Académie*. In 1817, on the insistence of Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes, a corresponding award for landscape artists was submitted for the first time which could be attained upon presentation of a study of a tree, painted true-to-life, and an outline for a landscape painting (cf. Scherb 2001: 15–16). Valenciennes, who himself made numerous nature oil sketches during his stays in Italy

between 1777 and 1785, recommended this practice also in the appendix of his "treatise of perspective," published in 1800 (cf. Scherb 2001: 15–16). The appreciation of oil sketches, expressed by the award practices of the academy, gave this previously low-esteemed medium its breakthrough in the context of landscape art. The audience got enthusiastic about the easily and quickly drafted depictions of nature in which the style of the artist could be seen. Besides, the increasingly practiced *plein-air*-painting was also promoted by a technical innovation which, coming from England, would soon change painterly practices all over Europe. Specialized paint merchants, the *color men*, whose professional status had already become established in the eighteenth century, had been offering completely prepared oil colors that were easy to transport and handle since 1822. Now painters no longer had to elaborately rub, process, and mix their colors themselves. The invention of resalable paint tubes, applied for a patent by John Rand in 1841, once again opened entirely new opportunities for working in nature (cf. Czymbek et al. 1990: 78). At the same time as the paint tube started its triumph, another new function was added to the depiction of landscapes when the mostly socially emancipated artists started using the nature that surrounded them, through processes intrinsic to art, as an answer for painterly problems and for testing aesthetic effects.

## LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS AND THE MARKET

It was only at this time that landscapes were no longer just established, but at once also universally respected pictorial objects. However, not only artists' inventions played a part in contributing to this but also the development of a free art market. It was only during the course of the nineteenth century that this nowadays so self-evident market, where paintings are sold to any customer, was fully developed. For the artists, this brought along extensive freedom as far as their pictorial design was concerned, but it also resulted in certain constraints. On the one side, they had to satisfy the expectations that their clientele had on art in order to sell their paintings; on the other side, they had to shape an accelerated artistic position of their own so that they could find and maintain their place in the freely developing market. Particularly those landscape paintings that also prevailed in official parlors seemed to offer themselves for this so that far more than a third of all sent-in paintings belonged to this field which was until then so little esteemed.

In 1857, the critic Jules-Antoine Castagnary considered the enormous popularity of scenic themes to be an immediate reflection of social dissatisfaction which resulted in an escape into fields and woods (cf. Castagnary 1892: 396–397). The search for pure nature, practiced, for example, by Charles-Francois Daubigny and the painters of Barbizon, was indeed also a

reaction to the social and political circumstances (cf. Heilmann 1996: 17–18). In 1852, having been elected president of the French Republic four years earlier, Charles Luis Napoléon Bonaparte, nephew of the famous Corsican, had declared himself Napoleon III, emperor of the French. During the then starting *Seconde Empire*, France experienced an enormous economic upturn. It was the time during which Paris lost its medieval look and was transformed into the “capital of the nineteenth century” under Georges Haussmann.<sup>13</sup> Industrialization started to appear in all areas of life. The quickly progressing expansion of railroad connections leveled the centuries-old contrast between the cities and the countryside, and urban culture reached even previously remote areas. Together with flâneurs, painters and a steadily growing number of photographers moved to the countryside in order to capture the motifs found there in ever new pictures. Along with the continuously increasing number of subjective views on nature and landscapes that were conveyed in pictures, new aesthetics began to gradually assert themselves. In no time, naturalism, induced by the school of Barbizon, and the so-called impressionism found numerous followers.<sup>14</sup>

### L'ART POUR L'ART

In the paintings of the impressionists, color triumphed over the object.<sup>15</sup> The environment and the nature that surrounds people were thereby not displayed for their own sake but as carriers of various tonal values. Accordingly, the brush strokes in, for example, Claude Monet's paintings did not follow the shape of things but they visualized solely the effect of their surface in different lights. The moment-like and transient nature of a picture's impressions, which found its equivalent in the swift and sketch-like painterly fixation, requested the observers to use their own visual function and emotional involvement in order to accomplish the image's effect which was experienced as something revolutionary by the contemporary spectators. At that point, paintings lost their aspiration of affecting and lecturing each viewer in the same way once and for all. In the impressionists' paintings, the purely artistic gained momentum which resulted in an anti-objectification of painting by absolutizing artistic subjectivity. Particularly landscapes, perceived as aesthetic objects and content-wise mostly without meaning, lent themselves as primary motives for such painterly experiments since the depicted item played a minor part. This negligence of the representational that is expressed in the pictures of the impressionists became a premise of the thematization of seeing in painting (cf. Belting 1998: 273–274). Here, older traditions of landscape painting, which were connected with theological, morale, or scientific instructions, or of spiritually guided views of nature which saw a glorification

of creation even in a small piece of nature, ended irrevocably. With the growing dissemination of photography as a documenting medium, the painted picture did no longer necessarily have to be a depiction. Far more importantly, the motive of a painting was the sentiment that was carried by it which was also understood as a trace of artistic emotion connected to the act of painting. With the increasing importance of the artistic subject, the long-initiated conception of the *l'art pour l'art*, which saw the whole purpose and cultural value of a painting in the fact that it was a painting and nothing else, gained ground. For the artists of the *Fin de Siècle*, as well as for the painters of the avant garde of the twentieth century, landscapes were most of all an experimental medium in which they could reflect on the materiality of painting. With this, they brought a historical process to an end that had started around the middle of the eighteenth century. By absolutizing the aesthetic effect of painting and acknowledging full autonomy of drawing and color, a subjective and unrestricted usage of painterly means and forms became established. From these artistic processes resulted the conception that the intellectual content of painting was merely a form of visual perception behind which the purpose of depicting, taken over by photography, receded. At the beginning of the twentieth century, new painterly forms of expression, attained through the autonomy of paintings, became increasingly accepted. The theme of the picture was subsidiary. However, when the solving of style problems was involved, landscape painting remained an almost programmatic starting point for many painters—particularly in their self-fashioning.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Since the nineteenth century, the landscape was only a piece of the world that was perceived as more or less beautiful, and it surely is no coincidence that the first picture postcard appeared in 1870 (cf. Günther 2009: 187–188; Unverfehrt 2001). Only a few years later, the so-called halftone was invented by which continuous tone templates were dissolved into matrix dots, and thus reasonably priced print forms could be produced for the simultaneous impression of text and picture (cf. Peters 1998: 23–30). When selecting motives for postcards, people were generally anxious to follow the ideals of classical landscape painting, which also remained valid for landscape photography during the first half of the twentieth century (figure 23.5). By way of example, this can be seen in the landscape photographs that were exceedingly popular in Germany and appeared in the series *Die Blauen Bücher* (*Blue Books*), published by Karl Robert Langewiesche (cf. Stamm 2014: 168–187). The illustrated books, originated from the ideological environment of the life reform movement, were dedicated to (folkloric) German art, and also to German

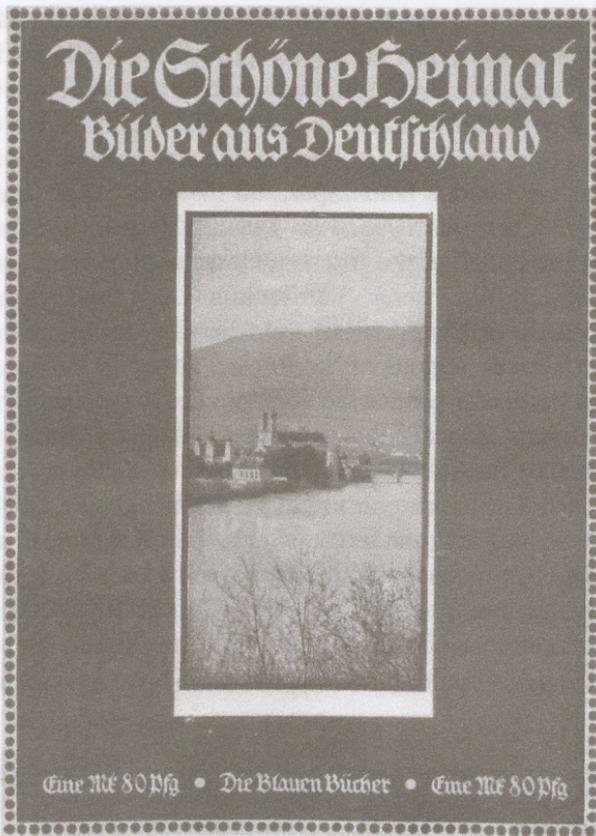


Figure 23.5 Cover illustration of *Die Blauen Bücher. Die Schöne Heimat. Bilder aus Deutschland*. Königstein im Taunus: Langewiesche, 1920.

architecture and landscape. The first volumes of this series of books came out in 1904. Their purpose was also a visually arguing popular education which was characterized as nationalistic and with a naïve adoration of Germany even before World War I. Particularly with regards to landscapes, a national “blood and soil” ideology increasingly gained ground for which Friedrich Karl Roedemeyer’s multiply reprinted book *Sprache Deutscher Landschaft* can be considered exemplary (Roedemeyer [1934]). After the end of World War II, a production ban was enforced on the publisher Langewiesche; after its reversal, it resumed where it had been forced to stop after the end of the National Socialist regime. “Not only the printing plates survived the war, but also the contents underwent only a few corrections. In 1952, the bestseller *Schöne deutsche Heimat* was released once more for its fiftieth anniversary, and thus it “Germaned” on for another while,” “und so ‘deutsche’ es noch eine Weile weiter.” (Klempert 2015). Particularly because quaint landscapes



the historical leading performers of the event, the names of subsequent actors are inscribed into the woodland scenery as well, as a means to illustrate the dubiousness of the chauvinistic monopolizing of the myth and to prompt contemplation about the culture of remembering. In order to visually express his repeatedly evinced opinion that there is no such thing as historiography but only "processing of history," Kiefer pursued a path that other painters had already taken before and introduced an abstract form of content to painting that goes back to myths and archetypes (cf. Meier 1992). In this connection, it was only logical that for Kiefer painting was only a conceivable medium for the realization of his artistic concepts, and landscapes were one of many themes.

Generally, landscape as a theme of pictorial art faded into the background during the last decades, to the benefit of an immediate preoccupation with nature as place and subject of artistic involvement. Along with the ecological movement of the sixties and seventies, numerous artists dealt with nature in various forms in the face of a growing awareness of threats to the environment (cf. Sabor 1998). Down to the present day, the plurality of media has not caused the end of painting, as frequently forecast since the beginning of the artistic modern era. Quite the contrary, to this day new landscape paintings are made time and again.

## NOTES

1. For the history of landscape painting, cf. Büttner 2006, with additional literature cf. also Lewis 2007: 67–70.

2. Detailed information: Büttner 2000 and 2015.

3. On the "tower view" of Hans Sachs, cf. Busch 1997: 76. On Dürer's ascent of the cathedral tower of Gent on May 10, 1521, cf. Unverfehrt 2007: 158; Warnke 1992: 47–48.

4. For more details in this context, cf. Büttner 2000: 79–98.

5. The nowadays common slope hachures only caught on during the nineteenth century. They were invented and first published by the mathematician Johann Georg Lehmann in 1799. Cf. Wilhelmy 2002: 107–109.

6. Lucas Rem, offspring of a Augsburg patrician family, first visited the town on the river Schelde, in which he frequently stayed as a businessman and art enthusiast, in 1508. Cf. Koch 1968: 10–11.

7. Tietze's monograph had been published in the series "Deutsche Meister," ed. by Karl Scheffler and Kurt Glaser.

8. Montaigne 1774: 39: "M. de Montaigne ne des-junoit jamais; mais on lui apportoit un piece de pain sec qu'il mangeoit en chemin, & estoit par sois eidé des reisons qu'il trouvoit, les vendanges se faisant encores en ce païs-là, le païs estant plein de vignes, & mesme autour de Linde. Ils les soulevent de terre en treiller, & y laissent

force belles routes pleines de verdure, qui sont très-belles." Ibid., 66: "Il y a cinq ou six journées par eau d'Insprug jusques à Vienne. Ce vallon sambloit à M. de Montaigne, représenter le plus agreable païsage qu'il eût jamais veu; tantôt se reserrant, les montaignes venant à se presser, & puis s'eslargissant asteure de nostre costé, qui estions à mein gauche de la riviere, & gaignant du païs à cultiver & à labourer dans la pante mesmes des mons qui n'estoient pas si droits, tantot de l'autre part; & puis decouvrant des pleines à deux ou trois etages l'une sur l'autre, & tout plein de beles meisons de jantil'homes & des églises."

9. Concerning the forms that his report follows, cf. Büttner 2000: 137–138.

10. Montaigne 1774: 75: "Au partier de là [Kollmann bei Klausen in Tirol, N.B.], le chemin nous sera un peu, & aucuns rochiers nous pressoint, de façon que le chemin se trouvant étroit pour nous & la riviere ensamble, nous etions en dangier de nous chocquer, si on n'avoit mis entr'elle & les passans, une barriere de muraille, qui dure en divers endroits plus d'une lieue d'Allemaigne. Quoyque la pluspart des montaignes qui nous touchoint là, sont des rochiers sauvages, les uns massifs, les autres crevasés & entrerompus par l'ecoulemant des torrans, & autres ecailleus qui envoient au bas pieces infines d'une étrange grandeur, je croy qu'il y faict dangereux en tems de grande tourmente, come ailleurs."

11. Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, V, 6, 13: "Neque enim terras tibi sed formam aliquam ad eximiam pulchritudinem pictam uideberis cernere." ("You would not believe that you saw a real scenery but rather a picture painted in idealistic beauty").

12. Concerning the genius-expression, cf. Schmidt 1985.

13. The description of Paris as the "Capital of the 19th century" dates back to Walter Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk*. Cf. in summary Feist 1995; Büttner 2006: 296–320.

14. In summary: House 1979; Büttner 2008: 182–192.

15. This summary is based on considerations made and continued in other parts, cf. Büttner 2006: 310–400.

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