

**Tina Sauerländer**

**WORLD ON CANVAS – The Landscapes of Daecheon Lee (excerpt)**

„The large-format landscape paintings by Daecheon Lee come across as abstract simultaneous representations. In a multi-faceted terrain all scenes of a story seem to be placed next to each other at the same time. At one point the viewer's gaze drifts into the image and scans it for traces of human existence. Quickly the viewer realizes that its course is not organized. Views in perspective dissociate themselves from each other. The viewer perpetually has to fix his glance anew, and has to accommodate it in the entanglement of central perspectives, card-like top views, distance and proximity. Sometimes picturesque color-fields are perceivable, sometimes representational space can be discerned. A purple tarn with boats turns into a withering, cloudy sky above red-soaked waters; massifs pile up and vanish into pebbles lining a river.

Rocks and waters recur in the works of Daecheon Lee frequently. Both elements also characterize Korean landscape painting, in which one and the same mountain is often painted from many different perspectives. Wide tarns, coastlines and rivers along with grass and pebbles vary the theme of water in his works. As the famous sailors embarked on their expeditions to the rivers of other continents, for Daecheon Lee the reeds always stand for new knowledge and territorial expansion. Since not only unspoiled countryside, but also habitats of other cultures are conquered, it results in disputes, displacements or war. Lee mostly depicts the tanks and bomb dropping planes small and silhouetted. Painted in black and not provided with any details the symbols take full effect and seem to be completely out of place in the scenery. However, owing to their small size they establish a balanced proportion to their environment. Several means of transportation such as ships, boats or even helicopters can be also found in Daecheon Lee's works. They do not only symbolize the negative aspects of the human pursuit of progression, but also the process of life in general. At the bottom of the projection surface Daecheon Lee applies bridges or streets at odd times, which then lead to the central perspective in the image. These are either painted in a naturalistic style or consist of harsh ruler-straight lines drawn with markers. On an emblematic level they combine the three vital elements nature, culture and movement in the artist's oeuvre. A quite significant subject in Daecheon Lee's works is the wanderer. The viewer comes across these small figures almost always alone or at rare intervals in groups. Faced with the impressive and mountainous countryside, the individual represents a typical element of Korean landscape painting, which can be also found in the pictorial worlds of other cultures. The solitary nomad symbolizes wanderlust and the yearning for adventures, suspense, and the search for knowledge and world order.

Daecheon Lee's subjects reveal his attention to the human existence in its entirety between the sky and the earth. He is concerned with the world as a whole, in which opposites harmoniously blend into each other. On his canvases Daecheon Lee combines many perspectives. His paintings seem to be expandable in all directions and to point to a large universe.“