

Mysterious Mountains

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2019, translated by Paul Kachur

For more than 20 years now, Alois Lichtsteiner has directed his gaze at the mountainous landscapes and the rugged rock formations on their slopes in order to create a varied body of work. In the printed graphics series on display at Castle Greyerz, the artist carefully navigates the thin edge between figuration and abstraction by exploring the very act of painting and at the same time, the potential for portraying his motifs.

Rocks which trace patches in the snow fascinate the artist, who photographs and reworks them before painting them. He does this by inverting the position of Leonardo da Vinci, who encouraged painters in his Treatise on Painting to look at spots and cracks in the walls as if they were landscapes. Lichtsteiner starts with the landscapes in order to rediscover the compositions created by the shapes of the rocks and to probe the unclear boundaries of reality. Whereas he first created his Alpine pictures in oil on canvas, he turned to paper a decade ago in order to take an unconventional approach to colours.

By employing new technologies, including digital photography and digitally controlled machines, Alois Lichtsteiner is taking a decisive and contemporary approach to woodcuts. By first laser-treating building boards with CNC-engraving machines as well as wood and Corian, a composite material made of acrylic stone, the artist is pursuing a game with materials in order to achieve his goals: creating printing blocks in which he intervenes as a painter and not as a printer.

The print blocks he creates are not used for creating serial prints. As if he were working with a canvas, the artist paints them in oils before printing them on delicate Japanese Tosa Shoji paper, which has lent its name to the exhibition. The print blocks, which are cleaned after every third or fourth printing, are thus used repeatedly, but each print is a unique painted piece that can never be reproduced.