



Art in Focus **And Then the World Changed Colour, Breathing Yellow** by Mariele Neudecker

What is it?

A sculpture by Mariele Neudecker.

How was it done?

Neudecker's works take many forms, including sculptures *per se*, video and video installation, paintings and prints, though it is fair to say that her signature pieces, and those that established her reputation, are what she terms tank works, as here. These are sculptural vitrines, glass tanks in which facsimile landscapes, or versions of landscapes – beginning with mountainous Romantic landscapes – are immersed in coloured liquids.

Early on, it was as if she took a Casper David Friedrich, translated it into three dimensions and artificially preserved it. The vitrines present many interpretative possibilities. Neudecker has noted that she grew up with Friedrich prints on the wall and was well aware of the way they became associated with German nationalist ideology.

Perhaps her early vitrines were keeping these potentially toxic representations secure, or observing that they embody a narrow, distorted view of nature, or noting that we poison nature? The latter particularly when you

consider nature in the contemporary context of crisis.

Where can I see it?

And Then the World Changed Colour, Breathing Yellow is included in *Sediment*, an exhibition of her work, curated by Úna McCarthy, at the Limerick City Gallery of Art until November 17th.

This survey show includes a number of her works in several forms, including early map pieces exploring people's grasp of global geography, her *Plastic Vanitas* series, more recent pieces based in deep sea and Greenland settings, and of course the tank works, including a new work made for this show.

Is it a typical work by the artist?

It is, allowing that the tank works are but one strand, albeit a central strand of her diverse output. Born in Dusseldorf, Neudecker began her artist education at the Crawford School of Art in Cork and is now based in Bristol and is a professor at Bath Spa University. Despite the fact that everything she does is concerned in some way with our representations of nature, both culturally and scientifically, and issues arising, she is careful not to describe

herself as an environmentalist artist.

Among her various commitments and activities, she is a fellow for CERN's (The Large Hadron Collider) Visiting Arts Programme, which is appropriate given her interest in the Northern Romantic landscape tradition and how it anticipates and relates to the contemporary sublime (she also uses the term the digital sublime). If you are looking for a manifestation of the sublime in our current world you could hardly do better than the notion of a subatomic particle collider that, apart from crashing fundamental particles together at energies that prompted speculation on the creation of a world-eating black hole, also managed to confirm the existence of the Higg's Boson, quickly dubbed the God particle.

It is fair to say that CERN's endeavours are a scientific equivalent to her own artistic work, if on a vastly greater scale: there they try to recreate conditions in the early universe, for example, creating a model of the early days of nature – hence the black hole fears. And they do various other kinds of modelling of the natural world.

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