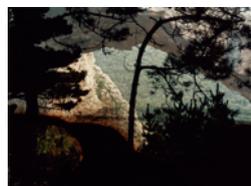


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On Landscape

**Group Show**

On Landscape # 1
07.03.14 - 30.03.14
Guest Projects / London / England

On Landscape / Reviewed by Roy Exley / 01.05.14

We each have our own ideas about what constitutes the ideal landscape and each is different. Many of us spend a considerable amount of time and money searching for that ideal – complicate this by asking what we might consider to be an ideal landscape photograph, and the permutations increase logarithmically. Of course neither of these phenomena exist nor will they ever – we are all exiled from the Garden of Eden. However, that does not preclude the possibility of re-considering the significance of our connection to the landscape or indeed its photographic representation. The four artists in this show at Guest Projects undertake just such a re-consideration, each from their own particular viewpoint, and each with their own particular passion for the subject.

We must, by now, all be aware of the illusions, the 'smoke and mirrors', that are employed in much contemporary photography, particularly that of a commercial ilk, in an attempt to achieve that ever-elusive phenomenon of the ideal. In her images in this show, Emma Wieslander teases the viewer with landscape images whose 'faux' is fatally flawed – she is more than happy about those flaws and is interested in how long it takes the viewer to suss this out for themselves. Does the subjectivity of the images outweigh its inherent objectivity? As she asks this, (and we must all answer this question in different degrees) such are the vagaries and exigencies of perceptual awareness, and such are the deceptions of commercial imagery, that we will all arrive at a different conclusion.

Meanwhile, Minna Pöllänen asks us to take a fresh look at the urban landscape, outside the gallery, through an array of tubes that penetrate the partition between gallery and its street window. Each tube gives us a different take, a different viewpoint on the skyline, the roofscapes, the jostling buildings, the street furniture, and the canal, beyond. Each detail our eye picks up is deprived of its immediate context by the narrow, restricted field of view offered by each tube, and each view briefly offers a microcosmic mystery – the ordinary has become the extraordinary. In our 'kwik-flip', 'bit-byte' culture, we have become divorced from the peripheries of daily existence – is Pöllänen giving us a wake-up call here? It would seem so.

Minna Kantonen, in her installation of medium format coloured prints has hunted down and zeroed-in on those urban mini-oases that exist in a whole range of western European cities. The bright greens of tree foliage illuminate the grey peripheries of concrete and cobble-work within which they are framed. These islands of vegetation bring a welcome visual relief, but also accentuate the fact that they are in effect imprisoned within the concrete walls of the impending urban scene. We are left wondering if this is an explosion of greenery or an implosion of dour concrete brick and stone, there is a creeping feeling here that the vegetation has merely been added as an afterthought, can never be more than such, and will forever be constrained.

In the landscapes of our dreams, the logic of creation is suspended, transcended, anything goes and is accepted without question. In her work here Dafna Talmor has obviously enjoyed a process of pictorial ad-libbing to create such dreamscapes. Talmor's staged images, on offer here, employ a mix of collage, montage and image superimposition to create wayward, dysfunctional and ultimately weird landscapes that invite our imaginations to inhabit with a profusion of fantasy scenarios – wonderlands in which we can create our own Alices, and our own adventures.

In a digital age when all becomes more formulaic, more specified, more standardised, more globalised, and consumable products have achieved precedence over personal discoveries or spontaneous creations, it is a relief to be offered an invitation to re-assess, on our own terms, the importance of landscape and its significance for our lives. The connotations of landscapes as vehicles for our well being have been emphasised here, and for that reason, this exhibition was more than just a breath of fresh air, it contained a strong element of the didactic. This is an age where we don't like to be preached at, but maybe sometimes we need it.

– Roy Exley



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© **Dafna Talmor**
From the series 'Constructed Landscapes'

© **Minna Kantonen**
From the series 'Urban Vistas'

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