

GALERIE BRIGITTE SCHENK

Press Release

FRANK SCHRODER

FOREVERGREEN



Frank Schroder, SONG OF THE EARTH #2, 2017

GALERIE BRIGITTE SCHENK

Vernissage

June 23, 2017

Exhibition runs until August 28, 2017

Opening hours

Tuesday – Friday: 11 am – 6 pm

Saturday: 11 am – 3 pm

English

Frank Schroder's Songs of the Earth by Richard Milazzo

[During my most recent visit to the studio in Washington Heights]: where did the inspiration for these exquisite jewel-like 14 x 11 in. (35,6 x 29 cm.) paintings come from; how did they come about; what was the impetus for these new works, which he entitled *Songs of the Earth*? Almost guiltily, he explained that they were intuitive, that they had come out of the urge, the pure desire, to paint. He began them in January 2017, and their inspiration had several sources.

First and foremost was the earth itself as an environment encompassing, embracing, all things, human and nonhuman. Which is what the hills and valleys, the undulation of the earth and sky, the topographical gestures of upheaval and cradling, even their most abstract and disembodied registers, represent in these small paintings. Schroder said that when he painted them, sometimes he actually cradled them in his arms like a child. I shuddered and wanted to cry, but this has become my generic response to the world in my later years. What was once an overly preemptive caustic predilection has become a morbidly empathetic *riposteto* all things human and inhuman on my part. It was his hope, Schroder explained, that their smallness, the intimacy of their scale, their existential modesty, would serve only to emphasize the grandeur of nature, its overwhelming power and potential for destruction and creation, and the *gravitas gravitas* – literally the earth-bound force of gravity – of the whole endeavor, of these virtual, sleight-of-hand forms and diffident use of materials. ‘*Gravitas*’, not only in terms to the responsibility we bear toward the earth which sustains us in every way, but in the sense of the intoxication of paint that configures in so many ways the “unbearable lightness of being.”

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Schroder admitted that sometimes he painted one every day or every few days! Instead of being embarrassed by this admission, he seemed like a child in a candy shop! I think it was the vulnerability and poignancy he contracted from nature and from the human condition and their potentially internecine or mortal interrelation that he transported to the canvas, or was it vice versa? Was it the diminutive dimensions of these canvases, the Japanese or haiku-like, almost calligraphic, character of the brushwork, that instigated a deeper understanding and acceptance of the very limited role we humans play in nature? We have only to look at a Chinese or Japanese landscape painting – the tiny villages embedded in a mountainside, with little figures engaged in everyday tasks or on their way to the waterhole or to the next village – to see physiological depictions of the reality of our miniature roles and small standing in nature. The further we unroll these scrolls, the more we realize how unspeakably diminished we are, not by any gods but by the simple, uncomplicated fact of our mortality, by our momentary existence, by our very rootedness in nature. Being grounded means understanding the profound way in which our very existence is predicated upon our groundlessness. It is to comprehend, in no uncertain terms, our mortal predicament. It is the poignancy and vulnerability of this predicament that is expressed in these small landscape paintings, these *Songs of the Earth*, by Frank Schroder, filled as they are with the power, beauty, and tumult, the attenuated spirit, of the subtropical terrain of Florida, the majesty of the Bavarian mountains and forests, and the culturally feral and multiracial streets of Washington Heights, New York.