

Caroline Bachmann

DIX MATINS

Opening, Thursday, March 13, 2025, from 6 pm to 9 pm (Nuit des Bains)

Exhibition from March 14 to May 30, 2025

In 2013, Caroline Bachmann began painting a view of Lake Geneva, at different times of the day, often at dawn, at dusk, or even at night, always from the same window from her house in Cully. These paintings are the result of a two-staged process. She starts with sketches, indicating areas of color and details of the landscape. Then, based on these drawings which are more like notations, she continues the painting process in her studio, away from the landscape. Bachmann never paints the landscape in the open air, but always after the fact, in her studio, that she calls “her cave”, or even further away from Lake Geneva, in her studio in Berlin. The short time of sketching gives place to a longer construction process during which she draws on her memory and imagination. Several paintings are produced in parallel, and it can take months before one of them is completed, a manner, through distance, of reappropriating and reinvesting this familiar and spectacular view.

The focalization on this unchanging everyday view of the lake has the precision of an imaginary telephoto lens. The painted frame that surrounds it equally translates a painting very far removed from naturalism or atmospheric effects; this double framing – the canvas border and the painted frame – accentuates the tight, kaleidoscopic vision of this body of water, struck between the immensity of the sky and a cirque of mountains, often set against the light. This recalls the dive in the chalk cliffs of Rügen in Caspar David Friedrich's famous painting *Kreidefelsen auf Rügen* (1818), or the open walls of Marcel Duchamp's *d'Étant Donnés : 1° La chute d'eau, 2° Le gaz d'éclairage* (1946-1966). A particularly important reference for Caroline Bachmann, as the waterfall visible in the background of this work is located in Puidoux-Chexbres, in the same region as Cully. A discovery which motivated in-depth research on *Étant Donnés* with Stefan Banz, followed by the organization of a symposium titled *Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall*. With Bachmann, as with Friedrich and Duchamp, the framing is fundamental. For her, it contributes to creating a distancing from the subject, transforming the painting into an image, more graphic, like a page, accentuating the stylization and cooling off the pictorial effect of oil painting with its impressionist effects of transparency.

The depth between sky, lake and mountains is matched by a dividing line between two horizontal planes, on either side of the horizon line, reminiscent of Ferdinand Hodler's *Le Léman vu de Chexbres* (circa 1904), painted from the same shoreline. This horizontality suggests a suspended balance which resonates with Bachmann's stylization of the band of clouds or with the grid formed by the sunbeams. Renouncing all human figures, all anecdotal elements, such as the boats on the lake, Bachmann accumulates imaginary forms – in volutes, arabesques and dot patterns – or strange, informal motifs. Of course, Bachmann also works with the luminosity of this exceptional geographical site, playing with the harmonies and disharmonies, through a seemingly limitless range of colors, from saturated to iridescent surfaces, moving from extremely luminous spots to more faded, darker details, multiplying sharp contrasts.

Bachmann's formal vocabulary sometimes resembles strange, unidentified objects. This stylization, detached from any pop aesthetic, produces dreamlike, unconscious images, like traces and strokes of light on the retina. Bachmann thus keeps the liberty of an immense library of forms and colors, which enable her to escape any likening with romantic, regionalist formulas, or postcard visions. Concurring with a touristic typology, at the limit of the “too good to be true”, she transforms it in a poetic vocabulary, almost naïve or childlike, sometimes facetious, with influences from the seventies, hippy with a psychedelic tendency, touching the spiritual with the tip of her fingers. Without complacency, and whenever a sentimental exaltation could appear, Bachmann moves on, multiplies deviations and surprises, inventing new combinations, more vivid and biting, which enable her to ward off the temptation where the representation of a spectacular, fascinating, addictive landscape might carry her away.

On the occasion of her exhibition at the Centre d'édition contemporaine, Caroline Bachmann presents a new edition of lithographs, *Dix Matins*, inspired by drawings made in 2023 in Überlingen, on the shores of Lake Constance. Here again, there is a unicity of place, subject and focal: the morning, the sky, the lake, and the horizon line with their combinations of light, shadow and reflection. However, each lithograph brings a surprise: a luminous sky alternates with games of stormy clouds, sunrise with a remanence of the moon or of the starry sky... The result is highly drawn, in a camaieu of blue; the surfaces seem to have been worked in fatty chalk or ballpoint pen to blend with the grain of the paper. Bachmann alternates flat tints, softened by the lithographic technic, and disseminations of small strokes or repetitive motifs, evoking embroidery. The sunbeams, shining through the bands of clouds and illumining the plan of water, sometimes left completely blank, emphasize the paper. The contrasts between light and dark are accentuated, but can also alternate with softer treatments, some images being very white, overexposed and calm, others very dark, stormy and dramatic. The unique cobalt blue, created specially by the lithographer, confers to these landscapes an aura seemingly derived from an ancient photographic technic, amplified by the tight, repetitive point of view. The view itself, between sky and lake, is part of a known aesthetic vocabulary, like a memory, an archetype, and even if Bachmann drew her inspiration from reality, it has been so reworked, in a double movement of refinement and reduction, that the image becomes factitious, in fact sublimated, following the example of Hokusai's famous series of ten prints, *La Grande Vague de Kanagawa* (1830-1831). For, while each lithograph retains certain details specific to the location which determine the coherence of the series, the variations between each morning stimulate the eye, the curiosity, and, through the refining of a perfect lithographic script, prevents the repetition of signs from becoming iconic.

(trad. Julie Barral)

Born in Lausanne in 1963, Caroline Bachmann lives and works between Cully and Berlin. After studying at the École des arts décoratif in Geneva, Caroline Bachmann lived and worked in Barcelona and Rome, before returning to Switzerland in 2003, where she is currently based. From 2007 to 2022, she was professor and head of the painting and drawing department at the HEAD, the University of art in Geneva. She was awarded in 2022 the Meret Oppenheim Prize. She collaborated with Swiss artist Stefan Banz between 2004 and 2014, during which time they founded the KMD – Kunsthalle Marcel Duchamp | the Forestay Museum of Art, an exhibition and research space, featuring mini-exhibitions in a transparent capsule-shaped structure. Two levels, a 360-degree display case, and an even smaller, more enclosed one inside the base of the cell. This minuscule exhibition room set up on a stand at eye-level of the passer-by, is permanently installed in Cully, along the lakeside Quai de l'Indépendance and Place d'Armes. Last exhibition: *N'zo C'est Du Gâteau MARSEILLE DUCHAMP*, on view until May 31, 2025.

Her work has been shown in numerous solo exhibitions, including: Caroline Bachmann & Nicolas Party, *Tribute to a Lake*, Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zurich (2025); *Locus Solus*, Lausanne, CH (2024); *Le Rhin*, Meyer Riegger, Berlin (2024); *Le Matin*, Le Crédac, Ivry-sur-Seine (2023) et Galerie Meyer Riegger, Karlsruhe (2022); *Lune rousse reflet*, Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zurich (2023); *Prix Meret Oppenheim*, Swiss Art Awards, Basel (2022); *Nine Landscapes, Two Portraits, and One Candy Bar*, Meyer Riegger, Berlin (2022); *58 av. J.-C.*, Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zurich (2021) et Kunsthau Glarus, Glarus (2020); *Starry Sky*, Duane Thomas Gallery, New York (2020); *Le temps retrouvé*, Locus Solus, Lausanne (2019). Her work has also been included in numerous collective exhibitions: *Hommage à Felix Vallotton*, Musée Jenisch, Vevey (2025); *Jardin d'hiver*, MCBA, Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (2025); *Modell Neutralität*, Aargauer Kunsthau, Suisse (2025); *Le Mamco de mémoire*, Mamco, Geneva (2024); *Thalassa Thalassa! L'imaginaire de la mer*, avec Stefan Banz, MCBA, Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (2024); *Temps de Mars*, Musée des beaux-arts de La Chaux-de-Fonds, La Chaux-de-Fonds (2024); *Apropos Hodler*, Kunsthau Zurich, Zurich (2024); *Friendship: That Shiver, That Aspen*, CRAC Alsace, Altkirch (2024), *SYMMETRICAL SPACE POPS*, Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zurich (2024); *La Ferme de la Chapelle*, Lancy, Geneva (2023); *Peintres*, CACY, Yverdon-les-bains (2023); *Un Lac Inconnu*, Bally Foundation, Lugano (2023); *Agora*, Centre d'art contemporain, Geneva (2023); *Etat des Lieux*, Espaces d'art indépendants, Maison Gaudard, Lausanne (2023); *(Un)Certain Ground*, KBCK, Kunsthau Biel Centre d'art, Biemme (2023); *Inventaire*, MAMCO, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva (2021); *Hans Emmenegger*, Fondation de l'Hermitage, Lausanne (2021).

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