

Michael Kunze (b.1961 Munich, Germany) creates paintings undergirded by Central European intellectualism. They are often inspired by works from the 15th to the 18th Centuries, and driven by ideals and metaphysics. Kunze eschews the received 'story' of modern art, preferring instead to look to what has been described as 'the Shadow-Line of Modernism', a kind of anti-modern modernity that traces an arc from the isolated masters of painting in the 20th Century, such as Bacon, De Chirico and Balthus, through to influential directors such as Lars von Trier. Kunze's complex, architectonic worlds hide many secrets. They are also paradoxical: the labyrinthine structures in the midst of Arcadian landscapes being at one and the same time arcane and futuristic, holding both time frames in a sole pictorial plane. We sense that there is a certain reality here, but it is not one to be found through physical exploration, rather through the activation of our imagination.

Kunze, contrasts American-oriented pop culture, with its pragmatic, positivist outlook so typical of our contemporary world, with a continental European way that is more difficult, more esoteric, and all but forgotten in our daily lives. The latter, according to him, is an intricately interconnected reservoir of idealistic, metaphysical and sceptical approaches that call seemingly obvious facts into question. The series of works in the exhibition show monumental architectural landscapes with their own logic, breathtaking scenes in which viewers can lose themselves, because nothing seems real or predictable. Architectural compositions under a cloudy sky, steeped in dramatic Mediterranean light. Multilayered contrasts of form and content dominate his work, in which fragments of modern and pre-modern architecture collide.

They represent the inner world of the human being, a dark, complex labyrinth with explosions of blinding light in which illusion is part of reality. The illusion of progress and the impossibility of clear thinking: a series of tripods on a deck for example in the work titled, Gnomon. This device, used by photographers and land surveyors to provide a stable base, is used as a kind of signature in many of Kunze's paintings. It is not only a formal gesture and an image of exactitude; more fundamentally, the artist presents this object in an ironic spirit, questioning the possibility of fixed points of reference for humankind.

Michael Kunze's masterly and distinct style of painting has gained him recognition in the recent years as one of the most important German painters of our times. In 2013 he was honored with a major retrospective at the Kunsthalle Dusseldorf, where works spanning over the past two decades were exhibited alongside a major publication. Earlier this year he was a recipient of the prestigious Hans-Platschek Prize in Karlsruhe, Germany. His works can be found in numerous public and private collections like the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, MMK museum in Frankfurt and the Goetz collection in Munich, among others.