

## **Jens Hanke**

### **Mining Ground, Digging Field**

Berlin artist Jens Hanke presents a series of large format charcoal drawings, which are fittingly given a title from the world of mining: *Mining Ground, Digging Field*. And these works are indeed about bringing something to the surface: the raw material of fantasy.

This series of drawings can be seen as a series of capriccios, a continuation of the flamboyant genre that enriched European painting and art in the seventeenth century. In so doing, the drawings belong to the rather rare genre of landscape capriccios. Hanke's drawings are puzzling and at the same time playful. There is nothing very natural about these landscapes. They appear inanimate, and yet are full of expressive movement. Is this group of trees not perhaps an explosive cloud? Are these towering metal plates not about to plow through the ocean at breathtaking speed? Are these constructions, which seem archaic and futuristic at the same time, not cutting through a landscape and then exploding with a loud bang? The end seems near, and approaching as if by way of a merciless chain reaction. The rest and staticness that the sheets exude on first glance turns into an almost apocalyptic dynamism that seems to rip through the sheet like a quiet scream.

The titles also seem to attest to a dangerous path, staking out one's own or the search for the other. This path is accompanied by intense detonations and deformations. The sheets almost seem like the illustration of a science fiction story or images from a computer adventure game. Fallen stones lie across the broad landscape like spaceships. Large geometrical shapes seem to overgrow the terrain, and in so doing wreak infernal devastation. Dreamlike scenarios develop before the eye of the amazed beholder, whereby everything remains within the framework of a striking aesthetics and stylization. Entire pieces are torn from the earth and altered to become new formations that seem dominated by a foreign power, forcing the material to submit to its will. While no higher intelligence can be made out in the drawings, there is a system behind this devastation with rules of its own, apparently controlled by a foreign intelligence. But it remains uncertain how things will turn out.

The drawing technique is used with virtuosity, but varies significantly in the individual sheets. Clear linearity contrasts with blurred charcoal lines, allowing no unity to be discovered in the variety. Accordingly, the moods vary, and promote the consumption of the sheets "chapter by chapter," which contributes to the almost literary quality of the works. Hanke takes his beholders on a continuing journey to a world that is shaped by silent violence and the violation of nature. We stand alone before these released forces that here seem to act according to plan, but without purpose.

In his charcoal drawings, Jens Hanke uses art's potential to awaken distant worlds and to send the beholder on a journey to an archaic and at the same time futuristic landscape with apocalyptic outlines.

Dr. Martin Steffens