



YVON LAMBERT

Paris 108, rue Vieille-du-Temple 75003 Paris tel +33 1 42 71 09 33
New York 550 West 21st Street New York NY 10011 tel +1 212 242 3611
London 20 Hoxton Square London N1 6NT tel +44 207 729 2687

Art in America

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

EXHIBITION REVIEWS



SVEN KRONER: *BLACK LAKE 3*, 2007, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 63 BY 118 1/4 INCHES; AT YVON LAMBERT.

SVEN KRONER YVON LAMBERT

Tender, acid, sentimental, harsh—Sven Kroner's imagined landscapes support just about any adjective, as well as referencing numerous painting styles both abstract and representational. Yet they're hardly a jumble. The 35-year-old Düsseldorf artist's first exhibition in the States, titled "Hidden Path," included 10 oversize acrylic paintings from 2007, most of them vistas on a grand scale. Bringing to mind Bierstadt, Friedrich, even the red roofs of Cézanne, they incorporate human elements either in actuality, as a lonely observer or participant, or by suggestion, in the form of a row of streetlights, an abandoned highway bed or words scratched into a tree trunk. No matter what the story, man has been there, for better or worse—usually worse. This conclusion, however, isn't thrown in our faces, but something we come to slowly on our own.

In *Schwarzer See 3* (Black Lake 3), which is nearly 10 feet wide, it's the vastness of the sky, mountains and water that makes the bucolic first impression; only belatedly do we notice the colony of little tents in the foreground, teeming with families on holiday doing what vacationers do:

take naps, wade in the water, tend campfires. The water is, yes, black like the mountains and roiling under an equally turbulent sky, while an approaching bank of dark clouds traps much of the campground in shadow. But the heedless campers gambol on in their determination to have the good time they've paid for.

Paradise has already gone awry in a painting named for the Greek island of Patmos. Here two men view the ocean horizon from a site where construction started but was never completed and, like the derelict pickup truck that has slid down the bank, is now overrun by tangles of weeds. In *Schöner Tag 2* (Beautiful Day 2), the artist's Kiefer-like use of dramatic perspective draws us into an unpeopled forest where languid deer are the only witnesses to the consequences of interrupting the land with a desolate abandoned highway; the scene is filled with water and melting snow.

Bleak and even apocalyptic as his vision may be, it's not angry; Kroner seems to venerate nature as well as identify with the depicted or implied humans, who are trying their best but can't help screwing up. And no matter how weighty his narratives, we can't take them too seriously once we realize that he has swiped every painting cliché in the book, from Jackson Pollock's drips to Bob Ross's televised sleights of hand. What looks majestic from afar disintegrates into abstract washes, squiggles and drips that are

utterly goofy when viewed up close. The musical equivalent would be the re-creation of Richard Wagner's "Ring Cycle" with samples of '80s disco. Kroner is a virtuoso, for sure, but one who uses his skill not to dazzle, but to question and make fun of virtuosity itself. Ultimately, these are paintings about painting, from its most fake application to its most exalted use.

—Carol Diehl