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# „CREATE YOUR OWN PERSONAL PATH" - INTERVIEW WITH DIETER RONTE, THE CURATOR OF THE EXHIBITION OF SUSAN SWARTZ, TITLED PERSONAL PATH

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„The greatest aspect of my work was the surprise of my contemplation of Susan's paintings for the first time."

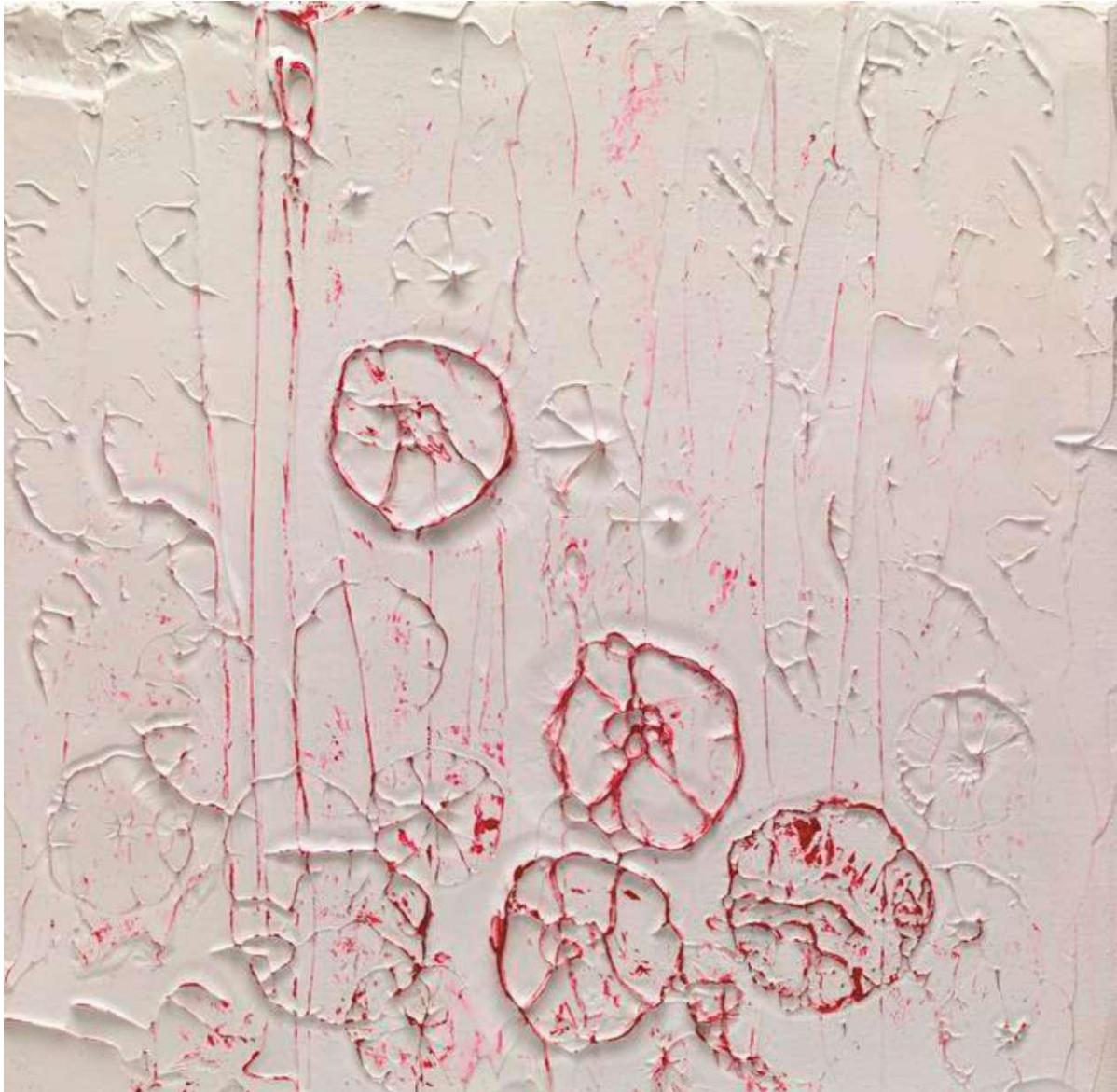


Dieter Ronte, curator of the exhibition

**Ludwig Museum:** How did you meet Susan Swartz and her paintings?

**Dieter Ronte:** Approximately four years ago, I saw reproductions of the artwork of Susan Swartz, and I saw a different art world from the contemporary art market, where artworks seem to be illustrations of social problems. I wanted to see these paintings in real life, and I had the chance in the same year, the fall of 2013, to spend some time at Susan's house and studio in Utah, before the exhibition in Salzburg.

We had a very extensive discussion there with Susan and her husband, Jim, and Walter Smerling, representative of the Stiftung für Kunst und Kultur, Bonn and some other American colleagues from the art world. I have seen several hundreds of paintings, and learnt that Susan's artworks are very personal, directly connected to her personal experiences, and even if they are full of hope, they are fed by bad experiences, and health issues I recognised how the biography of the artist is deeply included in her pieces, and that these artworks go beyond the personal dimension, and represent a quality I thought had already been lost. We decided to continue the co-operation and we selected the paintings for the exhibition in the Salzburg church.



Susan Swartz: *Back to nature 1.* 2016

**LM:** You write in your curatorial text that Susan's works are connected to the work of Caspar David Friedrich and Gerhard Richter. What are the connections, contexts you see among the works of these three artists?

**DR:** The paintings are connected to a 19<sup>th</sup> century American landscape painter tradition, they carry on the heritage of the Wasatch Mountain School: landscape appears as an emotional expression. These artists put onto canvas a landscape previously unknown. European landscapes had already been "used up" by that time, throughout the centuries. It is only the exaltation of the romantic painters e.g. Caspar David Friedrich that is extremely adored by

Susan Swartz, or the practice of impressionists, escape from the traditional landscapes to untouched areas, or the landscape painters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially Gerhard Richter, landscape paintings based on some photographs, that brought the possibility of the formation of a new approach to Europe. Contrary to the practice of the painters of Wasatch Mountain School, following traditional practices, the painter does not need to jam into one picture all what he/she saw/experienced. Susan Swartz is able to express her emotions directly, as a personal path. Thus, indirect correlations are formed to the mentioned two landscape painters, it is not a linear continuity.

**Nature surrounding the artist ensures her personal freedom and creativity.**

**LM:** Susan Swartz lives and works in the United States. How do you see her works, being a European expert?

**DR:** Being a European curator having much experience with American artists, I recognize, that for example, a female artist living in the USA still has to face the same old problem - working as a painter, and not with modern media - that they cannot receive the same recognition. Painting has an important tradition, while the comparison in new media arts is hard, as nearly all steps are new. Unlike in painting. These problems exist in Europe as well, but to a much less extent. Nowadays, it is impossible to watch the global artistic world from a European point of view. I do not believe in national arts, where the passport of the artist and the recipient determines how you react to an artwork. I rather believe in the individuality of a good artist and its works. At the same time, we can say the works of Susan Swartz reflect the American tradition, but it is influenced by other effects coming from outside of America. Susan expresses the American dream: believe in yourself and create your own personal path, do not consider the expectations of society, connected rather to the market, and they are less interested in esthetic issues.



Dieter Ronte and Susan Swartz in Ludwig Museum (photo: Glodi Balazs)

**LM:** What is in your focus as art historian and a curator, and how it is connected to the works of Susan Swartz?

**DR:** It is quite simple. I am interested in new, original artworks, and not in visual repetition. I do not cling to any style, era, or names. For me, arts is *Lebensmittel* citing the expression of Joseph Beuys, a necessary everyday lifeblood. Arts and culture are the best of friends. At this moment, it is hard to recognize the values of novelty, still we have to show the message of our modern times in ancient arts as well. It is a fascinating game with glass beads, as described by Hermann Hesse, a game between rationality, feelings, and knowledge - between good or sometimes bad decisions. The best aspect of my work was the surprise I had when, for the first time, contemplating Susan's paintings.

**LM:** What are the experiences a visitor may expect from the Budapest exhibition?

**DR:** A really deep impression, experience, operating without daily problems, but effecting through the involvement of beauty and emotions, an almost religious admiration of nature. You can learn a lot from it.

**The exhibition *Personal Path* of Susan Swartz is open until January 29<sup>th</sup> 2017 in the Ludwig Museum.**