

MASI Lugano

Museo d'arte
della Svizzera italiana,
Lugano

Via Canova 10
CH – 6900 Lugano

comunicazione@masilugano.ch
+41 (0)58 866 42 40
www.masilugano.ch

Thomas Huber

Lago Maggiore

8 October 2023 – 28 January 2024

Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano

LAC Venue

PRESS RELEASE

Lugano, 31 August 2023

Presenting seventy works including large oils and watercolours, the exhibition "Lago Maggiore" takes its name from a series of paintings by the Swiss artist Thomas Huber (Zurich, 1955). Huber, who is known for his intriguing, edge-of-reality paintings of architectural structures, rich in mise-en-abyme and drawing on a dream-like inner world, has long been based in Berlin, but since a couple of years he has felt the need to return to the landscapes of his youth, taking a home on the Italian/Swiss border near Cannobio.

The spectacular views of the lake from his home form the inspiration for the paintings in the exhibition. Like a sort of visual diary, the works explore the potentially endless variations on the same landscape, in which the mountains, water, sky and light are traversed by the natural rhythm of the seasons and the progression of the day. A celebration of the beauty and simplicity of the landscape, the paintings in this series represent an important new direction in Huber's work: while retaining the vivid colours and well-defined shapes typical of his art, the large oils on show in MASI herald a significant departure from his previous practice. Built space and illusionary architectural forms make way for the elusive, powerful presence of the lake, captured from a specific angle and at specific times. Indeed many of the paintings are titled with their date of creation in the title, revealing the artist's precise, almost scientific approach. This body of work thus takes up the idea of the series, which boasts many illustrious precedents in the history of art, such as those by Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne and Ferdinand Hodler.

The layout of the exhibition, developed in close collaboration with the artist, opens with a painting that offers insight into the theme of the show, Heimkehr (homecoming): a pivotal moment in which "old and new, inside and outside, distance and proximity are reorganized", as Barbara Alms puts it in her essay in the exhibition catalogue. The painting – rich in symbolic references that the artist often includes in his works, like the water and the boat – shows a landscape that is still partially shaped and "tamed" by architecture. At the same time, it leads us into the key theme and focal point of the new series, Lake Maggiore.

The walls of the exhibition space showcase a wide swathe of colour in the hues of the lake, creating an immersive experience of the landscape: the long, almost panorama-format shapes, of the canvases offer a physically tangible rendering of the scenery.

The different views of the lake are characterised by references, counterpoints and visual connections, immortalized in light shades and forms. The structure of the compositions follows a clear pattern, with the artist guiding our gaze to lateral vanishing points, offset by the mountain ranges. A cool, serene

atmosphere prevails over the clearly defined shapes and smooth, flawless surfaces. Huber's landscapes are unsullied by buildings or human presence, and not even the artist's brushstrokes are visible. Yet the surface of the water quivers with shimmering light and subtle reflections. The same atmosphere can be found in the body of light, luminous watercolours grouped in the "room within the room", a more intimate space in the large hall that plays host to the exhibition.

"An obsession, a devotion and a passion": this is how the artist describes this new series, whose cyclicity, repetitions and variations reveal the unlimited possibilities of painting.

The exhibition was conceived by Thomas Huber and coordinated and organized by Ludovica Introini. It will be accompanied by a catalogue in Italian, German and French, with texts by Barbara Alms and Thomas Huber, published by DISTANZ.

Biography

Zurich-born Thomas Huber, who comes from a family of architects, studied at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Basel from 1977 to 1978, before continuing his training at the Royal College of Art in London in 1979 and the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf from 1980 to 1983.

In 1984 Kasper König invited him to Düsseldorf, to take part in the group show "Von hier aus" (From here on), which brought him international recognition. Since then, his works have been exhibited in major international institutions and museums such as Centre Pompidou in Paris (1988), Kunsthaus in Zurich (1993), Fundación Joan Miró in Barcelona (2002), Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam (2004), Aargauer Kunsthaus in Aarau (2004), MAMCO in Geneva (2012), Kunstmuseum in Bonn (2016), and MONA in Hobart (2017). From 1992 to 1999 he taught at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Braunschweig, and in 1992 he became temporary director of the Centraal Museum in Utrecht. From 2000 to 2002 he was president of the Deutscher Künstlerbund.

He has received numerous awards, including the Kiefer Hablitzel prize (1984), the Zurich Kunstgesellschaft prize for young Swiss artists (1993), the Heitland Foundation prize (2004) and the Meret Oppenheim Prize (2013). In 2023 his project Dawn / Dusk was selected for the Art Unlimited section of Art Basel.

Press contacts

MASI Lugano
Press office
+41 (0)58 866 42 40
comunicazione@masilugano.ch

For Italy

ddlArts+battage

Alessandra de Antonellis
+39 339 363 7388
alessandra.deantonellis@ddlstudio.net

Margherita Baleni
+39 347 445 2374
margherita.baleni@battage.net

Exhibition venues

LAC
Piazza Bernardino Luini 6
CH – 6900 Lugano

Palazzo Reali
Via Canova 10
CH – 6900 Lugano

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Press images

01.
Thomas Huber
Heimkehr
2021
Oil on canvas
Private collection
Photo Julien Gremaud © Thomas Huber &
Skopia / P.-H. Jaccaud / 2023, Pro Litteris,
Zurich



02.
Thomas Huber
14.10.19
2021
Oil on canvas
Private collection, Geneva
Photo Winfried Mateyka © Thomas Huber &
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Zurich



03.
Thomas Huber
Januar 2022
2022
Watercolor and pencil on paper
Private collection, Saint-Prex
Photo Winfried Mateyka © Thomas Huber &
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Zurich



04.

Thomas Huber

Ohne Titel

2022

Watercolor and pencil on paper

Collection of the artist

Photo Marlene Burz © Thomas Huber & Skopia / P.-H. Jaccaud / 2023, Pro Litteris, Zurich



05.

Thomas Huber

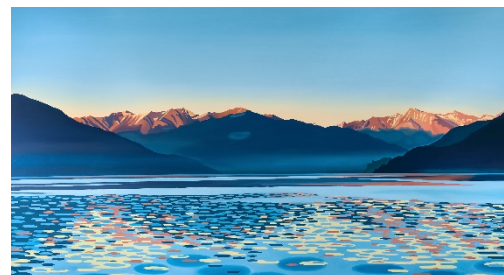
1.1.22

2022

Oil on canvas

Art collection Zürcher Kantonalbank

Photo Marlene Burz © Thomas Huber & Skopia / P.-H. Jaccaud / 2023, Pro Litteris, Zurich



06.

Thomas Huber

Bellevue

2022

Oil on canvas

Private collection, Köniz, Switzerland

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07.

Thomas Huber

Le soir

2022

Oil on canvas

Private collection

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Zurich



08.

Thomas Huber

Am Abend

2023

Oil on canvas

Private collection, France

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Zurich

