**A Glimpse of Memory and Time** – a thought, flaring up like a flash from the past, or a sensation that suddenly and very intensely asserts its presence: this is how the creative process of Jakob Kirchmayr typically begins. There is hardly ever one specific idea when he tackles a new painting. Rather, it is a continuous tracking of a sense, along with different external influences and the poetry of Yiannis Ritsos, which for years has served as a source of inspiration for the artist.

Jakob Kirchmayr’s artistic lineage dates back three generations. His roots are in Tyrol, Austria, and the time spent in nature and the mountains had a lasting impact that still reverberates in his art today. As Kirchmayr puts it, “the world in which I grew up in was archaic, influenced by my father’s unquenchable thirst for adventure.” He associates colours and scents with strong emotions and memories from his childhood. Memories of numerous travels to Greece with his family, still prior to sweeping environmental transgressions and before mass tourism had fully established its destructive force. Over the years, Kirchmayr has watched the steady retreat of unspoilt nature and the ever-increasing scale of its pollution. In the light of global abuses and the ruthlessness of the system that we live in, touches of melancholy, sadness, and anger gradually began to set in.

In this regard, the artist was particularly affected by a letter of Ritsos to his brother in 1950, in which the Greek poet describes the extreme injustice and unutterable violence suffered by himself and thousands of other political prisoners banished to so-called “internal exile” on various smaller Greek islands. People, whose only crime was to fight for freedom and peace. Many passages of Ritsos’s writings are directly adaptable to the present situation with its everyday human rights violations; his language, rich in contextual references and imagery, not infrequently has the effect of a shocking déjà vu.

All these elements blend into Kirchmayr’s multi-layered, monumental works, which are currently developed on handmade paper from Nepal, which inherently contains a vivid, distinctive structure. Following an impulse, without preliminary sketches or planning, something slowly emerges during the often-prolonged work process from the initially completely abstract painting. Something that might be reminiscent of seemingly mythic, rugged, rocky landscapes, whose many facets, shades, and depths reflect the artist’s inner world. On the one hand representive of the metaphors and projections of Kirchmayr, these paintings might also tempt the viewer to interpret them as a portrait of the collective state of mind at the time of their creation.

Between the dense, interlocking layers of paint, the semiotic and written elements, at once delicate and expressive and attributable to a downright catharsis of the artist, intense and distinctive lucid intervals appear throughout. Bright blues, a tiny spark of orange, and the consistently present, shimmering white periodically contribute to the fascinating balance and powerful attraction of Jakob Kirchmayr’s profound paintings – and this, in turn, may also be adapted for the bigger picture.

(Angelika Seebacher, 2022)