



**Paintings 1984-1985**

## The Painter Christopher Le Brun

From the outset, the source of Christopher Le Brun's attachment to painting was his passion, his clear-sighted longing for the 'ideal picture'. The romantic-classical subject matter which, after several years' exploration of surface and depth in painting, he incorporated in the key works of 1980-81, *Painting and Pegasus*, is simply the 'objectification' of this same clear-sighted longing. In both works his point of departure was Arnold Böcklin's *Isle of the Dead* (1880): strict horizontality and verticality of construction on the one hand, and criteria such as chiaroscuro and repoussoir on the other. I think it is important to understand that it was not the mythological motifs in themselves that interested Le Brun-literariness leads away from painting - but that, from a given moment on, these motifs constituted the concrete basis on which his painting could be carried forward.

'Concrete' in this context means that what previously (before 1977) had been expressed more or less non-objectively now took on objecthood, thus bringing the imagined 'ideal picture' more nearly within his grasp.

With few exceptions the subsequent evolution of his painting is based on the romantic-classical repertoire of forms he developed in 1980 - not as an interpretation of those forms but as a continuing process of transformation.

As a beholder, one feels the irresistible pull of the longing which his painting conveys, in which the motif - a distant echo - alternately disperses and coalesces and often, amid the interplay of light, can only be guessed at. This longing swells up and fills the painting, lending objective reality not to the motif but to the painting itself.

His painting invokes the motif, conjuring it forth from painting itself, with a freedom and a passion that are conceivable only in terms of a painter's instinct.

Are Pegasus' wings, in Christopher le Brun's paintings, still wings? Is a laurel wreath round a horse still a laurel wreath? Only thanks to our prior knowledge: the painterly is the meaning of the picture as such. The work addresses not the object but the painterly function for which it, the object, is a cipher.

Christopher Le Brun is a wonderful example of the truth that nothing can stand in the way of painting, whatever history may have in store for us.

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(translated by David Britt)

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