

Pictorial Time  
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Sisyphus labors heavily under his burden. Having incurred the wrath of the gods and condemned for all eternity to heave a rock to the peak of a steep mountain, only to let it tumble down again after his ascent, Sisyphus has established himself as a lasting, contemporary anti-hero. According to Albert Camus, in the absurd drama of human existence the highest duty of each and everyone lies precisely in accepting one's fate in the full knowledge of one's finitude, without gazing hopefully to the stars. Here, the journey itself is the destination, and hope fulfils itself in a this-worldly "struggle [ ] toward the heights," which commences anew over and over again. In the painting of the same name produced by the Berlin painter Daniel Mohr in 2015, Sisyphus is captured in an intermediate state, suspended between pausing and proceeding, collapse and departure, physical disintegration and consolidation. In Mohr's Sisyphus, the legs of a figure that is weighed down by a tall, heavy stone appear to be rushing ahead of its hunched torso. Silhouettes are dancing around this more distinctly formulated main figure like shadows. They recall various phases of a sequence of movements -bending over, standing up again, proceeding with the shouldered burden - that remain in a state of flux, as preconfigured in the early experimental photo series *The Horse in Motion* (1882) of film pioneer Eadweard Muybridge. At the same time, these wraithlike entities might also be seen as fellow sufferers of Sisyphus who are moving along on different temporal or narrative levels carrying their individual boulders in keeping with the idea that "The rock is still rolling". In his new works, created between 2014 and 2016, Mohr, who was born in 1976, has largely represented nude figures. In focusing on the fragile corporeality that is indicated by the bare body, the artist is also giving expression to the existential "thrownness of man." As does Camus' Sisyphus, Mohr's often sketchily rendered male and female characters -be these nameless or renowned -perform their roles before the extended horizon of the human condition. The pictorial events unfold in the space punctuated by dis-turbances, and fluctuating between presence and absence. Such shifting states are characteristic for the painter's works that are constantly caught up in disruptions, turmoil, and turbulences. Mohr decomposes his scenarios, which are played out on the open-air stage of parks and fields, on beaches, and other exterior spaces in fragmentations, superimpositions, and syncopal shifts. In his view, the fragmented figures and landscapes that manifest themselves between materialization and dematerialization follow a "pictorially based concept of time" pervaded by motion-immanent "compressions." This open-ended "pictorial time" that takes effect in the "micro-structure" of his painted compositions with their "interweaving of foreground and background" is fundamentally distinguished, in his opinion, from the "mechanically determined time which is embodied by photography." Although Mohr's works frequently draw inspiration from art-historical sources-in the concrete case from Titian's Sisyphus (1548/49, Muse del Prado, Madrid)-they are primarily concerned with questions of perception. This also links the artist to the protagonists of Impressionism, who implicitly addressed the act of seeing as such as a prominent subject in their light paintings. Mohr regards himself as a proponent of the "Impressionist project" in the sense of a phenomenologically motivated acquisition of cognition. Yet today, as our images of reality are emerging from the ephemeral reflexes of a continuous visual torrent, and are simultaneously obscured and overwritten by this non-stop inflow of images, we are literally im-merged in an Impressionist state of existence. The phenomena of disintegration and acceleration induced by digital simultaneousness, which have seized the real time of our everyday reality, are also revealed in Mohr's paintings: not least in the intervals, the quiet zones, in which the artist's subjects, the figures and landscapes, gain shape and consolidate themselves for a moment, before being transformed by the next rotation of the

paintbrush, and temporarily losing themselves in the play of colors enveloping them, or in spatial and temporal forms of displacement. "Time, like mind, is not knowable as such," as George Kubler has stated in his classic treatise on *The Shape of Time*. "We know time only indirectly by what happens in it: by observing change and permanence; by marking the succession of events among stable settings; and by noting the contrast of varying rates of change." In the 'here and now' of the artwork, an acute-ness which Walter Benjamin found entirely lacking in the reproduction, Mohr establishes an autonomous multi-temporality whose laws are co-determined by the viewers in accordance with their individual speed of contemplation and exploration. The artist's tension-charged temporal paintings capture movement in medias res both before and after its completion, while pictorial time continues to unfold anew in constantly shifting tempos.