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Susanne Kühn: *Picnic at the Fence*, 2005, oil and canvas, 47 1/4 by 51 1/4 inches; at Goff + Rosenthal.

**Susanne Kühn
at Goff + Rosenthal**

In this, the third New York solo exhibition of Leipzig-born Susanne Kühn, a female figure is prominent in three of the four large-scale, oil-on-canvas paintings (all 2005), although, as in her earlier work, landscape still dominates. The works in Kühn's 2001 exhibition at Bill Maynes included figures, yet they were small and positioned within vast landscapes; Kühn was making reference to the tactics used by Romantic painters to amplify nature's grandiosity. At Goff + Rosenthal, this visual trope appears only in *Quarry*. In this chaotic landscape, confusing shifts in perspective—a column of rock is seen from below and planks of wood are seen from above—give the viewer a sense of vertigo. The scene seems unpeopled, and it is only with close scrutiny that the silhouettes of two tiny figures can be discerned. The figures are more conspicu-

ous in the other three paintings (ranging from 48 by 52 inches to 87 by 63 inches). In *Ann Prepares the Wash*, a woman folds laundry beside a red table and curtain. The picture plane is flattened. Ann, the towel she holds and the table cast gray shadows on the pale green wall. A landscape seen through the window appears to be on the same plane as the shadows, giving the scene a dreamlike implausibility.

Kühn applies paint in thin washes. In many of her earlier paintings grays prevailed, and smatterings of blues and greens were often the only bright colors; these new paintings employ a more varied palette. One of the most remarkable features of Kühn's work is the way she deftly and seamlessly combines styles borrowed from a cornucopia of visual sources. For example, in *Picnic at the Fence*, a tree and some rocks are painted in the style of Hokusai. A Wyeth-like woman runs toward the right edge of the canvas; she wears an outfit that is as flatly patterned as a Matisse cutout. A towel slung over a piece of wood is decorated with cartoon figures, and two bushes are painted as flat, dark silhouettes. *Anne Goes Swimming* shows a female crouched in the bottom corner of the canvas surrounded by realistic trees and abstract, watery blue splotches; a shirt printed with a graphic of a Japanese face hangs on a branch.

Four smaller works in india ink and watercolor were also shown. Although lovely, these more conservative landscapes did not command attention as did the four magnificent larger canvases.

—Melissa Kuntz