

Manfred Naescher
Water Music (Overture)
at La Datcha, Berlin
September 2019

It is a warm July evening in London in the year 1717, when a full orchestra of fifty musicians embarks on an open barge. King George had commissioned George Frederic Handel to compose a piece of music that would accompany him and his royal entourage on a boat ride on the River Thames - a grand gesture, in true baroque fashion.

Drawing, in essence, is a small gesture, an intimate yet transformative act: Just as the line, guided by the hand, becomes a path, a path can become a shape, and a shape can become an image. The pigment in watercolour, when watercolour is applied wet in wet, finds its own way on the paper within a delineated boundary, a coast line, so to say, that separates the water in its unpredictability from dry areas, from the safety of the land.

On January 14, 1896, again in London, a small handful of spectators witnesses the second only public screening of a film in England (only four days after the first, and only two weeks after the world's very first public movie screening that had taken place in Paris on December 28, 1895 - the beginning of cinema as we still know it). The film that was projected at the Royal Photographic Society was only 39 seconds long, black and white, and silent: *Rough Sea at Dover*. It was made in 1895, the year before its public premiere, by Birt Acres and R.W. Paul, and showed a short sequence of waves crashing against a pier in Dover. Water, and especially water in motion, was seen as a particularly cinematic subject in the early days of filmmaking, as it provided the film camera with a direct image of movement.

The watercolours shown at La Datcha are literal water colours: Images of water (or the proximity to water), rendered in full colour. All of the water imagery is sourced from moving pictures: *Barque sortant du port* [Boat Leaving the Port] (Louis and August Lumière, 1895), *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982), *Jacquot de Nantes* (Agnes Varda, 1991), *Rough Sea at Dover* (Birt Acres and R.W. Paul, 1895), *Sans Soleil* [Sunless] (Chris Marker, 1983), and *Weekend at Bernie's* (Ted Kotcheff, 1989).

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication in English and German versions, titled *Water Music (Overture)* and *Wassermusik (Ouverture)*, respectively, with prose poetry by Manfred Naescher, co-published by Naescher and La Datcha, Berlin 2019. These texts and the works shown at La Datcha are both excerpts from the forthcoming book *Der geheime Kinosaal der Bibliothek von Alexandria* [The Secret Movie Theatre at the Library of Alexandria].

La Datcha is a garden located in Berlin, Wedding coordinated by Jessica Groome. During the summer months, artists are hosted for occasional projects, exhibitions, screenings and residencies.