

IMAGINARY LANDSCAPES

As the ground holds together seen from high up

By Fabrice HERGOTT,

It must have been in the Spring of 1987. Someone came in to show me some slides of her latest paintings. I don't know how she got in, but the speaker was persuasive and cautious. I looked at the pictures with a nonchalant air. And suddenly I was reminded of the imaginary landscapes of Hercules Seghers [1589 or 1590 to 1640], with his monochrome washes and his unbelievable techniques. We were no longer in the present, and this perfectly artificial reference enabled me to keep at least one foot on the ground.

Some time later I visited Manuele Vonthron in her studio.

From these early visits, I recall the coolness of the long paved courtyard and the smell of turpentine. The two-level studio, like two gerry-built shelves open to every wind, demanded the climbing of a metal ladder, from which the pictures were first seen from the floor. Manuele nervously paced the irregular floor in giant steps. I observed her with one eye only, while the other slid over the surface of her paintings and garnered my ideas around what could have been silhouettes. Our conversation was sparse or stumbling. We pretended to circumvent the pictures. Upon entering, a tension prevailed as before a storm – later, some easy words

