

Certain influences have emerged repeatedly over the last five years, drawn from a wide range of cultures and periods that reflect Kühn's exposure to Chinese and Japanese art while living in the United States, as well as her interest in and familiarity with art history. A Japanese kimono owned by the artist appears in several paintings including *Anne at the Fence* (2005, fig. ##), *Children's Room*, and *Anne Hiking* (2005, fig. ##), sometimes worn by the woman occupying the space and at other times draped across furniture, but in each case adding texture and a sense of fluidity to the more obdurate trees and architectural structures. Kühn frequently pays homage to the Japanese artists Hokusai and Takashi Murakami in her use of a formal language to discipline nature, producing highly stylized representations of dramatic natural scenes such as waterfalls and waves, stark contrasts of heights and depths, and the simultaneous use of several vertically stacked layers of images. Her work often recalls in general terms the features of Chinese scroll painting, from the delicate graphic style used for cliffs to the long perspective employed to structure the painting so that it is read temporally from the bottom to the top of the canvas. Recent American art history has contributed significantly to the artist's device of collaging together eclectic references. In *Waterfall* (2004, fig. ##) the fabric-like flow of the water, together with the artificial bubbles and splashes, echoes Pop Art's self-reflective fascination with the nature of paint on canvas, but these elements are also, in their exaggeration, appropriated directly from a comic aesthetic.

During the seven years she spent in the U.S., Kühn came into contact with the work of several American artists whom she continues to admire. The absorption of Kühn's figures with their environment, together with her nod to photorealism, has been influenced by Eric Fischl and Alex Katz. However, the contemporary artist by whom Kühn is most inspired is Kerry James Marshall, particularly his use of strong color, repertoire of painterly techniques, and his creation of space through devices such as city skylines and fragments of text. His paintings of figures in everyday, mostly urban settings are rendered as complete, self-contained environments, which the viewer is invited to occupy. As in Kühn's work, the movements of Marshall's figures—for example, the bike rider who appears to be falling in *Our Town* (1995. Acrylic and collage on unstretched canvas. Collection of the artist)—often appear artificial.

Susanne Kühn's paintings are constructed from the archetypes of landscapes—elements such as sun, horizon, trees, and winding pathways that through their familiarity give us access into the work. Having seduced viewers with these stereotypes, she is more easily able to coax them into carefully negotiating the unpredictable and dreamlike illusions in which they find themselves. Although less complex, Gerdt von Bassewitz's *Peterchens Mondfahrt*, illustrated by Hans Baluschek, a favorite book from Kühn's childhood, shares this strategy of using pictures of landscapes recognizable from books or reality as a basis for the exagger-



K. J. Marshall
Our Town
Deutscher Titel