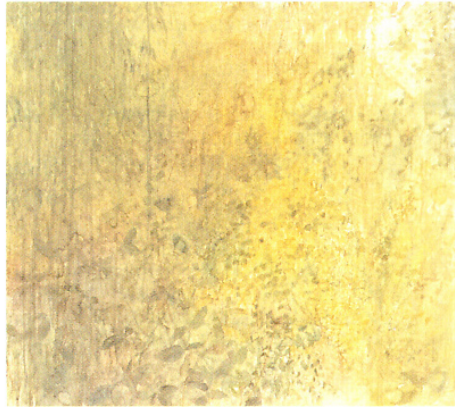


# REGEN PROJECTS

Belasco, Daniel. "Dusseldorf. Silke Otto-Knapp at the Kunstverein." *Art in America* (January 2004) p. 114

## Art in America

Silke Otto-Knapp: *Temperate House (subtropical)*, 2003, watercolor on paper, 33 1/2 by 37 1/2 inches; at the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen.



Based in London, the German-born artist works on canvas, bleeding together translucent layers and drips in instances of discreet splendor. The eloquent surfaces and dexterous interplay of color and line rephrase familiar aspects of those notoriously decadent American cities.

"Orange View," Otto-Knapp's first solo museum exhibition, gathered 31 paintings from the past four years. The earlier works describe the neon signage, hulking modern hotels and skinny palms above the Nevada desert. *Blue Sands* (2001) is Las Vegas seen

through the bleary eyes of someone who has just come off a bender. The iconic, flowingly scripted sign for the Sands hotel is washed out in soft vertical brushes of yellow and blue. Working from found photographs, Otto-Knapp captures the city's ephemeral nocturnal allure by muting the clarity of the source images. She keeps a determined distance from Vegas's promise of easy gratification, offering not critique but sympathy for that tenuous mirage.

Otto-Knapp seems far more engrossed by the fecund thickets of Los Angeles. Some of these dense, gauzy views of the capital of the American Dream were previously paired with Ed Ruscha's late '90s series of map details, "Metro Plots," in the two-person show "Imagining L.A." at the Kunstverein Wolfsburg in 2002. Both artists posit the city as a zone perpetually on the edge of abstraction. Otto-Knapp's *Japanese Style Apartments on Figueroa* (2002) shows the local historicizing architecture overwhelmed by a scrim of green foliage. The most recent work, painted from views of the palmhouses and greenhouses of a botanical garden, seems to complete her imagery's recent trajectory toward total surrender. *Temperate House (subtropical)*,

2003, with its all-over green leaves and yellow-pollen glow, portrays nature as the backdrop for human desire. As in Thomas Struth's dispassionate photographs of jungle paradise, there is a lurking sense that nature is the most artificial place of all.

—Daniel Belasco

### DUSSELDORF

#### Silke Otto-Knapp at the Kunstverein

Silke Otto-Knapp's luscious watercolors were a welcome reprieve from an adjacent show of rambunctious contemporary Russian art. Displayed in a single large gallery across the hall from noisy videos and irony-saturated photographs, her modestly sized landscapes of Los Angeles and Las Vegas quietly seduced the visitor with their surprisingly rich effects.