

Between Pause and Passageway

by Ditte Vilstrup Holm

Ditte Vilstrup Holm is an art historian. She has followed Ruth Campau's artistic development over the years and has previously written about Campau's works of art. In this article, she narrows down and interprets "Sunset Boulevard" from both a historical and a modern-day perspective.

Science has taught us that a place is a particular point on a map, a geometrical abstraction. But it is also filled with meaning. As humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has stated, a place is perhaps mostly defined by how it invites you to stay and that it makes us pause and find rest. It is what distinguishes one place from the rest of the landscape – what makes it into a place. At the same time, it is always connected to other places. It is a passageway – both physically and symbolically – to many different encounters, some near, some far away.

"Sunset Boulevard" invites you to both step back and go with the flow, follow the progression. We can stand still under the installation, but it changes as the sunlight passes through it. At the same time, it was created for movement, for our movement through the space, moving through the billows of the work. As a site-specific work, it interacts with this movement and the dynamics of the site, and infuses the discreet complexity of the architecture with a temporary layer of colouristic complexity.

Colour experiments

Painting has always been an experiment of colours. The pre-modern studios were like alchemists' laboratories with colourful substances and binding agents, substances that had to be mixed together before the artist could ever begin working on developing a motif. The industrial production of colours paved the way to a wider palette and enhanced the mobility of the practice of painting beyond the studio location. Later on, tubes became pots, making it possible for painting to blossom on a larger scale. Even so, there is always an element of experimentation in the way art processes colours, an unpredictable element that defies the lessons of experience.

A Danish art critic once described Ruth Campau as a cool romanticist. Perhaps a motif like the sunset attests to this, because her *"Sunset Boulevard"* is anything but a naive interpretation. This is evident most of all in the colours. This is not some cartoonish, sentimental universe, but rather the sharpness of the neon light. Not Disney World, but Sunset Boulevard. Her colours are anything but natural. They are exceptionally

radiant, exceptionally sharp, exceptionally mediated. You could say they are digital colours, of sorts. They capture the colour scale that currently permeates our era: the colours of the screen. Our era's technologically mediated colours.

Light as sight-specific guide

"Sunset Boulevard" wedges itself between contradictions. It is abstract, but figurative at the same time, a rhythm of extended brush strokes, but also a way to represent the experience of a sunset, for instance. Although romantic, its colour scheme is raw. It is simple at first glance, but essentially complex when you try to localise and pinpoint the work in its simplicity. It avoids being boiled down to a specific conceptual definition.

Most of all, *"Sunset Boulevard"* spans the gap between place and process, between stepping back and going with the flow. That's how it was created: as an artistic brush stroke down the Mylar film that evokes a powerful association with the pictorial material. This is also how it is experienced within its installation: as a progression associated with the site, yet at the same time inviting us to keep moving. A wave that continues, meditatively, but also disrupts the rhythm at the same time, sending us in new directions.