

# Unpainted Pictures

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## Lines, Colours, Blossoming, Heavy, Profound Glory

There is a small-format composition of Nolde's, treating the relationship between two female figures, which exudes an unspoken intimacy, an interpersonal "movement" concentrated in a constricted pictorial space in which content and form interlock. The aspects of content are transmuted into pure painting. The watercolour *Two Ladies* (plate 22) deals with open and closed vision. The figures' gazes, which meet not directly but indirectly within the picture, are differently orientated: the one active, directed upward and outward, into the distance; the other passive, musing, contemplative, directed inward or to some nearby point. This motif follows a metaphorical inspiration: a "story" based on silence, into which seeing, painting, linear interweaves, the overall image of an ambivalent pictorial spectrum enter.

The colours and linear accents call up associations with proximity and distance and depth, approach and detachment and mutual isolation. The different facial expressions, the interpenetrations and levels of reference find a correspondence in the palette. Various red and blue gradations are confronted with light and dark areas. The eye comes to rest in the central area, a light, indeterminate, greyish-ochre passage delimited by contours and flanked by two diagonally related blue-violet fields which cause the foreground to recede, producing an effect of depth which in turn makes distant areas appear to advance forward. The stability of the linear network, the framework of contours which might serve to support the composition, is not great, as it is played over by matte, heavily pigmented paint passages which serve to define facial features and figure profiles. Aspects of and references to reality are alluded to in abstract terms: the faces (or visions of them) crystallise out of an ochre-hued zone; lighter accents (orange) mark facial idiosyncracies; flowing washes indicate coiffures, garments, bodies.

Yellow can paint happiness, but also sorrow. There is fire red, blood red, and rose red. There is silver blue, sky blue, and storm blue. Each colour contains a soul, which cheers me or repels or excites me (30 December 1942).