



LANDSCAPE

WITH THE FALL OF ICARUS (BACKGROUNDS)



LANDSCAPE

WITH THE FALL OF ICARUS

When you think the most important thing in the world is the thing you have placed at the centre of your attention... remember Icarus.

From the front to the back: a man and a horse ploughing a field; a shepherd tending a flock of sheep; an angler, fishing from the rocks; a leg sticking out of the sea; a galleon, partly sailed; other, more distant boats of various sizes; two towns, one on a small island; distant mountains, and a sun (rising or setting?).

Rewind. A leg sticking out of the sea? Just there, between the angler and the ship. You could miss it if you'd just wandered by the painting and weren't looking for it.



The traditional sight lines of the painting draw the viewer in... to the open and empty ocean. The centrally located diagonal from the bright red shirted ploughman, through the shepherd, leaning on his crook draw a straight line off the cliffs into a patch of light in the sea just in front of the galleon. The title subject of the painting is shunted away to the bottom right, a tiny ripple on the sea.

And then the penny
drops.



The ploughman is Icarus. The shepherd is Icarus. The angler is Icarus. The sailors on the ships are Icarus. The inhabitants of the town are Icarus. You are Icarus. Look how you stare into the space in the empty centre of the painting. Folly. You might as well be strapping wings on and fixing them with wax. You might fly for a short while, but like everyone else, you'll come crashing out of that grey sky into that green sea, and no one will cheer you on, or mourn your fall.

