

AXEL HÜTTE
RHEINGAU

7 April – 13 May 2017

Sunday, 9 April 2017 at 11 am: artist talk with Axel Hütte and Florian Steininger,
director of the Kunsthalle Krems

AXEL HÜTTE (b 1951 in Essen), master student with Bernd Becher at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, is the undisputed master of analogue landscape photography.

In 1953, the pharmaceutical company Boehringer Ingelheim published *Lob des Rheingaus* (In praise of the Rheingau), the first of four volumes with photographs by Albert Renger-Patzsch, pioneer of the New Objectivity in photography. Sixty years later, **AXEL HÜTTE** was commissioned to reinterpret the subject of the RHEINGAU region. In 2009 and 2010, the artist took a series of compelling, captivatingly beautiful photographs. After an exhibition in the Old Town Hall in Ingelheim (an accompanying photographic book was published by Boehringer Ingelheim in 2010), the entire series, with an additional motif, will now be given its world première in our gallery.

As one views these works, it becomes clear that within the series there are strong divergences, both stylistic and formal. Large-scale prints are juxtaposed with small gems framed in deep blue linen passe-partouts. At times the viewer finds himself standing in front of classical landscape photography; at other times he is confronted with static patterns and grids that look almost abstract. *Geäst-1* (branches) consists of a network of lines formed by bare treetops: a formal „all-over“, like a Jackson Pollock „dripping“. Similarly with *Niederwald-1* (coppice): the dark trunks of a mixed forest stand out, vignette-like, against the light, diffuse background. Neither treetops nor roots allow spatial positioning. Only snow on the branches and scant withered leaves show that the photograph was taken during the winter months.

A vivid combination of landscape and architectural photography is demonstrated in the ruined chancel of the High Gothic Werner Chapel in Bacharach, a Late Romantic fortress and the Renaissance palace of the Mainz archbishops. The radical cropping of the buildings leads the viewer away from habitual patterns of seeing, towards a shifting of perception: neither chancel, fortress nor palace can be seen as the actual motif. **AXEL HÜTTE** breaks with the tradition of the Romantic Rhine, an emotively exalted depiction of the landscape as propagated particularly by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and William Turner. The details chosen by the artist and his rejection of the picture-postcard colours of past centuries afford the viewer a detached, evocative view of things, with a timeless, immobilised, everlasting validity.

The important status of **AXEL HÜTTE** is demonstrated by numerous international exhibitions: Städelmuseum Frankfurt (*Fotografien werden Bilder. Die Becher Klasse*, April – August 2017), Museum Kunstpalast Düsseldorf (*Night and Day*. Solo exhibition, September 2017 – January 2018) and Josef Albers Museum Quadrat Bottrop (*Axel Hütte. Frühwerk*, September 2017 – January 2018).

Salzburg, March 2017

Katja Mittendorfer

