

FLORIAN MAIER-AICHEN

Artist Talk on 23rd November 2019 at 11 am
Opening on 23rd November 2019 at 12 pm
23rd November 2019 - 10th January 2020

FLORIAN MAIER-AICHEN describes himself as a "painter-photographer". To him photography isn't the end result but the starting point of his artistic examination. The photographic image as an opportunity to produce a compositional vision just as precise and creative as a painting or a drawing: this approach connects **FLORIAN MAIER-AICHEN** to Heinrich Kühn (1866 – 1944) who is considered to be the founder of international artistic photography in 1900. As a representative of pictorialism Kühn combined photography and painting by creating the first colour photograph called autochrome. Pioneering landscape photography were the French Bisson brothers who first captured high mountain ranges (Mont Blanc massif), Gustave le Gray who was the first to photograph the sea and Carleton Watkins who took the first pictures of Yosemite valley. To this day the work of these 19th century photographers is a source of inspiration and a role model to **FLORIAN MAIER-AICHEN**. For *Watercolour, 418 feet* the artist chose the exact same position as Carleton Watkins did in 1861, an homage to his predecessor. The waterfall shimmers in all the colours of the rainbow, an ultraviolet illusory world unfolds.

FLORIAN MAIER-AICHEN works exclusively with an analogue large format camera. By using digital distortion techniques, the artist incorporates fictional elements into his works to free them from the status of the hyper realistic medium. Since **MAIER-AICHEN** does not work serial, he chooses an individual size for each photograph and the appropriate presentation (c-print, dye transfer print, gelatin silver print). To add to the viewer's irritation, the artist may use an expired film, then an infra-red film: in *Untitled, 2019* the red colourations mark the location of organic matter. The discolouration makes the Pacific coast south of Monterey look extraordinary and enigmatic. The artist likes to think that his landscapes can be read like maps and are therefore developed in corresponding dimensions. The exhibition's Seascapes are inspired by Gustave le Gray, who already used different negatives for sky and foreground in the 19th century to avoid any blurring in his work. This trick and the technicolour tinge of the water make the image look unreal and detached (*Untitled, Sunset #2*).

Besides landscapes, **FLORIAN MAIER-AICHEN** also works with two abstract, artistic forms of expression that affirm his unique disposition: Chemigrams and "Lasso Paintings". Chemigrams, brought to paper as c-prints, confront the viewer with cameraless photography. An amalgam made of light-sensitive substances and poured chemicals results in abstract forms. Associations with American abstract expressionism arise. In his *Lasso Paintings* **FLORIAN MAIER-AICHEN** creates multi-layered scribbles with a Photoshop tool of the same name, a brush resembling one meant for painting, to cover and alienate an image completely. The result is printed onto photo paper which brings us back to the "painter-photographer", who, in his work, takes us to fantastic parallel universes that leave plenty of room for our own interpretations.

Salzburg, November 2019

Katja Mittendorfer