

AXEL HÜTTE
TRACES OF MEMORY13th July - 31st August 2019

In our exhibition showcasing the new series **TRACES OF MEMORY**, **AXEL HÜTTE** (*1951 Essen) proves once again that he is the undisputed master of analogue photography. His cool rigour, the selected detail and a rejection of conventional postcard colour schemes clearly reveal him as a Becher student of the Düsseldorf Art Academy.

Since 2017, **AXEL HÜTTE** has visited the relics of ancient Greek and Roman settlements in Turkey several times. The artist's choice of access to the monuments presents the viewer with a detached and atmospheric perspective: the radical way in which the antique sites are cut off in some of his works leads us away from the usual visual patterns and towards a shift in perception (*Ephesos-1*).

AXEL HÜTTE breaks with the tradition of an overly emotive presentation of the ancient monuments by refraining from the high gloss of touristy photographs and instead capturing his motifs as a hazy blur. The illusionistic view of depth gives way to planes and symmetry, which dominate his works (*Sagalassos-4*, *Ephesos Night*). Light and space are thus the essential parameters in **HÜTTE's** artistic concept.

The magnificent, historical architectural structures defy ascetic documentation: it is extroverted, theatrical, festively lit at night (*Ephesos Night*, *Hierapolis Night*). The large format underlines the tableau character, the photo evokes painterly qualities (*Milet-1*, *Sagalassos 3+4*).

Advanced civilizations in the area that is now Turkey began to emerge around 3,000 BC. The finds in Troy and Pergamon and the ruins of the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus are examples of the archaeological wealth of the region. The legends of the Argonauts, the adventures of Odysseus and other Greek myths about this region prove the existence of ancient trade routes. In his explorations of this region so rich in history, **AXEL HÜTTE** focuses on the ancient relics from the Hellenistic-Roman period as seen in works taken in Ephesos.

Ephesos Night represents one of the most important structures of Roman building culture: the Library of Celsus was founded between 100 and 110 AD by Gaius Iulius Aquila for his father, Senator Tiberius Iulius Celsus Polemaeanus, and was erected above the burial chamber containing the sarcophagus of the deceased. A nine-storey open staircase, preserved to this day, led to the vestibule, from where the three-storey library could be accessed. The scrolls were stored in cabinet-like niches, which could be reached via galleries in the upper floors. An earthquake destroyed the building in 270 AD, and the Austrian Archaeological Institute restored the façade between 1970 and 1978. The setting captured by **AXEL HÜTTE** shows the brightly lit entrée at night, which covers the entire picture. The dramatic impact of the architecture, further accentuated by the light, bespeaks of a timeless, unwavering and everlasting validity.

Salzburg, July 2019

Katja Mittendorfer