

KATZ CONTEMPORARY

ELGER ESSER

PART I / *Ägypten*

6 June - 21 July, 2012

Opening: Tuesday, 5 June, 2012, 6 - 8 pm

PART II / *Heliogravure*

10 August - 25 August, 2012

KATZ CONTEMPORARY is delighted to present photographs by **Elger Esser** (*1967, Stuttgart, Germany) in a solo exhibition in Zurich for the first time. The first part of the exhibition features pieces created in Egypt, the second part presents Esser's heliogravures.

Elger Esser belongs to the second generation of the Becher School. Bernd and Hilla Becher's style and a 19th century inspiration show prominently in Esser's work - like no other student of theirs, Esser has adopted the Becher style: His large formatted photographs of landscapes and places are inspired by 19th century painting, literature and old postcards. Esser's choices of motif and composition are characteristic for the time period - he shows untouched, ephemeral and almost romantic seeming sceneries like views of beaches, riverbanks and valleys whose composition in shape and colour and the low horizon remind the viewer of romantic landscape painters such as Caspar David Friedrich.

The ***Ägypten*** photographs were shot along the Nile between Luxor and Assuan with an analogue camera in the early morning hours or during dusk - it is these special lighting situations which give the photographs their unique atmosphere. Esser photographs riverbanks, traditional Dahabeyas or fishermen - quite conventional, unspectacular motives at first sight. He succeeds, however, in capturing beauty and silence in the most unlikely places: No clouds, no wind, only minimal activity can be traced in the images. In addition, there is the width - focused on the spread of water and sky - the soft and tender light and the limited range of colours. It is the reduction per se which defines the language of Esser's Egypt works and charges the photographs with emotion - places of longing in which the viewer recognizes himself.

In the late 19th century the reproduction method of heliogravure was exclusively used for high end quality publications. Elger Esser readapts this noble technique and thus begins to blur the line of the temporal. In his ***Heliogravures*** Esser creates references to the fictitious place of Combray from Marcel Proust's "À la recherche du temps perdu": In addition to the constructed realm of Combray, the titles of the photographs are also inspired by the actual shooting location in France. This way he succeeds in deterritorializing the images and freeing them of any form of temporal classification. In his heliogravures of French landscapes and villages, Esser's characteristic treatment of present and past, scenarios that he came across and things he added becomes especially apparent. The two defining factors of photography - time and place - become oblivious and the images' immanent precision and clarity become even more obvious. His photographs thus gain an atmospheric and poetic character which makes the seemingly unspectacular places reveal intimate memories to the viewers.

Elger Esser succeeds in offering a wide spectrum of emotions in both series - his photographs deliver the frame for subconscious memories, different time zones are revealed and they offer a type of space which is normally only found in painting.

Elger Esser (*1967 in Stuttgart, grew up in Rome, lives and works in Düsseldorf, Germany) worked as a commercial photographer until 1991, then studied with Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Art Academy in Düsseldorf until 1997. His works have been presented in numerous exhibitions and were published in several volumes, such as *Veduten und Landschaften*, 2000, or *Eigenzeit*, 2009. In May 2012 Schirmer/Mosel published a catalogue with photographs of Monet's garden in Giverny. In addition, Esser has received several awards. His work is part of different private and public collections: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, Kunsthaus Zürich, Switzerland, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in the Netherlands or the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Esser's work will be presented in the upcoming solo exhibition *Stille Wellen* at Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Oldenburg from July 7 until September 30, 2012.

Raphaella Arnold

For image material and further information please contact the gallery:
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ARTIST TALK

24 August, 2012, 7:30 pm

“The Historic and the Contemporary in Photography“

Tobia Bezzola in conversation with Elger Esser and the collector Thomas Walther

Open House Weekend before Art Basel

Saturday, 9 & Sunday, 10 June 2012, 11 am - 5 pm

GUIDED TOUR / ART LUNCH

Friday, 13 July, 2012, 12:15 pm

Art Lunch offers you to take part in a guided tour of about 20 minutes through the current exhibition of Elger Esser PART I / *Ägypten* and - for all those who bring enough time - to enjoy a meal at a nearby restaurant afterwards (at their own expense).

Please register for the guided tour / Art Lunch under:

Tel: +41 44 212 22 00 / info@katzcontemporary.com

PREVIEW

Clarina Bezzola, 31 August - 6 October, 2012

Opening / Seasonopening: Thursday, 30 August, 2012, 5 - 8 pm