

Stillness as Wealth

For some, the camera is a rifle with which they go on safari for every more or less attractive motif. Others have internalized a strict hierarchy of images and consider very little worthy of a photo. Elias Hassos is among those who prize slowness, the extended measure of time. Long before he releases the shutter, he knows what a picture should be in terms of composition, sharpness of focus, and lighting.

The greater the degree of ephemerality, the more clearly Hassos' desire for calm, steady, and demanding images emerges. He counters the inflation or fragmentation of the world with a stringent concentration on what is essential and opposes the sublime to the everyday theater, without the slightest trace of pathos. He respectfully demonstrates a belief, grown rare, in deeper meaning and existential foundation.

His photographic series bears the title "Paradigma" for a reason. Hassos is truly interested in fixating objects, which he charges with the effective power of visual designs, ideas of models, and patterns of thought.

At the beginning and end stands silence. Between them, for example in "Baum #4" (tree #4, D.2006), a cherry tree against a black background photographed with a flash, so that the flash is lost in the darkness. The trunk and limbs in formal isolation, the singling out of the tree as an underscoring and homage – the elemental, the splendid in spring, at the height of its power, energy, and beauty!

Elias Hassos wants to view a hole in the wall, covered with glass, as a window, as a view into the sky, as a contemplative picture that draws line, surface, and space into unity at the same time: delicate in allusion, close to reality and demanding distance. Not even its title, "Loch" (hole, D.2006), wants to delude us. This picture has breathtaking depth and emblemizes the idea of emptiness as fullness; it is thus the opposite of nothingness – complete stillness as wealth.

Hassos confounds our concepts of the universe, nature, and art and leaves his audience silently astonished – also about itself. For Hassos, nature is neither a role model nor a depiction, neither norm nor formless material. For him, nature is a wonderful space for allusions, in which the real and the symbolic indissolubly interpenetrate each other.

With "Baum #6" (tree #6, D.2007), a "Pfad" (path, D.2007), a "Lampe" (lamp, D.2007), with the unspectacular that oscillates perspectively between the micro- and the macrocosmos and flows from the inside to the outside, Hassos confuses our ideas of the natural. For nothing is more unnatural than made nature.

A picture like "Baum #7" (tree #7, D.2007), photographed from above and focused on exposed roots in order to bring the vital connection between rooting, extension, and mooring into clear relationship, is an exemplar of monkish patience and compositional will.

Elias Hassos is a seeker, perhaps out of fashion, not an artist-tactician. He seeks experiences and images that can be experienced as something elemental, independent of religious and cultural affiliation. For him, mysticism is a source of power, inner tension, and knowledge – and in no way of sanctimony.

Free of sentiment or other earthly imprisonment, Elias Hassos is able to capture the complex with sensual precision and at the same time with a touch of the inexplicable, by turning away from the deluge of images and with respect for nature.