

# Galleri Riis

## Per Berntsen

May 1985

Landscapes from Eggedal

May 15 – June 13, 2020

The mountain area surrounding Eggedal in Buskerud County, Norway was an important location for Per Berntsen when working on his analogue black and white photographs of landscapes in the 1980's and 90's. In the fall of 1985, he made a compelling series consisting of images without a horizon, which investigated the shifting nuances and textures of the ground and vegetation in the area. In the first half of May that same year, Berntsen captured a number of images from views over the snow-covered landscape. With a graphic spectrum composed from the white snow and the dark conifer and birch trees, these wide views share the all-over effect with the later vegetation studies. Only four of these images have previously been exhibited, but they have become an important and characteristic part of Berntsen's oeuvre. While working on the digitalization of his early film negatives, he has restored eight additional images from this series. These are now printed in large format, as archival inkjet prints on baryta paper. We are pleased to present these works for the first time, under the title 'May 1985', exactly thirty-five years after they were conceived.

*"The gaze in Berntsen's pictures is that of the wanderer, but not one that is goal-oriented, moving from one place to another in order to do something specific. It is the gaze of one who walks in order to belong, to be able to know purity, freedom, authenticity and the possibilities that comes with being a complete human being who belongs in the world. It is not the gaze of a hunter, who takes cover while securing a wide open view; Berntsen's camera seeks no prey"* Åsmund Thorkildsen, from his essay STILL\*GAZE\*UP\*HERE\*OVER\*THERE\*AGAIN in the catalogue published for the exhibition "Per Berntsen, Photographs", Kunstnerens Hus, Oslo, 1995.

Per Berntsen (b. 1953) is one of the veterans of camera-based art in Norway and an important advocate for the medium's rise and acceptance on the local art scene. Berntsen was educated at Trent Polytechnic / Derby College of Art, England, during the second half of the 1970's and has exhibited actively since his debut in 1980 at Fotogalleriet in Oslo. Important recent projects are the 2008 publication and exhibition at Galleri Riis, 'Generator', documenting 100 generator halls from hydroelectric power plants in southern Norway, and 'Down Under Up North' in 2010, a documentation and art project about the mining industry in Kirkenes. From 2013-2015, Berntsen undertook an artistic documentation of the Taiga, the landscape connecting the northern parts of Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway. This project resulted in the publication and exhibition tour 'Metsä' in 2018. In 2019, a new development in Berntsen's work was introduced, with a series of landscapes from the Veståsen area in Tinn, Telemark, close to his home. Resulting from field work in 2018 and 2019, these large archival inkjet prints on baryta paper represented a recognizable theme in Berntsen's oeuvre - the unpopulated landscape - but they also marked a significant new departure as they were the first color images that he had exhibited to date.

Per Berntsen's works can be found in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo, AKO Art Foundation/Sørlandets Kunstmuseum in Kristiansand and the Oslo City Art Collections in Oslo. Per Berntsen lives and works in Tinn, Telemark.