

**German photographer Axel Hütte (Essen, 1951) belongs to the Düsseldorf School along with Andreas Gursky, Thomas Ruff and Thomas Struth, trained by Bernd and Hilla Becher. Over the past 40 years, Hütte has made an international name for himself with his photographs of landscapes, bridges, reflections, night shots and, most recently, flowers.**

**AKINCI is proud to present a few landscapes of Antarctica and Italy, along with the latest series of Flowers.**

Axel Hütte's photographs stand in a long tradition of landscape photography. Photographing landscapes has a strong connection with travelling and appropriating and 'discovering' unknown places. Since the late nineteenth century, photography has played a crucial role in the practical documentation and exploration of the earth. With increasing tourism, the use of Google Maps and widespread visual culture through the internet, the landscape has slowly become part of global, visual consumer culture. Given everything nowadays seems to be photographed and thus 'discovered', little mystery remains and we can conclude that there is a certain disenchanting of the world. Axel Hütte's photographs bring back an element of mystery, a form of alienation, rooted in reality.

This is partly because of a certain absence that can be felt in Hütte's photographs. There are no people or animals in his landscape photographs, and there are no signs or remnants of culture. History and human civilisation are absent from the photographs; an absence that accentuates the presence of nature. This absence, or in some cases presence of a dominant 'nothingness', leaves the viewer nervously wavering between wanting to see something and not being able to. His photographs of *Antarctica*, for example, show an overwhelming monochrome sky dominating the landscape. A dark void that offers no resistance to the eye.

Hütte's *Flower* series reveal a technique he also uses in his landscape photographs. He isolates a single natural phenomenon. Within the theme of his bridges, for example, Hütte does this by using the structure of a bridge as an architectural frame, in other photographs by choosing a particular point of view, but also by applying the technical frameworks of photography and using cut-outs. Hütte limits the space, removes something from its context and places it on a stage that serves as an exercise and experiment in perception. A larger context is concealed. The cut, loose flowers are literally separated from nature and taken out of their natural environment. In art historical terms, Hütte's *Flower* series should not be placed in the tradition of depicting landscapes, but in the tradition of the still life.

Using the negative of the photograph, the colours of the flowers are reversed, giving them an unpredictable character. Where today we are surprised by little, as all natural beauty seems to be documented, these flowers come as a surprise. The black background refers to Baroque still lifes, where this was applied to bring out the colours of the flowers. In Hütte's photographs, this is again a flat 'nothingness' that doesn't refer to anything and makes the viewer aware of their gaze. The background is broken up by the faded, smoky traces that hang around the flowers. These are their negative shadows. Although it is clear that they are shadows, the flowers take on a mysterious character, giving them a spooky appearance, like ghosts.