



A WALK THROUGH THE FOREST

April 01 – Mai 20/2006

This exhibition presents a selection of 31 vintage prints by EUGÈNE CUVELIER (1837-1900), AUGUST KOTZSCH (1836-1910) and ALBERT RENGER-PATZSCH (1897-1966).

"Nothing is in better accord with the resources and limits of our art than these forest interiors, these adorable laces of branches, trunks and trifles, where the exquisite coquetry of nature is revealed in its most insouciant attire".

The critic Paul Périer on the photography of Olympe Aguado at the world-fair 1955 in Paris

Already in the early ages of photography the inexhaustible motive of the forest assumes an important position as a place and a symbol of nature, shelter, space, secret, silence and solitude. The forest was represented at different times a year with its labyrinth of impenetrable undergrowth and its light-flooded clearings. Coherent with the romantic ideal the forest represents simultaneously a place of the unknown and primordial as well as a place of individual freedom and creativity. For Cuvelier and Kotzsch the forest was an intrinsic part of their closest surrounding. With their camera they explored the well-known territory in a poetic manner.

EUGÈNE CUVELIER (1837-1900) got to know the landscape painters of the Barbizon school very early on through his father Adalbert Cuvelier. In 1859 CUVELIER settled in Thomey a small village close to the Forest of Fontainebleau. This forest became his main subject. CUVELIER seems to have used the at that time famous guide *Promenades en Forêt de Fontainebleau* by Claude-Francois Denecourt for the detection of his locations. His poetic forest-sceneries show strong similarities with works of his painter friends Jean-François Millet, Théodore Rousseau and Camille Corot. The sensitive captions of the forest are reflected in his working-strategy. He used according to the desired result two different techniques: either the paper-negative based technique, which produces a more picturesque and atmospheric result or a technique based on glass-negatives, which produces a very sharp and precise image, which seemed to be perfect to caption the chaotic details of the forest.

Already in 1874 the Forest on Fontainebleau became the first natural site in the world to be classified. In 2007 the Musée D'Orsay is going to dedicate an exhibition to the Forest of Fontainebleau as an unique source of inspiration for painters, photographers and writers.

AUGUST KOTZSCH (1836-1910) spent all his life in the small village Loschwitz close to Dresden. KOTZSCH who had first worked as a winemaker took up photography in 1860. The encounter with the painter Ludwig Richter, who used to spend his summers in Loschwitz influenced KOTZSCH deeply. KOTZSCH depicts in his motives the whole spectrum of country life, which ranges from village- and genre-scenes to detailed nature-studies. Nevertheless his main subject remains the forest. His oeuvre carries despite its topographical limitations a documentary and objective style as well as a sensitive validity. Therefore "...his unique quality lies in his ability to unveil an imaginary territory..." (Jean-Francois Chevrier: A. Kotzsch, Pionier der deutschen Photographie, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 1992, S. 14). "Inclined towards a love of detail by the influence of Ludwig Richter, he captured the life around him with unvarnished objectivity" (Hans-Ulrich Lehmann: A. Kotzsch, Pionier der deutschen Photographie, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 1992, S. 52)

ALBERT RENGER-PATZSCH (1897-1966) specialised with his photography on plants, animals, architecture and objects. His main publication "Die Welt ist schön" was released in 1928. RENGER-PATZSCH managed to focus on the details and to separate them from their contexts through partial enlargements and close ups. Without any artistic claim he followed a consequent equation of objectivity and order with beauty and of technique with art. In his forest pictures as well as in his other works one can recognize his concentration on the surface, the structure and the form of the photographed object. Some of the here presented photographs from the years 1952-1956 were published in: *Im Wald. Aufnahmen aus dem Naturpark Arnsberger Wald, Wamel, 1965.*