

B r i g h t . D a r k .

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(Translation by Johanna Schuler)

Photography is based on the traces of light. It is inscribed in the emulsion of the film or in the photo diodes of the semiconductors. If there is no light, there is no photograph. Is it therefore impossible to take a picture of the dark? Sarah Straßmann repeatedly makes it an issue in her work. If in photography the dark is equal to nothing, the reverse would be that it can just be illustrated in negation, that is, in contrast to brightness. In Straßmann's exposures the line between light and dark, runs through the middle of the picture, becomes itself the object of representation. How much light requires the darkness, how much dark the light, in order to be perceived as such? Or further asked: How much presence requires the visibility of absence?

„Opposite“ (2009) and „The Void“ (2008) are two series of photographs that explore this very limits of what can be depicted. In „The Void“ light bands and - cones, columns and windows determine the space coordinates so that the dark experiences a dimension and thus a presence of spatial structure. And surprisingly, this principle can be turned around, as shown in „White Wall“ where narrow shadow gaps contour and define the glistening white area.

It seems that the exploration of the boundary line between light and darkness, between presence and absence or between object and space appears even more radical in the most recent work „Opposite“, that has been persecuted as work in progress and will be continued. The photographs taken by the strict and conceptual approach with a frontal, central perspective appear kind of dislocated while simultaneously the visibility of complete darkness is carried to its extremes. Thus, with the knowledge of the various possibilities of digitization of the image, one might ask whether the black beyond the visible objects, that is the visible outside of the sparse lit setting, is it photographed or is it actually just simply a photo-technical exemption. Even more than in evenly lit photos in these pictures of Sarah Straßmann the question is raised concerning the authenticity of the image and whether the absence can be photographed at all or will it because of the photographic act in the same moment mutate to presence.

At the first glance quite a different approach is followed by the artist Sarah Straßmann in her series „Nature of fourth Kind“ (2006) with photographs of industrial wastelands, and their slow recapture by the plant world. But here too, the issue of presence is put forward. What once took place on this land, how much of the previous history and of the civilization legacies remain in the dark? At what point is cultivated land protected area and how to determine the visibility of this ratio? Basically Sarah Straßmann explores in this work the narrow line between presence and absence, between visibility and invisibility, which is not only determined with all its blur but at the same time also bears highly unsettling potential. The localization of the individual's own standpoint constitutes the coordinate system of spiritual and physical orientation. If its fragility, its indetermination zone becomes obvious, the result is fundamental uncertainty. Art is finally a motor in order to determine this daily challenge in a new way and to use it as a productive force.