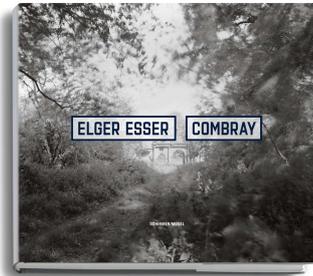


München, February 2016



PRESS RELEASE

A photographic journey into Marcel Proust's France: **Elger Esser: Combray 2005-2016**

On the exhibition and awarding of the Oskar Schlemmer Prize in Karlsruhe

Elger Esser

Combray

With essays by
Kirsten Claudia Voigt and
Bernd Stiegler
224 pages, 102 duotone plates
ISBN 978-3-8296-0751-3
€68, €(A) 70, CHF 78.20

The artist Elger Esser (born 1967 in Stuttgart) is a time traveler. His photographs are present-day images, actually existing landscapes, yet the world shown in these pictures seems to originate from the past. The photographic technique that he uses also evokes a bygone era: The former master student of Bernd Becher produces nostalgic-seeming photogravures of his negatives taken in black and white in an elaborate process and thereby provides the biggest possible contrast to the digital present.

In his new photo book *Elger Esser: Combray*, recently published by Schirmer/Mosel, Esser consistently limits his motifs to the French countryside and its secluded corners, which in their apparent enchantment evoke images of the fictional town of Combray from Marcel Proust's novel *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913). The large-format volume combines more than 100 images from a series of works that were taken over a period of more than 10 years by Esser, who, on February 19, 2016, will be honored with the Oskar Schlemmer Prize, the Baden Wuerttemberg State Prize for Visual Arts, and a large exhibition at Kunsthalle Karlsruhe (*Elger Esser: zeitigen* runs until July 20, 2016, from January 2017 at Landesgalerie Linz).

"It is not the identifiable specific locality that interests Esser; the aim of his search is the exemplary motif, the unique detail, the poetic moment."

Süddeutsche Zeitung

With his conceptually orientated series of works – the reworked historical postcard images or the sepia-toned cityscapes and seascapes – Elger Esser creates images of longing that cannot be anchored in any timeline. The uninhabited landscapes, abandoned places, gardens, small lakes and river courses, monastery ruins and dilapidated church naves, forests bathed in light and moss-covered stonework from the *Combray* series seem to be entirely removed from time. The French town of Illiers was indeed renamed "Illiers-Combray", in honor of Marcel Proust's 100th birthday, but the town of Combray, to where Proust's protagonist sets out to find the lost memories of his childhood, never existed – thanks to Esser's pictorial world, Combray now assumes visual form.

Alongside the artistically posed questions of reality and fiction, Elger Esser manages to develop his own poetization of the world. His atmospheric *Combray* images, which are presented for the first time in such range and complexity in the Schirmer/Mosel volume, compose themselves to a self-contained memory atlas and impress readers not least with their exceptional sensual, melancholy beauty.

**Schirmer/Mosel
Press Office**

Ulrike Haardt/Carola Conradt
press@schirmer-mosel.com
+49 (0)89-2126700