

May 2014
Press Announcement

1914/18 – Stephan Schenk, Kreuzweg / The Way of the Cross

Fotostiftung Schweiz, Winterthur, 7 June to 12 October 2014

Media preview: 6 June 2014, 10am to 12 noon, official opening: 6pm

As a counterpart to the exhibition of photo postcards dating from 1914–1918 entitled “Pictures from the Border”, the Fotostiftung Schweiz is presenting an installation of large works by Stephan Schenk in which the artist questions the very possibility of depicting the catastrophe of the First World War – which cost more than eight million soldiers and seven million civilians their lives. “The Way of the Cross”, a work done over the past three years, is based on 14 photographs of the largest battlefields of the First World War in Europe and overseas. Schenk deliberately narrows his focus, limiting himself to a small section of the ground the size of a soldier’s grave. By opting for this fragmentary perception of reality he denies himself and the viewer an overview, thus underscoring the irrational, unimaginable dimension of the events involved. Schenk also consistently questions the medium of photography and the objectivity it purports to have. He had his photographs woven into monumental tapestries, thereby falling back on ancient forms of pictorial transmission. The works installed on the walls of the exhibition space constitute a different, associative, emotional and non-documentary form of commemoration culture.

“It was also a question of finding another materiality in which to do justice to the dimensions of the theme. I was fascinated by the idea of things being interwoven, not only by the threads that make up the picture, but also by the fates, by history, by processes which one can also not separate, even for oneself. This technique simultaneously leads to an optical dissolution. Normally, a detail emerges all the more clearly, the closer one gets to a picture. This is not the case with these tapestries. If you get too close to the work, it dissolves into individual threads and indefinable planes. This is irritating for viewers, as it is precisely the opposite of what they expect. It plays a game with distance and proximity and perception, corresponding to the difficulty involved in approaching a theme such as the First World War; it demands this mixture of proximity and distance.” (Stephan Schenk in the publication “Kreuzweg”).

Stephan Schenk:

Born in Stuttgart in 1962, grew up in Backnang, Germany. Studied photography at the Bayerische Staatslehranstalt für Photographie in Munich. In 1985 he was received into the Association of Fine Artists in Württemberg. Active in the fields of photography and photographic laboratory work. Since 2000, museum technician at the Bündner Kunstmuseum Chur. Several solo and group exhibitions and book publications. Lives and works in Lünen, Graubünden.

Publication and Edition:

To mark the exhibition both an artist's book and an edition by Stephan Schenk will be published by Verlag Rothe Drucke, Berne. The Fotostiftung Schweiz will publish "Kreuzweg" containing a text by Klaus Merz and contributions by Stephan Schenk, Beat Stutzer and Peter Pfrunder.

www.fotostiftung.ch

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Press images in printable quality can be downloaded from: www.fotostiftung.ch (heading Press).

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