

## THOMAS WREDE. WEISS WAR DER SCHNEE (White Was The Snow)

Opening on 6th February, from 7 pm, in the presence of the artist with an introduction by Prof. Dr. Robert Fleck.

The exhibition will be on view from 7th February to 19th April 2025

Bernhard Knaus Fine Art is pleased to present its first solo exhibition featuring works from Thomas Wrede's *Glacier Project*. In his photographic oeuvre, Wrede explores the fascinating boundary between staging and reality, with landscapes as a central theme. His works examine both pre-existing and deliberately created constructions in nature, always navigating the tension between authenticity and artificiality.

Even Wrede's earlier bodies of work address themes of the environment, natural disasters, and human traces in the landscape, resulting in a unique visual aesthetic that blends surreal alienation, critical documentation, and apocalyptic fiction. His spectacular landscape photographs of Alpine glaciers vividly reflect the ongoing climate change and its consequences, making them more relevant than ever.

While the *Real Landscapes* series is characterised by intentional stagings with miniature models in natural environments, in which the artist consciously plays with perspective to create a tension between reality and fiction, in the glacier photographs, natural landscapes merge with human interventions.

Wrede's *Glacier Project*, which began in 2017 with photographs of the Swiss Rhône Glacier, includes large-format panoramas as well as outside and inside views of glacier caves. It is based on the concept of the "packaged landscape". In order to slow the rapid melting of glaciers, large ice surfaces are temporarily or permanently covered with fleece. Close-up shots reveal the weathered coverings, exposing rubble and dirty snow. The morbid aesthetic of the folds, the chosen crop, and the various shades of grey create unique painterly motifs. These images echo Wrede's early *Samsö* series from the 1990s, in which plastic sheets on a Danish island, captured in atmospheric black-and-white shots, unfold an oppressive beauty.

In contrast to the decaying "outer skin", the fascinating interplay of colours and light within the centuries-old ice layers is revealed. The fleece coverings appear through the thinning ice and partially collapse into the cave, merging the outside and inside, the natural and the artificial.

In his more recent works *Blutschnee* (Blood Snow), Wrede explores a captivating natural phenomenon on the Presena Glacier in South Tyrol. The pinkish algae in the meltwater transform the snow into abstract, almost surreal colour compositions, powerfully visualising the fragile beauty, transience, and climatic transformation of the Alpine landscape.

The title *WEISS WAR DER SCHNEE* (White Was the Snow) of our exhibition alludes to a lost purity, evoking an elegiac meditation on the once pristine Alpine landscape. It oscillates between melancholic reminiscence and contemporary lament, conjuring the virgin purity of the snow as a metaphor for an irretrievably lost authenticity, thus symbolising transience and change in Wrede's glacier photographs.

Wrede's aim is not a documentary record of glacial changes but rather the use of photography as a form of illustrative thinking. His artistic engagement with glaciers results in disturbingly beautiful images that oscillate between idyll and catastrophe, staging and reality.

As a committed artist, Wrede continues the *Glacier Project*, ascending further glaciers to capture the threatened beauty and fragility of the ice: "I want to find images between documentation and subjective seeing that make the traces of the climate crisis and the rapid changes visible in the heart of Europe." (2018). His works belong in prestigious collections worldwide. Additionally, he participated in the Climate Biennale at the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna (2021) and the exhibition *Weather Engines* at Onassis Stegi in Athens (2022).