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Joachim Hildebrand Wild West

Texts by Celina Lunsford, Manfred Berg
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A photographic adventure, deconstructing the myth of the Wild West

What better way to approach an American myth than through a road trip? Joachim Hildebrand traveled through the seven states of the American Southwest, in which the Wild West is located both geographically and in our imagination. The title of the book inevitably evokes images full of clichés and stereotypes. Today, where the wilderness has been displaced by “civilization,” Hildebrand discovers entirely different scenes than those generally associated with the Wild West and the American frontier. He sets his sight on blurred contours, contradictions, borders, and transitions: from architecture to nature, from urbanity to landscape. The archetypes of the American West have become mere platitudes. Here, the myths of the Wild West and the “manifest destiny,” which are so essential for the self-understanding of the USA, are deconstructed. For Joachim Hildebrand, however, the West continues to fascinate as a visual adventure.

»It is a mecca of surreal irony [...]. Instead of the virgin landscape, Hildebrand displays a paved paradise that is manufactured by “civilization.” It is a global Wild West in the middle of the American West.«

– excerpt from *Paved Paradise* by Celina Lunsford

Joachim Hildebrand (b.1964) studied economic sciences. At the same time he worked as a freelance photographer for press and photo agencies. After having completed his doctorate and fifteen years in business, he turned to photographic art and studied Fine Art Photography at the Istituto Europeo di Design in Madrid

under, among others, Elger Esser, Joan Fontcuberta, and Martin Parr. His works have been exhibited internationally and honored several times with awards such as the European Architectural Photography Prize. Joachim Hildebrand lives and works in Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, and Ellmau. www.joachim-hildebrand.de

Celina Lunsford has been Artistic Director of the Fotografie Forum Frankfurt (FFF) since 1992 and is above all a well-known curator of numerous exhibitions with national and international outreach. She focuses on extraordinary interdisciplinary photographic themes and artists. Besides her curatorial activities, she frequently writes about photography. Her writing is published worldwide.

Manfred Berg (b. 1959) holds the Curt Engelhorn Chair in American History at the University of Heidelberg. He served as Acting Deputy Director of the German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C. and as Executive Director of the Center for U.S. Studies at the Leucorea Foundation, University of Halle-Wittenberg. Berg has published numerous articles and monographs on a wide range of topics on American history.

Exhibition

Alp Galleries, Frankfurt am Main
07.06. – 18.08.2018

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