

wachau_scans

a project by Kurt Hoerbst

The Wachau and its inhabitants.

The name of this 35 kilometre-long valley on the Danube conjures up very specific images. Often these are inspired by the world of film, with a female protagonist taking centre stage. Theatre lovers think of Marianne, whose tragic tale begins with a swim in the Wachau. Others are reminded simply of Mariandl, who came to symbolise the Austrian homeland film or *Heimatfilm* genre.

And countless places that have been photographed countless times: Melk, the monastery. Aggstein, the castle. Spitz, the Tausendeimerberg hill. Dürnstein, the Blue Tower and ruins. Mautern, the bridge.

Krems, the old houses in Stein.

But what is the Wachau really like? And can this area be defined by its residents? First we have to find out who they are: the real men and women, or the *Wachauer* and *Wachauerinnen*, as they say in these parts.

What are their names? Where do they live? What do they do?

And are they the ones who define this cultural landscape? Or is it the other way round – does the Wachau shape its inhabitants?

wachau_scans is an attempt to gain a closer understanding of this well-known region through the people who live there. At the end of the day, you have to decide if the *Wachauer* and *Wachauerinnen* pictured here fit the familiar stereotypes. Maybe they show us something new, a kind of anti-stereotype. Or perhaps this small selection of portraits actually does very little to help us draw conclusions about the people and the region. You can be the judge of that.

About people_scans

The project is to be regarded as a counterpoint to the high speeds found in digital photography. Not, however, as a sign of personal rejection of the new media – the idea behind this project is more a form of concept-based personal slowdown, concentrated work, personal awareness of the environment.

The technical part is handled by a high resolution digital camera which moves along a specially designed rail system and can be used to photograph and scan individual surfaces/objects/subjects. The individual images are then put together to make life-size pictures. A finished picture consists of up to 20 individual images – giving you a high-quality finish. When you take a closer look at the finished picture, the high technical quality reveals new aspects in the contents.

The with regard to the genre of portrait photography and the slowing down of what is normally a very spontaneous act in portrait photography represent an additional aspect of communication between photographer and model.

The photographer takes on an exceptionally domineering role in this „game“. He literally rises above the model. The model has no possibility of movement.

He or she is at the mercy of the photographer for one to two minutes.

The result is a form of victim/assailant situation (as is very often the case in photography).

The shooting angle does the rest, making sure that once the exhibition picture is put up vertically again, there is something strange, distant and removed about it. An impersonal, unapproachable image develops, something that can only be the result of personal trust and personal closeness ...

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