

## ELGER ESSER

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### COMBRAY

SALZBURG VILLA KAST

15 Saturday - 19 Saturday

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Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is pleased to announce the exhibition Combray by the German artist Elger Esser. This solo presentation will focus on a series of large-format heliogravures made in 2007. Like other groups of works by Esser, Combray mainly deals with landscapes.

Esser seeks the *Zeitgeist* in landscapes, rather than in large metropolises or in portraits of people. Like his group of works entitled *Cap d'Antifer-Étretat* (2002), Combray is strongly marked by Esser's interest in literary accounts of landscapes. Guided by his interest in landscape painting, travel literature of past centuries, and most notably by Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, Esser has made for Combray, a series of pictures depicting forests, gardens and facades of old buildings. Illiers-Combray, a small town southwest of Paris in the Loire valley, was originally only called Illiers. The town became famous through Marcel Proust's descriptions of this region. *In Search of Lost Time* includes a chapter entitled Combray in which Proust told of Marcel's youth in the small French town. This account was the starting point for the pictures Esser presents at Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac.

His landscapes are often have a sense of loneliness and melancholy. The medium of heliogravure sustains this atmosphere of his pictures, especially as they are kept in black and white. Heliogravure (from *helios* [Gr.]: the sun) is a printing technique invented in the late nineteenth century in which the printing plate is made by means of photographic processes. Heliogravure is considered the 'Rolls Royce' of photo-chemical printing procedures. The special thing about it is the precise rendering of continuous tones. Therefore, a great sense of depth can be achieved with this technique. Heliogravure flourished between 1890 and 1910, when it was mainly used for monochrome illustrations in particularly valuable books. Esser created the group of works Combray in the internationally renowned etching workshop of Kurt Zein in Vienna.

Elger Esser was born in 1967 in Dusseldorf and grew up in Rome. He studied under Bernd Becher at Kunstakademie Düsseldorf from 1991 to 1997. Esser's pictures are included in numerous public and private collections, for instance those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim Foundation, Kunsthaus Zürich, FNAC Paris, the Stedelijk Museum, and the Albright Knox Gallery Buffalo. Among others, Esser has received the following awards and scholarships: DAAD Reisestipendium Italien, Förderpreis für Bildende Kunst, Deutsches Studienzentrum Venedig.