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Why Heinrich Riebesehl deserves more recognition

On 31 October 2010, died after a long illness 72jährig Heinrich Riebesehl, which is now titled in the arts pages alternately as the home of photographer and as an important German post-war photographer. The one reduces it to the documentary of the North German Plain, the other sticks him a rather vacuous label on. Does not the question of why it is important, but remained largely unknown? And what is this meaning? Can a photographer, photography have changed, and that this is publicly recognized? Yes, in Germany already. Distinguished artists are certainly underestimated, because you can ask any writer or painter. With the award of regional art awards it just is not done. The German dilemma is most apparent with reference to the Obituaries: While there are many, but they are largely limited to the reproduction of the consigned by the Sprengel Museum press release. The TAZ brings at least one interview with the director of the photography department of the Sprengel Museum, Schube that Riebesehl inadvertently incorporated into the American "New Topographics" highlighting instead its singular power.
Riebe Hel ever was the first contemporary autonomous artistic photographer in Germany. While he "situations and objects" yet arrested the zeitgeist in his first book, working with strong contrasts, "magically realistic" photography presented, he quickly found his own very sparse style. With the large-format camera on the bike, he explored the agriculturally used areas of his north German homeland, photographed the potato crop, coal fields, the plowed ground. While most photographers in this country were sailing on the crest of reportage and editorial photography, Heinrich Riebe Hel followed a self-imposed mission, a great artistic project. Published in 1979 the "agricultural landscapes" as a large format book, the authors first photo book in Germany.

There were an imported from the USA euphoria, photography also to establish now as an art form, the animated Riebe Hel, almost incidentally in 1972 with the Spectrum Photo Gallery to create the first photo gallery in Germany. Rudolf Kicken, who now represents Riebe Hel on the art market, its own art gallery, began in 1974 in Aachen, together with Wilhelm Schürmann: "At that time, I've always said, we're back
five years behind the Americans. It was not true. We were back twenty years."

Not only were we back in terms of sales of Photography, also was the situation of photographers here a completely different. There was the craft and the documentary photographer, that's it. Student of Otto Steinert, the teacher at the Folkwang School in Essen, headed Heiner Riebesehl, were in the 70erjahren the first to develop an artistic implementation of the journalistic approach to reality and at the same time created a new self-image as an independent, artistic photographer.

Riebesehl went with his uncompromising way as an artist a high personal risk, because for him there was no structure in which he could develop his or her being an artist. He could not just go away from Hanover. He photographed yes, what interested him what he knew and what was it all year round accessible - its landscape, which also included the harbor and railway crossings as the cow pastures around Hanover. To even have a steady income, he took place in 1984, the area of study Visual Communications at the Fachhochschule Hannover. A rather unfortunate structure over a long time. Only in 1995 he was appointed professor of art photography, but two years later he had to for health reasons in the early retirement can be put.

Both by the simple documentary style as well as biographically here urges the comparison to the Bechers on: content, the big difference is that the Bechers objects with the camera collected to allow a direct comparison in tableaux. Them was interesting the sculptural character of the industrial objects. In Riebesehl was never about collecting. He always made a quality selection. When he photographed in one day shed on the field, then he finally sought out those who had succeeded him artistically. Criterion was only touched the surface, the visual appearance. It was always intuitively much deeper. It was about the reference to the time represented by the scales or the field or the potato bag life world. There are traces left by the people, and which are mapped photographically simple, but the selection of the reality of the cut is a very personal photographer ‘decision and thus speaks of him, his biography, his attitude he takes over this landscape. By reference to the person behind the camera and the people who manage this landscape, his photos touch with all optical simplicity, therefore, they are timeless and standing up for yourself. The luck of the cup, the art market to be hugged because their work so well adapted to the current concept art at the time, and to be allowed to teach in the sequence at an art academy, Riebesehl was not granted.

Heinrich Riebesehl merely as documentarians of Lower Saxony countryside, or to subsume him even after such external criteria among other styles, ie, not to comprehend its meaning. For the German photography, he is of the rank of August
Sander, who was also an artist's personality, and with a large, self-imposed order in portrait photography opened new dimensions.

Heinrich Riebesehl has done nothing less than the landscape photography to lead to a new level. Instead of picturesque shots in spectacular light it provides scenic views of a character, conveying the idea of these planes in which people repeatedly plow the soil for decades or transport goods on rails. In the photographically cultivated by him sobriety comes congenial to cover: His own North German understatement makes him calmly in a visually unspectacular landscape find views that trigger a sensation in every viewer who is willing to embrace it. That is just the art of using a camera.

And another thing you should not forget: who is now studying photography, with the aim of being able to live as possible of its free photo projects, following an ideal that Heinrich Riebesehl lived out the first in the seventies.

The German Heinrich Photography Riebesehl owes a lot to.

*Personal Supplement*

At the height of his career in the early 80erjahre I had turned myself to Henry Riebesehl to write my thesis about him and the development of photography in the 70erjahren. (In 1987, "The autonomy of Photography" in Jonas Verlag, Marburg, to my knowledge the first and only dissertation on him, as well as André Gelpke and Verena von Gagern.) Terms, what photography really means, I've only through the analysis of several hours, several days of conversations with him. How took the step of optically attractive for simple documentary photography? As he goes on when photographing? What were the biographical reasons to become a pioneer of art photography? For me, these analyzes were the basis of what I have since continued with enthusiasm, expanded and enriched by experience: to analyze the potential of a photographer and to make concrete proposals for individual projects, commercial or artistic development.

I will always be grateful to have met him. He would have had not only deserves more recognition during his lifetime, but also a gnädigeres fate. I hope there is, wherever he is now, a view camera, a bike and a lot of flat landscape.

As to the figures:

1 Heinrich Riebesehl in Hamburg harbor during the filming of the movie about him, I was able to realize in 1985 for NDR3. In the background the NDR editor.

My second copy of "situations and objects," the first monograph on one contemporary photographers by Jörg Krichbaum, who unfortunately died in 2002.

3 The large-format edition of "agricultural landscapes" of 1979 and the tiny catalog of the eponymous exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bremen in 1980, a book about him, which he me 1988 Birthday sent (a day earlier than his) and published by Hatje Cantz catalog the exhibition at the Sprengel Museum Hannover, 2004.