

From Darkness to Light

Blackness is what he sees. And that is surprising, because our artist is generally an optimist. Born in the picturesque Frick Valley in Switzerland, later moving between Germany, Japan and the U.S., GJW spent an exciting and exhilarating life as a physicist working for leading international electronics companies, managing laboratories, building some giant loudspeakers and writing articles for special-interest magazines. He also discovered a passion for ballistics and became an expert marksman in silhouette shooting, where he successfully participated in numerous European and World Championships.

A true techie, it seems. And if someone of his ilk takes to the art of photography, than with an eye sharpened for technical details; the more so because his favorite medium is the big format where any compromise will lead to embarrassing results. Every single hair, every fold of skin, every leaf and every screw inevitably must be clearly visible – even the twin crows perched on a distant steepletop.

Technology itself seems to draw him in, for instance the dandelion-like contrails of an air defense missile or the concentrated expression on the face of a Silhouette shooter aiming his huge pistol at a sheet iron target placed some 200 meters away – at least four times the distance normal sports marksmen have to deal with.

But why black? He developed his signature "Dark Style" together with a longtime friend, the computer designer Ute Kremmayer, because it enables him to explore the hidden depths of his subject bringing its secrets from darkness to light. Dark Style brings the essence to his topic into sharp distinction through a unique picture language full of dynamism and contrast; mighty shadows that throw an almost surrealist flash of light on seemingly everyday scenes and adding an alluring extra dimension to the mundane. Nowhere is this more visible than in his striking portraits, which achieve a depth of expression and immediacy through the "black style" effect, transforming the visual experience into something intensely personal.

His pictures, which are to be seen in Cologne for the first time, have been displayed previously in Los Angeles, Essen and Taipei. His "Dark Style" exposes the dim sadness that lurks behind seemingly commonplace images. Mr. Wasser is represented by Galerie Moderack, an art gallery founded in 1911 and a respected member of Kunstring Folkwang.

Emi Uehlinger / Tim Cole