



Jesus and the Cherries.

Photographs by Jessica Backhaus. Texts by Monika Rydiger and Stephan Schmidt-Wulffen. *Kehrer Verlag, Heidelberg, 2005. 144 pp., 94 color illustrations., 9x13".*

Signed copies available!

Jessica Backhaus takes a characteristically serene tack to these pictures of a Polish village and its environs, eliciting a kind of nostalgic portrait of the European present. Its inhabitants and domestic interiors match each other in their composure, but there are hints of uncertainty as well. Suffusing all the pictures, whether portraits, interiors, or the few atmospheric landscapes, are tradition and transition. How the recent political and religious past—bundled up in one semantic parcel in the picture of a needlework of Pope John Paul II—tempers the transition into the modern, EU-bound future is only one level of the tectonic cultural shift. Tradition still holds a strong hand; it appears in the mounted antlers or as spectral visions of religion and ancestry hanging on the wall. The still-life photographic details that Backhaus provides are critical to the way of life depicted here. Tea or supper either already consumed or soon to be; plants, pillows and pictures all arranged in personal but parochial fashion. In comparison the stuffed animals, television consoles, trendy teenage clothes and other modern symptoms look transitive and unrooted. Subtle and barely perceptible underneath the serenity of these scenes is the trembling of transition, between East and West, tradition and modernity, adolescence and adulthood. But these dualities are themselves out-of-order, upset: the world the children live in is already culturally far away from that of their parents, lending them a sudden wisdom the older generation may never know. Like the packaging of the book, with its lace-pattern casewrap, the subject here is pretty but constricting. Moreover, the conundrum of this transition is summed by the same packaging: it looks like lace but is actually a durable synthetic. ALAN RAPP

About the limited edition: Available for sale in an edition of 75, the trade edition of the book is here accompanied by a signed photograph. Housed in a handcrafted slipcase draped with Cerata-cloth (Atelier Dermont Duval Paris). Also available in a Collector's Edition of 30.

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