

**OLAF OTTO BECKER**  
**GIOVANNI CASTELL**

November 17, 2023 – January 12, 2024

Reception and conversation with the artists: Friday, November 17, 6pm

“I want to create a window on what I have seen”, **OLAF OTTO BECKER** (b. Travemünde, D, 1959) says about the imposing landscape pictures taken all over the world in which, for over thirty years, he has recorded the changes in nature.

The unifying theme in his most recent series of works is the North Atlantic Gulf Stream, which flows along Europe’s western coastlines northward from Spain until it sinks to the bottom of the sea east of Greenland. In the ongoing project, begun in 2019, **OLAF OTTO BECKER** uses his camera to capture both primordial landscapes that owe their existence to nature alone and changes wrought by humans that have become imprinted on the scenery. He takes up to fifty individual shots of a chosen motif from a variety of perspectives and vantage points, which he then “stitches together” on the computer in a painstaking postproduction process to obtain the final image. This technique gives **OLAF OTTO BECKER's** works an unrivaled depth of focus, making them precise renditions of what he has seen: each discoloration in the landscape, each rock fold, each breaking wave stands out.

In the exhibition, large-format depictions of giant rock formations that rise from the sea to majestic dominance, vouchsafing vistas of the endless horizon as though seen through a curtain, contrast with ephemeral “natural drawings” in the sands of beaches. These pictures evince a graphical quality, balancing between abstraction and figuration. The striking phenomena are engendered by the rising and falling tides wherever different strata of sand abut. When the water recedes, delicate shapes, patterns, and lineaments remain that suggest drawings made by human hands. **OLAF OTTO BECKER's** camera immortalizes the evanescent creations, lending significance to what is but short-lived: the next incoming tide will efface the unique constellations, making room for new ones. “In this instance, my objective is to record not the traces of man but the singularity of nature,” the artist says.

In connection with the landscapes, he also produced a series of portraits of people he met as he worked in the respective regions. A selection of some twenty small-format pictures is on view in the exhibition, pieces from a colorful mosaic of narrative anecdotes.

New works by **GIOVANNI CASTELL** (b. Munich, D, 1962) are on display in the gallery’s upstairs showroom. The technically complex silkscreen prints on epoxy resin have the aura of luminous paintings fixed on the support medium by photographic means. “Light, to me, is a symbol of love, hope, and salvation, of finding new guidance in this dark and gloomy world,” **GIOVANNI CASTELL** emphasizes.

The intense shimmering colors and the three-dimensional structure endow the works with a blazing radiance and a beguiling evocation of spatial depth. They pose a challenge to our visual habits while eliciting a kind of nostalgia rooted in our cultural memory. Pictures full of intensity and bracing emotional power are reminiscent of an ideal world steeped in utopian visions and a creative gesture that blends figurative elements with abstract landscapes. Their deliberately painterly style reveals **GIOVANNI CASTELL's** admiration for the American painter Mark Rothko, a widely hailed pioneer of color field painting, which grapples with the manifestations of color and their integration into a compelling system within the composition.