

**PRESS RELEASE****Axel HÜTTE****Out of Darkness****4 February – 7 March 2009****Monday–Friday 10am–6pm****Saturday 10am–1.30pm**

*Capulin Fire-1, Dip., New Mexico, 2007*  
*Ditone. Diptych, each part 91 ½ x 61 in / 135 x 155 cm*

Waddington Galleries are pleased to announce an exhibition of recent photographs by the German artist Axel Hütte. The exhibition includes photographs taken in France, La Gomera, Canada, New Mexico, New Zealand and Borneo. Photographs taken in Mexico, Venezuela and Argentina stem from Hütte's recent expedition along the route of the Conquistadors, tracing the path of the earliest explorers in their discovery of South America. Monumental in scale but meticulous in detail, each work portrays both a topographical and metaphysical terrain.

Between 1973 and 1981, Hütte studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, where he attended the fine art course in photography taught by Bernd Becher (1931–2007). Becher, with his wife and photographic collaborator Hilla, taught the significance of German photography from the 1920s, "The New Objectivity", with its precise documentary quality as exemplified by August Sander (1876–1964) and Albert Renger Patzsch (1897–1966). Hütte, and his contemporary students Thomas Struth and Candida Höfer, worked with large-format cameras and made sharply focused images, mostly based on architectural sources. In 1981, Hütte shared a rented studio space in a disused power station with two of Becher's other students, Thomas Ruff and Andreas Gursky.

Devoid of people and narrative, Hütte's photographs explore a heightened, atmospheric observation of landscape and its four elements; air in 'Fox Glacier, New Zealand', earth in 'Underworld-1, Mexico', fire in 'Capulin Fire-1, New Mexico' and water in 'Aonda Camp-2, Venezuela'. Although the fire in the two-panel work 'Capulin Fire-1, New Mexico' was a controlled fire set up by the national park administration, the raw power of its flames is reinforced by the double image of being a diptych, as if containing the energy to jump and re-ignite. In this photograph, Hütte has used Ditone, a process that allows the image to be developed onto a natural paper; the fibres add texture and emphasize the soft abstract structure of flames and drifting smoke.

Hütte continues to work with a heavy plate-back camera, which produces 8 x 10 inch negatives. There is no digital manipulation or picture editing and consequently the choice of locations needs scrupulous planning and the weather and lighting conditions require patience. An atmosphere of patience, quietude and serenity radiates from the works, stemming from the artist's protracted physical journey to find an image and also the subject of geological phenomena that has required a residue of time to achieve its formation. This experience of nature and time is explored with a diligent clarity; whether the calm and stillness of aged moss growing in 'Nitinaht-2, Canada' fractured layers of compacted snow in 'Glacier de Bossons, France' or the shadowy deposits of stalactites in 'Niah Cave-1, Borneo'.

Axel Hütte was born in Essen, Germany in 1951. In 1982 he was awarded the DAAD-Scholarship to London, followed in 1985 by the Scholarship for the Deutsches Studienzentrum Venedig. From 1986 to 1988 he received the Karl-Schmidt-Rottluff scholarship and in 1993 was awarded the Hermann Claasen Prize. His first solo exhibition was at Galerie Konrad Fischer, Dusseldorf in 1984. Recent solo exhibitions include the Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland (1997), Huis Marseille Foundation for Photography, Amsterdam, Holland (2001) and Fundación Telefónica, Madrid, Spain (2008). A major retrospective was held at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Palacio de Velázquez, Madrid (2004). He lives and works in Düsseldorf.

**A fully illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition. For further information or images, please contact Leonie Grainger**