

Joseph Bartscherer

Forest

April, 7th – May, 26th, 2006

For his third solo show at Galerie Nelson, Joseph Bartscherer will be presenting the serie *Forest* which questions the nature of the image and its relation to memory and history. Born in 1954, Joseph Bartscherer has made five series of works about landscapes shaped by human industry (*Five Farms*, *Snohomish River Flood Plain*, 1984, *Pioneering Mattawa*, 1984-1993, *Nevada*, 1994-1997, *Canal*, 1998-1999), each one bearing witness to the foundation and conquest of a human territory.

In contrast, *Forest* (a work in progress initiated in 1999) sees him looking at a place that, miraculously, has been totally preserved. Some sixty colour photographs explore this wilderness in the north-east of the US whose metamorphoses can be seen as a metaphor of the changes undergone by cities. Returning to these sites again and again over the years, Bartscherer records the subtle or spectacular developments of a landscape that is always the same and always different. And so what we are looking at here, finally, is not the mute spectacle of silent, triumphant nature, but a vision of time and its unending work. The photographs are presented in a grid layout. The images form a kind of puzzle whose coherence is to be found not in the similarity of forms so much as in the depth of field.

In *De la démocratie en Amérique*, Tocqueville wrote as follows of uncontrolled nature: "Amidst all this different debris, the work of reproduction continues uninterrupted. New shoots, climbing plants and grasses of every variety emerge through all the obstacles. They crawl along fallen trunks, insinuate themselves into their dust, raising and shattering the bark that still covers them. Life and death seem to be present before us here, they seem to seek to mix and merge their work."

The landscape of *Forest* will, it seems, remain uninhabited for all eternity. For while the face of the world is constantly being transformed, because of images man is always able to recognise it. The relation to time endows this work with a historical, anthropological dimension.