

"Josef Strau", exh. cat. Prague Biennale 1, 2003

## JOSEPH STRAU

### Lives and works in Berlin

On holidays I left the beach soon and was forced to restless walks, certainly unprepared, too imprudently, followed the irresistible irritations of the excavation sites in alarming heat without any shadow only reserved for barren dryness, homes for some lizard and painful archeological transgression. Seeing all the leftover objects of bigger cities, it is really not that these remnants of ancient Greek cities look like remnants of a democratic society, as I had been told earlier, much for education reasons probably. More compelling is that they look like as if their structure is too obvious the structure of abhorrent urban dungeons instead. Destroyed enough through ages, these stones were fixed together again as buildings by the United Nations culture program of the post-war time. All the photos done there later reminded me of the normal suburban housing of the Nazis past which I many years ago photographed. No doubt not much is more moving than the anxious remnants of a horrible past. No doubt, this certain act of the photography was more the anxiety for the destruction of the buildings and the destruction of the city structures which were made with organic unanimity of certain security demand lawless society. In the same time period the incredible Ezra Pounds Cantos LXXIV-LXXXIV came back on my table, written by him in the Guantanamo like prison for Mussolinis followers in post-war Pisa. It was as if the photos of the ancient crushed objects and of the dry natures background were a dedication to the attractions of his writing, written unfortunately with a background of mad political philosophy of organic exclusive social utopia of ideal labour. Praising the shoulders of the farmer, the labour as treasure of honesty, the proudness of having not done useless labour. And critical of Das Bankgeschäft as he would say. I have never understood the point of these Cantos ever before. But now suddenly, I sacrificed my reserve and felt forced into sympathy and into praising them in an arty transgression, maybe. I know its hard to compare the literary transgression to the fotos work. A bit too much. Still these photos can hardly be empty enough to be not part of that very stuffy background-plus. Extinguishing the sometimes re emerging spectres of weariness would be difficult. They can better become just objects, deco, ineffective and maybe plus