



**“JESUS AND THE CHERRIES”
DEBUT COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS
BY JESSICA BACKHAUS
TO BE RELEASED IN THE U.S. IN MAY**

*Moving Portrait Reveals the Soul of Poland
And Depicts Small Town Polish Life on the Cusp of Change*

Jesus and the Cherries, Jessica Backhaus' debut collection of photographs depicting small town Polish life on the cusp of change, will be released in the U.S. by Kehrer Verlag in May 2006. (Hardcover, 9.6" x 12.9", 144 pp., 94 color photographs, essays by Stephan Schmidt-Wulffen and Monika Rydiger \$58. ISBN: 3-936 636-63-X.)

In a series of intimate images shot between 2001 and 2005, Backhaus portrays the residents, landscapes and domestic interiors of Netno, a small village in Western Pomerania, Poland. With a sure eye and an unusual color language, Backhaus' affectionate portrait reveals a provincial reality far from the urban pace, though not untouched by it. The photographer's clear gaze captures the beauty of everyday details and calm, trusting moods. The viewer feels the warmth, cordiality, and authenticity with which she was received in Poland.

Backhaus uncovers the central importance of faith and food to this modest lifestyle as she portrays neat, brightly colored living rooms with religious portraits and the remnants of meals partaken. She points out the distinctive aesthetic of details she encountered: plastic flowers and crocheted pillowcases, images of saints and lace doilies, cherries preserved in mason jars. As an object, the book itself – covered with an oilcloth resembling the lacy embroidered tablecloth that mirrors those seen in countless Polish interiors – embodies this aesthetic.

Dealing with time and change, *Jesus and the Cherries* documents the political and social upheavals that have occurred since the fall of the Berlin Wall. But changes have come slowly to this part of Europe. Amid the old-fashioned decorations, are new status symbols – from the western rock posters plastered on a teenager's bedroom wall to the full-scale electric refrigerator proudly displayed in the parent's living room.

Jesus and the Cherries illuminates a Poland still a long way from the modernizations that the full integration in the European Union will bring. Thus, Jessica Backhaus tells a tale of traditional ways of life that may already belong to the past.

About the Photographer

Jessica Backhaus was born in Cuxhaven, Germany, and currently resides in New York. She has studied and worked in Paris, where the great Gisèle Freund became her mentor. Her work has been included in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Europe and the United States including the National Portrait Gallery, London and the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin. Backhaus is represented by Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York, and The Photographer's Gallery, London.

About the Authors

Stephan Schmidt-Wulffen, noted German art critic and curator, formerly teaching Visual Arts at Columbia University, New York, is today rector of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Austria. He publishes on Contemporary Art and Photography. He recently contributed an essay to the acclaimed book, *Stephen Shore, Uncommon Places*.

Monika Rydiger, works as curator and author of texts on Contemporary Art in Krakow, Poland.