



## Christoph von Weyhe

*Just before German-born artist Christoph von Weyhe arrived in Paris as a young man to study art, he caught sight of the Port of Hamburg—an aesthetic encounter that would define his work for 40 years to come.*

At night and in silence, on the banks of the Hamburg piers, artist Christoph von Weyhe produces sketches, capturing in watercolour the industrial life and fleeting activity of the scenes before him. Then, he works on reinterpreting his initial sketches for months, and even years. Upon large-scale canvases in his Parisian atelier, he engages in an artistic exploration into the pathways of memory and representation. A first and major monographic exhibition in 2016, entitled *Christoph von Weyhe, Au silence*, at the Galerie Azzedine Alaïa in Paris has sparked important discussion around his hypnotic and deeply seductive body of work. This exhibition is accompanied by a book (also entitled *Au silence*, a reference from a poem

by major German poet Hölderlin, which the painter keeps in mind while composing his canvases). With the first scholarly examination of his oeuvre, it includes a foreword by Nobel Laureate Patrick Modiano. The watercolours—most of which were presented for the first time—are the cornerstone of von Weyhe's artistic process. This specifically allows unfiltered, cursory impressions from which memory is transcribed and translated into a larger, more painterly medium. For over thirty-five years, he returns to the Port of Hamburg, not far from where he was raised. 'To return to this port is to be reborn each time,' the artist has said. The large-scale paintings that comprise the major body of his work break away from the notion of the classic

landscape in horizontal format—they are invariably in vertical format and thus highlight the structural aspect of the images lent by the cranes and other industrial forms they depict. As black dialogues with white, and sparks of colour appear, he captures the quintessentially ephemeral life of a port—and all of its poetic implications of arrival and depart, longing and return. It is an emotional body of work that joins a canon of other German intellectuals who have found inspiration there, notably late novelist Siegfried Lenz in *The German Lesson*, taking place in Hamburg and the lyric poetry of Heinrich Heine, both of which are long-standing inspirations for the artist. *Collect* sat down with him in Paris to discuss his unique alchemy of immediacy and memory.