

Spaces

Photographs by Candida Höfer
and Thomas Struth



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June 12–September 5, 2011

The large-scale photographs by Candida Höfer and Thomas Struth featured in this exhibition offer distinct but connected perspectives on the ways individuals interact with the spaces they inhabit. Trained together at the Kunstakademie (Arts Academy) Düsseldorf in Germany in the 1970s, Höfer and Struth have embraced photography as a medium of social, cultural, and historical purpose, choosing public spaces as their subjects.

The Kunstakademie Düsseldorf is known for having fostered some of the major figures of contemporary German painting and sculpture, including Josef Beuys, Katharina Fritsch, Anselm Kiefer, Sigmar Polke, and Gerhard Richter, and is hailed as the progenitor of the so-called “Düsseldorf School” of photographers. The foremost professor of this studio was Bernd Becher, who worked and taught closely with his wife Hilla. Under the Bechers’ tutelage these photographers, including Höfer and Struth’s contemporaries Andreas Gursky, Axel Hütte, and Thomas Ruff, helped to usher monumental color photography into the marketplace (and into critical discourse) as a medium on par with painting and sculpture.

Both Höfer and Struth engage with history and the passage of time. Höfer’s photographs of libraries, auditoriums, and research centers are mostly uninhabited by people but filled with light and the mystery of visual and intellectual contemplation. Although the architecture of these monumental rooms conforms to a symmetrical logic, the photographs are pervaded by a sense of loss as the use and significance of the spaces have shifted over time. Struth’s works capture church and museum visitors engaged in the act of looking, as we, the viewers of the photographs, observe them from a physical and temporal distance. This reflexive impulse allows us to experience several historical moments at once, both inside and outside of the picture’s frame.

Given that both artists were raised in post-war Germany, when the country was literally rebuilding itself, the weight of history is particularly powerful in their work. Struth’s *Audience 7, Florence 2004*, for example, merges several layers of past and present. The awestruck, t-shirt-clad tourists are looking up at Michelangelo’s monumental sculpture *David* (1503), which stands in the eighteenth-century Galleria dell’Accademia (Gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts). Although the sculptural object of their inquiry is largely invisible to us, the space in which the tourists stand provides a potent architectural backdrop. This intersection of time is arrested by the central male viewer who looks directly out at us with *David* reflected in the sunglasses that hang from his shirt. Struth embraces these complex, transhistorical strata of meaning to investigate the abiding experience of looking at art.

Höfer’s photographs likewise capture moments that are at once immediate and timeless. The lack of figures in these works, as the artist herself has explained, in many ways evokes their presence. Gleaming wooden surfaces and endless rows of books are housed in an ornate

Gothic Revival reading room in *Juristische Bibliothek München II 2000*. Bright spots of light within the elaborate wall sconces and the daylight from the windows—emphasized by long exposure times—seize the moment in which the camera’s shutter opened and closed in the year 2000.

The artists’ exploration of secular and sacred venues for public engagement with works of art and the architectural environments designed for research, debate, and contemplation provocatively mirror the Clark’s dual mission as an art museum and a center for research and graduate study in the history of art. This exhibition is on view in the Clark’s central gallery. Seeing the works of Höfer and Struth in a gallery intended to display nineteenth-century art adds yet another layer of historical meaning to these contemplative works.

Jay A. Clarke

Manton Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

This exhibition is organized by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. All works in the exhibition are from a private collection.

Candida Höfer

German, born 1944

“To me these spaces have their own character and vitality, revealing in their displays the layers of time and the experiences through which they have come to be what they are, and they seem to resist such changes....I probably emphasize a sort of ‘permanent process of negotiation’ between space and its uses over time, but also more basically between light and space.”

Höfer interviewed by Ludovico Pratesi, 2009

Born in the former East German town of Eberswalde, Höfer began her artistic career as a commercial photographer for newspapers. She entered the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in 1973 to study film with the Danish cinematographer Ole John Poulsen (b. 1939). Three years later, at the age of 32, she transferred to Bernd Becher’s (1931–2007) photography class.

Following her studies, Höfer focused on portraits of so-called guest workers in Germany. Subsequently removing the figure from her work, Höfer’s imagery has consistently (but never repetitively) focused on depopulated interiors since the 1980s. Höfer has presented her work in numerous exhibitions in Europe; she represented Germany at the Venice Biennale in 2003 together with the late Martin Kippenberger (1953–1997). Her photographs have been featured in monographic exhibitions at the Louvre, Paris, and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, and a retrospective of her work traveled in America from 2005 to 2007. Höfer lives and works in Cologne.

Thomas Struth

German, born 1954

“In the beginning I was also interested in the relationship of the individual to the larger historical time span into which he’s born, and the responsibilities of what might be called one’s heritage....My goal has always been to address something more generalized than a specific historical moment....I’m always more interested in making a picture the central message of which is still valid in 50 years or so.”

Struth interviewed by Gil Blank, 2007

Born in Geldern, Germany, Struth began his art studies at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in 1973. He initially trained under the painter Gerhard Richter (b. 1932), whose work frequently interrogates the interconnections between photography and painting. Increasingly drawn to photography, Struth, like Höfer, entered Becher’s studio in 1976.

Struth’s main bodies of work include street scenes, family portraits, dense forests, techno-industrial spaces, and, in this exhibition, the “Museum Pictures.” Struth describes his photographic practice as interrelated regardless of subject matter. His work has been the subject of many group and monographic exhibitions, including two traveling retrospectives, one in America in 2002–2003, and another currently underway in Europe 2010–2012. Struth lives and works in Düsseldorf and Berlin.

Exhibition Checklist

Candida Höfer
Deichmanske Bibliotek Oslo II 2000

*Chromogenic print
120 x 120 cm
Edition of 6*

The Deichmanske Bibliotek is Norway’s largest public library. Höfer’s photograph shows the library’s main hall with a mural by the Norwegian artist Axel Revold (1887–1962).

Candida Höfer
Deichmanske Bibliotek Oslo III 2000

*Chromogenic print
120 x 120 cm
Edition of 6*

Candida Höfer
Deutsches Hygiene-Museum Dresden III 2000

*Chromogenic print
60 x 60 cm
Edition of 6*

The Deutsches Hygiene-Museum (German Hygiene Museum), features exhibitions on science, society, art, and culture. Founded in 1912 by the Dresden industrialist and mouthwash manufacturer Karl August Lingner (1861–1916), the museum’s initial goal was to promote public knowledge of human anatomy, health, and diet.

Candida Höfer
Igreja da Ordem Terceira Secular de São Francisco Salvador Bahia II 2005

*Chromogenic print
180 x 220 cm
Edition of 6*

This work depicts the Chapel of the Third Order in the Franciscan Monastery in Salvador, Brazil.

Candida Höfer
Juristische Bibliothek München II 2000

*Chromogenic print
60 x 60 cm
Edition of 6*

Munich’s main law library, this Gothic Revival interior is housed in the City Hall.

Candida Höfer
Kloster Mehrerau Bregenz III 1999

*Chromogenic print
60 x 60 cm
Edition of 6*

The small library shown is located in the Wettingen-Mehrerau Abbey, a Cistercian monastery initially founded in 611 and subsequently destroyed and rebuilt several times. The Abbey is situated on the outskirts of Bregenz in western Austria.

Candida Höfer
Universität Oslo I 2000

*Chromogenic print
60 x 60 cm
Edition of 6*

The main assembly room of the University of Oslo is referred to as the Aula, decorated with large-scale murals by the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863–1944).

Candida Höfer
Wikingmuseum Oslo I 2000

*Chromogenic print
75 x 75 cm
Edition of 6*

Oslo’s Viking Ship Museum, completed in 1957, houses three ancient ships. The one pictured in this photograph is the Gokstad ship, built around 890 and excavated in 1880.

Candida Höfer
Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte München I 2000

*Chromogenic print
60 x 60 cm
Edition of 6*

Founded in 1946, Munich’s Institute for the History of Art houses a library and international research center.

Candida Höfer
**Zentralinstitut für
Kunstgeschichte München
IV 2000**

Chromogenic print
120 x 120 cm
Edition of 6

Thomas Struth
**Audience 7
Florence 2004**

Chromogenic print
179.5 x 288.3 cm
Edition of 10

The “audience” depicted in this work is in the Galleria dell’Accademia in Florence, Italy, which houses Michelangelo’s monumental sculpture *David* (1503).

Thomas Struth
**Galleria dell’Accademia I
Venice 1992**

Chromogenic print
184.5 x 228.3 cm
Edition of 10

The Galleria dell’Accademia in Venice is known for its outstanding collection of Venetian art created before 1900. This print depicts visitors walking in front of Paolo Veronese’s (1528–1588) large-scale painting *Feast in the House of Levi* (1573).

Thomas Struth
**Giulia Zorzetti with a
Painting by Francesco
de Mura
Naples 1989**

Chromogenic print
188 x 152.4 cm
Edition of 10

Giulia Zorzetti is an Italian painting conservator. In this photograph, she is shown in the church of Santa Maria Donnaromita, Naples, working on a painting by Francesco de Mura (1696–1782).

Thomas Struth
**Museo del Prado 8–1
Madrid 2005**

Chromogenic print
140 x 176 cm
Edition of 6

The Museo del Prado, Madrid, is Spain’s national museum. In this frieze of five photographs, Struth depicts museum visitors interacting with works by the Spanish artist Diego Velázquez (1599–1660).

Thomas Struth
**Museo del Prado 8–2
Madrid 2005**

Chromogenic print
140 x 175.5 cm
Edition of 6

Thomas Struth
**Museo del Prado 8–3
Madrid 2005**

Chromogenic print
140 x 175.5 cm
Edition of 6

Thomas Struth
**Museo del Prado 8–4
Madrid 2005**

Chromogenic print
140 x 176.5 cm
Edition of 6

Thomas Struth
**Museo del Prado 8–5
Madrid 2005**

Chromogenic print
140 x 175.5 cm
Edition of 6

Thomas Struth
**San Zaccaria
Venice 1995**

Chromogenic print
182 x 230.5 cm
Edition of 10

The church of San Zaccaria, built between 1444 and 1515, contains numerous paintings, among them Giovanni Bellini’s (c. 1431–1516) eponymous altarpiece shown in the center of Struth’s image.

Chromogenic Print

Used by both amateur and professional artists, the chromogenic print, otherwise known as a C-print, is the most common type of color photograph. A chromogenic print can be produced from a color negative, slide, or digital image in conjunction with special chromogenic papers.

Related Events

Gallery Talks

Wednesday, July 13, 12:30 pm
Robin Kelsey, Shirley Carter Burden Professor of Photography,
Harvard University

Wednesday, August 3, 12:30 pm
Jay A. Clarke, Manton Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

Wednesday, August 17, 12:30 pm
Michael Fried, J. R. Herbert Boone Professor of Humanities,
Johns Hopkins University

Public Lecture

Of Times and Spaces: The Photography of Candida Höfer and Thomas Struth
Sunday, August 21, 3:00 pm
Charles W. Haxthausen, Robert Sterling Clark Professor,
Williams College

Member Lecture and Dinner

Gursky, Höfer, and Struth: Space and Scale in Contemporary Photography
Wednesday, August 24, 6:00 pm
A lecture by Jay A. Clarke, Manton Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs at the Clark, followed by a festive meal prepared by the Clark’s own chef Steve Wilkinson.

\$50 (\$55 guests of members) Space is limited; reservations are required.
Purchase tickets online at clarkart.edu or call 413 458 0585 by August 17.