

## Urban Spaces Artists

### ANDREAS GURSKY

(1955, Leipzig, Germany; lives and works in Düsseldorf): He started working in commercial with his father. In the early 80's he attends Bernd Becher photography class, although he almost immediately leaves behind black and white and starts working in colour. In the mid 80's explores the contrasts between natural landscapes and industrial areas, and takes photographs of groups of people in recreational activities embedded into landscape.

In the early 90's Gursky adopts a monumental format and in the mid 90's he focuses his work on large buildings. His photographs are inhabited by people tingling in the spaces. He reproduces a world that is opening up to a global dimension. His photographs are taken from on the highs, from cranes or helicopters, digitally tweaked. A retrospective of his work is held in Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, and at the Stichting De Appel in Amsterdam. In 1998, at Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf, an exhibition of his work from 1994 to 1998 is held, and in 2001 an important retrospective is held at the New York Museum of Modern Art. In 2001 he also wins the Infinity Award for Art given by the New York International Centre of Photography. Since 2007 until today there were many exhibitions of his work held, for example, at the Kunstmuseum, Basilea, and in at Monaco Haus der Kunst. The latest exhibition, Werke 80-08, was held at the Stockholm Modern Museet and the Vancouver Art Gallery.

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### Interview with Andreas Gursky

Fragment of the interview published in the cultural supplement of the Süddeutsche Zeitung, Bavaria, Germany, Munich, on Tuesday March 26, 2002, pg. 19. Translated to English: Daniela Gutiérrez.

*SZ: What is actually causing so much fascination in the people looking at your photographs?*

AG: Let's take the photo EM Arena Amsterdam ...as an example

*SZ: ...where we can see, on a green playing field, many football players, small as little toys.*

AG: On one hand, the presence of football as a mass phenomenon, a profane topic that is well known by all of us. This is an aspect that any person can establish a relationship with even without having any notion of what art is. This is something that can be seen in many of my images. And in addition, from an area of grass which is so green, emanates an aura, as that of a monochrome image.

*SZ: So, at the beginning there is the popular. And after that, you monumentalize what is to be seen, transforming it into something archetypal, universal. That is something that has been quite criticized: the coldness, that great distance from the facts, which in your work translates into petty dimensions. It is the gaze of strategist from the mountain.*

AG: The masses interest me: the relationship between the body and space, abstraction of the distance and the experience of the lack of space when one is there, in the middle of everything. As for the coldness, may be so, to the extent that the interpretative gaze could not be recognized in the first time. Everything seems to be as it is. If my photographs were stained by a subjective look, they would lose the timeless nature. My images use a visual vocabulary that must be explored first and that is guided by different rules than those of linguistic thought. In addition, the influence of the Becher: reality should be left to speak by itself, because it is so creative than man cannot be but left behind. It is a maximum that I have incorporated into my approach, which is why I work this way.

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### **Andreas Gursky: The Dizziness of Space**

Extract from the text *A view onto the city*, by Ludovico Pratesi, exhibition curator. Written especially for the edition of the exhibition catalog.

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“Andreas Gursky first separates himself from the lessons of his masters, pursuing since the early 1980s a process that focuses on the structural aspects of the image, emphasizing the ability to catch the eye. His formal artistic research focuses on the concentration on a single *photogramme*, printed large scale and with an almost maniacal attention to detail. Conceptually, his works grip the spectator physically and emotionally, recalling the experience of German painting from the Renaissance to Romanticism. The composition of the image, as Martin Hentschel<sup>1</sup> points out, refers to the structure of the natural landscapes of Claude Lorrain and Caspar David Friedrich, where the monumental dimension of the subject, a beach on the Rhine (*Rhein, Oberkassel*, 1985), a pass in the Dolomites (*Dolomites, Klausen Pass*, 1984), the interior of a cathedral (*Cathedral*, 2007) or the main hall of an international airport (*Frankfurt*, 2007) is amplified by the human presence intentionally overpowered by the surroundings. On one hand, this provokes in the spectator the same sense of dizziness experienced when viewing the space of frescoes in Baroque churches, and on the other hand gives him or her the sensation of living a collective experience with the figures in the work. In sum, a type of shared view, provoked by the artist through the extension of the work, always attentive to the acute precision of each detail, with results similar to those of the 18<sup>th</sup> century *vedute* painters such as Canaletto or Bellotto. Indeed, as Emmanuel de L’Ecotais points out, an objective approach characterizes German painting since the Renaissance, citing as an example the works of Albrecht Aldorfer (1480-1583), the more famous student of Albrecht Dürer, as a possible illustrious precedent of Gursky.<sup>2</sup> Beate Sontgen claims that “Gursky’s images speak of structures of perception and of the relationships that vision establishes between figures, objects and space, to compose a new world architecture.”<sup>3</sup> Gursky captures this architecture, where the contemporary city is protagonist, with a precision and a farsighted vision that never ceases to amaze”.

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. M. Hentschel, *The Totality of the World, viewed in its component forms. Andreas Gursky’s photographs 1980 to 2008*, published in *Andreas Gursky Works 80-08*, exhibition catalog, Kunstmuseen Krefeld, Moderna Museet Stockholm, Vancouver Art Gallery, 2008-2009, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern, Germany, 2008, pp. 22-23.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. E. de l’Ecotais, *Une certaine tradition objective*, in the catalog *Objectivités*, pp. 65-68.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. B. Sontgen, *Le vertige de sens. Les images photographiques d’Andreas Gursky*, in the catalog *Objectivités*, p. 285.

## **CANDIDA HÖFER**

(1944, Eberswalde, Germany; lives and Works in Cologne): She begins to work as photographer in the mid `60s focusing her gaze on waiting rooms, stations and public spaces. Hofer takes photographs in small-format devoted to show, with a simple and direct language, everyday life. From 1976 to 1982 she attends the Academy of Dusseldorf, where she learned from the Becher a certain kind of coldness when looking, but especially the use of photography as a rigorous instrument of inquiry. In 1990 began her Zoo Project, understood as a museum, in which the animals are represented as sculptures. At the end of the `90s begins to use a larger format, with which she gets to print greater force to the image. Among Hofer individual exhibitions, the following can be mentioned: Newport Harbor Art Museum in 1991; Sydney Museum of Contemporary Art in 1992; St. Louis Art Museum and Sonnabend Gallery at New York in 1997; retrospective exhibition Orte Jahre 1968-1999 at Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur Cologne and the Kunsthalle at Nuremberg in 1999; Architecture of Absence at University Art Museum, Long Beach, California and at the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida, in 2005; Musée du Louvre, Paris, in 2006 and Palais des Beaux Arts at Brussels in 2007. In 2002 represented Germany at the 50th Venice Biennial.

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### **Interview with Candida Höfer**

By Ludovico Pratesi. Published in the exhibition catalog.

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*L.P.: No persons are ever visible in your works. Is your idea of a city empty and deserted?*

C.H.: It is about interior spaces rather than city spaces. As regards interior spaces it started as a practical consideration: I simply did not want to disturb people with my work. But it also turned out to be revealing: With their absence, paradoxically, people become more present in the pictures because it is now clearly to be seen what expectations spaces have with regard to the people using them.

*L.P.: The choice of representing cultural places as theatres, libraries and museums: is it to underline the traces of memory over architecture?*

C.H.: Not in such a fundamentalist way. To some extent these particular building types do represent social habits which, although very slowly, seem to go out of use or at least change fundamentally in the way they are used: Presence in the theatre is being replaced by tele-presence, books in libraries become virtual, and also museums seem are changing in the way they present objects. At the same time, however, to me these spaces have their own character and vitality revealing in their displays the layers of time and experiences through which they have come to the present and they seem to resist such changes.

*L.P.: Shelley Rice has written that "Candida Hofer's photographs render homage to the concept of the human community as historically limited, fragile and always in negotiation". Is it your intention to capture the emptiness and make it visible through the perception of this fragility?*

C.H.: From my previous answers you may deduct that indeed 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. But it is less about fragility I tend to think it is more about a hidden strength.

*L.P.: What is the city of today for you?*

C.H.: A vital time space.

*L.P.: When you worked in Buenos Aires, what was your perception of the city?*

C.H.: The sensual presence of layers of time, and enormous vitality, and even if I get suspected of flattery - together with St. Petersburg - although totally different - the most beautiful city I have ever been to.

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### **Candida Höfer: The Presence of Absence**

Extract from the text *A view onto the city*, by Ludovico Pratesi, exhibition curator. Written especially for the edition of the exhibition catalog.

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“I do not want to disturb the public with my work’, declares Candida Höfer. Following the cycle of works on the Turkish community in Germany, the artist abandons black and white photography in favour of colour, she begins to use a large format, and above all, she definitively eliminates the human presence in her work, concentrating instead on public urban spaces for culture, such as libraries, theatres and museums. She selects spaces that have been enriched by the presence of thousands of people, transforming these places into ‘spaces in which every object has an intrinsic meaning, tied to the passage of time and to memory’<sup>4</sup>. Höfer points out that these spaces are slowly but surely losing their primary function: the spectators of a theatre are replaced by television-spectators, books in libraries are becoming virtual, and museums are visited by Internet. By means of large-scale images, the artist invites the spectator to look again, to consider every detail. ‘The wallpaper, crystal chandeliers, bookshelves filled with books, floor tiles, heavy theatre curtains give the spectator the feeling of being enveloped by these rigorously empty rooms’<sup>5</sup>. The artist brings us on a *Grand Tour* of absence from Weimar to Bologna, to Seoul, to Buenos Aires, to Lisbon, to Paris, in order to ‘capture the empty space, immobilize it, and make it visible’ points out the Portuguese writer José Saramago.<sup>6</sup>

Involved in a continuous process of negotiation with her subjects, the artist bases her ideas on the theatricality of architecture, in order to reveal the most hidden identity, the *genius loci*. Thus the city that emerges from the art of Candida Höfer is an extensive vital space, where the absence of human beings only serves to emphasize their presence in time, rooted in a collective memory”.

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<sup>4</sup> Cfr. L. Pratesi, *Genius Loci. Riflessioni sull’opera di Candida Höfer*, published in *Candida Höfer. Bologna Series*, catalog of the show at the Centro de Artes Visuales Pescheria di Pesaro, Hopefulmonster, Turin, 2007, p. 55.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. F. Maggia, *Candida Höfer, Bologna*, published in *Candida Höfer, Bologna Series*, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> J. Saramago, *Emptiness, Silence*, in J. Saramago, S. Rice, *Candida Höfer em Portugal*, Schirmer/Mosel, Munchen, 2006, p. 10.

## **AXEL HÜTTE**

(1951, Essen, Germany; lives and works in Düsseldorf): Between 1973 and 1981 attends Bernd Becher's photography class. Influenced by his teacher he begins photographing the postwar German architecture with a sober and objective gaze. In 1982 Hutte wins a grant to study in London, where his work focuses on domestic interiors and industrial buildings, devoid of any human presence. In the mid '80s he took a series of black and white portraits, unrelated to any external reference, and landscape images in a large format, which foreground topic is an architectural element, the cusp of a top, the fog or mist. Far from attempting a definition for a space, he tries to turn it anonymous, devoid of geographical coordinates. Toward the end of the '90's Hütte starts to represent urban landscapes by night in extreme visibility conditions. In more recent years he takes up again the portrait topic, this time confronting the human being with the grandeur of nature.

His individual exhibitions were held in the Rotterdamse Kunststichting, Rotterdam, in 1989; Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, in 1993; Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn, in 1995; Fotomuseum Winterthur, in 1997 and Foundation for Photography, Amsterdam, in 2001, at the Henie Onstad Art Centre, HØvikodden, in 2006. Recently an important retrospective exhibition of his work has been held at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2004.

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### **Interview with Axel Hütte**

By Ludovico Pratesi. Published in the exhibition catalog.

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*L.P.: What is the city of today for you?*

A.H.: Still a place like in the last century where you can feel the vibrations of modern times; food for the brain, exhausting nightlife and linked to other cities and countries via airports.

*L.P.: In your first black and white images the influence of Bernd Becher, your professor at the Düsseldorf Academy is visible. Was it he who suggested a conceptual vision of architectonic space?*

A.H.: Although Bernd and Hilla Becher are coming from a background where "subject matters" Bernd never made any topic proposals to his students. But the method of working in series supported a work ethic and the idea of selection by comparing the different variations of a theme.

You see the city as swift and nocturnal, like that of a traveller who has arrived by night with no particular purpose. Is the city therefore a distant space to be rapidly crossed in order to arrive at nature?

After an architecture series in the 80' showing hallways, underground stations or in general empty public spaces interior but also exterior (like street corner scenes in Venice and London) I started the night series titled "As dark as light" 1998. Mysterious illumination in the landscape and later urban views from skyscrapers towards the darkness or partial illuminated architecture were the focus of my work.

*L.P.: Bridges, subways, abandoned factories: contemporary ruins or spaces to lose your identity in?*

A.H.: As important as the reality you can recognize are the invisible parts that are hiding through darkness or behind the structure of a bridge or a factory window. The imagination - what we would like to see - depending on what we can see and what we don't see is the focus of all my architecture, landscape and portrait work.

*L.P.: The urban districts underlining your works are marginal and anonymous like the stages of a purposeless wandering. Must one get lost in the city of today?*

A.H.: One must get lost in ones dreams, in nature and in the city.

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### **Axel Hütte: Spaces of Hallucination**

Extract from the text *A view onto the city*, by Ludovico Pratesi, exhibition curator. Written especially for the edition of the exhibition catalog.

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“The photographs that Axel Hütte took at the underground subway stations in Germany in the late 1970s, and the works realized in London in the early 1980s, represent dismal and empty spaces, illuminated by the cold, dim lights of the abandoned parking lots. These works reveal the artist’s interest in the first years following his graduation from the Düsseldorf Academy, in a disquieting and night view of the city, dominated by an underground aesthetic, also present in the films of German filmmakers of those years such as Wim Wenders and Rainer Fassbinder and described in the novels of Peter Handke or Heinrich Boll.

For example, the series *As dark as light*, from 1998, focuses on a solitary and lunar image, nurtured by cinematographic and literary sources, which over the years evolves into the study of the gradations in luminosity present in the night views of large American cities. These works represent panoramic aerial views of buildings in Atlanta, Seattle and Las Vegas, transformed by the artist into mysterious webs of light that present a dreamlike and unfocused abstraction. This tendency has intensified in his works of the last decade, often through the use of the lens to capture glimmers of light on reflecting surfaces, such as *Berlin, Nationalgalerie* (1991): the museum designed by Mies Van der Rohe becomes an unrecognizable place, a hypnotic and surreal landscape; a space of hallucination, vividly defined by Rudolf Schmitz, who notes the artist’s ability to explore the limits of visibility, although always remaining faithful to reality. Schmitz states, “The origin of latent images, pending their revelation, is offered to the imagination of the spectator, where an aura of mystery rife with promise is offered to the austere and sober compositions.”<sup>7</sup> By means of a gradual elimination of recognizable and visual points of reference, the artist leads us into hallucinatory landscapes, where urban reality is transfigured into a pure territory of vision”.

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<sup>7</sup> Cfr. R. Schmitz, *Le concept de l’objectivité hallucinatoire ou: comment Axel Hütte se représente l’éveil des consciences*, published in the catalog *Objectivités*, p. 223.

## **THOMAS RUFF**

(1959, Harmersbach, Germany; lives and works in Düsseldorf): In 1977 he attends Bernd Becher photography class, where he shows his interest in the documentary photography. Ruff makes dozens of portraits, first in small-format, and in 1986 he starts working in larger dimensions. Toward the end of the 80`s he represents postwar Germany anonymous buildings. In 1993 Ruff works on images obtained through a procedure used by the police to make identikits, and also he intervenes manually a series of small portraits extracted from medicine books. In 2001 he starts teaching at the Academy of Dusseldorf. Personal exhibitions of his work had been held at: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, in 1989; Centre National de la Photographie, París, in 1997 and Chabot Museum, Rotterdam, in 2001. In 2002 a first important retrospective exhibition of his work is held at the Kunsthalle, Baden Baden. Also an itinerant exhibition is shown in many European countries, Tate Gallery at Liverpool in 2003 and the Museo de Arte Contemporánea Serralves, Oporto, in 2003. In 2006 a retrospective exhibition is held at the Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Venecia. That same year he receives the Infinity Award from the New York International Center of Photography for the The Grammar of Photography. In 2007 Ruff is invited to show his work in dialogue with the Sprengel Museum Collection at Hannover. Early this year an interesting individual exhibition was held at the a Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy.

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### **Interview with Thomas Ruff**

By Ludovico Pratesi. Published in the exhibition catalog.

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*L.P.: What does the contemporary city mean for you?*

T.R.: There is no contemporary city. All cities are a mix of a lot of different architectural periods.

*L.P.: Inside your works there is an important interest in architecture. For what reason?*

T.R.: Besides nature, architecture is the biggest thing that surrounds us. We move around it and we move inside of it.

*L.P.: Often you photograph isolated buildings, with shapes that reminds you of rationalism. Is this a reference to your own life?*

T.R.: I would say that there exists no rationalism, there exists only subjectivity that is dreaming for objectivity or rationalism.

*L.P.: In your research do you see the architecture as formal, symbolic or historic attitude?*

T.R.: Only formal, but formal also includes symbols and history.

*L.P.: Recently you've dedicated your work to architecture destroyed. Is this an explicit reference to the collapse of the Twin Towers or to a symbolic decadence of the western civilization?*

T.R.: Architecture is build by man and is destroyed by man. So it was just natural to include work about destroyed buildings.

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### **Thomas Ruff: Political Images**

Extract from the text *A view onto the city*, by Ludovico Pratesi, exhibition curator. Written especially for the edition of the exhibition catalog.

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“The main interest of Thomas Ruff is the use of photography to investigate individual or collective perception through the constant flow of images of contemporary society generated by the media. His themes are many and varied, from *Portraits* (portraits of common people) to *Nudes* (pornographic images taken from Internet) to *Jpegs* (enlarged digital images), where the theme of the city is represented in its many social and political aspects. While still a student at the Düsseldorf Academy in the 1970s, Ruff developed an interest in anonymous domestic interiors filled with the accessories of German daily life, as seen in the series *Interiors* (1979-1983). Unlike the Bechers, Ruff abandons black and white photography, to deal with colour photography, which offers a less rigorous but certainly more intimate and sensitive pictorial dimension. In the following series, *Houses* (1987-1991), Ruff abandons architectural interiors for exteriors of buildings, analysed with an eye to the historical tradition of Rationalism and the Bauhaus, and appropriating the visual codes of German postcards of the 1950s.<sup>8</sup> This approach of revisiting modernist tradition finds its peak in the series *l.m.v.d.r.*, begun in 1999: a cycle of historical photographs of buildings by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, re-elaborated by the artist. This desire to re-write the guidelines of the cultural and semantic value of the image is evident in the recent series of *Jpegs*, begun in 2004, which can be considered a reflection on the city as a platform populated by buildings that carry a social and political meaning, made accessible through Internet. Matthias Winzen points out that “the *Jpegs* of Ruff reveal the irritating quality of a world experience that has become collective, or more precisely, a reduction of that experience.”<sup>9</sup> It is not surprising that the destruction of the Twin Towers is one of his most representative subjects: the first tragedy lived throughout the world in first person, and icon of a society governed by the mass media”.

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<sup>8</sup> Cfr. M. Winzen, *Regarder et discerner*, in *Objectivités*, pp. 267-270.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. M. Winzen, *ibid.*, p. 269.



## **THOMAS STRUTH**

(1954, Gelden, Germany; lives and works in Düsseldorf): Begins to study painting in the Kunstakademie of Düsseldorf and later he signs for Bernd Becher's photography class. In 1978 Struth got a grant from the Academy to go to New York, where he produces his first photographs in black and white without any human presence. Later he adopts both colour and a larger format. In the mid 80's in a series of portraits, he tackles the relationship between human and space. Those images show, above all, domestic environments. Later he captures crowds and anonymous characters in chambers of museums, exploring the dialog between the public and the work of art. In recent years Struth has extended his language to include tropical landscapes in his work. Individual exhibitions of his work has been held at Kunsthalle, Bern and at the Yamaguchi Museum in 198; Frankfurt Portikus, Chicago Renaissance Society in 1990. In 1992 at the Washington Hirschhorn Museum. In 1993 at Hamburg Kunsthalle, in 1994 at Boston ICA and London ICA. In 1995 at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, and Bonn Kunstmuseum. In 1997 at the Pekin International Art Palace. In 1998 at the Carré d'Art in Nîmes and at the Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum. In year 2000 an exhibitions were held at the Tokyo Museum of Modern Art and the New York Metropolitan Museum. At the Dallas Museum and The Moca, Los Angeles, in 2002. In 2007 at the Prado Museum in Madrid and in 2008 at the Naples Museo Madre.

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### **Interview with Thomas Struth**

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*L.P.: What is the city of today for you?*

T.S.: Ah! Cities! Once founded as trade posts on the banks of rivers, as harbors and fortresses.

Cities are still exciting conglomerates of information and possibility. However, life in cities has become increasingly difficult: The dependence on the automobile as the means of individual transport dominates the quality of space in an unbearable and destructive manner. It is surprising that the idea of the urban utopia, which came up in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and promised leisure and happiness in an environment of large-scale apartment blocks connected by multistory superhighways, has not been recasted or reinvisioned in an era of ecological awareness.

Cities all around the world have ignored the upcoming collapse of their infrastructures because of the greed, ruthlessness and incompetence of some real estate developers, who have often destroyed important historical sites and, more generally, the human scale in urban environment. Politicians and city planners have often failed to keep a cautious eye on the interests of the private sector and a vision of their city's future.

The old downtowns of many big cities in the United States are destroyed, China and Russia follow this model and give up their urban history—but people want to be in Paris, London and New York which represent the dream of the old city on a human scale.

*L.P.: What is the meaning of urban architecture in your work?*

T.S.: Understanding and representing architecture was the beginning and occasionally returns to be the foundation of my work. Architecture manifests a society's will and self expression. In the cities, the gestalt of a mentality can culminate in a peak intensity.

The history of a society, its common unconsciousness ("Unconscious Places" was the title of my first publication, Kunsthalle Bern/Verlag Walther König 1987) is often truthfully expressed in the dynamic of normal, everyday architecture. This goes beyond individual buildings, which can be more easily traced and documented.

*L.P.: In the works exposed you have chosen historic cities, like Naples or Venice, and contemporary megalopolis, like Shanghai, Tokyo and Hong Kong. Why this dualism?*

T.S.: Because it represents two developments, two solutions to an urban mechanism. Dualism is the most basic notion of analysis. You need to look at two different versions of a solution to be able to compare; in this comparison, it becomes clear that human-scale architecture is necessary for existence.

*L.P.: When you are working on the image of a city which elements are you more interested in?*

T.S.: To get to know the place and to scout what represents an unmistakable narrative. I'm mostly interested in the dynamic of conjunctions of buildings. This means streets, larger perspectives; I prefer dense urban structures that have a revelatory potential. For example, when I first photographed in the Shin-juku neighborhood of Tokyo, I was looking for what defined that place as different from everything else I'd seen before. I learned, through the photographs, something about the Japanese conception of space and the temporality of architecture there.

*L.P.: In developing your research you moved from more intimate images, like Vico dei Monti in Naples (1988), to panoramic views of more anonymous places. Does this reflect the development of your visible relationship with urban architecture?*

T.S.: After photographing the jungle for several years ("New Pictures from Paradise" was the title of this group of works, which I published around the turn of the millennium. Schirmer/Mosel, Munich 1999), I felt curious to return to the city and trace locations where a so-called globalization had become visible. Similarities of modern building styles between Inner Mongolia and Las Vegas, Sao Paulo and Palermo etc. struck me and allowed me to question mechanisms of thought, memory and self-representation.

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### **Thomas Struth: Unconscious Places**

Extract from the text *A view onto the city*, by Ludovico Pratesi, exhibition curator. Written especially for the edition of the exhibition catalog.

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"Understanding and representing architecture is the point of departure and the basis of my work. Architecture expresses the desire of society to represent itself<sup>10</sup>. In this way, Thomas Struth explains the constant presence of urban architecture in his work, beginning with the first black and white series of urban views that represent deserted streets seen from the pedestrian's perspective, with particular attention to the urban stratification.<sup>11</sup> His view looks towards the city in order to analyse the cultural coordinates of its evolution, seeking to capture the most secret and less evident traces. For this reason, when the artist looks at the metropolis, ancient or modern (he has photographed the small alleys of Naples and the streets of Tokyo), he never seeks out the most representative places, such as monuments or museums, but concentrates on the spaces between buildings. He is interested in insignificant streets or public squares, which he considers repositories of an anonymous and unconscious memory. Unlike Candida Höfer, he looks towards the stratification of banal daily life, interpreted as would an anthropologist, and focuses on the subtle relations that link man to his social environment. This interest began in the late 1970s and culminated in the exhibition *Unconscious Places* at the Kunsthalle in Bern in 1987;<sup>12</sup> shortly after the artist shifted towards large-scale colour photographs of the metropolis of the future such as Shanghai or Seoul. This triggered a reflection on the evolution of the city and the intimate cultural nature of the area. The artist states, 'Recently, I have begun looking at the city with a different eye

<sup>10</sup> Quote extracted from the interview with Ludovico Pratesi and published in this catalog.

<sup>11</sup> An interesting analysis of this artist's work can be found in L. Derenthal, *Appréhender le monde entier: à propos de photographies de Thomas Struth*, in *Objectivités, op. cit.*, pp. 251-265.

<sup>12</sup> U. Looock, *Unconscious Places*, exhibition catalog, Bern Kunsthalle, 1987.

in order to find areas where the so called globalization is more visible. The stylistic similarities between modern buildings in places such as the centre of Mongolia, Las Vegas, São Paulo or Palermo deeply affected me and led me to reflect on the mechanisms of collective thought, memory and its representation<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> See the interview with L. Pratesi published in the catalog.