

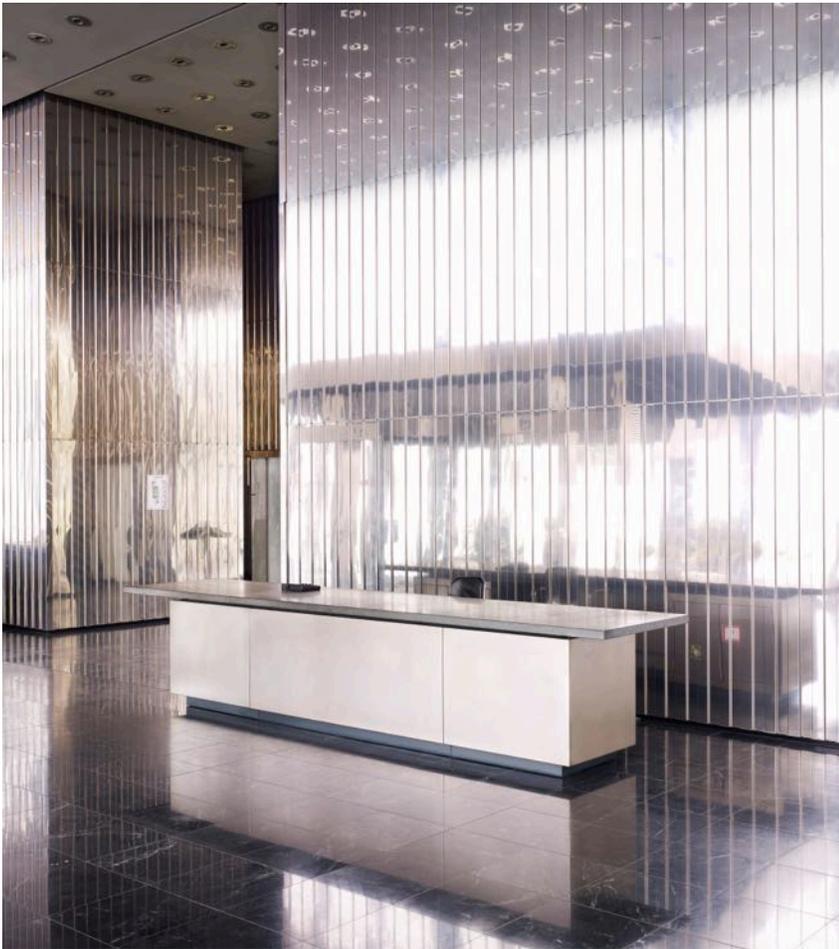
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Review: Düsseldorf Photo Weekend

Düsseldorf art galleries and museums opened their doors for three days to celebrate the city's photographic heritage



Dreischeibenhaus Düsseldorf IX, 2011 © Candida Höfer

Düsseldorf, capital city of Germany's North Rhine-Westphalia state, is known for its lively arts scene and strong links to photography. Most famously in 1976, Bernd and Hilla Becher began teaching photography at the Kunstakademie in the city; before this, the arts academy focused mainly on painting.

The Bechers' influence was profound and long lasting; their teachings contributed to the German photographic movement known as the Düsseldorf School of Photography. Former students include Thomas Ruff, Thomas Struth, Andreas Gursky and Candida Höfer, all of whom went on to become some of the world's most successful photographers.

This photographic legacy is played out at the city's annual Photo Weekend (which took place this year from 31 January to 02 February), most prominently through the work of Höfer, whose mini retrospective at the Museum Kunstpalast featured prints from across the photographer's lengthy career.

Höfer opened up her archive especially for the exhibition to reveal there is far more to her photographic oeuvre than the familiar photographs of empty public spaces. Alongside the large-scale colour prints of the interiors of opera houses, museums, libraries and concert halls, which made Höfer's name (and look spectacular in the vaulting space of the museum), were lesser-known works from early on in her career, including images she took while a student at Kunstakademie. Höfer also made new photographs for the exhibition, including one of an interior inside the Kunstpalast. Some of the most interesting images in the exhibition were intimate still lifes showing tiny ornaments in windows, which contrasted with the large-scale interiors.

The other main draw was *Duane Michals' Photographs from 1958-2013*, curated by Enrica Viganò. The vast exhibition on show at art museum NRW-Forum included many of the American's well-known sequenced works, which often combine handwritten poems and short stories with photographs, and take a humorous and playful yet sometimes melancholic view on life. The comprehensive and well-curated show also included Michals' more recent hand-painted tintypes, and a short film that tracks the photographer as he wanders through his favourite locations.

Also at the NFW-Forum was *Heimat* (homeland), featuring images from the DZ Bank collection in Frankfurt, and the second Portfolio Reviews, which featured work by 27 emerging photographers, four of whom were awarded prizes for their portfolios. Nearby, Samuel Henne's colourful still lifes were nicely presented in a lively space that served as the hub of the Photo Weekend.

Some 32 art galleries and institutions took part in the third Photo Weekend, which was founded by gallerist Clara Maria Sels and former artistic directors at the NRW-Forum, Werner Lippert and Petra Wenzel. "We would like the Photo Weekend to become an international meeting place for people who are interested in photography and cultural exchange," said Sels. "From next year, we plan to involve a partner city from another country; in 2015 it will be Milan. Another plan is to introduce an artist exchange programme between academies or photography schools. We want to create a network between art institutions."

Other notable exhibitions included *Antifoto 5: MacDonaldStrand* at Künstlerverein Malkasten, an artists' association founded in 1848. The exhibition, organised in association with the Antifoto Manifesto, featured a new installation of *Shredded Part 2, 1992 to 2014*, which saw the duo present their shredded student work in small, transparent cubes. Artworks from the series *Most Popular of All Time* – famous photographs reduced to a series of lines and numbered dots – were also on show. In addition, MacDonaldStrand presented photographs of smashed cameras from the series *Throwing Analogue Cameras at the Studio Wall and Recording the Impact Digitally, 2014*, among other work.

A little way outside of the city centre, in Kadel Willborn gallery, an exhibition of American artist Barbara Kasten's work was a real highlight. Using the photographic space as a stage, Kasten, who studied sculpture before taking up photography in the early 1970s, creates installations, which she then photographs. The images – intricate studies of light, shape, space and form, both in colour and black-and-white – evoke elements of the Bauhaus movement and constructivism.

Another standout exhibition was *Japan 8-9-3 Achim Duchow: In Search of Japan* at former bakery-turned-arts space Weltkunstzimmer, in the artist district of Flingern. The exhibition featured images from Duchow's photographic archive, which came into possession of the Hans Peter Zimmer Foundation after the artist's death in 1993.

Little is known about Duchow's photographic past, and during his life he was known mainly as a painter. In 1979, Duchow went to live and study in Japan, where he stayed until 1981, and became obsessed with Japanese street and pop culture and its punk scene. Returning to Japan many times during his life, Duchow took snapshots of Japanese subcultures in a bid to understand and get close to these cultures. Although he sometimes showed his images as slideshows, most of his photographic work has never been seen. The prints on display were made especially for the exhibition by staff at the Foundation who continue to mine his archive.

Elsewhere, exhibition space Kunsthalle Düsseldorf staged a strong show, featuring video projections and sculptures by Dutch artist Ma-ri-jke van War-mer-dam, while Konrad Fischer gallery made an obligatory

nod to the Düsseldorf School of Photography by hanging Becher and Ruff photographs alongside work by former Kunstakademie student Juergen Staack.

Overall, Düsseldorf Photo Weekend presented a balanced programme of work by locals and artists from further afield. It will be interesting to see how the organisers build on the strong foundation they have created.

Visit www.duesseldorfphotoweekend.de



Benrather Schloss Düsseldorf IV, 2011 © Candida Höfer