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School Playgrounds, A Pleasure Palace And Grainy Portraits

James Mollison's images of school playgrounds around the world and more in On Photography



Candida Höfer's 'Benrather Schloss Düsseldorf' (2011). PHOTO: CANDIDA HÖFER, KÖLN/VG BILD-KUNST, BONN./SEAN KELLY, NEW YORK

Candida Höfer: From Düsseldorf

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Beginning in 1972, Candida Höfer studied photography at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf under Bernd and Hilla Becher, known for their typological studies of industrial structures. Höfer (b. 1944) had already had a career working for newspapers as a portrait photographer, but under the Bechers's conceptualist influence she gained prominence taking dramatic large format pictures of empty interiors. She returned many times to Düsseldorf, where she photographed the city's baroque and rococo churches and historic buildings, as well as more modern structures. "Dominikanerkirche Sankt Andreas Düsseldorf II" (2011) is an example of the former; the camera is located at the front of the church and looks up the central aisle, past the elevated pulpit and its ornate

canopy, toward the organ pipes in a balcony on the far wall. The ceiling and archways of the sanctuary are covered with decorative modeling, but they are painted white so the space is filled with light.

Two pictures taken in 2011 of Benrather Schloss, a pleasure palace built in the 18th century, are devoid of people; the rooms have very high ceilings and richly decorated walls that framed the aristocratic life lived there. The modern buildings in this show are without ornamental décor, and Höfer presents details of them as geometric abstractions. "Julia Stoschek Collection Düsseldorf X" (2008) is composed of rectangles in varying shades of gray. "Neuer Stahlhof Düsseldorf III" (2012), also seen in shades of gray, looks up a spiral staircase. Several untitled pictures taken in 2012 are concerned with the play of light on the textures of walls and floors.