

ANDREAS GEHRKE : ESPACES - RÄUME

EXHIBITION 7th Oct. – 11th Feb. 2021

I have never differentiated between architecture, landscape or portrait. I don't think it is important what you photograph, but how you photograph it. – Andreas Gehrke

Emptiness only appears to be nothing. But really it conceals a wealth of meanings. Emptiness ranges from abandoned and left-behind spaces, undefined areas left to their own devices, to historical **voids** which have become memorials. But it also encompasses planned and designed emptiness, open spaces in dense urban contexts, the aura of exhibition spaces, and the grandeur of prestigious buildings.

Andreas Gehrke places the aesthetics of emptiness at the centre of his photographic work. In the exhibition “Räume – Espaces” he shows the juxtaposition and entanglement of abundance and deprivation, order and chaos, presence and absence – as well as conception and coincidence – as interconnections of our built environment. He conceives his spatial perspectives as **portraits** and even finds a concrete counterpart in assemblages devoid of people. Gehrke's perspective and cropping turns the marbled interior of the *Museum of Modern Art*, New York into an abstract composition; similarly, the glass vitrines in the *James Simon Galerie* on Berlin's Museum Island resemble minimalist objects in their arrangement and superimposition. Andreas Gehrke's photography may seem matter of fact at first, but upon closer inspection, a very unique perspective unfolds, granting spaces a pictorial quality far removed from their history and function.

Andreas Gehrke is **self-taught**. His work has been exhibited at the *German Architecture Museum*, Frankfurt, and *PS1*, New York, among others. Born in 1975 in **East Berlin**, he began photographing aged 12 as a member of the “*Arbeitsgemeinschaft Fotografie*” at the *Pionierpalast Berlin*. After German reunification, he encountered the photobooks of Walker Evans, Lewis Baltz, John Gossage, and Michael Schmidt, which influenced his work and career. Since 1999, he has been working internationally under the pseudonym NOSCHE, realising commissioned works for architectural firms such as *David Chipperfield* and *Sauerbruch Hutton*, and magazines and publishers such as *Wallpaper**, *AD Germany*, *Distanz* and *Hatje Cantz*. In 2013, Andreas Gehrke founded his own publishing house **Drittel Books**, which has published numerous photobooks, for example by Martin Eberle, Julian Faulhaber and Sara-Lena Maierhofer. “Berlin” is his most recent publication – a portrait of a city one thinks one knows everything about. Gehrke took six years to explore his hometown beyond the well-known places and clichés. As in the work “Brandenburg,” he resists pure documentary photography to draw attention to the structural and social changes by means of subtle allusions.

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GALLERY: Association and Revision

Andreas Gehrke counteracts the continuity and self-reference of architecture with the experience of **change, conversion, and shift in meaning**. A bunker from the Second World War becomes the home of the Boros Collection, and on the former industrial site of the Zollverein coal mine and coking plant, a cultural landmark with visible storage is created, allowing it to exhibit its own history. He also addresses the political dimension: In the wake of German reunification, the German Bundestag moved from Bonn to Berlin and, with its seat in the Reichstag, followed on from the Weimar Republic which was proclaimed there in 1918. The heavily discussed replica of the Berlin Palace dates back to the Hohenzollern dynasty. There is nothing left to remind us of the Palace of the Republic which once stood as a landmark of the GDR on that very spot.

EVENT HALL: Controlled Emptiness

Few spaces have become as much of a convention as the **empty exhibition space**. White walls, cubic format, minimalist design, consistent lighting – in this allegedly neutral ensemble, art can appear without visual disturbance. But controlled emptiness creates its own context. In this spatial construction, with its lack of connection to the outside, and detachment from time and space, anything can become art. Andreas Gehrke takes photographs in exhibition venues and galleries after their structural completion, but before the opening. In this brief moment, when the art is not yet present, the spaces themselves emerge as something between a restrained shell and a work in itself.

LIBRARY: Indeterminate Modernity

In his trilogy on vacant buildings of post-war modernity, Andreas Gehrke provides insights into the former headquarters of business enterprises that shaped the political, social, and economic reputation of the young [German] Federal Republic. The abandoned high-rises in Hamburg, which once accommodated the newspaper *Der Spiegel*; the old German headquarters of the US technology and consulting giant *IBM* in Stuttgart-Vaihingen; and the offices of the once largest and now defunct mail-order and department store chain *Quelle* in Nuremberg: the series depicts interiors of remarkable landmarks of modern architecture which, after the corporations' departure, are in a **moment of limbo** that still hints at their representative function but also testifies to decay and new beginnings.

*Text: **Maxie Fischer**, art and cultural theorist, lives and works as an author and curator in Berlin. She is currently undertaking a PhD on the work and career of **Michael Schmidt** at the Folkwang University of the Arts, Essen. (Translated by Ellen Lapper)*

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