



Lukas Hoffmann

Strassenbilder

SA 06. April 2024 bis SO 02. June 2024

The photographic works of Zug-based artist Lukas Hoffmann, who lives and works in Berlin, have so far mainly been exhibited in France. At the Kunsthalle Lucerne, the artist is showing his self-contained series of works, titled "«Strassenbilder», («street pictures»)) which were created between 2018 and 2021 and have now been completed – coupled with the book publication of the same name from 2023.

His photographs focus on the unseen aspects of everyday life and the human condition, avoiding specific references to places, times, or personalities. With great formal, aesthetic, and technical precision, the artist creates minimalist images capturing intuitive moments.

Lukas Hoffmann's «street pictures» series is consistently in black and white, with the photographer using his large-format camera freehand without a tripod. The focus, fixed at 80 centimeters, decisively determines the proximity to his subjects. The artist captures passers-by in public spaces on 13 cm x 18 cm sheet film, choosing almost exclusively back and side shots with fragmentary body sections. Deliberately excluding facial features and long shots, Hoffmann aims to prevent his subjects from recognizing themselves, thus preserving the authenticity of the captured moments. These snapshots of everyday life defy spectacle; they are a departure from the tradition of «street photography», yet upon closer examination, they reveal a quietly profound nature. The large-format prints measuring 102 cm x 72 cm reveal an enormous wealth of detail, particularly in the hair and skin areas or the fabric structures of the clothing. The random dynamics of individual images are further accentuated by an age-related defect in the view camera: several holes in the bellows admit stray light during prolonged shutter releases, creating a unique luminous haze over the subjects.

The monumentality and richness of detail of the fragmentary excerpts allow for a unique closeness in viewing. This closeness is accompanied by intimacy, which, however, contradicts the anonymity and placelessness of the images. Through the presented proximity and reduction to black and white values, the dimensions of sensory perception are expanded, stimulating memories. This expansion appears to coincide primarily with the dynamics and ambiguity of the veiled glare in some of the images. In this way, empathy with the textures of textile materials, areas of skin and hair is further supported by associations that evoke smells, flavors, and sounds, as well as the appearance of movements, silhouettes, and lighting moods, and even to the phenomenon of *déjà vu*.

In the small lower show room of the Kunsthalle Lucerne, Lukas Hoffmann presents an installation featuring three slide projections. These projections display photographic images captured during the artist's residency in New York in 2016. The collection, titled «NYC sidewalks», juxtaposes formal-aesthetic images of mundane scenarios in public spaces and differs from the «street pictures» series through its vibrant colors and the partial absence of human subjects.

With the help of a shift lens, which enables horizontal movement within the image circle, diptych photographs are crafted in «NYC sidewalks», portraying temporal vignettes of distinct sceneries



kunsthalle luzern

as connecting images. Through this presentation method, new time-space compositions are generated, each combining a diptych image of one location with that of another. Thus, the divergence of the individual diptych becomes equally apparent.

In «NYC sidewalks», the proximity to the motifs serves as a key feature, too. Views of walls and the architectural contours are scarcely interrupted by street lines or expansive cityscapes, often constrained by fences and pavements. Long distances are deliberately excluded, while the close-up of inconspicuous places beckons the viewer with its intricate structures, textures, and interplay of light and color. Lukas Hoffmann achieves an extension of this limitation with his moving lens and its subtle horizontal shifting of the image section. The various movements of passers-by, for instance, introduce both temporal and spatial dimensions within the imagery. This expansion of temporal and spatial boundaries is amplified when the artist integrates different locations. In the inclusion and continuation of various lines and structures in his pictorial compositions, the different locations find a foothold in one another. This effect is heightened when, for example, the artist combines shots with horizontal frontality with diagonal alignments or juxtaposes different gradations of light and color.

With a high degree of formal aesthetic quality, Lukas Hoffmann uses trivial, inconspicuous motifs to prompt reflection on the significance and relationship between architecture and nature, tranquility and movement, and the presence and absence of people. In doing so, the artist creates moments of deceleration that sensitize us to the beauty of the inconspicuous up close.