CANDIDA HÖFER PROJECTS: DONE

ON EXHIBITING PROJECTS: DONE

When preparing for an extensive exhibition like *Projects: Done*, Candida Höfer places prints of the images she has selected in gray or black boxes, most of which are labeled by city or country. Sometimes the label reads "Liverpool" or "Madrid," sometimes "Portugal" or "Mexico." The boxes are an imaginary mapping of various stations that are distinguished not so much by typologies of space as by specific situations in spaces. With *Projects: Done*, none of these boxes of photographs are labeled. It is the title both of an exhibition and of a book. Whereas several of the projects, such as *On Kawara* and *Liverpool*, are unlikely to be continued, others, such as *Zoologische Gärten* (Zoos), *Possessions*, and the seeking out of locations of museum- like presentation, are not yet finished. From the perspective of the exhibition organizers, however, presentation in a museum or a publication represents the temporary completion that a public showing requires and also produces.

This is a central aspect both of Höfer's artistic oeuvre and of the exhibition itself. The projects presented tell of designed places, not all of which are accessible to the public, in which specific display systems and readings of what is displayed activate public spheres. In collaboration with the architects Kuehn Malvezzi, display systems were developed for the exhibition that not only strip the many venues of the *On Kawara* project of their privacy, but also ultimately bring the archived prints into the exhibition space in the form of the recent publication *Candida Höfer. On Kawara. Date Paintings in Private Collections*. The presentation of the project in the exhibition transforms the book into an exhibit: in two glass-covered table vitrines, the individual pages are spread out in two rows in each, resulting in opposite motions in space. The four rows contain a selection of the roughly one hundred sites that were visited and organize them according to the chronological sequence of the artist's various travels.

Projects: Done exhibits exhibiting. *Türken in Deutschland* (Turks in Germany)—a multipart work consisting of a presentation of color slides and a series of black-and-white photographs with which Höfer successfully applied to the Bechers' class at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in the mid- 1970s—addresses this theme as well. The images depict everyday situations in a "space of life-styles" in which, according to Pierre Bourdieu, social classifications are distinguished by clothing, language, taste, and consumer behavior. But the images do not put "the other" on display, nor is it a voyeuristic gaze that speaks. Höfer must have visited some of the sites several times, for one image shows a sixmember Turkish family in their living room, whereas another image in the same place shows only the husband and wife, wearing different clothes. Several images show Turkish merchants in their stores in Cologne, Hamburg, or Düsseldorf.

Their store displays could have been taken from the 1964 exhibition *The American Supermarket* at the Bianchini Gallery in New York. This quiet observation of Capitalist Realism, as the one-evening event *Leben mit Pop* (Life with Pop) at the Berges department store in Düsseldorf in 1963 was called, is still found in subtle ways in Höfer's work even today. For example, in the images of reading rooms in the library at the *Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven* (*V* and *VI*, 2003), designed by Maarten van Severen, bright colors pop into the silence of contemplation, generating an antidesign of everyday forms.

From *Türken in Deutschland*, our gaze shifts to *Casino Lissabon II 2006* (Casino in Lisbon), in which Höfer photographed the "heart, the social center" of the casino (according to the casino's Web site), which opened in 2006. "Photograph" is, however, not a very apt term here. The English phrase "to take a picture" is closer to her approach to spaces. Taking a picture of a space: a broad white screen frames an auditorium as if it were the stage below which the DJ's stand is prominently located. Outside this passe-partout inherent in the space lies the bar and restaurant—in Höfer's work, however, this venue is much more than a background. The picture appears to be nested, doubled, and reflected. A picture within a picture. A "mise en abyme." If the photographic image is hung in such a way that it can be seen from a great distance in a long visual axis, this confusion is reinforced. The single-point perspective often used by Höfer opens the large-format pictorial object into the exhibition space. Where does the depicted space end? Where does the real one begin? By this point at the latest, it becomes clear that Höfer's photographic images are not documentary reproductions of a space; rather, the image itself becomes a space. It is not the depicted space that is real but rather the one imagined as a result of the image.

Looking at the image is like looking at a map. In an interview Höfer remarked: "Rather I want the image to contain stories, not to tell stories, not to be talkative. I want them open for the stories of people wandering through these images with their eyes, to be open to discoveries, to invite them to spend some time with the image. And photographic images, like maps, invite you to use plenty of time." We have long since known that mappings can be neither complete nor objective, since they are subject to political, cultural, religious, and even historical paradigms. Even Google Maps does not show a map of the world as it is but instead offers a visual apparatus that makes it possible to travel virtually through photographs of streets, squares, airs, and seas. Höfer's images of rooms like those in the casino but also her works *Galleria Gió Marconi Milano I 2005*, *Schauspielhaus Hannover 2005*, and

Museum Morsbroich I + II 2008 can be read as mappings of spaces, of sites, with which the viewer navigates the images, just as Kuehn Malezzi creates environments with its architecture that function as hosts oriented to the specific situation. Ultimately, it does not matter whether the events actually occur in the space or only in the imagination.

In 1973, Susan Sontag argued in "In Plato's Cave," her first essay on photography, that photographing is a way of collecting the world. This topos is reflected in Höfer's *80 Pictures*. The title of the project recalls the story of the British gentleman Phileas Fogg, whom Jules Verne sent around the world in eighty days at the end of the nineteenth century. It is Höfer's only project thus far that treats text and image as equals; however, the designations of time and place—especially specific terms like "grey," "brick," or "show-case," each on its own text slide—recall today's tags, which are used to personalize images by adding titles to them on Internet portals such as Flickr and Facebook. The double slide projection is actually a double slide installation: *80 Pictures* not only requires projectors in the exhibition space that can project two text slides followed by two image slides; the surrounding space and the projection also become constitutive installation elements of the presentation. The present publication translates this media presentation into a series of images against a black ground.

The project *Flipper* (Pinball), which is being shown for the first time as part of *Projects: Done*, is based on several trips. Much like the projects *On Kawara* and *Zwölf. Die Bürger von Calais* (Twelve. The Burghers of Calais), in *Flipper* an object is the point of departure for every inspection of the scene: the pinball machine (Shangri-La, pachinko) becomes the lens of drifting the streets of Cologne, Düsseldorf, Wenningstedt, Paris, London, and Brussels. Originally planned as a book project, this early project spent more than thirty years in a box. It is exhibited in a loose but compact series of nearly fifty original vintage prints laid out in a glass-covered table vitrine to create a single visual object. The exhibition display by Kuehn Malvezzi—a horizontal display case—spreads out before us not only a sociological history of pinball but also an itinerary. Höfer visited about fifty sites for this project. The large number of photographs—often found in later projects as well—is here a manifestation of a unique language with which the pinball arcade, which is frequently used only by men, is appropriated. Whereas the photographs in the vitrine disclose their own temporality, the present publication accelerates the speed of the pinball images: readers can flip through the multipage sequence of full-page images like leafing through illustrations in a magazine.

Just as the pinball machine in its various locations sometimes looks like an entertainment, a site for socializing, or, in rigid rows, a sculptural object, Höfer's project *Zwölf. Die Bürger von Calais* presents Auguste Rodin's *Les Bourgeois de Calais*— which was commissioned in 1885 and since 1895 cast in bronze in twelve editions—in different narratives at their present locations. Höfer is not interested in their art-historical interpretation. She focuses rather on the possibilities of presentation that turn the burghers into a cultural asset (*The National Museum of Western Art Tokyo II 2000*), make them seem temporarily stored (*Kunstmuseum Basel II 2000*), decorate the museum café with them (*The Metropolitan Museum of Art New York I 2000*), or make them the symbol of a city (*Place de l'Hotel de Ville Calais I + II 2000*). Much like an index, the project includes various forms of presentation that apply only to each specific place. It reveals an exhibition policy that was the basis of the invention of the bourgeois museum in the mid-eighteenth century.

The exhibition *Projects: Done* begins in the Schloss Morsbroich, a baroque castle. At the same time, it marks a temporary caesura in the collaboration between Candida Höfer and Kuehn Malvezzi that began with Documenta 11 in Kassel. In 2002, *Zwölf. Die Bürger von Calais* was exhibited at the Binding brewery in Kassel, in a site that the architects had converted into spaces for art. Two years later, "*Binding Brauerei Kassel II 2004*" was taken. On the one hand, traces of both use and nonuse tell of the past presence of art and its viewers and, on the other, illustrate a temporality of exhibition that remains hidden to an ordinary gaze. Usually preceding exhibition in space and time, several images—which I would call the "verso of exhibition"—show sites of archiving and preparation (*Biblioteca do Palácio Nacional da Ajuda Lisboa I 2006*), of conservation (*Museum für Islamische Kunst Berlin II 1990*), of interim spaces (*Alvar Aalto Kulturhaus-Wolfsburg II 1998*), and of transition (*Festspielhaus Recklinghausen XIII 1997*).

Whereas the early project *Liverpool* could be read as a travel-related mapping of a city, this exhibitions shows, with works such as *Haus des Rundfunks Berlin* (House of Broadcasting, Berlin) and *Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien* (Art Historical Museum, Vienna), sites that in Höfer's photographs look more like exhibition objects. Various ways of hanging them can distinguish them. For example, *Niederländische Botschaft Berlin* (Dutch Embassy Berlin) is presented in a hanging that surrounds the space. Much like a compound eye, the numerous closely hung photographic images generate an overall picture of the building. By contrast, the images of *Zoologische Gärten* generate a wall tableau of four rows that, in the language of graphic designers, is hung flush left. Zoos are also places where the world is brought together. The designed enclosures house live exhibits that turn any zoo into an outdoor museum. The simulated living spaces of the animals probably also say something about the culture in which fenced-in preserves are found.

There is one work in *Projects: Done* that is the only project in which the images are shown neither as slides nor as prints: *Possessions* assembles a selection of Höfer's works whose ownership has been transferred to the Candida Höfer-Stiftung (Candida Höfer Foundation) since 2004. The images in this project do not de facto exist physically, which is why in the present volume *Possessions* is published in the form of a text. The transfer of a virtual image file to a space is an essential part of the installation that was developed in 2008 for the exhibition *Candida Höfer: Werkgruppen seit* 1968 (Candida Höfer: Groups of Works since 1968) at the ZKM in Karlsruhe. The spatial shift takes up a work situation: consisting of a chair and a table with a computer screen, roughly a hundred images go past in a loop of digital film. There may be some duplicates with the images in the exhibition, but here the repetition produces a difference in two respects: on the one hand, the various localizations of the same image appeal to a perception that grasps the exhibited image in the surrounding space situationally and, on the other hand, each photographic medium demands its own temporality.

Whereas the essence of this project is directed at the future in the literal sense—the Latin verb proicere means "throw forward"— the public presentation marks a moment of fixing something in time and space that is manifested both in the exhibition and in the publication *Projects: Done* in various aggregate states but with a similar layout. At the beginning of this publication, Candida Höfer invites the reading flaneur: "How to read this book: Read it like a walk through an exhibition." Before us lies another project box spread out—filled with past future.

Doreen Mende
Extract from the Catalogue PROJECTS: DONE