

Press release
Zurich, 10 June 2010

Kunsthaus Zürich shows «Thomas Struth. Photographs 1978 – 2010»

From 11 June to 12 September 2010 the Kunsthaus Zürich presents the largest and most comprehensive exhibition of work by Thomas Struth to date. The photographs on show, some 100 mostly large-format, were produced between 1978 and the present day. The exhibition also includes a premiere presentation of a group of new pieces.

At the latest since the success of his Museum Photographs in the early 1990s, Thomas Struth (born in 1954) has emerged as one of the world's leading and most influential artistic photographers. His work develops slowly, in thematic series, between documentation and interpretation, social study and latent psychological meaning. Struth's careful and meticulous method allies his oeuvre not only with the history of classical photography but also – by way of his constant questioning of his own representational techniques – with contemporary art as well.

Streets empty of people, visitors standing before famous artworks in renowned museums, portraits of individuals and families as well as landscapes, jungles and flowers: Struth's photographic work over the last thirty years can be roughly classified into these four groups.

STREET AND MUSEUM PHOTOGRAPHS

It began with his street pictures in the late 1970s. Initially structured with strict central symmetry, later more freely composed black-and-white images of European streets empty of human beings. There followed street scenes from Asian cities, now incorporating the bustle of passers-by as a central pictorial element. Struth became renowned for his museum photographs, which take the presence and comportment of visitors confronted with world-famous art in museums as their motif. Ultimately, however, Struth was just as interested in the question of the meaning centuries-old pictures are still able to convey. 'The museums were almost always full to bursting, and that made me wonder what people are actually looking for when they stand in front of these historic paintings. For me a museum is a place for sharpening my instruments, my perception. What is the use of pictures from the past? How can they serve to inspire me to interesting or productive future ideas?'

FAMILY PORTRAITS

Another pivotal group is composed of family photographs from around the world. Struth's work in what at first seems an antiquated genre was triggered by the artist's desire to understand himself: 'I was trying to analyse and to comprehend myself, my own family, the position of the family in western culture; I was thinking of why we are the way we are.'

PICTURES FROM PARADISE AND NEW WORKS

Finally, the Zurich show, curated by Tobia Bezzola, in addition to Struth's fourth central category of works, his photographs of landscapes, jungles and flowers, also features a series of new pieces, some of them very large-format, which herald a new thematic classification within Struth's oeuvre. The artist here focuses on the complex visual structures produced by complex technical facilities. These most recent pieces may be seen as the continuation of Struth's interest in a 'history of human ambition', which makes itself manifest in the collective accomplishments of a given culture, whether in the form of a mediaeval cathedral, an urban structure, or the design of a space ship.

THOMAS STRUTH

1954: born in Geldern (Lower Rhine), lives in Düsseldorf and Berlin. 1973–1980: studies at the Art Academy of Düsseldorf. 1978: awarded the Art Academy of Düsseldorf's New York fellowship. 1980–1982: civilian service. 1990: awarded Werner Mantz Prize by the Werner Mantz Foundation. 1993–1996: professorship at Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design. 1997: Spectrum – International Prize for Photography, Foundation of Lower Saxony. 2007: marriage to Tara Bray Smith.

ART EDUCATION

An audioguide in English and German is included in the price of admission, while the exhibition website offers detailed background information. Lavishly illustrated with around 200 reproductions, the catalogue (240 pages, Schirmer/Mosel Publishing) is an exhaustive account of Struth's work and features an extensive conversation with the artist as well as essays by Tobia Bezzola, James Lingwood, Anette Kruszynski, Armin Zweite, Ruth HaCohen and Yaron Ezrahi. Available at the Kunsthaus shop for CHF 44.

The exhibition was organized by the Kunsthaus Zürich in collaboration with K20, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf. After opening in Zurich, the show will be on display in Düsseldorf (K20, 26.2.-19.6.2011), London (Whitechapel Gallery, 6.7.-16.9.2011) and Porto (Museu Fundação Serralves, 14.10.2011-29.1.2012).

Supported by Swiss Re – Partner for contemporary art.

GENERAL INFORMATION / GUIDED TOURS / ADVANCE SALES

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich, www.kunsthaus.ch

Opening hours Sat, Sun, Tues 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed, Thurs, Fri 10 a.m.–8 p.m., closed on Mondays.

Admission including audio guide (English/German) CHF 18.- / concessions CHF 12.-. CHF 14.- per head for groups of 20 or more. Free entry for young people under the age of 16.

Guided tours in German: Wednesdays, 6.30 p.m., Sundays, 11 a.m. Private guided tours can be arranged on +41 (0)44 253 84 84 (Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–12 noon).

Advance sales/arrival by train Switzerland: RailAway/SBB Kombi-Ticket, with 10% reduction on rail travel and entrance to the exhibition, at SBB stations and by phoning Rail Service: 0900 300 300 (CHF 1.19 per min.). Magasins Fnac: Sales points CH: Rives, Balexert, Lausanne, Fribourg, Pathé Cinema Basel, fnac.ch; F: Carrefour, Géant, Magasins U, 0 892 68 36 22 (0.34 €/min), fnac.com; BE: fnac.be.

NOTE TO MEDIA

See download area at www.kunsthaus.ch for press release and visuals

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