VAN DER GRINTEN GALERIE

Karl Hugo Schmölz

Funkhaus Köln 1952

18.01.2014–29.03.2014

As early as 1948, the decision was taken in favor of a design for the new broadcasting house in Cologne that newly defined its mission and function, thus implementing a paradigm shift: away from the propaganda machine of the Nazi era and toward a cultural facility that allows the young democracy to participate in a social discourse. In regards to

Van der Grinten Galerie
Ackerstraße 144
40233 Düsseldorf

the future activity of concerts and events, the director, Hanns Hartmann, vehemently championed an inner-city location, and the architect Peter Friedrich Schneider (1901-1981), a student of Peter Behrens, developed an architecture meant to radiate openness and transparency. Thus one of the most remarkable buildings of the 1950s came to be built in Cologne.

Karl Hugo Schmölz (1917-1986) documented the entire construction with his camera: the façade, the inner courtyard in daytime and nighttime, the vestibule, staircases, small and large broadcasting halls, the tearoom, the main and upper foyers, and studios up to and including details of the furnishings such as technical installations, seating, lighting and art-in-architecture. The archive of the Schmölz photo workshop consists of around 200 negatives and the logbooks.
For the current exhibition, Van der Grinten Gallery chose, together with the archive, a series of 10 especially spectacular photos that are shown as modern prints (pigment prints on Hahnenmühle baryta paper. Size: ca. 80 x 60cm; edition of 3) on the gallery's upper floor.

All of Karl Hugo Schmölz's photographs have an enormous artistic quality and a singular technical perfection all their own. Already during his lifetime, Karl Hugo Schmölz was known far beyond Germany for his lighting techniques which gave his pictures, above all the interior shots, a partly hyperreal sharpness and depth. In addition his one-hundred percent preparation for a shooting was his special trademark that elevated him above many of his contemporaries. This preparation consisted of an exact capture of the interior space, the passage, the structural shell in its volume and effect, so as not just to be able to portray these later in a way that not only reproduced their exterior surfaces but also the space and the atmosphere. On Schmölz's photos you can feel the coolness of metal, the softness of fabric, the pleasant shine of polished wood, the translucency of glass. Schmölz here proves he is a genius in his treatment of the available and the additional lighting as well as the combination of the two to their mutual benefit. And finally the choice of the camera angle, the exact definition of the height of the line of sight as well as the exposure time are of crucial importance for representing spatial and architectural situations.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the book "Karl Hugo Schmölz, Funkhaus Köln 1952" has been published in German and English for € 32 along with a special edition of 35 copies

(book & later a color print of an original negative 1952/2014 in a slipcase) for € 385.

Additional exhibitions and publications in 2014 with photographs by Karl Hugo Schmölz are planned, among others, for the New Aachen Kunstverein and at the Deutsche Börse in Eschweiler/Frankfurt, which has recently bought an entire block of his works.

Translation: Jeanne Haunschild