VAN DER GRINTEN GALERIE

Karl Hugo Schmölz

Objective Photography by Karl Hugo Schmölz

26.04.2024–15.06.2024

The current exhibition “Sachliche Fotografie” (Objective Photography) presents selected incunabula from the renowned Cologne photo atelier **Fotowerkstätte Schmölz**. The focus of this show is on the images, often stringently minimalist, of cinema interiors, staircases and industrial architecture.

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All images by **Karl Hugo Schmölz (1917-1986)** display outstanding artistic quality and a unique signature brand of technical perfection. During his lifetime, Karl Hugo Schmölz had already made a name for himself far beyond his native Germany with his special lighting technique, which lends the photographs, especially the architectural interiors, an often hyper-realistic sharpness and depth.

Another feature of the trademark Schmölz approach is the impeccable preparation done for each photograph. Absolutely nothing was left to chance, producing results that were head and shoulders above the work of many contemporaries. This pre-planning involved gaining an exact appreciation of the volume and expressive quality of the subject in question, be it an interior, a passageway or an entire building, so that the photographic presentation would not just show surfaces but also manage to capture depth-of-space and a characteristic atmosphere.

The images produced by Schmölz communicate a palpable sense of materiality: the viewer can virtually feel the coolness of metal, the softness of fabric, the smooth sensual patina of polished wood, the bright light piercing a clear pane of glass. Here, Schmölz reveals himself to be a genius in his use of light: existing natural light, additional technical lighting apparatus, and the combination of the two, to mutually enhancing effect. Finally, the precise positioning of the camera, the exactly defined height of the sight line, and the exposure time were all decisive factors in the representation of spatial and architectural situations. That applies especially to the industrial photographs.

Without a doubt, **Karl Hugo Schmölz** holds a special place among the German architectural photographers of the 1950s. Profoundly knowledgeable and passionate about architecture, his engagement is reflected in a large circle of architect friends. The exceptional significance of Schmölz lies in his success in developing a photographic language to consistently communicate his passion in sober, objective perfection.

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