

Poetic Spaces

Candida Höfer's Ways of Looking at the Department of Art History in 1992 and 2020

Christoph Zuschlag

I.

Candida Höfer visited the Department of Art History of the University of Bonn twice, and twice she took photographs in its rooms. Twenty-eight years separated the two visits. The first takes place in 1992, probably in the warm part of the year (she no longer remembers so precisely, and the photos provide no clues) and probably (though this cannot be proved) at the suggestion of Stefan Germer. The latter was an art historian, research associate in the Department, and Co-Editor of the journal "Texte zur Kunst," which in its March 1992 issue had published an artist's edition by Candida Höfer.¹ Ten black-and-white photographs result from the first visit. The second visit takes place on 22 January 2020 and thus in the cold part of the year. I have invited the artist to view the premises where we would like to exhibit—for the very first time—her photographs from 1992. In a small group we walk through the rooms, seeking out the places she photographed in 1992. Candida Höfer has a small-format camera with her and photographs without much fuss, casually. She only rarely asks for something to be changed: to close a door here, to shut off a light there. Otherwise, she photographs the rooms as they are. A few days later she presents us with 36 color photographs. We are delighted and together we decide to juxtapose the two series in an exhibition and to document them in a book.

II.

In other words, two series of photographs of the same spaces, between which lie almost three decades. Comparisons suggest themselves, not only in aesthetic and artistic terms: Has the method of approach, has the way the artist looks at things changed? Beyond that: What role does the divergence in photographic technique play, back then analog, today digital? How have the rooms changed, how have our habits of perception as viewers changed?

III.

Let us first characterize the photos from 1992. The entrance to the Department is located on the first floor of the Kaiserplatz wing of the residential palace. It leads you into the entrance hall. Candida Höfer shows the view toward the southwest^A. The hall presents itself (then as now) as it was originally designed in the early 1950s: a light-colored natural stone floor made of Solnhofen limestone with black edging, a glass-encased skylight ceiling—the open loft situated above

A III 1992, pp. 38–39

1 <https://www.textezurkunst.de/artist-editions/candida-hofer/>. Accessed on 11 June 2020. Cf. Anne Ganteführer-Trier, ed., *Candida Höfer. Editions 1987–2020* (Berlin 2020), pp. 30f. I would like to thank Candida Höfer and Anne Ganteführer-Trier very warmly for valuable advice and support.

providing it daylight, several wall lamps, and two display cases set into the wall to the left and right of the entrance (one of which can be seen on the right edge of the picture). The foyer is furnished with a large round wooden table around which eight chairs and armchairs are grouped. They also date back to the 1950s and are in part still to be found in the Department today. On the back wall, to the left of the door to today's Library Room A, there is a copying machine; unidentified artworks hang on the walls and above the display case.²

If you go down the hall in the back on the right and open the first door on the left, you come into the Kaiserplatz Reading Room (named after the square it faces of the same name). Candida Höfer has captured two views of it. In doing so, she chose the diagonal view into the corners of the room. In Photo no. I 1992^B, the portrait of Carl Justi (a copy after Reinhold Lepsius) hangs on the left wall. Atop the bookshelves there are two portrait busts that purport to be from the Florentine Renaissance but are actually fakes from the 19th century. Photo no. IV 1992^C is dominated by a more than three-meter-wide landscape painting, the artist of which is unknown. Almost the entire reading room is filled with tables and chairs, all of which are empty. What cannot be seen in the photos are the door to the hall and the door to the balcony opposite it.

Opposite the Kaiserplatz Reading Room (also called the Great Reading Room), on the side of the building facing the courtyard garden (the *Hofgarten*), is the Hofgarten Reading Room. Here Candida Höfer has created two views, in this case from almost identical angles^D. On the wall between the two large windows hangs a portrait of Frederick the Great, a copy after Antoine Pesne by an unknown artist. Details of the reconstructed baroque garden side of the palace can be vaguely made out in the left window. The furnishings are similar to those of the reading room described above: once again a room with empty workplaces and bookcases on the walls.

All the remaining five photographs were taken in the library, which is spread over three floors. Photo no. X 1992^E presents a feature peculiar to Bonn: On the mezzanine floor, wooden panels have been set into the deep window niches facing the courtyard garden to create workstations directly next to the books. Höfer photographed the narrow corridor extending deep into the room; it runs between the shelves and the wall with the window niches, in front of which three-legged stools stand. One can also see the following: a double light switch on the supporting column in the foreground left, a row of smoke detectors on the ceiling, and a series of photographic portraits of well-known art historians on the upper part of the wall on the right.

Photo no. IX 1992^F offers a view into the rearmost room of the top-floor depot. On the left and right edges of the picture there are metal shelves with large-format books lying on them. There is another shelf between them that directs the eye to a plaster cast standing on the rear wall next to a closed door. It is the figure of John in front of the Golden Gate from the inner west facade of the central nave of Reims Cathedral. The cast is part of Paul Clemen's legacy holdings and survived the wartime destruction of the sculpture hall undamaged. To the right of John is another life-size, not clearly identifiable plaster figure, partially obscured by the shelving, apparently a medieval female figure clad in robes.

B pp. 34–35

C pp. 40–41

D II 1992, pp. 36–37 /

VIII 1992, pp. 48–49

E pp. 52–53

F pp. 50–51

2 Cf. the list of exhibitions held in the Department of Art History in 1992 in Grischka Petri, "Ausstellungen am Kunsthistorischen Institut seit 1953: Gespräche und Momentaufnahmen," in: Harald Wolter-von dem Knesebeck, ed., *Paul Clemens Erbe. Das Kunsthistorische Institut in Bonn* (Opaion, vol. 1), (Berlin, Munich 2014), pp. 70–113, here p. 105. The artworks in Candida Höfer's photographs cannot be assigned to any of the exhibitions in the list. On the history of the Department of Art History, cf. also Roland Kanz, ed., *Das Kunsthistorische Institut in Bonn. Geschichte und Gelehrte* (Berlin, Munich 2018), as well as the contribution by Roland Kanz in this volume.

From the position in the room from which she took Photo IX 1992, Candida Höfer had only to turn around to take Photo no. V 1992^G. The photograph shows the back end of the last room of the top floor. On the right edge of the picture, next to the fire extinguisher, there is an emergency exit, behind which a spiral staircase leads down to the first floor. A sign hanging from the ceiling with a little man running to the right indicates to the person fleeing the way out into the open—or perhaps to the viewer the way out of the picture? One encounters such humorously ironic details time and again in Candida Höfer's pictorial worlds. There are large index-card cabinets in front of the walls. On top of these cabinets, there are books; two desk lamps, crisscrossed; the plaster statuette *La pleureuse* by the French sculptor Paul-Albert Bartholomé from the *Monument aux Morts* in the Paris cemetery Père Lachaise; and a portrait bust of Anton Springer, the first Bonn professor, created by Carl Seffner in 1889. Springer seems to be looking over at a life-size plaster figure standing in front of the supporting column on the left edge of the picture, one of the prophets from the west facade of the Liebfrauenkirche in Trier. The latter does not return his gaze but looks skeptically at the fire extinguisher at the bottom right, next to the door. "Oh, yes," could be going through his head, "fire prevention, where is that going to end up taking us..."

Candida Höfer took a few steps forward and turned (halfway) to the right. From here she took Photo nos. VI^H and VII 1992^I, which render nearly the same spatial situation. One now looks at the emergency exit from the front, whereas it was off to the side in Photo no. V 1992. On the right edge of Photo no. VII 1992, the plaster casts of Ekkehard and Uta from the Naumburg Cathedral can be seen. They appear in Photo no. VI 1992 too. The latter also shows, under a slanted roof window, a part of the plaster depot where, among other things, capitals of the cathedral in Reims are kept. On the right edge of the picture, there is the shelf with the large horizontal formats, which we have already seen in Photo no. IX 1992.

The artist made use of a Hasselblad 6 × 6 medium-format camera—at that time state of the art in photography. The negatives were first used to produce contact prints. On their basis, Candida Höfer determined which negatives were to be enlarged and, of those, which sections and formats were to be chosen. On the contact print reproduced here^J, she defined the sections of four motifs with horizontal lines. In doing so, she turned a square into rectangular formats—providing insight into "the making of" analog photography.³

Candida Höfer presents unobtrusive and quiet, atmospherically dense and poetic views of the Department of Art History. The relatively small formats—the largest print is no. V and measures 21,1 × 28,1 cm—correspond to the intimate, unspectacular character of the scenes. Although people are absent, they are present in every scene. The spaces created by people for people are literally filled with the evidence of human productivity and creativity—furniture, technical installations and equipment, books, pictures, sculptures. All things are accorded the same value in Candida Höfer's visual worlds, whether plaster bust or fire extinguisher, ceiling lamp or oil painting: there is no hierarchy of meanings.⁴ Black and white emphasizes the formal qualities and draws the viewer's attention to the compositions, which are characterized by a carefully balanced system

G pp. 42–43

H pp. 44–45

I pp. 46–47

J p. 55

3 On this, cf. Anne Ganteführer-Trier, "Von Anfang an. Zum photographischen Œuvre von Candida Höfer," in: *Candida Höfer. Orte Jahre. Photographien 1968–1999*, Catalogue to the exhibitions in Cologne (1999) and Nuremberg (2000), (Munich, Paris, London 1999), pp. 9–15, here p. 11 incl. nn. 30, 31.

4 Cf. Maren Polte, *Klasse Bilder. Die Fotografieästhetik der "Becher-Schule"* (Humboldt-Schriften zur Kunst- und Bildgeschichte, vol. 17), (Berlin 2012), p. 96.

of horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines. On the top floor, the artist seems to have been particularly captivated by the formal structure created by the concrete columns. Other essential elements of composition and expression include light, the interplay of light and shadow, and the distribution of light and dark. (Photography literally means “writing with light”, and accordingly, in German, an “image of light,” a *Lichtbild*, is the oldest term for a photograph.) For the most part, this is diffuse daylight without dramatic effects of light and dark, but at times with attractive contrasting effects. In the reading rooms, daylight falls through the windows onto the smooth tabletops and is reflected by them. The situation is different in the entrance hall and in the top-floor depot, where a mixture of natural and artificial light illuminates the rooms, sometimes creating stronger contrasts, such as reflections on the ceiling and on the smooth floor screed. It is precisely these subtle aesthetic qualities, in which the artist's subjective view is revealed, that give her photographs a dimension that goes beyond their factual, documentary character.

IV.

Twenty-eight years later, on January 22, 2020, Candida Höfer comes again to the Department of Art History at the University of Bonn, accompanied by Anne Ganteführer-Trier and equipped with a small digital camera. During a walking tour, 36 color photographs are taken en passant, some of them in the rooms where the artist had already taken photographs in 1992, others in other rooms. Lectures are in full swing and the end of the winter semester is approaching. People can be seen in five photographs: students in the lecture hall^K and in the Kaiserplatz Reading Room^L and a worker on the top floor^M. Moreover, this is also the time of the ENTERVENTIONALE#2020 exhibition, which involves numerous art locations in Bonn, including the Paul Clemen Museum in the Department of Art History.⁵ Two horizontal-format photographs taken in the entrance hall show one of the two wall display cases^N (also published as an artist's edition to this volume⁶) and a view of the hall in a northeasterly direction^O. Ceramic vessels are visible in the display case and on the floor, created by the artist Young-Jae Lee and the Keramische Werkstatt Margaretenhöhe in Essen, which she heads. And the shadows in two squares of the skylight ceiling are also part of the exhibition: “teaching readymades” after Marcel Duchamp, which come from the collection of the Paul Clemen Museum. They were placed atop the skylight's glass floor following an idea of Maria Eichhorn's and Michael Stockhausen's and were visible from below as shadows against the light.

In one of the two photographs of the Kaiserplatz Reading Room^P, the landscape painting, which is over three meters wide, hangs exactly on the spot where Candida Höfer photographed it in 1992^Q. It probably has not been moved for decades on account of its size. Today, however, it is flanked by the two portrait busts that stood on the high bookshelf of the entrance wall in 1992. The second view of this reading room^R shows the central aisle leading from the entrance door to the balcony door just opposite. This is framed, as it were, by two bronze portraits by the sculptor Gisela Pütter-Zitelmann, depicting former full professors in Bonn, namely Carl Justi (right) and Paul Clemen (left). As in

K XI 2020, p. 73 / XII 2020, p. 72

L XVIII 2020 / XIX 2020, p. 77

M XXXII 2020, p. 84

N I 2020, p. 67

O II 2020, p. 66

P XVIII 2020, p. 77

Q IV 1992, pp. 40–41

R XIX 2020, p. 77

5 <https://enterventionale.com/>. Accessed on 11 June 2020.

6 Cf. Ganteführer-Trier 2020 (as in n. 1 above), pp. 252f.

1992, the artist creates, again in 2020, two landscape views of the Hofgarten Reading Room from a similar angle^S. Both times we look over a large table—cut off by the edge of the picture and consisting of several individual tables pushed together—to a bookcase on which two sculpted portraits of Bonn university lecturers are once again exhibited. On the right is the plaster bust with the portrait of Anton Springer, which was captured in 1992 in the rear room of the top-floor depot^T. On the left there is another portrait of Carl Justis, a bronze head, created, as was the bust in the Kaiserplatz Reading Room^U, by Gisela Pütter-Zitlmann. In addition, in the Hofgarten Reading Room, Höfer photographs two computer workstations between the windows. A black-and-white photograph of a female nude from the back by Herand Müller-Scholtes hangs above them on the wall^V.

Let us look at some more selected photographs in the sequence in which they were taken during the tour. Photo no. III 2020^W shows the view from a central perspective down the corridor leading to the Hofgarten Reading Room. On the left are “teaching-readymades” after Marcel Duchamp and on the right are large gray metal cabinets containing the library’s rare books collection. One of the doors leading from the corridor to the right opens to the slide library, where Photo nos. VII–IX 2020^X were taken. Back in the corridor, you pass the card boxes containing the systematic library catalogue^Y on the right and reach a door through which you enter a small courtyard. Bordering the courtyard, there are two windows of Lecture Room IX^Z, in which a lecture is in progress at the time of the shooting. If you leave the slide library again and turn right onto the corridor, you will end up at the white double doors, which can be seen at the very back of Photo no. III 2020. They lead you into the rear corridor with the Italian section of the plaster cast collection^{AA} and the rear exit^{BB}. The Italian section leads to the casts of medieval sculpture, some of which are attached to the walls of the Great Seminar Room, such as the casts of medieval tympana^{CC} on the north wall. In the Great Seminar Room, Candida Höfer also photographs the old blackboard^{DD} at its entrance.

The remaining 17 photographs^{EE} are all taken in the library, which extends over three levels into the top-floor depot. The photos show cabinets that contain the historical photo collection and wide shelves for large-format books stored on their sides^{FF}. They also show details of shelves viewed close up^{GG} and the historical iron construction dating from the post-war period, in which valuable holdings were once locked away^{HH}. Long corridors run between the shelves^{II} and, time and again, parts of the plaster cast collection are interspersed between the books, in which the white of the plaster and the architecture contrasts in a charming way with the bright red floor screed^{JJ}.⁷ Reference should be made to Photo nos. XXXII–XXXVI 2020^{KK}, which—like Photo nos. V–VII and IX 1992^{LL}—were taken in the rearmost room of the top-floor depot, the floor screed of which is gray. Photograph no. XXXII 2020^{MM} shows the same metal shelves as no. IX 1992^{NN}, but from the opposite direction. Their position in the room has not changed in almost three decades. Photo nos. XXIV–XXVI and XXXIII–XXXVI 2020^{OO} show views of the plaster cast repository between the books, whereby the same roof window appears in no. XXXIV 2020^{PP} as in no. VI 1992^{QQ}.

- S V 2020 / VI 2020, p. 69
- T VI 1992, pp. 44–45
- U XIX 2020, p. 77
- V IV 2020, p. 68
- W p. 66
- X pp. 70–71
- Y X 2020, p. 71
- Z XI–XII 2020, pp. 72–73
- AA XIII 2020, p. 75
- BB XIV 2020 / XV 2020, p. 74
- CC XVI 2020, p. 76
- DD XVII 2020, p. 76
- EE XX–XXXVI 2020, pp. 78–87
- FF XX 2020, p. 78
- GG XXI 2020, p. 78
- HH XXII 2020, p. 79
- II XXVI 2020, p. 80 / XXX 2020, p. 83
- JJ XXV 2020 / XXVI 2020, p. 80
- KK pp. 84–87
- LL pp. 42–47 and pp. 50–51
- MM p. 84
- NN pp. 50–51
- OO pp. 80–81 and pp. 84–87
- PP p. 86
- QQ pp. 44–45

7 Photo no. XXV 2020 shows (partly fragmented) plaster casts from part of the relief of Donatello’s cantoria in the Florentine Cathedral as well as other figures from the west facade of the Liebfrauenkirche in Trier (the latter are also in Photo no. XXIV 2020). Photo no. XXVI 2020 shows further donor figures from the west choir of Naumburg Cathedral (the latter are also in Photo no. XXIII 2020) and the relief of Donatello again on the right edge of the picture.

The artist uses a Sony brand camera—a compact digital camera with a 35 mm full-format sensor—and photographs with just one lens and without a flash or tripod. In addition to views of entire rooms, there are also views of sections of rooms or individual details. There is a noticeable preference for a clear, often symmetrical pictorial composition^{RR} and for homogeneous elements such as slide or card boxes, whose configuration produces structures^{SS}—Candida Höfer's proximity to minimalism has often been described. There is also a preference for mirrored images. Thus, the windows of Lecture Hall IX reflect the architecture opposite and the sky with clouds above. This superimposes the external and the internal—people can be seen in rows of chairs, and above them ceiling chandeliers arranged in a circle^{TT}. In the glass door of the rear exit, both the windows opposite and the plaster casts of Renaissance sculptures on the wall are reflected^{UU}. In Photo no. XV 2020^{VV}, multiple superimpositions, optical penetrations and reflections literally obscure the actual spatial situation. Thus the black-and-white photo clipped by the left edge of the picture—it is Massimo Listri's photograph of Michelangelo's tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici in the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo in Florence—hangs outside the Department, i. e., behind the glass door seen in Photo no. XIV 2020, whereas the plaster casts on the right are inside. By the way, there is also a prominent mirror image in the 1992 series: in the photograph of the entrance hall, the glass wall display case on the right-hand side of the picture reflects the door to Library Room A^{WW}.

V.

Analog black-and-white photographs in 1992, digital color photographs in 2020. Gottfried Jäger writes about the fundamental differences between analog and digital technology in a text published in 1995, i. e., in the early phase of digital photography: "And although it continues to make use of the aesthetic qualities of analog and complex photos, digital photography is nonetheless something fundamentally different. It is something different from the play of light on the surface of objects and its direct absorption and storage into a light-sensitive layer. Here, due to the exposure and development process, this mysterious elementary and molecular physical structural change takes place in the silver halide crystal, which we call the photographic elementary process."⁸ Whereas in the analog camera the bundled light hits a light-sensitive film or a plate by passing through a lens, the digital camera uses a digital storage medium, for example a chip, as a recording medium. Digital technology enables comprehensive subsequent treatment and processing of the images on the computer (*digital image processing*): sections of the image are selected, possible converging lines are set straight, colors are harmonized or replaced as needed, contrasts are altered. In analog photography, films are developed, and enlargements are produced in the laboratory with chemicals. Here, manipulations can be made to the photographic source material by means of filters, post-exposures, and contrast enhancements, but the digital possibilities for designing and modifying the image material go far beyond this. However, photography always is and always will be a technically generated image, a "product made

RR I 2020, p. 67 / IV 2020, p. 68 / XIX

2020, p. 77 / XXX 2020, p. 83

SS VIII–X 2020, pp. 70–71

TT XI 2020 / XII 2020, pp. 72–73

UU XIV 2020, p. 74

VV p. 74

WW III 1992, pp. 38–39

8 Gottfried Jäger, "Analoge und digitale Fotografie: Das Technische Bild," in: Hubertus v. Amelnunx, Stefan Iglhaut, Florian Rötzer, eds., *Fotografie nach der Fotografie* (Dresden, Basel 1995), pp. 108–110, here p. 109.

of ideas and experience, imagination and technical material [...]. It was and is something manufactured, a product, a construct—with quotes from reality.”⁹

In a conversation with Anne-Kathrin Hinz in this volume, Candida Höfer elaborates on this: “We assign different cultural meanings to black and white and color in our perception... Today I generally prefer color because colors also belong to the structure of things”*. Since we perceive the world in color, color photography corresponds to our experience of reality and conveys things present. By contrast, black and white is perceived from the outset as something further removed from reality. And since photography in its early days was exclusively black-and-white, and color was long frowned upon in artistic photography, we now use black-and-white photography to connote things past.¹⁰ In addition, our perception today is generally informed by the fact that in the age of the Internet, smartphone and social media, images circulate as never before in the history of mankind: never before in such large numbers, at such speed and with such reach. For the generations of “digital natives,” digital images on Instagram and Snapchat are, as a matter of course, part of everyday communication. Our students will by their very nature perceive Candida Höfer’s images with different eyes than we teachers do.

“I want to capture how spaces change through time, how spaces change through what is placed in them, and how these things are arranged relative to one another,” said the artist years ago in an interview.¹¹ University institutions such as the Department of Art History at the University of Bonn are places of research and teaching where archived knowledge in the form of books is kept, and new knowledge is generated and communicated. A certain permanence, even inertia, is inherent in such institutions; changes (not only) in its spaces take place rather slowly, especially when historical monument preservation dictates extensive conservation of architectural structures. So perhaps it is really not that surprising how little the rooms have changed in almost three decades. The wooden furniture in the entrance hall had to be removed for fire safety reasons, tables and chairs in the reading rooms were replaced, technical equipment was modernized, movable objects have been moved around—otherwise, little has changed, especially in the library and depot areas. And yet the traces of their use have left their mark on the rooms like wrinkles on a face.

VI.

Since the late 1970s, Candida Höfer has remained true to her subject, “portraits of [the] spaces”¹² of mostly public or semi-public interiors, usually devoid of people. In doing so, she emphasizes: “But even more decisive for me than the space itself is what comes next: what kind of image does the space make?...there is no doubt that space itself triggers the taking of pictures. But what is important for me is the image of space, and the image is ultimately always different from the way the space is directly perceived.”¹³

Has her approach changed, has the artist’s way of looking at things changed in and over the intervening years? Not fundamentally, I think, but it has become more differentiated and evolved, sharper and more precise, not only in terms of the formal-compositional qualities of the images, but also in terms of the pictorial reflection on the conditions of the photographic medium. For a photograph, as Candida Höfer’s art vividly demonstrates, is not a document of reality in the sense of a “replica”¹⁴ of

* p. 63

9 *Ibid.*

10 Cf. Thomas Weski, “Beyond Representation,” in: Rik Nys, Martin Reichert for David Chipperfield Architects, eds., *David Chipperfield Architects in collaboration with Julian Harrap. Photography by Candida Höfer: Neues Museum Berlin* (Cologne 2009), pp. 205–214, here p. 208.

11 Candida Höfer, “‘Ich möchte etwas zeigen, das eigentlich nicht modern ist, etwas, das eine Langlebigkeit hat.’ Susanne Boecker sprach mit der Kölner Fotografin, deren Thema seit fast 30 Jahren Innenräume sind,” in: *Kunstforum International*, vol. 153, 2001, pp. 280–291, here p. 291.

12 Sabine Tenberg, “Gefundene Situationen. Zum Werk von Candida Höfer,” in: Gerda Breuer, ed., *Außenhaut und Innenraum. Mutmaßungen zu einem gestörten Verhältnis zwischen Photographie und Architektur* (Frankfurt am Main 1997), pp. 115–121, here p. 115.

13 Candida Höfer on the radio program “Zwischentöne” in Deutschlandfunk on 8 August 2004, here quoted from Anne Ganteführer-Trier, *Editionen im Werk von Candida Höfer*, in: idem. 2020 (see n. 1 above), pp. 5–10, here p. 9.

14 Cf. Klaus Honnert, “Versuch zur Werkgruppe ‘Innenraum’ von Candida Höfer,” in: *Candida Höfer. Innenraum. Fotografien 1979–1984*, Exhibition catalogue, Xanten, Bonn 1984/85, Cologne 1984 (Regional Museum Guide, no. 20), pp. 6–9, here p. 9.

reality (however documentary-like and factual it may seem). The photographic image is a complex construct, a “product made of ideas and experience, imagination and technical material,” as Gottfried Jäger puts it in the quote above. That which is captured photographically one moment is already part of the past in the next. Temporal levels overlap—here indeed in a twofold sense, since different temporal levels are already represented in the rooms and in the objects in them, namely, the historical and current works of art as well as the plaster casts. There is an almost complete absence of people, who are nonetheless always present as creators and users of the rooms. This allows Candida Höfer's photographs, situated as they are in a “field of tension between [their] objective gesture and subjective charge,”¹⁵ to stir the viewer's imagination and open up spaces of association, imagination, and thought. “Ultimately, Photography is subversive not when it frightens, repels, or even stigmatizes,” writes Roland Barthes in 1979 in his famous, last book *La chambre claire*, “but when it is *pensive*, when it makes you think.”¹⁶

At the same time, Candida Höfer's images of spaces retain their mystery and remain—for all their formal austerity and cool objectivity—deeply poetic. It is a very individual poetic realism that is inherent to the art of Candida Höfer.

15 Weski 2009 (see n. 10 above), p. 207.

16 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*. New York 1981, p. 38 [translation modified].