

Andreas Gursky

Peter Galassi

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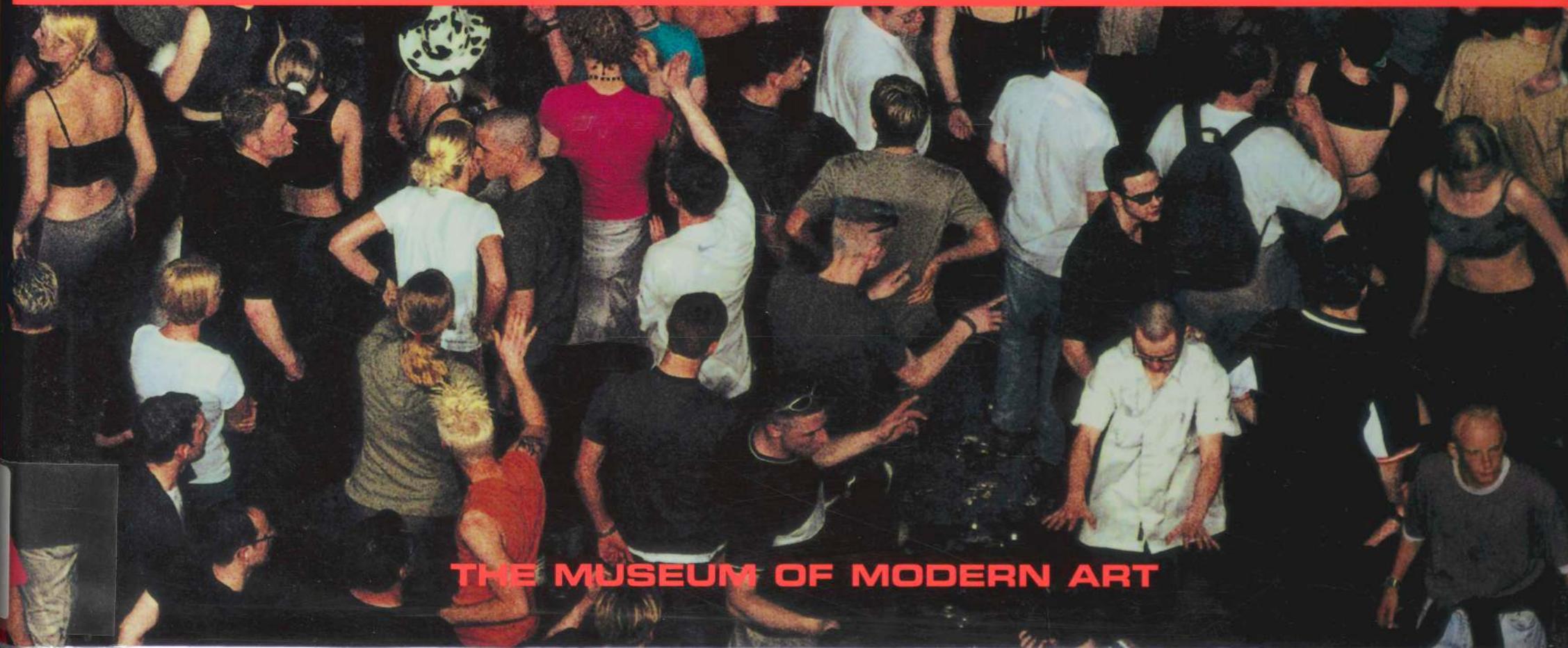
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primary documents, installation views, and an
index of participating artists.



ANDREAS GURSKY



THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

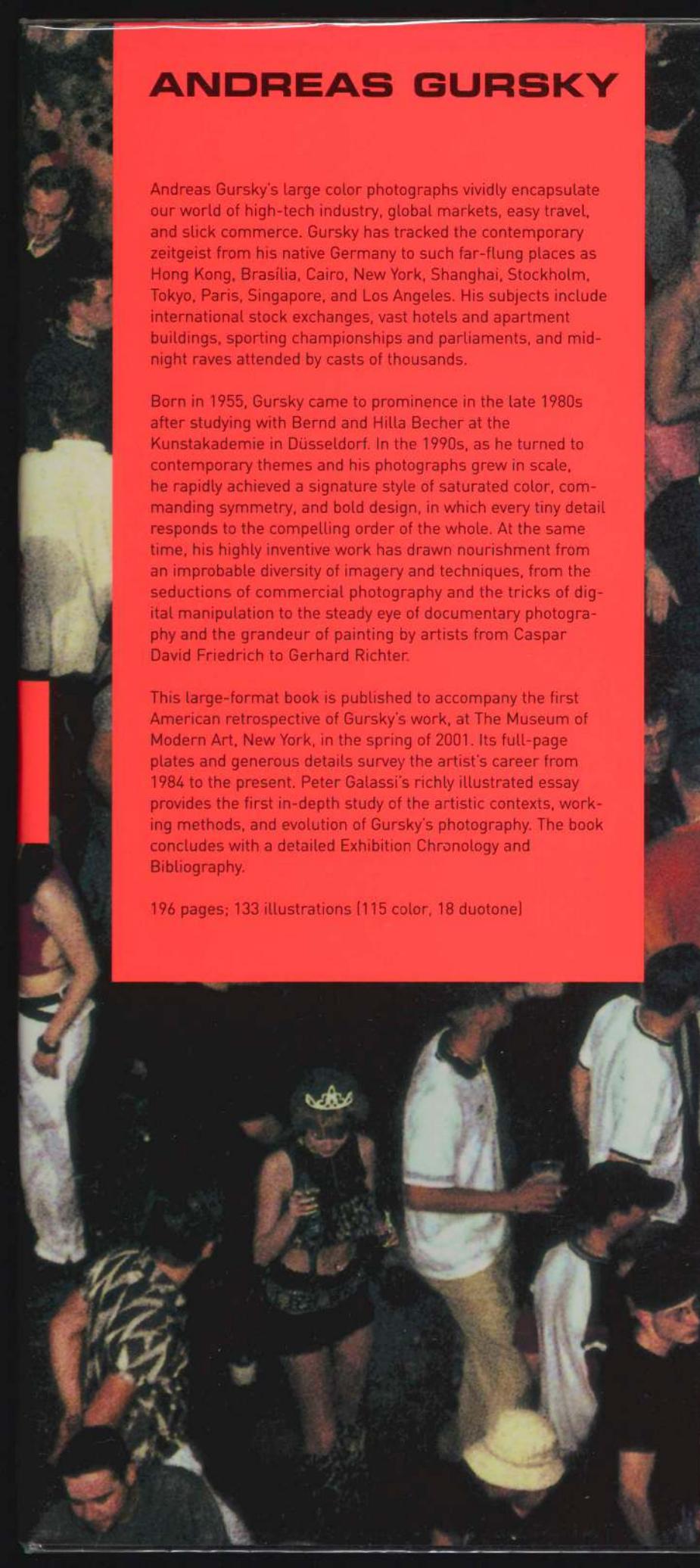
ANDREAS GURSKY

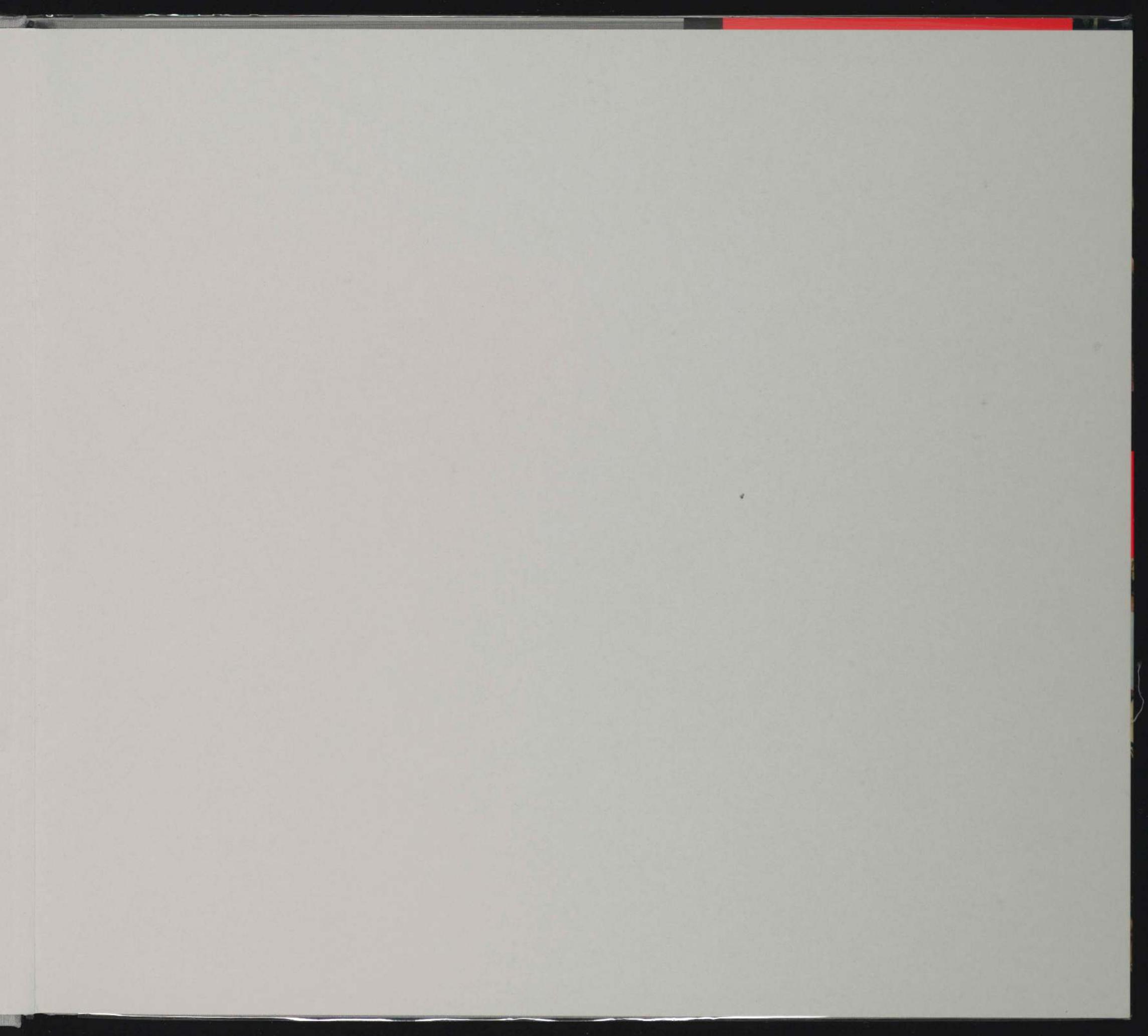
Andreas Gursky's large color photographs vividly encapsulate our world of high-tech industry, global markets, easy travel, and slick commerce. Gursky has tracked the contemporary zeitgeist from his native Germany to such far-flung places as Hong Kong, Brasília, Cairo, New York, Shanghai, Stockholm, Tokyo, Paris, Singapore, and Los Angeles. His subjects include international stock exchanges, vast hotels and apartment buildings, sporting championships and parliaments, and midnight raves attended by casts of thousands.

Born in 1955, Gursky came to prominence in the late 1980s after studying with Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf. In the 1990s, as he turned to contemporary themes and his photographs grew in scale, he rapidly achieved a signature style of saturated color, commanding symmetry, and bold design, in which every tiny detail responds to the compelling order of the whole. At the same time, his highly inventive work has drawn nourishment from an improbable diversity of imagery and techniques, from the seductions of commercial photography and the tricks of digital manipulation to the steady eye of documentary photography and the grandeur of painting by artists from Caspar David Friedrich to Gerhard Richter.

This large-format book is published to accompany the first American retrospective of Gursky's work, at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in the spring of 2001. Its full-page plates and generous details survey the artist's career from 1984 to the present. Peter Galassi's richly illustrated essay provides the first in-depth study of the artistic contexts, working methods, and evolution of Gursky's photography. The book concludes with a detailed Exhibition Chronology and Bibliography.

196 pages; 133 illustrations (115 color, 18 duotone)





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MODERN ART
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ANDREAS GURSKY



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Peter Galassi

The Museum of Modern Art,
New York

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FOREWORD

The striking and adventurous photography of Andreas Gursky has been widely recognized as one of the most original and impressive contributions to recent art. I suspect, however, that much of his audience, especially in the United States, is familiar with many of his pictures only through reproduction. I am delighted that in organizing the first major Gursky exhibition in this country, The Museum of Modern Art is able to bring his extraordinary work to our large and diverse public. I thank Andreas Gursky enthusiastically for giving us the opportunity to do so, and for the effort he has so generously devoted to the project.

The term "mid-career retrospective" is inelegant, but the function is crucial: to set forth a mature body of work that is also an ongoing experiment and so bears directly upon the unfinished business of current art. The aim is to combine sober reflection and enthusiastic engagement with the present moment. That, in a nutshell, is the spirit of the Museum's lasting commitment to contemporary art—a commitment that has never been deeper than it is today, when our ambitious project to reshape and expand the Museum is now fully underway.

Accompanying the first full Gursky retrospective in the United States is a publication that presents the first in-depth study of his art together with a superb suite of plates. Both the exhibition and the book are the work of Peter Galassi, Chief Curator of the Department of Photography, assisted by his fine staff and by scores of other professionals throughout the Museum. I am grateful indeed to lead such a talented and dedicated group of people.

Finally, this is an excellent occasion to thank the Museum's generous and devoted Committee on Photography. Under the leadership of John Parkinson III and Robert B. Menschel, the Committee has over the past decade nurtured an impressive growth of the collection (which now includes five outstanding works by Gursky) and has built key endowment funds to ensure the continued vitality of the acquisition, exhibition, and publication programs of the Department of Photography. Especially notable among these funds are the William Randolph Hearst Endowment Fund, which has provided essential support for this exhibition, and the John Szarkowski Publications Fund, which has enabled the publication of this book.

Glenn D. Lowry
Director, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book and the exhibition it accompanies serve parallel goals, but do so in different ways: the exhibition could accommodate only so many of Andreas Gursky's large photographs, but he and I agreed that there was no reason to impose that limitation on the book. Together we edited and sequenced the plate section independently of the exhibition, aiming to suggest the character and evolution of Gursky's work since 1984. With the exception of one picture that was completed too late to appear in the book, however, all of the exhibited pictures are reproduced here. All of the works in the exhibition have been lent by the artist, courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, and Monika Sprüth Galerie, Cologne.

I have learned a great deal from the often imaginative and perceptive body of writing about Gursky's photography. In reviewing it, however, I observed that relatively little effort had so far been made to trace the artistic contexts and origins of the work in any detail. My attempt to begin that process in earnest led me to write an introduction of some length. Even so, the essay is only a beginning—an encouragement to further study. In addition to the published literature, the essay draws on my conversations with Bernd and Hilla Becher, Thomas Ruff, Michael Schmidt, Monika Sprüth, Thomas Struth, and Thomas Weski. I am grateful to them all, as well as to Susanne Lange, director of the Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur–August Sander Archiv in Cologne, who made available a number of key resources, including her own dissertation on the work of the Bechers; and to my colleague Robert Storr, who commented on a draft of the essay and freely shared his expertise on many

subjects, notably art in Düsseldorf since 1960. I am also thankful to the artists, galleries, collectors, and others who kindly provided illustrations to the text, and especially to Matthew Marks and Ellie Bronson of Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, who provided essential help on both the exhibition and the book.

The book has been edited and produced by the Museum's Department of Publications, under the dedicated and thoughtful direction of Michael Maegraith. No author could wish for a finer editor than David Frankel, and I thank him warmly. Chris Zichello, who supervised production, matched his outstanding skills with a delicate sensitivity to the subtleties of the photographs. Praise and thanks are also due to Deborah Littlejohn and Santiago Piedrafita, who in designing the book were similarly responsive to both the art and the artist, and to Gina Rossi, in the Department of Publications, who contributed vital assistance.

At the Museum, the exhibition and its tour have been wisely and efficiently administered by Jennifer Russell, Deputy Director for Exhibitions and Collection Support; Maria DeMarco, Coordinator of Exhibitions; and Terry Tegarden, Associate Registrar. Like every curator in the Museum, I am forever indebted to Jerome Neuner, Director of Exhibition Design and Production. Mark Steigelman, Production Manager, ably took charge of the design and installation of the exhibition. Throughout the project, my colleagues and I have relied upon the unflagging enthusiasm and guidance of Glenn D. Lowry and upon the stalwart dedica-

tion of the staff of the Department of Photography: Rachel Crognale, Sarah Hermanson, Susan Kismaric, Eva Respini, and Laura Santaniello. I am thankful to all of these members of the Museum staff and to many, many others whose names it is, alas, impractical to mention here. A special note of gratitude goes to Stefan Altevogt, who guided me through the splendid thickets of German language and culture, compiled the book's valuable Exhibition Chronology and Bibliography, and worked tirelessly and cheerfully on every aspect of the exhibition and book. Nora Pohl and Nina Pohl in Düsseldorf also contributed to the project in countless ways.

Among the finest rewards of museum work is to discover in the process of studying a body of art that it is still richer and more inventive than one suspected at the outset. Another is to work closely with the person who made the stubbornly fascinating things and so to learn to see them differently. Gursky's work and Gursky himself have granted me these rewards in a high degree, and I am deeply grateful to both.

P. G.



Peter Galassi

Andreas Gursky's best pictures of the past decade knock your socks off, and they're meant to. They're big, bold, full of color, and full of surprise. As each delivers its punch, the viewer is already wondering where it came from—and will continue to enjoy the seduction of surprise long after scrutinizing the picture in detail.

If you have seen some of these pictures and your socks are still on, you will take little profit from this essay. We can encircle Gursky's photographs with words, but anyone who hasn't felt the impact of his pictures isn't likely to get it from reading a book. Nor will the reproductions do the trick, fine and useful as they are, for Gursky's pictures aren't just photographs that happen to be big. They earn their size by completing an aesthetic that inhabits every aspect of the work.

For all the panache of the finished product, however, Gursky's art has arisen from a restless, risky process of experiment, in which devil-may-care daring and naive curiosity mingle with sophisticated calculation and alert scrutiny of other art. Part of the achievement, and part of the challenge and pleasure of

contemplating it, is that what first strikes us as a polished signature style, under strict control, in fact draws upon a great diversity of motives, currents, and methods, many of them rather strange bedfellows. Here a little history and analysis can be useful, by helping us to sort out and consider the threads that are improbably and imaginatively interwoven in Gursky's work.

His artistic biography is a good place to begin, and much of what will follow is indeed a largely chronological account of his education, creative environment, working methods, career, and art, elucidated with equally conventional allusions to other pictures of various kinds. Partly because of the diversity of Gursky's frames of reference, however, and partly because the overwhelming mass of interpretation to date has identified his work with only one of these—our cultivated, spirited, but self-absorbed contemporary art world—it seems worthwhile to start by sketching the historical outlines of those shifting frames.

The European culture that created photography more than a century and a half ago inescapably contemplated the new medium through an aesthetic under which photography was inconceivable. Intellectuals tended to address this conundrum as a philosophical question: is photography an art? With the comfort of retrospect we can now see that the question is not philosophical but cultural—that the answer is both no (most of the time) and yes (rarely but brilliantly), depending upon how particular human beings in particular circumstances have made use of the medium. Nevertheless, like a family quarrel

that avoids the real issue and so is fated to erupt again and again with very real consequences, the unanswerable philosophical question of photography's artistic status is far from irrelevant, for it has deeply influenced those contingent cultural understandings and uses of the medium, and continues to do so today.

While philosophers and aesthetes were scratching their heads, photography was proving itself enormously useful in a widening range of practical applications that exploited the medium's unprecedented capacity to record and disseminate visual information quickly, reliably, and cheaply. This functional vernacular is typified by a turn-of-the-century photograph by Peter Weller, which addresses the artifacts of modern industry with matter-of-fact clarity (fig. 1). By 1900, when a small, self-conscious elite made it their business to win photography a place among the fine arts, their principal obstacle was the medium's now firmly established identity as a purveyor of crisp visual documents. They overcame this inheritance by emulating fashionable modes of painting that equated creativity with the suppression of fact, and so announced artfulness and refinement rather than observation and invention as their goals, withdrawing from the depredations of the Industrial Revolution into a privileged realm of noble sentiment and idealized nature. A view of Nymphenburg Castle by Heinrich Kühn, a leader of photography's Pictorialist movement in German-speaking Europe, is a lovely fiction of placid harmony between nature and man, achieved by favoring the princely past over the commercial present, and by declining even to provide much information about the castle itself (fig. 2).

The rise of photographic modernism in the 1920s and '30s consisted largely in retaining the artistic ambitions of Pictorialism but embracing the medium's talents for description. The result, in a nutshell, was the rich unfolding of the art of modern photography. But in the mainstream of culture—in the mind of both the painter in the studio and the man in the street, and consequently also in the mind of many a would-be photographer—the vague assumption lingered that the straightforward photographic document and the imaginative work of art were incompatible forms: that a clear, unembellished photograph was inherently inartistic.

This background, however summarily outlined here and however apparently remote from our current concerns, is indispensable to grasping what followed. It is essential to understanding how photography's so-called "documentary" tradition could over a few decades evolve into a mature art while attracting little more than lip service from the keepers of high culture; that as a result, a photographer in passionate pursuit of a personal vision and another in the routine employ of commerce or journalism (these two photographers being sometimes, out of economic necessity, one and the same person) could find themselves belonging by default to a single photographic community largely alien to the community of artists, critics, gallerists, curators, and so on, who defined the concerns of the dominant culture; and finally that unlike painters, who, talented or not, were confident of both their purpose and the audience they addressed, the artist-photographer possessed no fixed frame of reference beyond a handful of like-minded friends. This uncertain identity often proved an

advantage—an opportunity and encouragement to engage the vital doings of the world outside art's ivory tower, or a freedom to follow one's nose—but it now means that the history of photography cannot be written as a continuity of innovations and arguments, successes and failures, all encompassed within a universally agreed-upon sphere called "art."

The career of Bernd (Bernhard) and Hilla Becher is a case in point. Born respectively in 1931 and 1934, they emerged as teenagers into a thoroughly devastated Germany. After initial experience as an apprentice painter in the restoration of churches and other public buildings, Bernd Becher studied painting and graphics at Stuttgart from 1953 to 1956 under Karl Rössing, a minor figure of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) movement of the 1920s. Through Rössing, he developed a taste for unpretentious descriptions of vernacular architecture, which he continued to pursue after beginning to study typography at the Staatliche Kunstakademie (State art academy) in Düsseldorf in 1957, the year he began making photographs as aids to his drawings and prints. Hilla Wobeser, following in the footsteps of her mother, began to photograph at an early age, and from 1951 to 1954 studied under a commercial photographer in her native Potsdam, near Berlin. In 1955 she escaped the Soviet-dominated East to Hamburg, where she established herself as a professional photographer. In 1957 she moved to Düsseldorf to take a position at an advertising agency, where Bernd Becher worked part-time. The following year she began to study graphic techniques at the Kunstakademie, and also to teach there herself, introducing basic photography instruction and facilities. (There would be no

advanced courses for some time.) She and Bernd began to collaborate in 1959 and were married in 1961.

The Bechers are quick to point out that the Kunstakademie in the late 1950s was not yet the hotbed of avant-garde experiment that it would soon become. Rather, it was the sleepy backwater evoked in Günter Grass's novel *Die Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*, 1959).¹ In such an environment the Bechers—whose training was a patchwork of the fine and the applied arts, with a distinct emphasis on the latter—enjoyed precious little guidance in developing their embryonic enthusiasm for photography, but neither were they encumbered by a commanding authority that could deflect them from their path. They made good use of this freedom.

Bernd had been born in the Siegerland, the home of Germany's early iron industry, whose dying remnants he observed as a boy. The couple now lived not far away, just south of the Ruhr Valley, whose mammoth steel plants had undermined the Siegerland's industrial prominence. Soon working exclusively in photography, they focused their attention on the anonymous but imposing architecture of the steel industry, which in their eyes exemplified a pre-Nazi and hence authentic Germany, and which stood as an implicit rebuke to the anodyne reconstruction architecture that was blithely obliterating the past.

As they pursued their mission of industrial archaeology amid the sprawling installations of central North Rhine-Westphalia—many built well after 1900 but already falling into disuse and decay, and so, to the Bechers, urgently demanding a durable



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1. Peter Weller. **Steel Mill Bremen, Geisweid, Siegen County.** c. 1910. Gelatin silver print, c. 1980. From a glass negative in the Siegerländer Heimatverein, Siegen, Germany

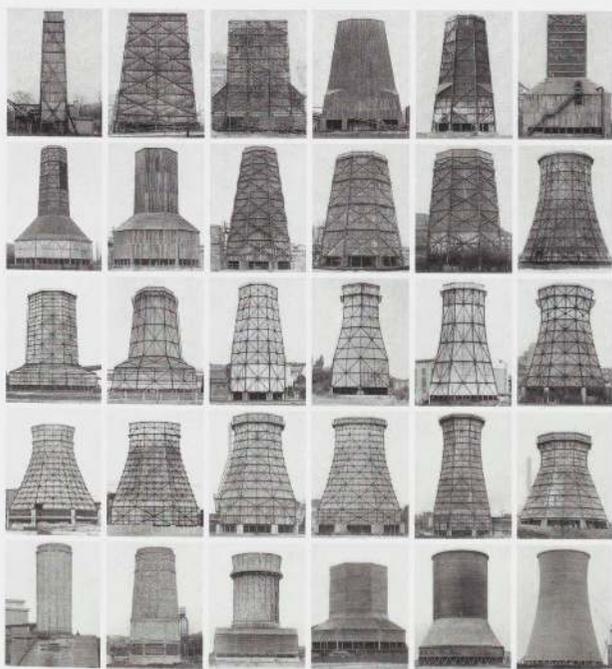


2.

2. Heinrich Kühn. **Nymphenburg Castle.** 1900. Pigment print, 12 3/8 x 18 1/2 in. (31 x 46 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Edward Steichen

record—they sought out the firms' photographic archives, there discovering pictures such as Weller's.² In 1958, Bernd Becher had found a copy of August Sander's *Antlitz der Zeit* (Face of our time), published in 1929 and suppressed by the Nazis in 1933, which outlined the photographer's ambitious project of surveying modern German civilization through portraits of representative types from all stations of society.³ The gestation of the Bechers' mature work of course involved many other precedents, including Karl Blossfeldt's elegant studies of plant forms and Albert Renger-Patzsch's celebrations of machine precision and more lasting investigations of the social landscape of industrialization in the Ruhr Valley. Broadly speaking, however, the impersonal records of the industrial archives and the encyclopedic ambition of Sander were the only hints the Bechers needed for the method and aesthetic they rapidly defined and gradually purified, and that eventually led them a long way from any precedent.

The method consisted of making sharply focused black-and-white photographs of many examples of chosen subjects (blast furnaces, cooling towers, mineheads, gas tanks, and so on), each picture conforming to a predetermined template (typically a front or side view corresponding in its planar fixity to an architectural elevation). Later (often much later, since it could take many trips to many sites over many years to accumulate a sufficient number of pictures, many of which required special scaffolding to obtain the required vantage point) the Bechers would assemble a group of photographs, all belonging to a single classification, into what they called a "typology." Thanks to the strict consistency of the template, this assembly would



3.

reveal the unvarying functional form of which each example was a unique variant. Displayed in the imposing form of a grid, a Becher typology is both a Platonic abstraction of stunning simplicity and an absorbing encyclopedia of Aristotelian fact (fig. 3).

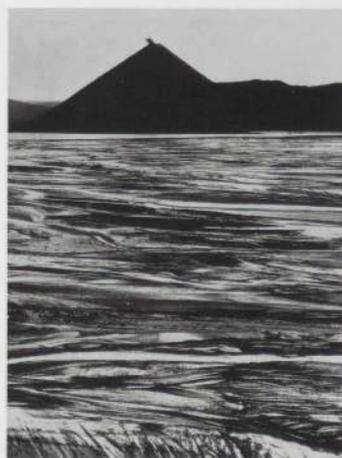
The Bechers' goal of impersonal objectivity was distinctly inimical to West Germany's postwar photographic establishment, which had coalesced in the 1950s under the leadership of Otto Steinert. A physician who had turned to photography after the war, Steinert taught photography at Saarbrücken and then after 1959 at the Folkwangschule (Folkwang school) in Essen, promulgating a movement he called *Subjektive Fotografie* (Subjective Photography).⁴ Aiming to champion personal creativity in the wake of Nazi repression, Steinert and his cohorts sought to rekindle the élan of the experimental photography that had flourished at the Bauhaus before the Nazis closed the school, in 1933. To that end they cultivated stylistic devices such as high contrast, dramatic perspectives and croppings, and other intimations of abstraction. Above all, they were determined to distinguish their work from the taint of the plain photographic document, and in that sense Steinert's grand gestures (e.g., fig. 4) are like updated versions of Kühn's Pictorialist generalities.

The indifference or even hostility of the Subjective Photography movement to the work of the Bechers left them isolated from German photographic culture, such as it was.⁵ Around 1970, however, their work began to appear in exhibitions devoted to the new Minimal and Conceptual art,⁶ which occasionally made use of photography as long as it was unencumbered by evident

artistry, and which prized impersonal address, serial formats, and mathematical precision as the hallmarks of intellectual clarity. The Bechers owed little if anything to this movement, whose leaders nonetheless embraced their work. The typology reproduced here was included in Kynaston McShine's influential *Information* exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in 1970, and the initiation of the Bechers into the international art world was completed in 1972 by their first exhibition at New York's Sonnabend Gallery and an admiring article by the American sculptor Carl Andre in *Artforum*.⁷

Art, thank heaven, can be as deliciously unpredictable as life, but the ironies of this story seem especially emblematic of photography's checkerboard history. Steinert's overweening anxiety to invest photography with artistic significance led him to mimic another creativity. His movement thus stifled the very artistic ambitions it had meant to foster, repeating the dead-end pattern of Pictorialism and reconfirming the jealous isolation of the photographic community. The Bechers, who pursued their quasi-archaeological mission so independently that they barely cared whether it was recognized as art,⁸ and who modeled their style in part on photography's driest and least celebrated vernacular past, found themselves embraced by an international avant-garde that had never heard of Peter Weller or Otto Steinert, and that had little interest in photography's prior artistic achievements.

It ought to be acknowledged that the Bechers were more talented than Steinert and his epigones, but that is not enough. The oil-and-water divergence between the two aesthetics is



4.

3. Bernd and Hilla Becher. **Anonymous Sculpture**. 1970. Thirty gelatin silver prints, overall 6 ft. 11 1/8 in. x 6 ft. 2 1/8 in. (207.3 x 188.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gertrud A. Mellon Fund

4. Otto Steinert. **Sludge Pond 2 (Schlammweiher 2)**, 1953. Gelatin silver print, 22 1/8 x 18 1/8 in. (57.8 x 46 cm). Museum Folkwang, Essen

an unusually clear instance of the powerful if unpredictable influence of cultural frames of reference upon both the ambitions of artists and the reception of their work. The canonization of the Bechers' art within the Minimal and Conceptual movements tended to discourage curiosity about the particular roots and circumstances of their work, thus unintentionally masking its distinctive originality. Something similar would happen to the work of Gursky—who studied under both Steinert and the Bechers.

Andreas Gursky was born in January 1955, the only child of Willy Gursky, a commercial photographer whose father, Hans, had been a photographer too.⁹ Before the end of the year, Willy and Rosemarie Gursky moved with Andreas from Leipzig, in the East, to Essen, in the industrial heartland of the West. The wall between the two Germanies would not rise until 1961, but crossing the border meant leaving everything behind. The move coincided with the revival of West Germany's economy, however, and after relocating in nearby Düsseldorf in 1957, Willy Gursky's studio flourished.¹⁰

It was a family business. Father and mother worked together; studio and living quarters overlapped; and Andreas himself sometimes appeared in advertisements photographed by Willy. It would be difficult to imagine a photographer more intimately familiar than Andreas with commercial photography, from its technical nuts and bolts to its earnest conventions and sly tricks.



5.

5. Andreas Gursky. *Unpublished (Paris)*. c. 1979. Gelatin silver print



6.

6. Andreas Gursky. *Unpublished (Grand Canary)*. c. 1979. Gelatin silver print



7.

7. Andreas Gursky. *Unpublished (Schützenfest)*. c. 1979. Gelatin silver print

If the teenage years of Bernd and Hilla Becher were shaped by the scars of a defeated and humiliated nation, Gursky's teens were marked by protest against what many young people regarded as the fatuous comforts of the economic miracle. Thirteen years old at the time of the upheavals of 1968, Andreas was in his early twenties when the deaths of the terrorists Ulrike Meinhof, in 1976, and Andreas Baader, in 1977, marked the end of a decade of violent dissent. Like many of his peers, Gursky found himself at odds with his parents, their generation, and especially their profession, which seemed to him hopelessly implicated in West Germany's complacent materialism.

Upon graduating from high school in 1975, Gursky refused compulsory military service, finding an alternative in eighteen months of work as a health-care assistant. For a time he contemplated a career in psychology or social work, but when he completed his civil service, he instinctively turned again to photography. In 1977, he and a friend applied to the Folkwangschule in nearby Essen, which Steinert had established as the West's answer to the loss to East Germany of the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst (College for graphic art and the art of the book), in Leipzig—before the war, Germany's most prestigious school of photography.

The Folkwangschule's photography program had risen to prominence in the heyday of the postwar magazines, and despite the rhetoric of Subjective Photography it was mainly a training ground for professionals in advertising, illustration, and especially photojournalism.¹¹ The photographer most

admired by Steinert's students of the 1960s and '70s was Henri Cartier-Bresson, cofounder in 1947 of the Magnum photo agency and revered as both artist and professional photographer for the magazines. André Gelpke, one of Steinert's star pupils and briefly a mentor to Gursky, emulated the master by initiating the Visum agency in 1975, the year after he graduated from the school.

The badge of the Cartier-Bresson mythology was the 35mm Leica camera. Armed with a Leica or two, the photographer roamed at large, prizing instinct over calculation. In theory, each new picture was the fruit of a fresh existential encounter, a durable image plucked from the flux of experience. Gursky, who had begun driving a taxi to supplement his income at the hospital, enacted the mythology by keeping two Leicas at hand in his cab. The pictures he made during his school years at Essen are exemplary period pieces—small black-and-white prints, a bit sharp in contrast, neatly composed within the uncropped 35mm frame (e.g., figs. 5–7). They owe less directly to Cartier-Bresson than to younger photographers such as Gelpke or the American Ralph Gibson, who had reduced the Frenchman's complex geometries to simple pictorial formulas. In Gursky's circle, the choice of subjects too had become a matter of routine. He recalls, for example, that he and his fellow students regularly photographed the *Schützenfeste*, an annual local ritual of parades and feasts, full of nostalgia for Germany's preindustrial militias (fig. 7). The vaguely condescending concern with quaint customs is in itself symptomatic of a photographic tradition in decline.

In 1979 or '80, at the conclusion of his studies, Gursky did what many, perhaps most Folkwang graduates did: he prepared a portfolio and went to Hamburg, headquarters of the West German magazine industry, to seek work as a photojournalist. Upon failing, he took the advice of his friend Thomas Struth and applied to the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, where Struth had been studying for several years. In retrospect this was a decisive step. In effect, Gursky left behind a community in which artistic ambition and practical professionalism coexisted and overlapped—a community that included both Cartier-Bresson and Willy Gursky, simply because both were photographers—for a community unified by commitment to the modernist vision of an avant-garde, that is, to ceaseless artistic invention unburdened by any practical function. But this observation is both premature—since, despite the success of the Bechers, membership of photographers in the avant-garde establishment would not become a matter of course until Struth, Gursky, and others achieved it in the 1980s¹²—and inexact.

For the photographic community itself was already evolving. Steinert's death in 1978, less than a year after Gursky arrived at the Folkwangschule, helped to mark the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. In the course of the 1970s, the gradual proliferation of photography galleries, museum programs, and publications, the creation of new art-school professorships, and state- and industry-sponsored grants for young photographers had combined to foster a photographic art-culture distinct from the worlds of journalism and commerce.¹³ In Essen, the historical collection of photographs that Steinert had formed at the school was transferred in 1978 to

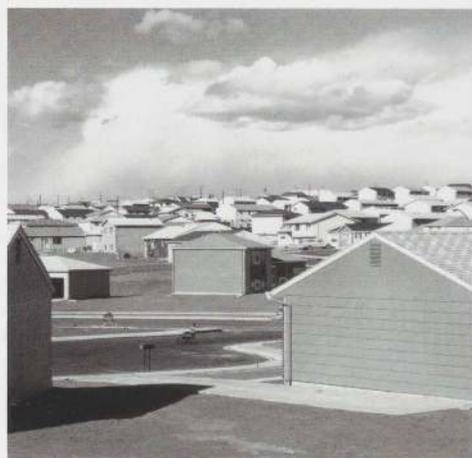
the Museum Folkwang, where his former student Ute Eskildsen initiated what soon became West Germany's most lively program of photography exhibitions and publications. Steinert's teaching duties were assumed by younger photographers, of whom the most important was Michael Schmidt, whose two-year stint at the Folkwangschule roughly coincided with Gursky's.

Born in 1945 and trained as a policeman, Schmidt was a self-taught photographer. Like the Bechers, he had charted his own path out of the diminished landscape of postwar German culture partly by discovering predecessors and older contemporaries whose work was sympathetic to his own emerging sensibility. Nearly alone among Germans of his generation, he was alert to the work of advanced American photographers, several of whom he invited to the photographic workshop he had established at the Volkhochschule, or adult education center, in his Berlin neighborhood of Kreuzberg. Like Eskildsen's program and the Museum Folkwang, Schmidt's Kreuzberg workshop widened the horizons of younger German photographers.¹⁴

Among the Americans whose work Schmidt admired was Robert Adams, who beginning in the mid-1960s had shattered the mythology of the American West as pristine wilderness by casting a steady eye on the unpretty tract houses, gas stations, and shopping malls that had been scattered on the land (fig. 8). Schmidt's work of the 1970s explored the working- and middle-class neighborhoods of his native Berlin with a comparable admixture of reserve, critical scrutiny, and unembellished

photographic clarity (fig. 9). But while Schmidt doubtless learned from Adams, the common elements of their work also belonged to a much broader development, or perhaps parallel developments, in German and American photography. Setting aside the Leica and with it the romance of freewheeling observation, ambitious young photographers on both sides of the Atlantic turned to the tripod-bound view camera, which requires more patient and deliberate craft and whose larger negatives are richer and more precise in detail. Human beings sometimes appeared in their pictures, but the subject of the typical photograph was an unpopulated view of a city street, an occasional interior, or an unprepossessing mark of human presence in the land (figs. 10–12). This often unattractive material could be the foundation of a new beauty, but the first order of business was a sober stock-taking of the places that modern society had made.

This movement, or pair of movements, was documented in two distinct but related exhibitions: *New Topographics*, organized in 1975 by William Jenkins in Rochester, New York, which naturally focused on the work of Adams and other Americans;¹⁵ and *In Deutschland* (In Germany), organized in 1979 by Klaus Honnef in Bonn, which presented work by thirteen Germans, including Heinrich Riebesehl, a student of Steinert's; Schmidt; two of Schmidt's students; and four students of the Bechers, including Struth.¹⁶ In the catalogue of the Bonn exhibition, Honnef presented a theory of "author-photography," designed to show that photographers working in the so-called "documentary" tradition could be (and had been) artists despite the practical functions and apparently passive realism of their



8.

8. Robert Adams. *Colorado Springs, Colorado*. 1969. Gelatin silver print, 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 6 in. (14.8 x 15.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. David H. McAlpin Fund.



9.

9. Michael Schmidt. *Untitled, from Berlin Wedding*. 1976–77. Gelatin silver print, 8 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (20.5 x 28 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase.



10.

10. Robert Adams. *East from Flagstaff Mountain, Boulder County, Colorado*, 1975. Gelatin silver print, 8 ³/₈ x 11 ³/₈ in. (22.7 x 28.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase



11.

11. Martin Menz. *Drive-In Movie at the Main-Taunus-Center, Frankfurt, July 1977*. Gelatin silver print, 10 ¹/₄ x 15 in. (26 x 38.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. E. T. Harnmax Foundation Fund

work, just as certain film directors had forged personal visions within the restrictive commercial conventions of the movie industry. The Rochester catalogue advanced no comparably elaborate theory, but usefully complicated matters by including the work of the Bechers (absent from the Bonn show but present in spirit, not only through the work of their students but as avatars of dissent from Subjective Photography) and of the American Stephen Shore (the only photographer in either exhibition who worked in color).

None of this had an immediate impact on Gursky, but all of it would play an important role in his work of the mid-1980s. A bit later, as he began to achieve recognition, the tendency to classify him as an exponent of the Becher school powerfully influenced the reception of his work, not least by discouraging curiosity about its roots in other photographic traditions. Thus it is worth recalling that on the eve of his entry into the Becher class, a coherent aesthetic had emerged in German photography. That aesthetic drew upon otherwise distinct currents in Düsseldorf, Essen, and Berlin, suggested the potential for a collective artistic movement of genuine originality and breadth for the first time since 1933, and opened a passage to the terra incognita of advanced work in the United States, where the art of photography had flourished since the war. The moment of convergence would not last; Schmidt and Struth, for example, soon took divergent paths, and the brief détente between German and American sensibilities soon evaporated. But the interests and attitudes of that brief moment would help Gursky to find his own way after 1984, as he emerged from the tutelage of the Bechers.

The Kunstakademie that Gursky entered in the fall of 1980 had become a very different place from the provincial school that Bernd and Hilla Becher had encountered in the late 1950s. The key catalyst of change was the multivalent artist Joseph Beuys, who had been named a professor of sculpture in 1961. Beuys's messianic ambition to inspire a flood of collective creativity had exploded the parochial ken of his teachers, helping to unleash an era of no-holds-barred artistic experiment. Less than two decades after the fine nineteenth-century building of the Kunstakademie had been reduced to a bombed-out shell, Düsseldorf reasserted itself as a potent center of a new European avant-garde.

The leading students at the Kunstakademie in the early 1960s—Anselm Kiefer, Sigmar Polke, and Gerhard Richter among them—would eventually develop their own highly distinctive bodies of work. But they all shared an unflinching readiness to take on all comers, from the venerable graybeards of the European past to the triumphant cowboys of postwar American painting. In the early 1960s, within a few years of emigrating from East Germany, Polke and Richter brazenly launched a movement they called Capitalist Realism, simultaneously repudiating the ideologically programmed art of Communism and announcing their intention to create a distinctly European answer to American Pop. Making good on their ambitions, they helped to animate a vibrant scene that soon spread to nearby Cologne, whose compact gallery district became the principal venue where new art met its audience.¹⁷



12.

12. Nicholas Nixon. **View of Copley Square, Boston**. 1974. Gelatin silver print, 7 7/8 x 9 1/4 in. (19.4 x 24.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase

Most Americans, enjoying their still-recent emancipation from the prewar dominance of European art, were slow to notice that Germans (and other Europeans) had initiated a vigorous postwar avant-garde of their own—and had, moreover, translated the lessons of Jackson Pollock and Pop into the European idiom. Despite many transatlantic relationships that developed between and among artists—the Bechers' friendship with Sol LeWitt and other Americans, for example—it wasn't until about 1980 that the American art world as a whole turned its attention to developments overseas. By then, the Düsseldorf/Cologne scene was a full-blown theater of the avant-garde; and the American contemporary-art apparatus had matured from the quaint bohemian gatherings of the 1950s into an elaborate machine, whose countless moving parts included a small army of private collectors seismically alert to the quiverings of the next new thing. Carrying less baggage and more money than the museum curators they were certain would follow in their wake, American collectors plunged into the Düsseldorf/Cologne scene as if indulging in long-repressed desires.¹⁸

For Gursky's generation, this background was influential in a number of ways. Beuys (whose experience as a Luftwaffe pilot during World War II was central to his personal mythology) and his students (too young to have fought in the war, but nonetheless deeply affected by it and, in the case of Polke and Richter, by the Communist aftermath in the East) had struggled with the weight of Germany's past. In doing so they helped to free their successors (who as children had experienced not so much the aftermath of the war as the advent of the nation's

economic miracle of the 1950s) to embrace the future. Moreover, the reemergence of a dynamic avant-garde tradition had established a threshold of ambition that newcomers were obliged to meet if they wished to participate in the scene. And that scene—artists, of course, and also art dealers, collectors, curators, critics, professors, publishers, and movers and shakers of all kinds—had matured into a nexus of culture and money that would deliver fame and fortune to several of the Becher students when they were barely out of school.

When that happened, in the late 1980s, it led some critics to write as if the Becher class were an institution of long standing. In fact, Bernd Becher was appointed professor only in 1976, nearly two decades after he had begun to make photographs and just five years before Gursky joined his class. The appointment certainly recognized the quality of the Bechers' work; doubtless it also recognized the international art world reputation they had by then achieved. Because of a strict rule governing academic appointments, the professorship belonged to Bernd alone. But his students were well aware that Hilla was a full partner in the Bechers' art, all the more so since Bernd regularly conducted critiques of individual students' work at the couple's home on the outskirts of Düsseldorf. In his father's studio and at the Folkwangschule, Gursky had always thought of photography as a way of making a living. For the Bechers it was a way of life, and this made a deep impression on him.

After a year of general introductory courses taught by several professors, each student at the Kunstakademie must choose



one of two paths: *Kunsterziehung* (art education), a formal program involving courses in art history and aimed at a career in teaching, or *Freie Kunst* (free or open art), designed to prepare the student for a career as an independent artist. Upon choosing the latter path, as Gursky did, the student applies to study under a single professor and, once accepted, answers to him or her alone. The diploma or title of *Meisterschüler* (master student) is granted at the sole discretion of the professor, who thereby certifies that the student has achieved independence. This master-student relationship resembles a medieval craft apprenticeship, except that its aim is to cultivate individual sensibilities capable of fulfilling the collective aspirations of the avant-garde. Gursky was awarded the distinction by Bernd Becher in 1987, after six years in his class.

For Gursky and his peers the singularity of the Kunstakademie program was reinforced by the distinctness of the Bechers' approach to teaching, which derived from their unique artistic method. It has become common to interpret their work as a manifestation of an innate (or at least very old) German taste for encyclopedic classification, but this cliché masks as much as it reveals. For example, while Sander indeed strove for a systematic survey of the German society of his time, the power of his portraits resides in the suppleness with which they respond to the individual personalities inhabiting generic social roles. The power of the Bechers' work, on the other hand, depends on a rigorous suppression of that suppleness—on the exclusion of any specificity belonging to the encounter between photographer and subject, so that the specificity of the picture seems to belong to the subject alone.

This is easy to say but hard to achieve, since a photograph records the subjective conditions of its execution as ineluctably as it records the objective presence before the lens. The art of photography is largely a matter of mastering the obstreperous relationship between the two, and the success of such mastery may be judged by the persuasiveness of the relationship that is set forth in the work, and by the coherence with which it is maintained from picture to picture. The originality and distinctness of the Bechers' work lies in the rare thoroughness with which the contingent conditions of photographic perception have been disciplined. This does not mean that the work is more objective than the work of other photographers; it means, on the contrary, that the apparent objectivity of the Bechers' art is the expression of a hard-won and highly personal sensibility, which marks one extreme of photographic aesthetics.

No one had taught the Bechers how to achieve this. Despite their links to the New Objectivity of the 1920s and their deep curiosity about a great variety of art, their aesthetic was very much their invention, and it is not surprising that their approach to teaching was equally personal and independent. They drew not upon the methods of their own professors but upon the idiosyncratic methods they had created for themselves. Hence the paradox: artists who had formed a strong personal aesthetic amidst the permissive ruins of a depleted culture became pedagogues of a demanding and inflexible method in Germany's most distinguished temple of the avant-garde.

The Bechers instructed each student to choose a plentiful subject—preferably a class of architecture, but in any case

something belonging to the social rather than the natural realm. Next: adopt a uniform style of picture-making—if possible, cloudless, frontal, and static—so as to minimize the contingencies of experience and thus the obtrusiveness of the photographer's point of view, both literally and metaphorically. Finally: make a large number of pictures of individual examples, which because of the rigor of the method will constitute a typology representing the generic identity of the subject through the range of its particular incarnations. Only then—sometimes years later—would it be time to move on to another subject. The early work of all of the Bechers' students conforms to this simple formula.

Even the best teacher is powerless to create an artist, but assignments that trim the daunting wholeness of art to manageable size can save the student from biting off more than he or she can chew. In this way, the Bechers' fixed method, coupled with their infectious dedication to their art, seems to have been useful to their students, if only by providing them with a clear place to begin and so taste the rewards of working. The insularity of the master-student relationship at the Kunstakademie and the idiosyncrasy of the Bechers' approach to teaching were further intensified by the class's social dimension. Bernd Becher accepted very few students, so that despite the long duration of the apprenticeship, the entire class consisted of only six or seven people at any one time. Although the teaching sessions were generally conducted privately at the Bechers' home, and although the students naturally enjoyed friendships with others at the school, the common travails of handfuls of aspiring artists under the strict Becher regime made

the class a cohesive group, animated by camaraderie and competition. When Gursky entered the class in 1981, he joined Candida Höfer, Tata (Roswitha) Ronkholz, Thomas Ruff, and Petra Wunderlich. Struth and Axel Hütte had completed their studies in 1980, but both remained part of the tightly knit group. For a twenty-six-year-old uncertain of his outlook or even of his talent, the Becher community was an ideal incubator, and the group, especially the ambitious Ruff and Struth, would play a key role in Gursky's work for the next decade.

Technique and method may be codified and replicated, but art is not so pliant to the human will—a principle richly illustrated by the work of the Bechers' students. Höfer, for example, has emulated her teachers' dedication to a single theme by photographing the interiors of public buildings for over two decades.¹⁹ But interiors constrict the photographer's options far more decisively than exteriors do, and perhaps partly because of this Höfer has never settled upon a strict formula for composing her interior views, and so has never developed the consistent image template that is fundamental to the Becher aesthetic. Consequently, while the Bechers produce large numbers of pictures in the service of a synthesis that extracts stunning visual poetry from the prosaic accumulations of industrial archaeology, Höfer's ever-growing inventory of interiors has seemed to reverse the process, dissolving the conceptual rigor she inherited from her teachers into the broad stream of perfectly competent photographic documents.

It might be added that, by choosing to work in color, Höfer forwent the abstracting effect of black and white, so essential

to the Bechers' pristine style. But Ruff, also working in color, readily achieved the building-block simplicity that has eluded Höfer, in a series of pictures that made him the first of the Becher students to hear the applause of the heady art market of the late 1980s. The series, which Gursky has affectionately lampooned (fig. 13), consists of head-and-shoulder color portraits of young Germans—mostly the photographer's friends and fellow artists—executed with a few exceptions between 1984 and 1989. Ruff at first included an occasional profile or three-quarter view,²⁰ but soon purged these distractions to produce unvaryingly frontal images in which his subjects present themselves with deadpan candor (e.g., fig. 14). If Sander's portraits have rightly become a touchstone of photography's capacity to evoke the unique person who resides in each human body, Ruff's portraits prove to a fare-thee-well that photography is equally capable of recording everything and revealing nothing. This uncanny effect was greatly enhanced when Ruff enlarged the portraits from conventional to nearly monumental scale, so that his blank icons of contemporary identity dwarf the puny viewer. Chuck Close had outlined this territory in the 1960s when he adopted the expressionless head-shot as the raw material of his paintings, but by dispensing with the paint Ruff unmasked photography's talent for mindless opacity with cheerful perfection. Deploying the Bechers' reductive, impersonal method, Ruff realized in a contemporary key their goal of extracting a social reality from its constituent particularities. Gursky has predicted that the future will regard Ruff's series as a touchstone of an essential ethos of the 1980s, and he may well be right.²¹ These untroubled icons of youth, confident of their prospects no less than of

their spunk, are not only ambassadors of a West Germany that has turned its eyes from the past to the future; they are the embodiment of the young and well-fed West, period.

When Ruff completed—or simply put an end to—the series, in 1989, he was back at square one. The Bechers, whose chosen field of inquiry was rich enough for a lifetime of work, had never had to contemplate such a circumstance. Returning as it were to the Becher source in order to move on from the portraits, Ruff embarked on a series of strictly frontal views of the inelegant rectilinear facades of functional postwar architecture. Although he had in fact begun to photograph the buildings before completing the portraits, the two projects were entirely distinct from each other, and Ruff has since largely confined his work to a succession of discrete series, each defined in advance by a precisely calculated concept and adhering to a consistent image-model. Some of these have been more successful than others. What is most relevant here, for its contrast with Gursky's mature work, is the tenacity with which Ruff has applied the conceptual imperative of the Becher legacy. Many artists of course work in series, but for Ruff the initial pretext or conceit narrowly determines the range of pictorial outcomes, foreclosing the potential for unexpected discoveries—as if the idea were all and the execution merely a matter of labor.

Struth's work evolved very differently from Ruff's. After a few years as a student of painting under Peter Kleeman and Richter, he entered Bernd Becher's class in 1976 and soon adopted a prototypically Becheresque strategy—planting his five-by-seven-inch view camera in the middle of a city street



13.

13. Andreas Gursky. *Unpublished (Thomas Ruff and his models)*. c. 1985. Chromogenic color print

14. Thomas Ruff. *Portrait*. 1989. Chromogenic color print, 47 1/8 x 22 5/8 in. (119.6 x 57.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Fellows of Photography Fund



14.



15.



16.



17.



18.

and pointing it straight ahead, parallel to the course of the absent traffic (figs. 15, 16). At first, but not for long, he even grouped his photographs in grids.²² Bernd Becher usefully pointed out that Manhattan had been built as if to provide material for Struth's project—a tip that led to some excellent early pictures, thanks to the Kunstakademie's New York scholarship in 1978. An inevitable corollary of Becher's observation was that, even if the unvarying image of symmetrically paired triangles converging at a central vanishing point were not in the long run a recipe for tedium, Struth's inflexible system would have hampered his ability to deal with cities less conveniently designed for his purposes than Manhattan. But Struth did not need to learn this lesson the hard way, for it soon dawned on him that nothing but his own rules kept him from swiveling his camera to include an aspect of the scene that interested him, or to exclude an aspect that seemed irrelevant or distracting (see, e.g., fig. 17). Taking the option, Struth abandoned the comparative function of the typology, but received in exchange the interpretive capacity of photography's extraordinary malleability. In current parlance, a conceptual artist had discovered the art of photography—the challenge of finding the one place to stand from which the world, compressed into two dimensions within the picture's frame, makes sense of itself.²³

Struth has progressively initiated other series, some of them taking the form of large color prints, without ceasing to add to his collection of city views (some in color), which he has continued to exhibit at the same modest scale with which he began. This is now a large and impressive body of work, in part

15. Thomas Struth. **Clinton Road, London**. 1977. Gelatin silver print, 16 1/4 x 22 3/8 in. (41.3 x 57.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Samuel J. Wagstaff, Jr., Fund

16. Thomas Struth. **Sommerstrasse, Düsseldorf**. 1980. Gelatin silver print, 15 3/4 x 22 1/4 in. (40 x 56.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Lois and Bruce Zenkel Fund

17. Thomas Struth. **Shinjuku (Skyscrapers), Tokyo**. 1986. Gelatin silver print, 15 5/8 x 23 in. (42.2 x 58.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Anonymous Purchase Fund

18. Thomas Struth. **View of Saint Salvator, Duisburg**. 1985. Gelatin silver print, 13 7/8 x 21 1/8 in. (35.3 x 54.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Family of Man Fund

because of its global range, in part because of Struth's confident flexibility in adapting his consistent clarity of vision to a considerable diversity of physical circumstances. That very flexibility places his work at a far remove from the Bechers'. When he abandoned the immobile street-centered perspective, the serial rigor of the typological method disappeared. Struth instead aimed to incorporate within single pictures the comparative function that the Bechers had achieved through groups: wherever possible, he would find a vantage point from which he could photograph exemplars of different architectural types, periods, and styles, so as to summarize the character and history of a place (e.g., fig. 18). This encyclopedic approach to the individual picture anticipated a strategy that Gursky would explore in the early 1990s—and it reversed the clock of modernism, drawing the style and spirit of Struth's work close to the conventions of the nineteenth-century city view as developed by such masters as Charles Marville, who recorded the transformation of ancient Paris into the modern city of Baron Haussmann. Those who cherish the avant-garde mythology of the Becher school may take such a comparison as an assertion that Struth exchanged the gold of Conceptual art for the dross of documentary photography. But Marville was a great photographer, and the comparison is intended simultaneously as a compliment to Struth and as a way of characterizing his talent for making our built environment, old and new, grand and regrettable, speak intelligibly to our eyes. If this achievement is heresy to the avant-garde, it is all the more apposite here, for Gursky would commit the same sin, and would do so, at first and in part, by following Struth's lead.²⁴

Gursky, in his mid-twenties when he joined the Becher class, dutifully adapted his work to the new regime. He put aside his Leicas and with them the unstructured habit of plucking pictures from the course of experience whenever the spirit moved him. The Bechers insisted on the patience and calculation of view-camera craft, and Gursky began to work with four-by-five-inch and five-by-seven-inch models (both his own and the ones that the Kunstakademie stocked for its students). He rarely used the larger eight-by-ten-inch format favored by Shore, Joel Sternfeld, Nicholas Nixon, and others who led the American view-camera revival of the 1970s and '80s, for the simple reason that the largest negative accommodated by the Kunstakademie's enlarger was five by seven inches.²⁵

In the summer of 1980, shortly before he entered the Kunstakademie, Gursky and a painter friend persuaded the Düsseldorf public-works authority to rent them studio space in a disused power station on Hansaallee, across the Rhine from the school. In 1981, they convinced the city to accommodate several additional artists in other parts of the large building. Among the latter were Hütte and Ruff, who joined Gursky in installing a color lab, which the three photographers shared. Henceforth Gursky worked exclusively in color.

Upon entering the Becher class in the fall of 1981, Gursky proceeded to deploy the typological method on the interior fittings of local restaurants and bars (fig. 19), department-store saleswomen (fig. 20), and finally and most extensively, security personnel at their posts in the lobbies of corporate office buildings (figs. 21–24). In Germany, these *Pförtner* (from *Pforte* or

gateway) always work in pairs, adding to their employers' confidence the assurance that each guardian guards the other. Gursky was alert to the comic pathos of the theme, and the rigid formality of his *Pförtnerbilder* (*Pförtner*-pictures, 1981–85) may be read as a mild parody of the stiff rectitude of his prey—a rare intrusion of humor into the earnest Becher aesthetic. The series won the approval of Bernd Becher and was eventually shown—Gursky's first exhibition—at the Düsseldorf airport in 1987, the year that Becher designated him a *Meisterschüler*.

No doubt pleased to have pleased his teacher, Gursky nevertheless was demoralized by the prospect of mechanically accumulating more and more *Pförtnerbilder*, especially since he had exhausted the local material and so would be obliged to travel. Like Ruff a few years later upon completion of the portrait series, Gursky confronted a blank slate; but he responded very differently. The nature of his response marks the year 1984 as a watershed in Gursky's work, unusual for its clarity in the work of any young artist.

Photography was Gursky's inheritance, if you will; under the Bechers he was learning to make art. The distinction is crucial to understanding the hybrid character of Gursky's work, but it is equally crucial that the uncertain border between the two terms was just then becoming ever more convoluted and porous. The lively Düsseldorf/Cologne scene, now international in its reach, provided an excellent vantage point from which to survey fresh developments. Particularly helpful to



19.

19. Andreas Gursky. *Unpublished (Uehrig, Düsseldorf)*. c. 1981. Color instant print (Polaroid), 8 1/2 x 7 1/2 in. (24.1 x 19 cm)



20.

20. Andreas Gursky. *Unpublished (saleswoman)*. c. 1983. Chromogenic color print.



21.



23.



22.



24.

Gursky was the impresario Kaspar Koenig, who organized the sprawling, ambitious *Westkunst* exhibition in Cologne in 1981,²⁶ and who stoked the ambitions of the students by inviting an impressive international roster of leading young artists to conduct workshops at the Kunstakademie. Among the artists Gursky met through Koenig's initiative were the American Dan Graham, whose color photographs of vernacular American architecture, while generally classified under the Minimal/Conceptual rubric, were raw and colloquial compared to the monochrome sobriety of the Bechers' work, and the Canadian Jeff Wall, who was endeavoring to recapture the spirit of nineteenth-century Parisian modernism in fictional tableaux, which already suggested and in the late 1980s would achieve cinematic scale. Wall's outsized ambition and outsized photographs—inventively presented in the polished, eye-catching form of backlit commercial displays—made a lasting impression on Gursky.²⁷

Among the other artists whose work Gursky recalls noticing at the time were Jochen Gerz and Jean Le Gac, very different artists whose common indifference to conventions of photographic craft and decorum struck the hesitant Becher student as a welcome declaration of independence. Gursky was also aware of the Düsseldorf artist Hans-Peter Feldmann, who in 1968 had ceased painting in a dry, Pop art style to embark on a series of small, cheaply printed books, each a collection of variants of a single unremarkable photographic image—specks of airplanes suspended in the open sky, women's knees, a coat, and posed group portraits of families, to name the subjects of his first four books. Later he moved on to

21. Andreas Gursky. **Security Guards, Thyssen, Düsseldorf** (Pfortner, Thyssen, Düsseldorf). 1982–85. Chromogenic color print

22. Andreas Gursky. **Security Guards, Provinzial, Düsseldorf** (Pfortner, Provinzial, Düsseldorf). 1982–85. Chromogenic color print

23. Andreas Gursky. **Security Guards, Spaeter, Duisburg** (Pfortner, Spaeter, Duisburg). 1982–85. Chromogenic color print

24. Andreas Gursky. **Security Guards, Victoria, Düsseldorf** (Pfortner, Victoria, Düsseldorf). 1982–85. Chromogenic color print

mountain peaks, shoes, soccer players, clouds, hedgerows, and unmade beds, to give just a few more examples.²⁸

Although preceded and perhaps partly inspired by Edward Ruscha's tongue-in-cheek documents of the 1960s, such as *Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations* (1962) and *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass* (1968), Feldmann's books gradually acquired a quasi-encyclopedic range that set them apart. Their uninflected modesty of design, small scale, and simple titles [*12 Bilder* [1968], *11 Bilder* [1969], *1 Bild* [1970]—twelve pictures, eleven pictures, one picture, and so forth] masked a voracious cumulative appetite to possess the world through pictures. Drawn liberally from the bottomless kitsch of commerce and tourism and from the throwaway abundance of amateur snapshots (often but not always Feldmann's own), the books together re-create in witty miniature the image world that we all carry in our heads. The repetitive overfamiliarity of their contents is presented as a positive quality—a hallmark of the photographs' status as talismans of shared experiences and values. Feldmann's *9 Bilder* of 1972, a collection of casual snapshots of utterly typical residential neighborhoods of the Ruhr Valley (fig. 25), describes the same social reality that Struth would soon approach from the opposite pole of the aesthetic spectrum (e.g., fig. 16). Although Gursky's mature work shares Struth's devotion to photography as a carefully crafted personal art, it also embraces Feldmann's delight in the medium as the ubiquitous stuff of the common culture.

All of this and more would eventually help Gursky to shape his mature work, but none of it had any immediate impact. To move

forward he instead turned back: he put aside his view cameras and took up a medium-format six-by-seven-cm (2 1/4-by-2 3/4-inch) model, whose negative is roughly four times the size of the negative produced by the Leica and correspondingly richer in detail, but which may be held in the hand and so shares the Leica's mobility. Gursky also abandoned the premeditated strategy of the typological method, sallying forth to see what he might see.

What he saw were people at leisure—out for a stroll, hiking, playing sports, swimming, sunbathing, making excursions on their bikes (plates 2, 4, 5). It was Kaspar Koenig who suggested that the new photographs be called "*Sonntagsbilder*," or Sunday pictures, but the theme was entirely familiar to the Essen aesthetic; in fact Steinert had often assigned it to his students.²⁹ What distinguished Gursky's new pictures from the old Essen model was the relative sharpness of the six-by-seven-cm negative—and of course the advent of color.

Color photography had been available for some time to amateurs content with Kodachrome slides or prints ordered at the drugstore, and for still longer to professionals who had the money and the skill for the expensive and demanding process. But it was only in the 1970s that color materials had become cheap and easy enough for independent artists to work with them. Those artists then faced the challenge of forgetting more than a century of monochrome tradition—a challenge that many photographers who had worked extensively in black and white either never managed or, like the Bechers and Schmidt, never tried to meet. Gursky had worked in black and white



25.

25. Hans-Peter Feldmann. From *9 Bilder* (Nine pictures). 1972. Offset lithography, page size: 4 1/4 x 3 3/4 in. (10.5 x 9.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art Library, New York

for only about three years, and his shift to color was all the more decisive because it coincided with his passage from the Folkwangschule to the Kunstakademie. Like his exact contemporary Joachim Brohm, who studied at Essen in the early 1980s and began to make his mark toward the end of the decade, Gursky belongs to the first generation of German photographers whose work is exclusively in color.

As the son of Willy Gursky, Andreas was no stranger to commercial work, and he had mastered its artificial palette in the early 1980s, when he took on advertising assignments to supplement his taxi-driving income (e.g., figs. 26, 27). His work of the 1990s has often drawn upon that shamelessly alluring vocabulary, but in 1984 his work was much closer to the more naturalistic if sometimes romantic color imagery of Shore, Sternfeld, and other Americans who had embraced color photography slightly earlier (e.g., figs. 28, 29). Gursky's mid-1980s aesthetic of crisply focused, spatially generous, sunlit views of reassuringly ordinary places, whose inhabitants seem to have all the time in the world, unmistakably echoes a salient note of *The New Color Photography*, an anthology published in 1981, which presents compact portfolios by eighteen American photographers, including Shore and Sternfeld.³⁰

Simultaneously, however, Gursky was finding a path that would lead him away from the Americans. In 1984, while vacationing in Switzerland, he obliged one of his companions by recording a splendid view of *Klausenpass* (plate 1). Six months later, when he enlarged the negative, he was excited to find scattered across the landscape the tiny figures of hikers whose presence

Wohnzimmer, hell wie der lichte Tag.

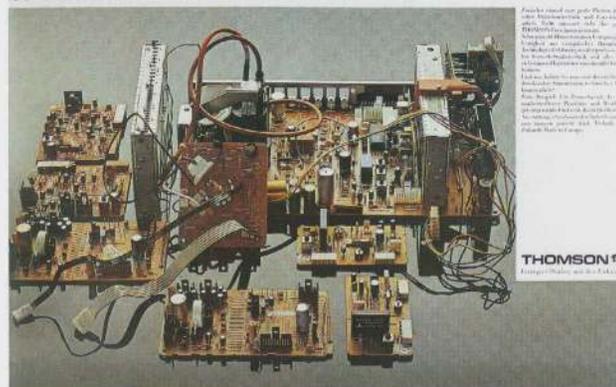


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26.

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THOMSON
Elektronik-Motoren und die Elektronik

27.

26. Andreas Gursky. Advertisement for Osram. Tearsheet from *Der Stern*. 1981-86

27. Andreas Gursky. Publicity photograph for Thomson. Tearsheet from a Thomson publication. 1981-86

the photographer, unlike his camera, had failed to register at the time.³¹ He thus rediscovered one of the oldest, simplest, and most rewarding pleasures of photography—the patient delectation of details too small, too incidental, or too overwhelming in their inexhaustible specificity to have been noticed, let alone pondered, at the moment of exposure. From the comfort of an armchair we enjoy the illusion of omniscience—a power of analysis and reflection unavailable to any actual participant: the world can seem richer and more generous in disclosing its meanings when we are freed from its pressing fullness to contemplate its fixed, flattened image on a piece of paper. The effect is all the more seductive when, as in Gursky's *Klausenpass*, the photographer was already remote from the scene, whose antlike actors consequently seem all the more purposeful because blissfully unaware of the eye that regards them. Our Olympian detachment makes the familiar strange to us, and, like benign extraterrestrials who have unexpectedly encountered an inhabited planet, we study the view with disinterested curiosity, free equally of urgency and malice. Gursky has used the extraterrestrial metaphor to describe his signature images of the mid-1980s, in which the patterns of group leisure provide the pretext for his patient gaze.³²

The fascination of a distant prospect rendered with uncanny sharpness was part and parcel of the American view-camera revival and its extension into color (figs. 10, 12, 29). But Gursky's steadfast pursuit of a uniform image-model, becoming ever more stable through the accumulation of its variant incarnations, was alien to the Americans. For them, to seek out subjects that conformed to a preconceived model would have



29.



28.

28. Stephen Shore. *El Paso St., El Paso, TX*. 1975. Chromogenic color print, 7 1/8 x 9 1/8 in. (19.5 x 24.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the photographer

29. Joel Sternfeld. *Florence, Oregon, June 18, 1979*. Chromogenic color print, 13 3/8 x 17 1/8 in. (34.5 x 43.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the photographer

been to make pictures about pictures, not about the world—in a sense, a revival of Pictorialism, and a violation of the descriptive (“documentary”) tradition they esteemed and aimed to continue. Notwithstanding the stylistic habits that marked each photographer’s work, and the work of all of them together, they believed that the photograph ought to shape itself to the demands of the subject rather than the other way around. Gursky’s adherence to a ruling pictorial scheme—an instinct acquired from the Bechers—drew his work away from the Americans even as they helped him to outgrow his apprenticeship. Or, to reverse the terms of Gursky’s aesthetic alloy, the *Klausenpass* epiphany was the reward of unpremeditated observation and old-fashioned photographic revelation, but it contributed to the emergence of a sharply defined pictorial model that radically constricted his freedom to explore the world with his eyes.

This fruitful contradiction at the heart of Gursky’s first mature work established the pattern by which his art has continued to grow and flourish. He had been familiar with the American color work for at least a few years before he began to respond to it. When he did so, his work palpably registered the foreign influence yet in other respects remained aloof from it, thanks to his stubborn attachment to lessons and instincts of the past. As the intrusion of alien ideas and images multiplied in the years to come, the resilient core of Gursky’s work became more and more his own.

On the surface it would appear that Gursky was working very slowly. In the six years from 1984 to 1989, perhaps as few



30.



32.



31.



33.

30. Andreas Gursky. **Unpublished (Gelsenkirchen)**. 1985–86. Chromogenic color print

31. Andreas Gursky. **Unpublished (containers)**. 1989–91. Chromogenic color print

32. Andreas Gursky. **Unpublished (tunnel)**. 1994. Chromogenic color print

33. Andreas Gursky. **Unpublished (Peloponnese)**. 1995. Chromogenic color print

as three dozen pictures issued from his studio, and while the bird's-eye image template was less exclusive than I have suggested, the range of his style and themes was very narrow. In fact, however, Gursky was working steadily, and his files from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s are full of perfectly good pictures that he declined to exhibit or publish (for example, figs. 30–33). All photographers must edit, for after the results of technical errors have been discarded, the only thing that distinguishes a successful picture from a failure is the maker's artistic judgment. But Gursky applied the editing principle with unusual and telling severity.

The file prints sketch a body of work closer to the roving aesthetic of Shore and Sternfeld than to the Gursky oeuvre we know. And a number of city views that approach architecture as the embodiment of changing social patterns recall the contemporaneous color work of Struth. Some of Gursky's essays in the latter mode are three-part panoramas, one of which he later merged into a seamless image, after he had begun regularly using a computer to alter his photographs (fig. 34).

From the late 1980s onward, then, Gursky was functioning on parallel tracks. Out in the field, where he allowed himself considerable freedom, he was mastering the flexibility of photographic description—emancipating himself from the strictures of the Becher method, in part by absorbing the work of his slightly more mature contemporaries. Back in the studio he consigned most of his work to the drawer, refining a narrow aesthetic that in part preserved his attachment to the rigor of

the Becher aesthetic. Gursky has candidly recalled that he was long uncertain of his artistic path and even of his talent.³³ But his insecurity, if that's what it was, became an advantage in the long run: he gradually merged the parallel tracks of his work, finding his way to a rigorous style, embodied in a small number of thoroughly considered pictures but nonetheless accommodating his responsiveness to a widening range of other art, and incorporating the open-ended sensibility of descriptive photography.

In the work that Gursky did present to the world in the late 1980s, the most significant development was the radical reduction of the antlike multitude of group leisure to a single figure, or just a few. The shift decisively altered the viewer's relationship to the image, transforming detached scrutiny of an undifferentiated crowd into sympathetic identification with a solitary being, who is dwarfed by the expanse of nature and now quite often by man's own overarching creations as well (e.g., plate 15). Gursky's posture of reserve was now colored with romantic feeling, and critics have eagerly cited the affinity between his new work and the revered imagery of Caspar David Friedrich, patron saint of German Romantic landscape painting (fig. 35).

This now ritual invocation invites a little probing. While Gursky has certainly recognized and even cultivated affinities with Friedrich and other long-dead painters, he has nicely observed that he is an artist, not an art historian. He attributes those affinities to the persistence of certain essential pictorial types that have rooted themselves in our collective visual imagination

and so reappear unbidden. Once he playfully challenged a curator to explain how otherwise a photographer untutored in art history could find himself evoking the imagery of the Old Masters.³⁴ He meant the question rhetorically, but I think there is an answer.

The distant prospect from an elevated position, for example, belongs to a very old class of imagery, born of an accommodation between the maplike schemas of primitive pictures and the unique, fixed vantage point of Renaissance perspective. It makes of the viewer a God-like presence, everywhere and nowhere at once, granting us a sense of overarching possession while excluding us from direct participation in the toylike realm. Svetlana Alpers has imaginatively studied the prominence of the elevated prospect in Dutch art of the seventeenth century,³⁵ and one could trace its complex descent through the elegant views of Canaletto and Bernardo Bellotto and the crystalline perfections of Biedermeier naturalism (fig. 36). But the tracing of that lineage would be incomplete if it did not also include the modern picture postcard, which, like its Dutch ancestors, symbolizes the molding of individual experience to collective social values (e.g., fig. 37). In Gursky's mental library of *Urbilder*, or root images, the rare and the ubiquitous, the refined and the demotic, stand side by side.

The same goes for Friedrich. To become loosely familiar with his paintings Gursky need never have visited the great collections in Dresden and Berlin and Hamburg. The pictures were all around him, in books and magazines and on postcards. Moreover, once introduced into the abundant colorful realm of



34.

34. Andreas Gursky. **La Défense, Panorama**. 1987/1993. Chromogenic color print. Frame: 24 1/8 x 59 1/8 in. (63 x 150 cm)



35.

35. Casper David Friedrich. **The Large Enclosure**. c. 1832. Oil on canvas, 28 ¹⁵/₁₆ x 40 ⁵/₁₆ in. (73.5 x 103 cm). Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, Dresden

36. Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller. **View of the Dachstein**. 1838. Oil on canvas, 17 ⁷/₈ x 22 ⁵/₈ in. (45 x 57.5 cm). Historisches Museum, Vienna

halftone surrogates, the handmade pictures of the Old Masters intermingle with the vastly more numerous productions of the same medium that has made the reproductions possible: photography. Gursky's *Ruhr Valley* of 1989, in which a highway bridge towers over an earthbound figure (plate 15), does bring to mind the aching sweep of Friedrich's sublime inventions, but it also recalls the outpouring of pictures with which local photographers had welcomed that same bridge as an icon of regional identity after its completion in 1966 sped the commute between Düsseldorf and Essen—a trip Gursky himself had made hundreds of times (fig. 38). (The bridge also earned a reputation as a convenient site for suicides, and Gursky claims that, after his failure to get a job as a photojournalist upon graduating from the Folkwangschule, he sometimes contemplated joining their number as he drove across it.³⁶)

The peculiar originality and force of Friedrich's landscapes reside in a simple, commanding pictorial scaffold, wholly invented and refined in the studio and evocative of a divine order, which is then given flesh through an accumulation of seemingly accidental detail and delicately varied color, invoking the particularity of observation.³⁷ This merger of opposites is what elicits our sense of connection between the earthly being and the infinity of creation. The same merger emboldens some of Gursky's most striking pictures of the 1990s, anchoring his otherworldly geometries in the concreteness of experience (e.g., plate 56). In short, I concur in the relevance of Friedrich. But I dissent from the pretensions of an art history that diminishes the contemporary spirit of Gursky's work by invoking a distant past, while failing to extend art-historical

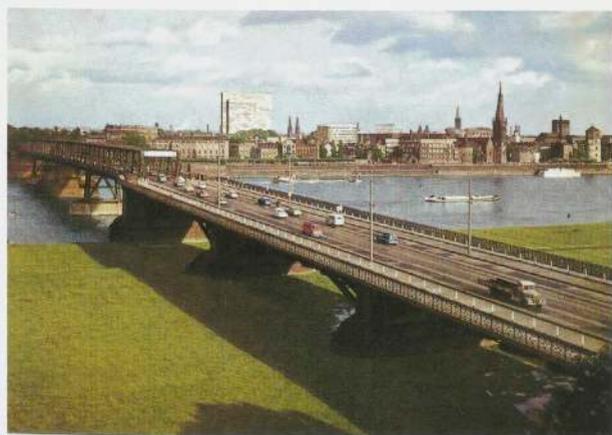


36.

methods to the less distinguished pictorial flotsam of the present. Like Feldmann, Gursky has accepted that mongrel inheritance cheerfully, indeed as a blessing, even as he extracts from the undisciplined mess an imagery of great sophistication and refinement. Moreover, the pathway thus opened permits traffic in both directions: if Gursky's work sometimes evokes the artificial saturations of picture postcards, his photographs may encourage us to notice that, while Friedrich worked before the invention of modern commercial inks and dyes, his chromatic concoctions could be just as unabashedly seductive, especially when measured against the polite conventions of prior landscape painting.

In 1987, with the support of Kaspar Koenig, Gursky had won the Kunstakademie's *Graduiertenstipendium*, or graduate stipend, which freed him to forego further commercial assignments and so to concentrate on his own work.³⁸ That year he definitively set aside the six-by-seven-cm camera in favor of larger—four-by-five- and five-by-seven-inch—formats. The exploratory impulse associated with the hand-held camera never disappeared from his work, but it was henceforth shaped by the purposeful pace of view-camera craft. His return to the view camera enabled and perhaps was encouraged by another development: he started producing larger prints, which, to appear sharp at close range, required the larger negative.

The art world's acclaim of the Bechers' work had been facilitated by the scale of their typologies. The individual photographs were relatively small, but the gridded groups were large



37.

37. Joseph Kessel. **View of the Rhine at Düsseldorf.** Late 1950s. Postcard, offset lithography, 4 1/8 x 5 7/16 in. (10.4 x 14.8 cm). Collection Laurenz Berges, Düsseldorf

enough to compete for attention in the rooms of galleries and museums generally reserved for works of painting and sculpture. The prints needed to be small to be sharp, and at first the work of the Bechers' students, equally dependent on clarity of detail, was similarly modest in scale. Ruff's portraits began as prints in the neighborhood of eleven by nine inches (c. 29 by 22 cm); Struth's street views measure a bit larger than sixteen by twenty inches (about 40 by 50 cm); Gursky's prints of 1984 and 1985, about twenty by twenty-four inches (roughly 50 by 60 cm).

Meanwhile large photographs were beginning to proliferate in commercial galleries—because their makers, trained as painters, were in the habit of producing objects of consequential size (Günther Förg, for example); or because the maker deliberately intended to compete with painting (Wall); or because, observing the trend, the artist felt that he or she had no choice but to join it. A further factor was a circular art-market logic. A big print costs more to produce than a small one, especially since it is more easily produced not by the photographer but under his or her supervision in a commercial lab. But if big pictures can compete with paintings for cash, as well as for attention on the wall, then they will more than pay for themselves. Both Wall and Gursky have made original and impressive use of the opportunity to work in large sizes, but neither would have been able to pursue the opportunity for long were it not for the ability of their representatives to sell their huge pictures for substantial prices.

In Ruff's recollection, he had been thinking about printing his portraits much larger but could not afford to do so when, in



38.

38. Hans-Joachim Ellerbrock and Gerd Scheffts. **Ruhr Valley Bridge.** 1989. Courtesy Bilderberg, Hamburg

anticipation of an exhibition at the Galerie Philip Nelson in Lyons in 1986, Nelson offered to pay for the production of three large prints. Ruff had them made at a Düsseldorf lab—and never looked back. The enlargements transformed his portraits from a series of heads at more or less human scale into the monumental icons of blankness that were soon so widely admired. By 1989, Ruff, Struth, Hütte, and Gursky, all now clients of the same lab (Fachlabor Grieger), were presenting their new pictures in large sizes, mounted and framed in variants of a single style.

The new convention of large photographs confronted their makers with the challenge of inventing new styles of presentation. The fragile surface of a photographic print generally requires some sort of protection, but the new aesthetic required that the photograph present itself not as a piece of paper under glass but as an object in its own right.³⁹ The Düsseldorf group applied a single solution to the challenge by ordering their prints with white margins all around the image, then laminating the face of the print to Plexiglas and finishing the work with a simple wood frame. The margin recalls the overmat of traditional presentation and serves the same function of separating the image from its environment, but instead of suggesting a window through which the viewer is invited to look, the continuous surface of the whole sheet including the margin, now slick and planar under the glass, announces the entire work as an object that shares the viewer's space.

From the late 1980s onward, Gursky favored a variant of this style of presentation, in which the back of the print is mounted



to Plexiglas and the face is protected by glass—until his pictures outgrew the largest available sheet of glass, forcing him to switch to Plexiglas. The size of his prints grew modestly at first, then in the 1990s rapidly reached the limit of about 1.8 meters (nearly six feet) in the smaller dimension—the width of the largest roll of photographic paper that could be obtained from the manufacturer. (For all practical purposes there is no limit to the long dimension, a material fact that has meshed neatly with Gursky's growing taste for ever more slender horizontals.) Eventually, toward the end of 2000, Gursky overcame this limitation by fashioning part of the white margin of the finished work from another piece of unexposed paper, so as to increase the smaller dimension to two meters—the upper limit of the machine that laminates the paper to the Plexiglas. Thus the frames of some of his most recent works measure about two by five meters (more than six by fifteen feet) [e.g., plates 47 and 59].

A small picture is illegible except from near at hand, but a large one may be viewed from a distance and then by degrees more closely. This range of regard is an old story for painting, but it became familiar to photography only recently. Many artists have treated it with indifference, making big pictures whose imagery, as we approach, simply dissolves into the unlovely industrial material of photographic paper. Some of Gursky's largest productions, sacrificing precision of detail to grandeur of effect, do suffer slightly at close range. Most of his pictures, however, offer a continuous reward from very far to reasonably near, as the macrocosm reveals its microcosmic structure.

To the students of the Bechers, their teachers' well-honed aesthetic and appealing dedication came wrapped in art world prominence, but none of them could have been prepared for the whirlwind success that rapidly came to them thanks to the chemical attraction of free-spending American collectors to the bustling Cologne gallery scene and its enlarged doppelgänger in New York's SoHo district. Ambitious gallerists, imagining Leo Castelli's success with Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg as a mere foreshadowing of their own future triumphs, had become eager to sign up young artists before they became recognized, spawning a culture of anticipation that by now so thoroughly infected the whole art world food chain that it had virtually become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Through the contagious alchemy of this bandwagon mentality, the Becher students, little more than a decade after Bernd Becher's appointment at the Kunstakademie, were summarily elevated from obscurity to stardom. Gursky has observed that they doubtless succeeded together more readily than any one of them might have alone—that *Becherschüler* was a handy marketing label for a reliable brand. For some of the photographers, in my view, the spotlight became a burden that weighed against fresh experiment; but for Gursky it was an incitement, nourishing his best and most original work. For their audience, the apotheosis of the Becher school lifted the work of its protagonists out of the messy currents of the histories of art and photography, and so has tended to limit rather than expand our understandings of the individual bodies of work that first became known under its rubric.

In 1990, contemplating a trip to the opening of an exhibition that included his work at the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo, Gursky noticed a newspaper photograph of the Tokyo stock exchange and made arrangements to make his own version of the image (plate 11). Like the *Klausenpass* episode six years earlier, the resulting picture and the circumstances surrounding it seem in retrospect to encapsulate the advent of a new pattern in Gursky's work—beginning with the opportunity for far-flung travel afforded by his budding celebrity in the international art world. The habit of identifying potential subjects not through firsthand experience but through the media; the focus on subjects that struck him as representative of the contemporary zeitgeist, thanks in part to their prominence in the media;⁴⁰ and the advance planning required to gain access to otherwise inaccessible sites—all of these became characteristic of the new approach. The Tokyo picture also introduced a new image-model that soon took pride of place in Gursky's work: the aloof vantage point and small figures persisted, but the crowd now filled the frame in a dense mass from edge to edge.

Gursky's focus on contemporary themes was abetted in the same year when Thomas Weski, a photographer who had been hired by the industrial giant Siemens to administer an ambitious photographic project, invited Gursky to participate. Under the auspices of Siemens's well-funded cultural program, photographers were granted generous stipends to explore one or more Siemens sites, with no restrictions beyond the loose directive

that the work concern itself with the relationships among people, the environment, and technology.⁴¹ From 1991 to 1993 Gursky photographed in dozens of Siemens factories throughout Germany (e.g., plate 10), adding further pictures in the plants of such firms as Mercedes and Grundig on his own initiative. Siemens is the very model of high-tech manufacturing, but to Gursky's eyes most of the factories looked decidedly old-fashioned.⁴² It is revealing of his increasingly secure artistic instincts that instead of pursuing this observation, he worked prodigiously to mold his unpromising material to the image he had formed in his mind. The essential source of that image was photography itself—the slick pictures that big corporations use to project an image of ultramodern know-how and efficiency through their annual reports, promotional literature, and magazine ads (e.g., figs. 39, 40). We all know these pictures—we can hardly escape them—but Gursky knew them even better, having made some of them (e.g., fig. 26). For all their specificity of detail, his industrial interiors of the early 1990s are best understood not as windows on an exotic reality but as artful refinements of an idealized fiction of technological wonderment.

As the 1990s progressed and Gursky elaborated his up-to-date themes, his scope of operations expanded from the environs of Düsseldorf and an occasional excursion to the Alps or Tenerife to an international itinerary that has taken him to Hong Kong, Cairo, New York, Brasília, Stockholm, Tokyo, Chicago, Athens, Singapore, Paris, and Los Angeles. Local sites of Sunday leisure have been replaced by enormous industrial plants, apartment buildings, hotels, office buildings, and

warehouses. Family outings and small-gauge tourism have given way to the Olympics, a cross-country marathon involving hundreds of skiers, the German parliament, a boxing championship in a vast arena, and midnight techno raves attended by casts of thousands. Gursky's world of the 1990s is big, high-tech, fast-paced, expensive, and global. Within it the anonymous individual is but one among many.

Summarized in words, Gursky's image of the contemporary is familiar, even banal. "Globalization"—our umbrella term for the relentless process that has created this well-lit world of easy travel, abundant goods, international markets, inescapable brand names, regimented grids, and sparkling surfaces, all of it smelling of money—is itself by now a cliché. Few of us have traveled as widely as Gursky and still fewer have observed the internal workings of the stock exchange at Hong Kong or the Siemens plant at Karlsruhe. But our omnivorous, well-oiled professional image-industry has processed, packaged, and delivered all of this and more. Gursky's originality lies in the vividness with which he has distilled compelling images from the plenitude of this commercialized image-world.

His ways of working and ways of thinking about his work—his instincts and his aims—coalesced in the early 1990s into the mature aesthetic that has since guided his art. The subject of *Tokyo Stock Exchange* is not the trading floor glimpsed at a given moment through the eyes of a unique observer, but the identity of the whole operation, including all of its unseen machinations—not so much a particular place in Tokyo as the



39.

39. Television production at the Grundig plant, Nuremberg, 1999. Courtesy Grundig AG



40.

40. Opel headquarters, Rüsselsheim, 1997. Courtesy Adam Opel AG



41.

stock market in general, as a global institution, or, further, as not merely an economic institution but a model of contemporary behavior. The traders, uniformed in black and white, lose their identities in the mass, which nonetheless provides the *raison d'être* for the particular task that each so intently pursues, much as the ravers at a huge event draw their private raptures from the collective frenzy of the crowd [plate 59].

The stock exchange and the rave are made to resemble each other at a level of abstraction toward which all of Gursky's mature pictures strive. The aim is to obliterate the contingencies of perspective, so that the subject appears to present itself without the agency or interference of an observer; and to select and shape the view so that it suggests not a part or an aspect but a perfectly self-contained whole, corresponding to a mental picture or concept. Even if the scene evidently extends beyond the frame, the manifest implication is that everything essential is included; what lies outside can only be more of the same. *Salerno* of 1990, for example, is an encyclopedic overview of large-scale industry and commerce imposed upon the ancient culture of the Mediterranean (plate 9). The view inventories all the key components of this complex phenomenon, from the distant hills and the sweeping shoreline of the old city to the industrial port and the brightly colored grid of spanking-new automobiles in the foreground. Gursky's friends told him that he would find similar and better material in Genoa, but the tip proved useless because Genoa's grander scale meant that all the necessary elements of the conceptual image could not be made to appear in a single picture.

The Platonic striving of Gursky's aesthetic bears an obvious debt to the work of the Bechers, which aims to distill from a great variety of individual observations an essential structure unavailable to ordinary experience. But the differences are equally striking. The Bechers make many pictures from which to assemble the synthesis. Since 1990, Gursky has made very few pictures each year. He has transposed the process of synthesis to a prior period of reflection and gestation, in which incipient pictorial ideas and potential subjects are held in suspension, often for a long time, until each resolves the other and the execution of the picture—which again sometimes involves extensive preparation, extensive revision, or both—can get underway. And while the Bechers have purged their photography of impurities so thoroughly that it barely resembles the photographic vernacular on which it is partly based, Gursky has embraced the gaudy blandishments of commercial imagery and—though this was only beginning in the early 1990s—the tricks and wiles of digital manipulation.

Finally—and surprisingly, in view of all that separates Gursky's work from the conventions of traditional modernist photography—he has held fast to a faith in visceral intuition. He has repeatedly pointed out that no amount of pondering and planning is sufficient unless it leads him to an image that persuades the eye; and, conversely, that an ephemeral, unanticipated visual experience can yield a picture he had never expected to make.⁴³ This element of spontaneity has persistently enlivened Gursky's work.

41. Andreas Gursky, *Giordano Bruno*, 1989. Chromogenic color print, frame: 52 $\frac{3}{16}$ x 61 in. (132.5 x 155 cm)

The main outlines of what I have been trying to summarize were still taking shape in the early 1990s, when Gursky's work acquired fresh momentum from another direction altogether—from a deepening engagement with contemporary painting. In this respect 1993 seems to have been a key year.⁴⁴

Gursky and his fellow students had aimed from the beginning to be recognized not merely as photographers but as artists. The Bechers had fostered this ambition by proving that it could be realized, and in the course of the 1980s the rising celebrity of such figures as Wall and Cindy Sherman simultaneously reinforced the point, broadened the scope of photographic art, and raised the competitive temperature. Wall was at the top of Gursky's contemporary pantheon. Although the narrative core of the Canadian's art was alien to the young German's sensibility, and although Gursky was careful to monitor his admiration for Wall's work,⁴⁵ the influence had made itself felt in several pictures of the late 1980s, such as *Giordano Bruno* (fig. 41),⁴⁶ that hint at unfolding stories. One may also point to Wall's panoramic landscapes of the 1980s, which are conceived as maps of social and economic forces (e.g., fig. 42), and whose grand size and rich color may have helped Gursky to translate the critical eye of the view-camera aesthetic into an art of big pictures. More generally, the cinematic proportions and slick production values of Wall's light-box tableaux surely contributed to Gursky's mature creations, which despite their hypnotic stillness richly evoke the polish and allure of Hollywood. Above all, Gursky embraced Wall's ambition, taking to heart his

proposition that a photographer who wished to achieve the highest mark must confront the painters who had set it.

Since the mid-1980s, Gursky had cultivated the high-art associations that accrued to his pursuit of particular image-models—the way a tiny figure in an open landscape could bring Friedrich to mind, or the edge-to-edge field of *Tokyo Stock Exchange* could claim kinship in the family of all-over compositions deriving from the drip paintings of Jackson Pollock. In the 1990s, Gursky increasingly pursued an open emulation of and competition with certain forms of recent painting and sculpture.

In our cultural hierarchy, to draw a relationship between the works of any photographer and any painter is inherently to flatter the former. The body of writing on Gursky's work, much of it otherwise perceptive, contains a steady undercurrent of this brand of flattery, very close in aim and texture to the Pictorialist rhetoric of a century ago, when the observation that a photograph resembled an etching or a charcoal drawing was the highest praise. But if all Gursky's work did was make us think of paintings by Friedrich or Pollock, Barnett Newman or Richter—if its only goal were to establish parity of status between photography and painting—his art would be empty indeed. The critical challenge is not to assert the obvious affinities between Gursky's photography and recent painting, but to try to make sense of them.⁴⁷

As a way of beginning—and in full acknowledgment that the end will not be reached here—it may be worthwhile to focus

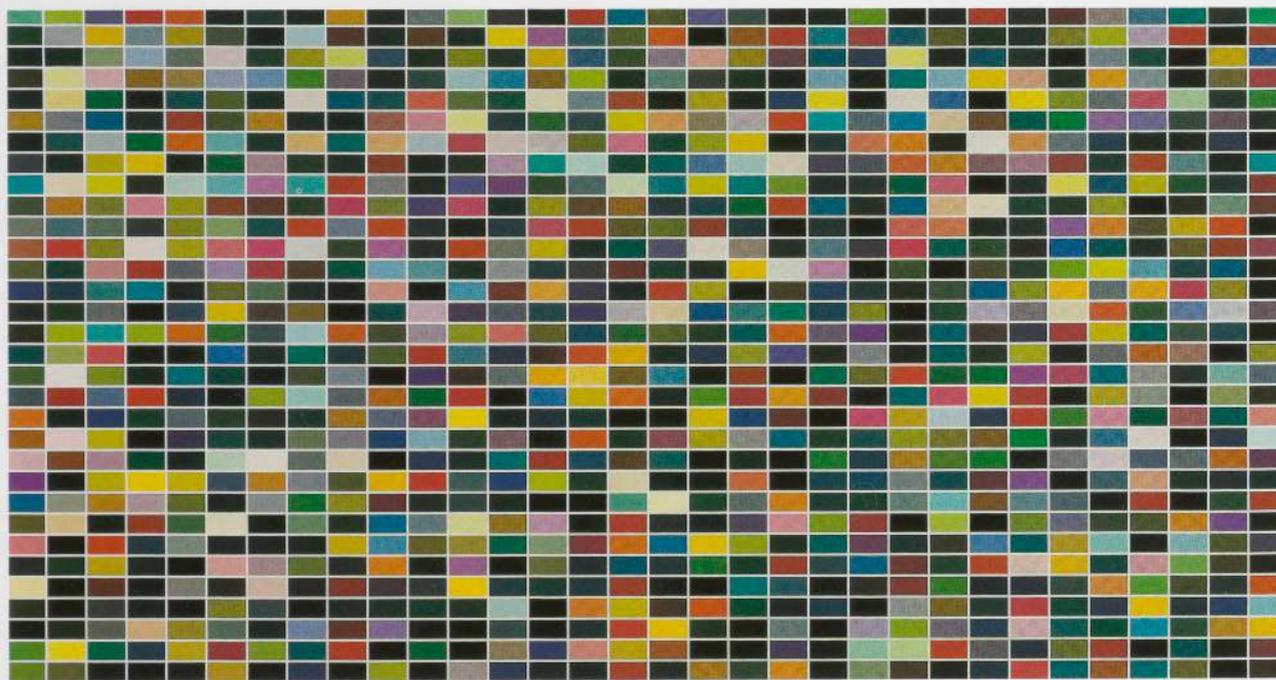
on the relationship between Gursky's work and that of Richter, who by the late 1980s was internationally admired, and who held a particularly commanding position in Düsseldorf. His Pop-inspired painting of the early 1960s had soon been inflected by the rise of Conceptual art, championed in Düsseldorf by the gallerist Konrad Fischer, who, under the *nom d'artiste* Konrad Lueg, had collaborated with Richter and Polke in founding Capitalist Realism.⁴⁸ Without ever abandoning his devotion to painting, Richter soberly and deftly took cognizance of the Conceptual aesthetic, including its withering skepticism toward painting—the widespread sense that the medium's inventive past had exhausted its potential future, and that looking forward in art thus meant leaving painting behind.

That is an oversimplification. At the heart of modernism resided the imperative to innovate—to discover an unexploited opportunity in the materials and mechanisms of art, and so to open new territory for the collective tradition even as one claimed it for oneself. The game of seeking the open position had been integral to advanced art well before Marcel Duchamp made the game itself the explicit subject of his work some ninety years ago—and it had been present in the spirit of Capitalist Realism from the get-go. Nevertheless, the Conceptual tradition that emerged in the 1960s sharpened the game, and Richter's art from the late '60s onward is saturated with its skeptical calculations. One might say that he found a way to merge his old-fashioned attachment to the magic of paint on canvas with the Duchampian conviction that painting had reached a dead end—and so to prove the latter wrong.



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42. Jeff Wall, *The Bridge*, 1980. Color transparency in lightbox, 23 1/2 in. x 7 ft. 6 1/2 in. (59.7 x 229.9 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York



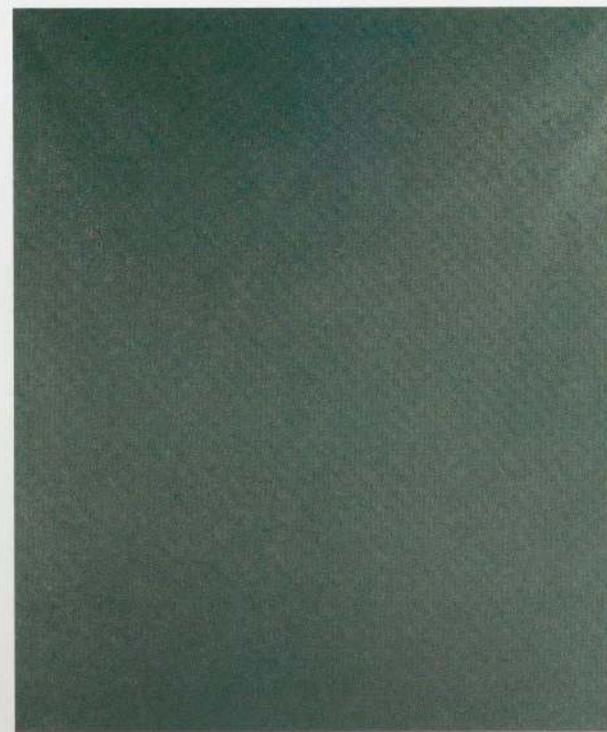
43.

43. Gerhard Richter, **1024 Colors**, 1973. Lacquer on canvas, 8 ft. 4 in. x 15 ft. 8 ³/₁₆ in. (254 x 478 cm). Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

44. Gerhard Richter, **Gray**, 1973. Oil on canvas, 9 ft. 10 ¹/₈ in. x 8 ft. 2 ⁷/₁₆ in. (300 x 250 cm). Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

In 1966, for example, Richter began a series of large paintings modeled on the color charts issued by paint manufacturers to enable consumers to choose colors for their living rooms (e.g., fig. 43).⁴⁹ The key difference (besides the enormous disparity of size) was that Richter chose and deployed his colors according to a variety of arbitrary systems. By appropriating an unpretentious model from the realm of everyday commerce, he was extending the aesthetic of Pop. By adopting a mechanical principle to determine his colors, and then realizing them in the impersonal, industrial form of a rectangular grid, he aligned his work with the new Minimal/Conceptual outlook. Above all, by giving himself up to the predetermined system, he freed himself to make large abstract compositions in color without having to compose, without undertaking the creative choices that the Conceptual outlook judged to be exhausted—even without needing to accept that his paintings were abstractions at all, since they so obviously mimicked the manufacturer's samples. "It all came down," he has explained, "to the desperation of not knowing how I could ever arrange colors meaningfully—and I tried to fabricate that as unequivocally as possible."⁵⁰ Like a suitor who expresses the purity of his love by rejecting the tired gestures of romance, Richter had discovered a way to make big seductive paintings by renouncing what he regarded as the worn-out clichés of abstraction.

In 1968, two years after beginning the Color Charts, Richter embarked on what would become a long series of paintings, all of them nothing but gray from edge to edge (e.g., fig. 44).⁵¹ This seemingly unrelated gambit enabled him to indulge in the expressive sensualities of applying paint to canvas on the



44.

pretext that the color gray is inherently inexpressive. In the same vein, Richter has elaborated a panoply of strategies for recovering the naive pleasures of painting while seeming to reconfirm the exhaustion of his medium's creative momentum.

In 1993, Gursky made a picture of a huge apartment building in Paris (plate 28). The gridded modern structure and the theme of individual and mass were not new to his work. But the specific motif—a facade dead ahead—was new, and it is reasonable to speculate that Gursky's alertness to its potential may have been piqued by Ruff's ongoing series of facades, which, thanks in part to his friendship with the Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, had recently expanded to include not only anonymous postwar structures but aesthetically ambitious contemporary buildings. Moreover, Gursky used the same digital technique that Ruff had used the previous year in making his picture of Herzog and de Meuron's brand-new Ricola factory in Laufen, Switzerland (fig. 45).

Unlike Ruff, however, Gursky made only one such photograph, then moved on to other things. And while Ruff's buildings are comfortably enclosed by the frames of his pictures, Gursky cropped the apartment building at left and right, draining the image of depth between the facade and the picture plane. As a result, and because of the particular character of the building he had chosen, Gursky's *Paris, Montparnasse* brings Richter's Color Charts to mind. Like the multiplicity of Richter's subtle tints and hues, each in its place, the flickering asymmetry of the window treatments of Gursky's individual apartments enlivens the massive, rigorously organized whole with the impression of

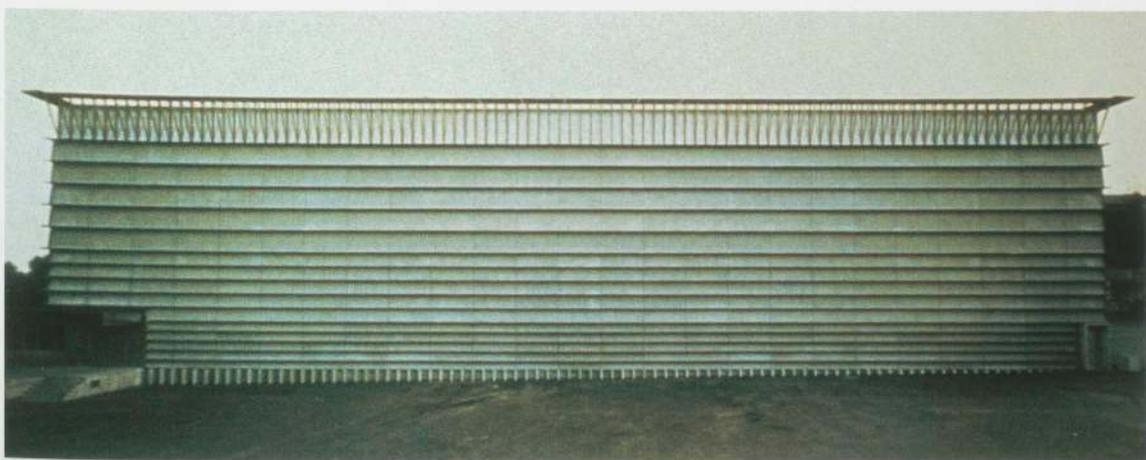
abundant variety. Meanwhile the imposing abstraction—at some two by four meters (roughly six by twelve feet) including the frame, the photograph was Gursky's largest so far, and comparable in scale to Richter's paintings—is simultaneously, like Richter's mechanical re-creations of hardware-store samples, an artlessly passive transcription of a thing in the world.

That same year, Gursky took his camera to the Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf and exposed several sheets of film from the upper-level gallery, looking down upon visitors in the large, double-height gallery below (e.g., fig. 46). In adopting an elevated viewpoint, the pictures are not unrelated to Gursky's early bird's-eye perspectives (e.g., plate 4) or to the Tokyo picture of 1990 (plate 11). As in a diptych made in Cairo in 1992 (plate 18), however, the nearly vertical plunge of the photographer's gaze flattened the image and exiled the horizon from the frame, hinting at his growing taste for planar abstraction. Continuing to apply a draconian reserve to his experiments in the field, Gursky never exhibited or published any of these pictures. Instead he chose an entirely different negative he had made after descending to the gallery below, lowering his tripod to about two and a half feet, and focusing on the carpet itself (*Untitled I*, 1993; plate 25).

The result was a picture of radical emptiness, in which Gursky's favored polarity between realism and abstraction was pushed at both ends. The image—an unbroken field of neutral gray—is so barren of pictorial incident that its subject, if there may be said to be one, seems to be the volume of unoccupied space of which the carpet is merely the lower boundary. On the other

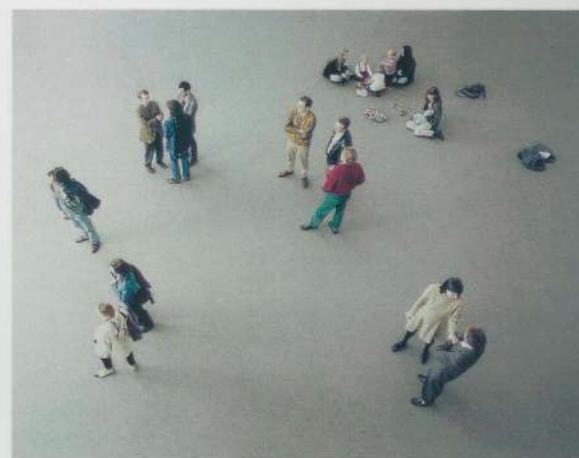
hand, the carpet is palpably present, all the easier to grasp with our eyes because it steadily recedes from our feet, tracing a continuous gradient of texture away and toward the top of the image—a textbook example of the sort of basic perceptual clues that enable us to interpret the raw data of vision as an image of the world. Photography's unequalled talent for capturing this sort of texture, in which every tiny component is irrelevant in itself but indispensable to the whole, is as basic to the identity of the medium as the fabric of brushwork is to the art of painting. In other words, if the resemblance of Gursky's *Untitled I* to Richter's gray paintings reinforces the otherwise possibly incidental resemblance of *Paris, Montparnasse* to the Color Charts, the matter of resemblance is only the beginning. If Richter's gray paintings are a form of *Urmalerei*, an essence of painting, Gursky's carpet picture is an equally reductive form of *Urphotographie*. Each work goes to town by excluding all else except a single quality of its medium. And finally: for both artists the readiness to embrace such an unpromising, nuts-and-bolts proposition is precisely what opened the door to the rich, unpredictable opportunity of picture-making. What could be more unpromising than a picture of the floor?

It is a perilous business for the critic to pretend to occupy the artist's mind, not least because the process of making, if successful, leads the artist to an outcome he could never have imagined at the outset and in consequence forever redraws the map of possibility that set the process in motion. Whether and in what sense Gursky had Richter's gray paintings in mind before or as he made *Untitled I* is now fundamentally irrelevant. For even had he intended nothing more than a homage to the



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45. Thomas Ruff, *Ricola Laufen*, 1992. Chromogenic color print, 60 1/4 in. x 9 ft. 8 1/4 in. (153 x 295 cm). Courtesy Peter Blum Gallery, New York



46.

46. Andreas Gursky, *Unpublished (Kunsthalle Düsseldorf)*, 1993. Chromogenic color print.

work of a famous painter (which I doubt), the impulse led him through the terms of his own very different art to make an original picture—original with respect to Gursky's own prior work, to photographic tradition generally, and to Richter's painting. Moreover, once made, the picture provided a new starting point, for other works that play in a variety of keys the same tune of empty, all-over abstraction embodied in the peculiarly photographic form of an unbounded textured plane receding at an angle from our eyes (notably *Brasília, General Assembly I*, 1994 [plate 31] and *Untitled III*, 1996 [plate 51]). For all of *Untitled I*'s apparent indebtedness to the art of Richter (and by extension to the tradition of monochrome abstraction to which Richter's gray paintings belong), these subsequent elaborations also evoke such quintessentially photographic precedents as Lee Friedlander's repeated engagements with the chain-link fence (e.g., fig. 47). By 1993, Friedlander must have been to Gursky but a dim memory of his Essen passage, classified vaguely within the documentary-style tradition of 35mm black-and-white photography. But the way in which the American has exploited a cat-and-mouse familiarity with modernist motifs from a wide variety of art as a way of extending the range of descriptive photography is similar in spirit to the way that Gursky has construed his competition with contemporary painting as an incitement to distinctly photographic invention.

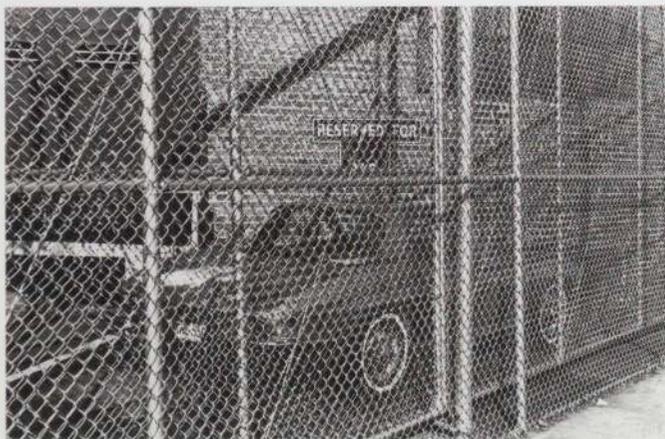
In contrast to Struth and Ruff, who have continued to work in series that are fundamentally independent of each other, Gursky in the 1990s has elaborated a single, cohesive body of work, greater than the sum of its parts. Individual pictures unmistakably belong to subgroups, each charting the pursuit

of a single idea, motif, or pictorial scheme, or seeming to initiate a new one. But over time these subsets have progressively overlapped, sometimes in improbable ways, developing a network of family relationships. *Brasília, General Assembly I*, for example, clearly belongs to the progeny of *Untitled I*, but its geometric grid of artificial light rendered in oblique perspective is also a cousin to the nighttime view of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, in Hong Kong (1994; plate 32), which in turn is obviously a descendant of *Paris, Montparnasse. Prada II* (1997; plate 53) pares the theme of consumer fetishism to the bare essentials, and in so doing unambiguously links the whole series of which it is part to the dispassionate ideals of Minimalist abstraction, which also inhabit such pictures as *Autobahn, Mettmann* (1993; plate 34), *Schiphol* (1994; plate 22), *Untitled VI* (1997; plate 45), and *Rhine II* (1999; plate 56).

This web of kinships also includes a family of touchstones in older and recent art—a constellation of allusions and well-springs that helps to enrich and define Gursky's sensibility. As this personal world of art developed, it came in broad outline to resemble Richter's. At the core of Richter's Pop-inspired beginnings was a dialogue between the grandeur and materiality of painting and photography's most mundane functions and demotic themes. This productive dialogue only deepened in the late 1960s, as Richter took on the imposing imagery of Romantic landscape painting (which he simultaneously embraced and deflated, by also embracing its decline into photographic kitsch) and the equally grand manner of postwar abstraction (which he also both emulated and parodied, for example by using photography to grotesquely enlarge tiny

details of his own brushwork). Indeed photography has been central to the wry conceptual operations that have enabled Richter to come to terms with the sublime monuments of German Romanticism and American Abstract Expressionism. The glaring absence is the virtual entirety of modernism's intervening course, most notably its Parisian mainstream, from Manet and Cézanne to Picasso and Matisse.⁵² Broadly speaking, this decidedly partial world of art is Gursky's, too.

For Richter, the circular corruptions of photography and photo-mechanical reproduction were a deliverance from painting's impasse. Friedrich's unironic reverence for God's earth, trivialized by degrees to the rock-bottom kitsch of the travel brochure, could be recovered for painting through photography by ironically quoting that photographically degraded lineage. The same layering of the magnificent and the marginal animates Gursky's *Yogyakarta* of 1994 (plate 13). The bottom layer embodies the European Romantic ideal of overabundant nature, wild but accommodating the man-made bridge, and promising untroubled reverie at the dawn of the industrial age. But the palette of Gursky's photograph, bleached and disconcertingly abbreviated from nature's full chromatic range, transforms this artificial ideal into a fraud. In fact this is not a photograph made in a European park, but a picture of a cheap photomural in a greasy spoon in Indonesia. Thus, incidentally, the picture also reconfirms Gursky's taste for photography's passive flatness, since despite the spatial depth of the underlying image, the plane of his photograph merely replicates the plane of the mural, much as Richter in the 1960s had approached a black-and-white snapshot as a piece of paper



47.

47. Lee Friedlander. *New York City*. 1963. Gelatin silver print, 8 7/8 x 9 3/4 in. (18.5 x 24.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase

whose two-dimensional image was to be transcribed into the two-dimensional fabric of paint on canvas, with exacting indifference to its identity as an image of things in the world.

These conceptual convolutions of painting and photography, object and image, homage and irony, also lie behind Gursky's in situ records of celebrated icons of (not surprisingly) European Romantic landscape painting (*Turner Collection*, 1995, showing a group of paintings by J. M. W. Turner in the Tate Gallery [now Tate Britain], London; plate 23) and Abstract Expressionism (*Untitled VI*, 1997, showing Jackson Pollock's *One: Number 31, 1950* in The Museum of Modern Art; plate 45). These installation views strike me as effective but less compelling than many of Gursky's other pictures, perhaps because the trick of reducing masterpieces of painting to generic objects of reverence has become all too familiar. Nor am I fully persuaded by Gursky's mammoth enlargements of tiny details of paintings, which transform the descriptive vocabulary of (for example) John Constable's technique into the raw material of abstraction (*Untitled X*, 1999; plate 52). To my eyes Gursky's recycling of Constable, unlike the perversely appealing *Yogyakarta*, falls short of viscerally embodying its conceptual ambitions.

Nevertheless, Gursky's engagements with the Old Masters (for Pollock indeed is now one) are, like many of Richter's stratagems, welcome instances of a high ambition unembarrassed to try the most obvious experiment—to risk flat-footed failure on the chance of unpredictable success. And who knows where Gursky's taste for conceptual head-games may yet lead. It has already led him, in 1999, to an elaborate process of

selecting fragments—a sentence or two, or even parts of sentences—from Robert Musil's sprawling modernist novel *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (*The Man without Qualities*, 1930–42), then assembling the fragments into a continuous text and commissioning a typesetter and printer to create a generic page of German prose for a photograph of Minimalist simplicity (plate 55).⁵³ Doubtless the strategy has many precedents (for example in the work of Hanne Darboven, Joseph Kosuth, and even Michael Schmidt⁵⁴), but the work, at once extravagant in its single-minded obsession and austere in its execution, is very much Gursky's own. And however puzzling the picture might seem when confronted in isolation, it enlivens the family of relationships in Gursky's current work. Consider it in juxtaposition to *Library* (1999), a panoramic interior of Gunnar Asplund's Public Library in Stockholm, a storehouse of tens of millions of pages of laborious scholarship long since superseded and of unattended creativity patiently awaiting rediscovery (plate 54). The Minimalist motif of the linear series inhabits both works, creating a passage through which Gursky's familiar leap from the solitary one to the uncountable many travels at the speed of light.

The Minimal and Conceptual movements earned separate monikers for the good reason that, at their poles, they are quite distinct from each other. Moreover Conceptual art, always more difficult to pin down to a defining set of principles and qualities, has proved with the passage of time far more expansive in its influence. Nevertheless, especially at their mutual origins in the 1960s, there is a considerable overlap between the two. As

the work of Sol LeWitt plainly demonstrates, for example, rigor of conception, precision of execution, and stringent rejection of ostentatious effect are not barriers to drop-dead beauty. On the contrary, especially in concert they can be excellent means of achieving it.

In Gursky's work of the 1990s, the simple geometries and ravishing purities of Minimalism have gradually outweighed the skeptical stratagems of Conceptualism. But savoring such pictures as *Rhine II* (plate 56) and *Prada II* (plate 53) need not keep us from considering their complex ramifications. Behind Gursky's taste for the imposing clarity of unbroken parallel forms spanning a slender rectangle, for example, lies a rich inheritance of reductive aesthetics, from Friedrich to Newman to Richter to Donald Judd. Friedrich's celebration of God's limitless horizon (fig. 48) is literally turned upside down in Richter's ironic homage (fig. 50); Newman's bare embodiment of the absolute (fig. 49) is recast by Judd in the materials of modern industry and commerce, so that the solemn majesty of infinite progression is set forth in the anesthetic repetitions of the assembly line and the display case (fig. 51). These four works suggest the parameters of Gursky's art-savvy aesthetic of the 1990s, and to him their mutually reinforcing and contradictory reverberations are neither a burden nor a puzzle but a boon. It is thanks in part to that inheritance, for example, that his hymn to the Rhine and his lovely send-up of commercial allure echo each other. God and Mammon are discovered to have used the same geometric template, both creators simultaneously inciting us to wonderment and excluding us utterly from their realms of perfection. Nevertheless, any striving for

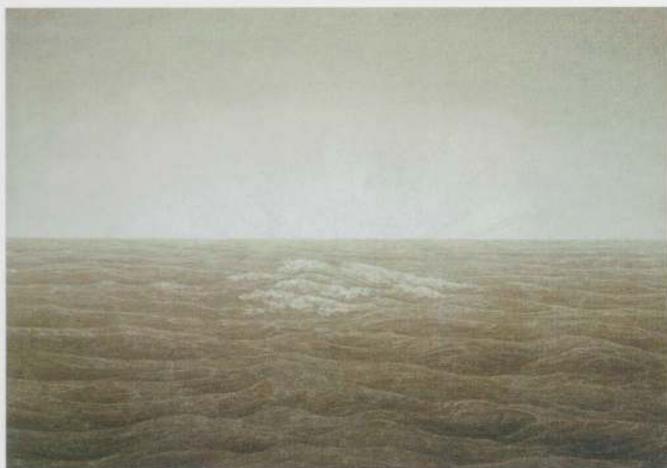
universals deserves to be approached with skepticism—all the more so right now, when the art world's embrace of photography is at once enthusiastic and selective, as if conditioned upon acceptance of a set of unwritten rules. Against this background, Gursky's drive toward abstraction and his open emulation of painting and sculpture have risked comparison with the anxious envies of Pictorialism. To make *Rhine II*, for example, he used a computer to eliminate a messy accumulation of buildings on the far bank, which sullied the sweep of a straight stretch of the river. The technique is up-to-date, but the impulse to reshape inconvenient realities in accordance with received definitions of aesthetic decorum is reminiscent of Kühn's *Nymphenburg Castle* (fig. 2)—or even of Steinert's *Sludge Pond* (fig. 4).

But Gursky has not treated painting and photography as enemies, the latter jealously regarding the former. He has treated them as friends, and so has drawn from the encounter an unpredictable and inventive course of experiment. While a good deal of contemporary photography indeed deserves to be classified as a form of Pictorialist revival, Gursky has never stood still long enough for the pall of predictability to settle upon his work. Consider, for example, *Autobahn, Mettmann* of 1993 (plate 34)—an excellent example of Gursky's talent for creating images that begin by delivering the jolt of the unexpected and stay with us by offering the rewards of contemplation and reflection. One might decode the picture as a knowing cultural overlay, in which pristine aluminum strips reminiscent of a Donald Judd stack have been superimposed upon a painterly field animated by brushstroke grass and an artfully asymmetrical arrangement of cows borrowed from Claude Lorrain or Constable—as if to

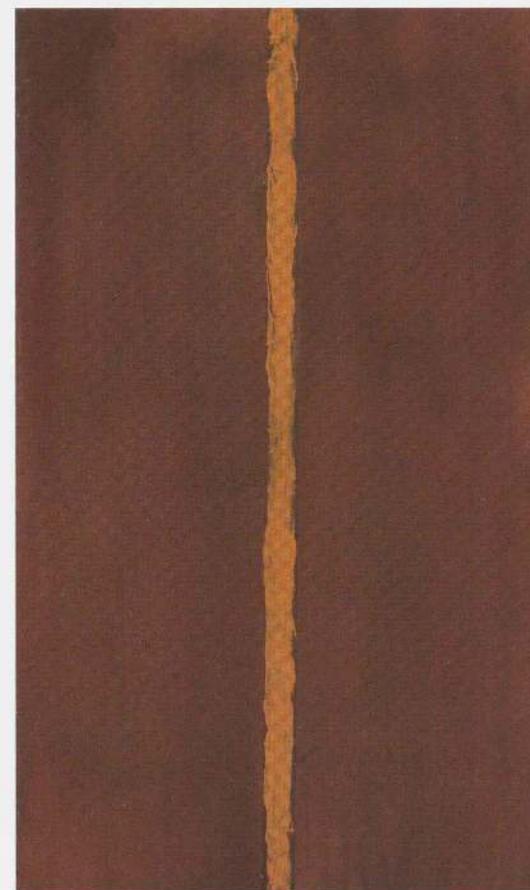
measure the cultural distance between the pastoral past and the postindustrial present. There is nothing wrong with this sort of art-historical name-dropping, for indeed the theme of Gursky's picture seems to be the gap between our romantic nostalgia for a long-lost rustic ideal and our headlong pursuit of precision and speed. By appealing directly to the court of painting and sculpture, however, such an interpretation overlooks much of the verve of the picture, which is after all a photograph.

A near, screenlike foreground imposed between the viewer and the prospect beyond was a favorite device of advanced photography of the 1920s and '30s (e.g., fig. 52) and has enjoyed a lively career ever since. Obviously indebted in part to modernist painting both before and after Cubism, the device also possesses a specifically photographic torque: viscerally invoking the contingency of our vantage point, it reinforces the immediacy of perception, while simultaneously placing us at a remove from the scene and abstracting the image from the continuity of experience. *Autobahn, Mettmann*, like the equally stunning *Happy Valley I* of 1995 (plate 27), belongs to and exploits this tradition. Notice, for example, that the silver bands subtly diminish in width and brilliance from top to bottom (thus registering the gently downward inclination of our gaze), while along the scale of measurement provided by the intervals between the bands, the cows gradually become larger in apparent size (thus measuring the advance of the ground plane, which at the bottom of the picture is about to disappear beneath our feet).

At roughly six by seven feet finished in its frame (that is, including Gursky's signature white margin), the work is an object that



48.



49.

48. Caspar David Friedrich. *Sea with Sunrise*. c. 1826. Sepia over graphite on paper, 7 1/8 x 10 3/4 in. (19.1 x 27.3 cm). Kunsthalle, Hamburg

49. Barnett Newman. *Onement I*. 1948. Oil on canvas and oil on masking tape on canvas, 27 1/4 x 16 1/4 in. (69.2 x 41.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Annalee Newman

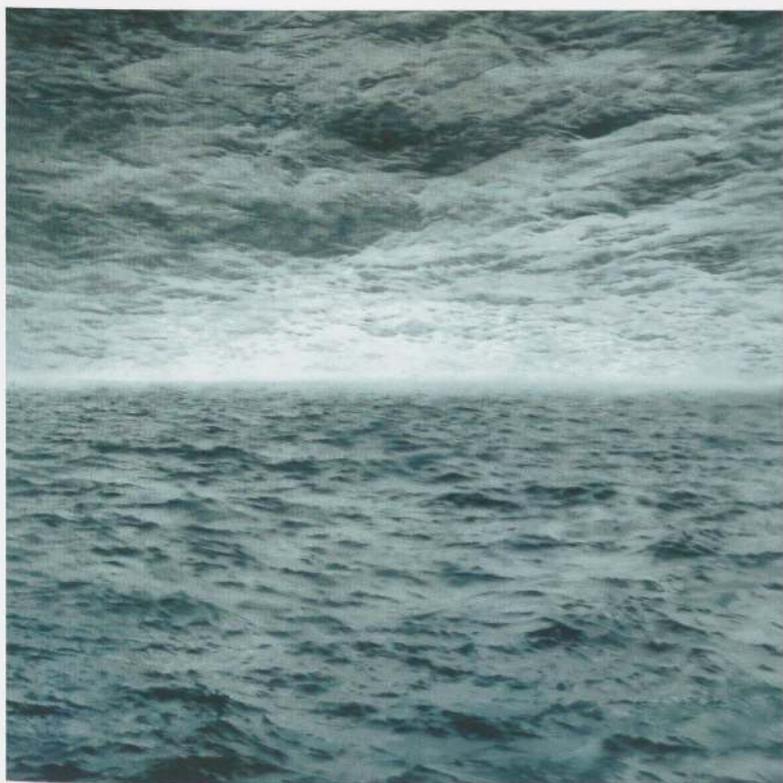
shares our space as it stands before us, like the abstract paintings it rivals. At the same time, it is a photograph—a window on the world—which plants us where the photographer once stood and tilts our head with his as we take in the scene through his eyes. As it happens, we are standing on an expressway overpass, and the minimalist strips are painted on the glass siding to mark its presence and to discourage drivers from becoming overly distracted by the landscape—a sleek, effective German invention if there ever was one.

Gursky had noticed the opportunity from his car, and well before that, one suspects, had taken his time in allowing the everyday experience of surveying the scene while cruising on the Autobahn to formulate itself into a pictorial possibility. Alas, by the time he had stopped and set up his tripod the cows had wandered out of view. Undaunted, he packed up his equipment, took the next exit, chased the cows back into the picture, and returned to the overpass to make it. Every photojournalist can tell still more convoluted tales of chase and capture, some of which are even true. But the story is revealing, for it reminds us that, while Gursky's mature working method is founded upon advance planning and elaborate cogitation, he has also remained open to photography's old aesthetic of spontaneous observation and response.⁵⁵ (But of course photography did not invent that aesthetic. It was latent from the beginning in Renaissance perspective, which announced itself as a universal, impersonal system for organizing vision and gradually became a tool for exploring the contingencies of perception. Witness, for example, the deft visual trick that animates Friedrich's *Churchyard*, painted in the late 1820s on the eve of

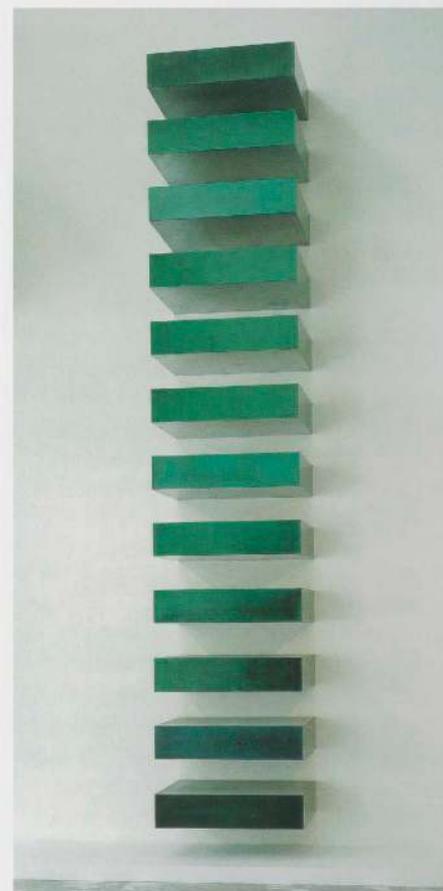
photography's advent [fig. 53]. The uncanny correspondence between the narrow gap in the sagging gate in the foreground and the steeple of the church beyond is the hallmark of the particular brand of image that locates the viewer in precisely one spot and no other.)

The flexibility of Gursky's working method at once mirrors and underpins the suppleness of his formal strategies. It is worth discussing these strategies at some length, as a way of unpacking the ingenuity that inhabits Gursky's ostensibly austere aesthetic. The analysis will concentrate on Gursky's deployment of what I will call the diptych form (although it has sometimes involved more than two images, and has often yielded just one). The story begins in 1986, when Gursky made a number of three-frame city views, which extend the scope of the camera's vision to panoramic sweep. These pictures, like most of Gursky's work of the late 1980s, stayed in the drawer. But one appeared much later, in 1993, after he had begun to alter his pictures in the computer, which permitted him to erase the two gaps separating the three frames—an imperfect solution, in my view, and in any case entirely conventional, despite the digital technique (fig. 34).⁵⁶

Gursky returned to the multiframe format for several of his industrial interiors of the early 1990s, but with a difference: instead of adopting a single vantage point for all of the frames, he repositioned his camera for each shot, so that the picture plane remained parallel to the rectilinear architecture of the subject.⁵⁷ This, too, was a tried and tested strategy,



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51.

50. Gerhard Richter. *Sea Piece (Sea-Sea)*. 1970. Oil on canvas, 6 ft. 6 3/4 in. x 6 ft. 6 3/4 in. (200 x 200 cm). Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin

51. Donald Judd. *Untitled (Stack)*. 1967. Lacquer on galvanized iron, twelve units, each 9 x 40 x 31 in. (22.8 x 101.6 x 78.7 cm), installed vertically at 9 in. (22.8 cm) intervals. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Helen Acheson Bequest (by exchange) and gift of Joseph Hellman

allowing the photographer to mimic the regularity of a continuous architectural elevation across the breadth of a long facade.⁵⁸ Then in 1992, without at all planning a panorama or diptych, Gursky photographed a chaotic Cairo intersection. As photographers generally do, he took more than one shot; and as photographers often do, he later found himself uncertain about which of the two negatives he had made was better. Photographers have occasionally approved and printed more than one variant negative of a single motif, but Gursky's solution to his dilemma was rare, and in his own work entirely unprecedented: he printed both negatives and presented the pictures together as a diptych (plate 18). Such a juxtaposition inevitably invites the viewer to study the two parts together, as if to compare the before and the after. Yet here, while the shadows indicate that one exposure was made not long after the other, and while a handful of vehicles remain fixed, this viewer at least finds the impulse to read the diptych as a record of elapsed time a recipe for fascinated frustration, since the wealth of likely clues yields very few reliable conclusions⁵⁹—a fine example of Gursky's talent for turning the habits of photographic realism to unpredictable ends.⁶⁰

For *Paris, Montparnasse* in 1993, Gursky returned to the frontal strategy he had applied to many of the industrial interiors, recording the left and right halves of the facade from separate viewpoints, then merging the two in the computer. This was just the method that Ruff had used for his picture of the Ricola factory (fig. 45),⁶¹ but in any case Gursky had no choice, since it was impossible to take in the vast expanse of the build-

ing from a single central vantage point. The two negatives also had the advantage of doubling the relative sharpness of what would become an enormous enlargement, in need of all the detail that could be mustered. Moreover, as Gursky has observed, the double viewpoint enables the viewer to see more deeply into the individual apartments—a gain in documentary information achieved thanks to a method that violates the conventions of perspectival realism.

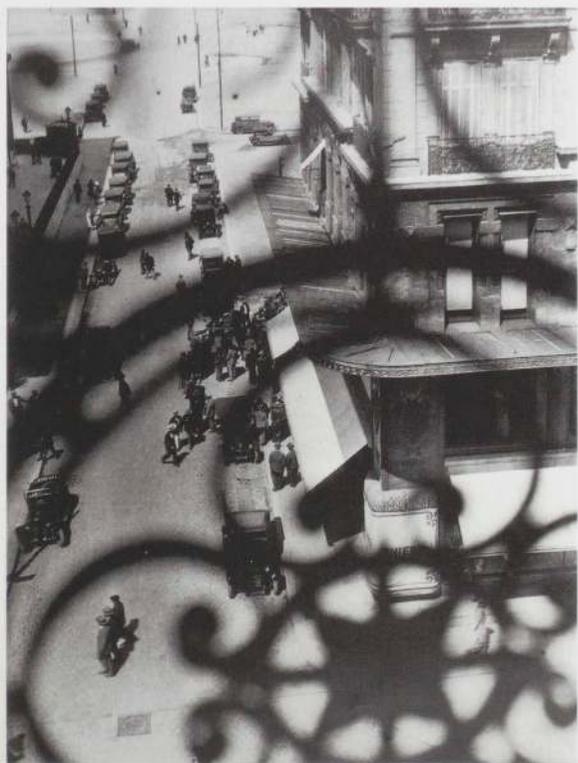
The following year Gursky made another true diptych, of the Hong Kong stock exchange (plate 37). Here again the image preserves the rectilinear clarity of the architecture, since the plane of each frame is parallel to the rear wall of the huge room—except that in reality these two walls stand at right angles to each other. The powerful geometry that unites the two parts, marked by the steady beat of the red rectangles across the top, thus creates an outrageously fictional space. A single-frame view of the room seen from one corner (fig. 54) vividly illustrates the fine rudeness with which the formal simplicity of Gursky's diptych violates spatial logic.⁶²

The momentum of this invention would eventually yield *Times Square* of 1997, an image of commanding symmetrical unity improbably composed of two views looking in opposite directions along a single line of sight, each showing the position from which the other was made (plate 49). That is, the six-story bridges that converge toward the center from the left and the right sides of the picture are, in reality, one and the same structure running parallel to the photographer's line of sight. And the single gridded facade that confronts us in the middle of

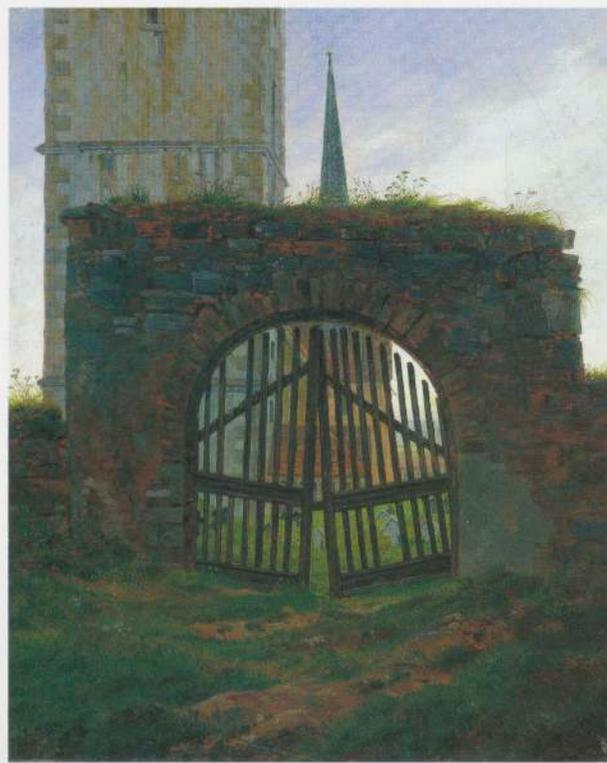
the picture is composed of two different facades that face each other across John Portman's atrium.⁶³

The hallucinatory improbability of this simple strategy is nearly as mind-boggling as the picture itself, as admirers of Gursky's work may judge for themselves by visiting the Marriott Marquis Hotel in Times Square. No such reality check is available for *Untitled V* of 1997, a shimmering display of 204 Nike sports shoes that represents the ultimate stage (so far, at least) of Gursky's highly original pursuit of what I have been calling the diptych form (plate 42). For there is no subject to visit—not just because Gursky constructed the display case and dismantled it after making the picture, but because he built only part of it, repositioned a new set of shoes for each of six exposures, then composed them in the computer to make a slender Minimalist image of something that never existed.⁶⁴

Ever since photography became an industry, in the late nineteenth century, artist photographers have used equipment, materials, and techniques developed to serve photography's practical and commercial functions. (The notable exception is the arcane darkroom cuisine of the Pictorialists, which expressed their dissent from those functions.) The computer software that enabled Gursky to create such pictures as *Times Square* and *Untitled V* was a by-product of the digital revolution in the graphic-arts industry. The advent of the personal computer in the 1980s soon delivered to individual users the fluid capabilities of digital image-manipulation that at first had been available only to big-budget professionals. Given time and skill, conventional



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52. László Moholy-Nagy. *Marseilles*. 1929. Gelatin silver print, 14 3/4 x 10 1/8 in. (37.5 x 27.5 cm). Collection of Robert and Gayle Greenhill

53. Caspar David Friedrich. *The Churchyard*. 1825–30. Oil on canvas, 12 3/8 x 9 5/8 in. (31 x 35.2 cm). Kunsthalle, Bremen

photographic techniques can be made to do nearly everything that computer software can do. But the contrapositive is also true: anything that before could be done laboriously and crudely can now be done easily, quickly, and with seamless results. An exponential rise in the flexibility of the process and the perfection of the product has changed the rules of the game. Predictably enough, the initial outcome—at first in the commercial realm, then in the fine-art one—was an overwrought outpouring of Surrealist kitsch, a massive indulgence in unctuous couplings of incompatible realities. Gursky is among the first artists to have used the new technology to make something genuinely new.

Like Ruff, who began using digital techniques around 1989 or 1990 to excise unwanted distractions from his pictures of buildings, Gursky initially used the computer only as a retouching tool. The first picture so altered was *Restaurant, St. Moritz*, in 1991 (plate 21). The next stage came with pictures such as *Paris, Montparnasse*, made in 1993—that is, at the same time that Gursky upped the ante of his engagement with painting. Ever since, the standard procedure has been as follows: Gursky begins with one or more conventional (chemical) negatives. Sometimes the image needs no further work (plates 22, 26, and 29, for example). Otherwise the negative is scanned to produce a digital file that may be displayed on the computer monitor and revised at will—pixel by pixel if necessary.⁶⁵ The file is then used to produce a new negative, which is printed conventionally, making use of the usual darkroom techniques to control contrast, color balance, and so forth. In other words Gursky's method, like his art, is a merger between the old technology and the new. That is precisely what the software was designed to

achieve: a fluid continuity between the relatively young vocabulary of photographic description and the immemorial vocabulary of pictorial invention in all of its variety. The distinction between the two—an axiom of visual culture for the past century and a half—is currently eroding at both margins, since applications that allow us to manipulate photographs any way we like have now been supplemented by the capacity to create from scratch images that convincingly resemble unaltered photographs.⁶⁶ The result may eventually be that, while adults of today will never shed the visceral notion that photographs belong to a distinct class of imagery, children born tomorrow may grow up in a world in which the flavor of photography is wholly integrated within an unbroken continuum of pictorial options.

Gursky, who in any case belongs to the former group, has explained that he intends us to approach his pictures as photographs. The goal is not to fool us; it is to frame our response to the image within the culture of photography, and so to draw upon photography's histories and habits, its deep-seated associations and visceral intuitions. That is why Gursky's dialogue with painting is indeed a dialogue, not an attempt to dissolve photography into painting. For a century or more—roughly speaking, over the course of photography's lifetime—we have cultivated a sense of painting that regards the work as a man-made object, however compelling the image it may bear. Despite photography's various exchanges with painting, including Gursky's own increasingly bold interventions, the culture of photography still evokes the experience of an individual—once the photographer and now the viewer—standing just here and looking just there.

I do not mean that a photograph is a shard of reality. As the American photographer Garry Winogrand explained, "A photograph *isn't* what was photographed. It's something else. It's a new fact."⁶⁷ Asked whether he ever staged his pictures, Winogrand answered, "No. I wish I had the imagination to conceive of some of these things,"⁶⁸ and I recall him saying that, while he had no objection to making things up, he was certain that the world was more improbable than anything he could invent. Since the eclipse of his heyday (that is, since the late 1970s), an impressive roster of the most adventurous photographers, including Wall, Sherman, and Philip-Lorca diCorcia, have made it their business to explore the opportunity that Winogrand declined to pursue. Among the most imaginative of the younger members of this roster is Gursky's friend Thomas Demand, who begins with an unprepossessing picture in the press—an image always empty of human figures and typically somewhat obscure or even enigmatic, although because of its origin ultimately associated with a particular event or personality. He then carefully constructs the scene out of paper and cardboard so as to refabricate the original image as a crisp, colorful fiction (e.g., fig. 55, which represents the corridor leading to the apartment of serial murderer Jeffrey Dahmer). As in the case of Gursky's Platonically pure commercial displays (plates 24, 42, 53), which are cousins to and perhaps partly descendants of Demand's loaded inventions, the construction, once photographed, is discarded.

Gursky and Demand, like Wall, Sherman, diCorcia, and others, have been congratulated for unmasking photography's spurious claims on the truth.⁶⁹ As Winogrand's remark makes



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54. Andreas Gursky. *Hong Kong Stock Exchange*. 1994. Chromogenic color print, frame: 6 ft. 8 1/4 in. x 10 ft. 4 in. (205 x 315 cm)



55.

55. Thomas Demand, **Corridor**, 1995. Chromogenic color print, 8 ft. x 8 ft., 10 in. (182.9 x 269.2 cm). Courtesy Max Protech Gallery, New York

plain, however, that poor horse expired a long time ago. If Winogrand aimed to alert his audience to the fictional depths of photographic realities, the subsequent generation has been traveling the same road in the opposite direction, probing the reality quotient of photography's hyperbolic fictions. Their now well-developed aesthetic, in other words, aims not to obliterate one term in favor of the other but to revel in the exchange between them.

If I am right in judging Winogrand's tone, his hint of exasperation was well earned, not only by his own extraordinary work but by the preceding half-century of inventive description. Consider, for example, two photographs made by Eugène Atget on the same August day in 1922 at the gardens of Saint-Cloud. The first was well worth the use of one of the heavy glass plates the photographer had shouldered from his apartment in the center of Paris (fig. 56), but it was apparently only a stepping stone to the picture that he made after walking perhaps ten or fifteen yards to the right and rotating the ground glass of his view camera ninety degrees (fig. 57). As John Szarkowski has observed, both pictures crop the dark form on the right at the same point.⁷⁰ The essential difference is that the middle of the view has been stretched horizontally, as if with the aid of a software program unimaginable in Atget's time and as yet untested by the playful eye of the digitally adept Andreas Gursky.

In the present context, the lesson of Atget's masterful proof of photography's extraordinary plasticity is that Gursky's digital manipulations are not artful fictions willfully imposed upon the

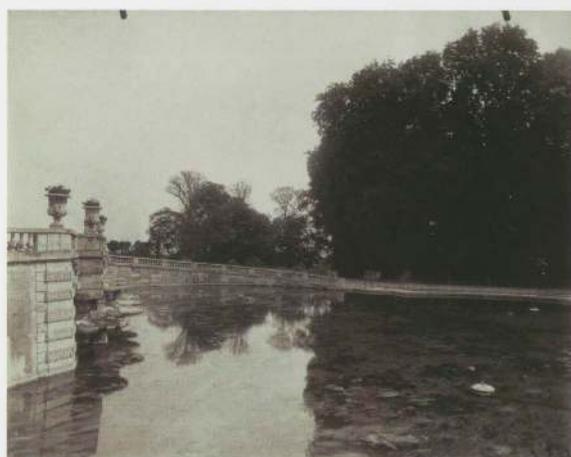
recalcitrant body of a passive realism. Marvelously inventive as they are, they are entirely continuous with the medium's long tradition of fluid mendacity. For example, Gursky's contemporary *Urbild* of the Rhine—a 1999 refinement of an image first presented in 1996, both of them now festooned by critics' invocations of Barnett Newman—frankly presents its unbroken horizon as a creation of the digital studio (plate 56). But an equally pristine green band already zips across the center of *Sha Tin* of 1994 (plate 35). Having wised up to Gursky's digital mischief, we are condemned to wonder whether he hasn't swept the track clean, or inserted the postmodern touch of the giant video screen on which the race thunders to the finish. But, to use photography's old-fashioned lingo, the picture is perfectly straight.

With its far-flung subject, wealth of closely observed detail, realistic palette, and imposing size, *Sha Tin* is a brilliant extension of photography's mainstream documentary tradition. More specifically, one might reasonably say that it fulfilled the promise of the transatlantic view-camera aesthetic that had coalesced nearly two decades earlier, on the eve of Gursky's matriculation at the Folkwangschule—reasonably but far too narrowly, for the picture is part and parcel of a coherent and highly original body of work that has also played the most extravagant havoc with the expectations of documentary realism.

Documentary realism versus digital manipulation, modernist idealism versus postmodern skepticism, high art versus



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57.

56. Eugène Atget. **Saint-Cloud**. 1922. Albumen silver print, 8 1/4 x 6 1/8 in. (21 x 17 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Abbott-Levy Collection. Partial gift of Shirley C. Burden

57. Eugène Atget. **Saint-Cloud**. 1922. Albumen silver print, 8 1/8 x 8 1/4 in. (17 x 21 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Abbott-Levy Collection. Partial gift of Shirley C. Burden

commerce, conceptual rigor versus spontaneous observation, photography versus painting: these and other antagonisms have engendered some fierce battles, but for Gursky they are all givens—not opponents but companions. Much of the grace of his art and still more of its contemporary torque derive from the agility with which it accommodates a wealth of apparent polarities.

The diverse currents that flow into Gursky's work emerge as the coherent picture of a world. There is no place for us in that world. Banished from its commanding symmetries, we are consigned to contemplate its wholeness from without. We may study its details at our leisure. We may be beguiled or repelled by the gorgeous spectacle. We may marvel at its serene indifference. We may even elect ourselves to sit in judgment upon it, but we will never become participants.

Gursky's world, of course, is an invention. Part of its authority rests upon the imagination and skill with which the artist has deployed his creative license. The other part rests upon the recognition that the work elicits from the very observers it so resolutely excludes. It is Gursky's fiction, but it is our world.

Notes

1. Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961), pp. 461–74. In this chapter the drummer becomes a model in life-drawing classes at the Kunstakademie.
2. In fact we owe our knowledge of Peter Weller's photography to Bernd Becher. See Winifred Ranke and Gottfried Korff, *Haugberg und Eisen: Landwirtschaft und Industrie im Siegerland um 1900. Photographien von Peter Weller u.a.* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1980).
3. August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit: Sechzig Aufnahmen deutscher Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*, with an introduction by Alfred Döblin (Munich: Transman Verlag and Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1929; reprint ed. Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1976).
4. See Otto Steinert, *Subjektive Fotografie: Ein Bildband moderner europäischer Fotografie / Un Recueil de photographies modernes européennes / A Collection of Modern European Photography* (Bonn: Brüder Auer Verlag, 1952), with texts by Steinert, J. A. Schmollgen, Eisenwerth, and Franz Roh, in German, French, and English; and *Subjektive Fotografie 2* (Munich: Brüder Auer Verlag, 1955). See also Ute Eskildsen, ed., *Der Fotograf Otto Steinert*, exh. cat. (Essen: Museum Folkwang, and Göttingen: Seidel, 1999).
5. In the 1920s and early '30s, German photography had been at least as vital and forward-looking as its principal competition in France and the United States. One measure of the destructive legacy of the Nazi era is the painful slowness with which German photographic culture recovered its momentum after the war. Throughout the 1950s and '60s, the liveliest exhibitions of photography were not Steinert's occasional efforts but the annual displays organized by L. Fritz Gruber under the auspices of Photokina, the annual photographic trade fair in Cologne. These exhibitions enabled a large public to see outstanding work in original examples, but the nature of the venue and the permissiveness of the selection tended to reinforce the mentality of a photographic community that encompassed everything from adventurous experiment to servile commerce. The spirit of the exhibitions is reflected in the collection of Renate and L. Fritz Gruber, now in the Museum Ludwig, Cologne. See Reinhold Misselbeck, ed., *Sammlung Gruber: Photographie des 20. Jahrhunderts*, exh. cat. (Cologne: Museum Ludwig, 1984).
6. Notably in the *Konzeption-Conception* exhibition at the Städtisches Museum, Schloss Morsbroich, Leverkusen, in 1969 [see Rolf Wedewer and Konrad Fischer, eds., *Konzeption-Conception: Dokumentation einer heutigen Kunstrichtung*, exh. cat. (Cologne and Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1969)], and *Documenta 5*, organized by Harald Szeemann at the Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, in 1972 [where seven Becher typologies were exhibited near works by Mel Bochner and John Baldessari, among others].
7. Carl Andre, "A Note on Bernhard and Hilla Becher," *Artforum* 11 no. 4 (December 1972): 59. Although Andre's compact "note" is admirably informative, the art world acclaim to which the article famously contributed soon had the effect of uprooting the Bechers' work from the unique circumstances in which it had developed, the better to incorporate it within the international Conceptual/Minimal movement. That trend has now been reversed by Susanne Lange in *Die Industriephographien von Bernd und Hilla Becher: Eine monographische Untersuchung vor dem Hintergrund entwicklungs-geschichtlicher Zusammenhänge* (Ph.D. dissertation, Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, 1999). Lange is now director of the Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur—August Sander Archive, Cologne, which among other things has established itself as the essential resource for the study of the work of the Bechers, their predecessors, and their students. I am deeply grateful for the help of Lange's staff and of Lange herself, especially for allowing me to consult her dissertation, which will be the basis of a major publication she is currently preparing. Until it appears, see Lange, ed., *August Sander, Karl Blossfeldt, Albert Renger-Patzsch, Bernd und Hilla Becher: Vergleichende Konzeptionen / ... Comparative Conceptions* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1997; in German and English); Monika Steinhauser with Kai-Uwe Hemken, eds., *Bernd und Hilla Becher: Industriephographie* (Bochum: Kunstgeschichtliches Institut der Ruhr-Universität, 1994); and Wulf Herzogenrath, *Distanz und Nähe: Fotografische Arbeiten von Bernd und Hilla Becher, Andreas Gursky, Candida Höfer, Axel Hütte, Simone Nieweg, Thomas Ruff, Jörg Sasse, Thomas Struth, Petra Wunderlich / Distance and Proximity: Photographic Works by ...*, exh. cat. (Stuttgart: Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, 1994). In German and English. The best resource for looking at the Bechers' work in reproduction is the series of books, each devoted to a particular theme, that has been published since 1977 by Schirmer/Mosel, Munich, and in the United States by The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass.
8. Andre's "Note" concludes by quoting Hilla Becher: "The question if this is a work of art or not is not very interesting for us. Probably it is situated in between the established categories. Anyway the audience which is interested in art would be the most open-minded and willing to think about it."
9. I have relied on the published Gursky literature, especially several interesting interviews with the artist [see the Bibliography, p. 190]. The latter are occasionally cited here as sources of particular points of fact or interpretation. Otherwise, this essay depends upon extensive conversations with Gursky in 1999 and 2000, and upon conversations with Bernd and Hilla Becher, Thomas Ruff, Michael Schmidt, Monika Sprüth, Thomas Struth, and Thomas Weski.
10. See Helga Meister, "Willy Gursky: Beste Seiten," *Fotografie in Düsseldorf: Die Szene im Profil* (Düsseldorf: Schwann im Patmos-Verlag, 1991), pp. 76–77.
11. See Thilo Koenig, "'Ich lasse alles gelten, was Qualität hat': Otto Steinert als Lehrer" / "'I Accept Everything of Quality': Otto Steinert as Teacher," in Eskildsen, ed., *Otto Steinert und Schüler: Fotografie und Ausbildung 1948 bis 1978 / Otto Steinert and His Students: Photography and Education 1948 to 1978*, exh. cat. (Essen: Museum Folkwang, 1991), pp. 8–28. In German and English.
12. Another exception is Klaus Rinke, a painter who in 1969 had responded to the rise of the Conceptual movement by developing his own brand of serial photography, and who had begun to teach at the Kunstakademie in 1974.
13. See Weski, "Too Old to Rock 'n' Roll, Too Young To Die: Eine Subjektive Betrachtung deutscher Fotografie der letzten beiden Dekaden" / "A Subjective View of German Photography of the Last Two Decades," in Timm Rautert, ed., *Joachim Brohm: Kray* (Leipzig: Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst, in association with Plitt Verlag, Oberhausen, 1995), pp. 104–16, in German and English; and Weski, "Point of View: A Photo Map of Germany," *Aperture* no. 123 (Spring 1991): 88–89.
14. See Eskildsen, "In leidenschaftlichem Widerstreit zwischen Abbild und Darstellung" / "In Passionate Conflict Between Representation and Presentation," in Michael Schmidt: *Fotografien seit 1965*, exh. cat. (Essen: Museum Folkwang, 1995), pp. 5–23. In German and English.
15. See William Jenkins, *New Topographics: Photographs of the Man-Altered Landscape*, exh. cat. (Rochester, N.Y.: International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, 1975). The exhibition included work by Adams, Lewis Baltz, the Bechers, Joe Deal, Nicholas Nixon, John Schott, Stephen Shore, and Henry Wessel, Jr.
16. See Klaus Honnef and Wilhelm Schürmann, *In Deutschland: Aspekte gegenwärtiger Dokumentarfotografie*, exh. cat. (Bonn: Rheinisches Landesmuseum, 1979). Represented in the exhibition were Johannes Bönsel (a student of Floriss Neusüss at Kassel); Ulrich Görlich and Wilmar Koenig (students of Michael Schmidt); Candida Höfer, Axel Hütte, Tata Ronkholz, and Thomas Struth (students of the Bechers); Harmut Neubauer (a student of Steinert and Neusüss); Heinrich Riebesehl (a student of Steinert); Hans-Martin Küsters, Martin Manz, Schmidt, and Schürmann.
17. A useful study of the flowering of Joseph Beuys's circle in the 1960s is Stephan von Wiese, Maria Kreutzer, and Johannes Meinhardt, *Brennpunkt Düsseldorf: Joseph Beuys, die Akademie, der allgemeine Aufbruch: 1962–1987*, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Kunstmuseum, 1987). The catalogue's valuable chronology by von Wiese appears in English and Catalan in *Punt de confluència: Joseph Beuys, Düsseldorf 1962–87*, exh. cat. (Barcelona: Centre Cultural de la Fundació Caixa de Pensions, 1988), pp. 167–69. Still more valuable is the detailed chronology of events in all of the arts in North Rhine-Westphalia from 1945 to 1989, in Karl Ruhrberg, ed., *Zeitzeichen: Stationen bildender Kunst in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Landesregierung Nordrhein-Westfalen, in association with DuMont Buchverlag, Cologne, 1989), pp. 448–561.
18. Monika Sprüth (in conversation with the author, May 2000), whose Cologne gallery has represented Gursky since 1993, adds that the Americans—ready and willing to spend on the spot—in turn raised the stakes for German collectors and museums.
19. See most recently Susanne Pflieger, ed., *Candida Höfer: Photographie*, exh. cat. (Wolfsburg: Kunstverein, in association with Schirmer/Mosel, Munich, 1998).
20. See, for example, several portraits of 1985 reproduced in Peter Weiermair, ed., *Das Auge des Künstlers, Das Auge der Kamera*, exh. cat. (Frankfurt: Kunstverein, 1985), pp. 106–11.
21. See "Andreas Gursky: 'Das Eigene steckt in den visuellen Erfahrungen': Ein Gespräch von Heinz-Norbert Jocks," *Kunstforum International* 145 (May–June 1999): 249–65. Gursky's remark on Ruff's portraits occurs on p. 263. Hereafter the interview is cited as "Jocks interview [1999]."
22. See James Lingwood, "Working the System," in Marc Freidus, ed., *Typologies: Nine Contemporary Photographers*, exh. cat. (Newport Beach, Calif.: Newport Harbor Art Museum, in association with Rizzoli, New York, 1991), p. 93.
23. There is a revealing parallel in the work of the American artist Jan Groover, who also started out as a painter and began making photographs in the early 1970s in a strictly controlled, Minimal/Conceptual style. Her work blossomed after 1975, when she realized that she could move the camera from the fixed position that had established the conceptual rigor of her early diptychs and triptychs. Consequently, as Susan Kismaric has explained, "The conceptual element is loosened in favor of greater perceptual freedom." See Kismaric, *Jan Groover*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1987), n.p.
24. One needn't wade far into art world gossip about the Becher students, and about Struth and Gursky in particular, before encountering arguments over who did what first. Although these arguments have fortunately found their way into print only rarely, they are common enough that I would like to make it clear that I find them pointless. Like New Yorkers who regard all of America west of the Hudson River as a band of narrow interest compared to the breadth of Manhattan, the Becher students in their early years tended to overestimate the significance—and uniqueness—of developments in Düsseldorf. The relative insularity of the group—especially after the celebrity that unexpectedly descended upon them in the late 1980s—sharpened the ambitions of its most talented members and encouraged them to focus their competitive instincts upon each other. But this circumstance also challenged them to broaden their horizons. It seems to me that Gursky has met this challenge more imaginatively than the others, but one need not share this view to recognize that—no matter who did what first—Ruff, Struth, and Gursky are now very different artists.
25. Fig. 19, an exception, was made with an eight-by-ten-inch camera fitted with a Polaroid back.
26. See Laszlo Glozer, ed., *Westkunst: Zeitgenössische Kunst seit 1939*, exh. cat. (Cologne: Museen der Stadt Köln, in association with DuMont Buchverlag, Cologne, 1981).
27. Gursky's first solo exhibition of his work, in 1987, was unusual: several of the *Pförtnerbilder* were presented as backlit transparencies in the permanent advertising vitrines of the Düsseldorf airport—precisely the form of commercial display that Jeff Wall had adopted for his art.
28. In 1975, Hans-Peter Feldmann collected all of his thirty-six books from 1968 to 1974 in one volume: *Bilder / Pictures*, exh. cat. (Munich: Kunstraum München, 1975), with texts by Herman Kern and Josef Kirschbichler. In German and English. See also Werner Lippert, *Hans-Peter Feldmann: Das Museum im Kopf*, exh. cat. (Frankfurt am Main and Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 1989).
29. See the essay by Thilo Koenig in Eskildsen, ed., *Otto Steinert und Schüler*, p. 25.
30. Sally Eaucilaire, *The New Color Photography* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1981). In contrast to the Bechers' rigid method, Bernd Becher encouraged his students to become familiar with a wide range of art and photography. He and Hilla had befriended Shore in New York in 1973 and owned examples of his color work, which they shared with their students. Aware that the Kunstakademie's library was weak in photography, Becher made a point of bringing books to the school. He recalls that the Eaucilaire anthology must have been popular with his students, since it rapidly disappeared. [Becher, in conversation with the author. See also "His pictures have the quality of a first encounter": Hilla and Bernd Becher in Conversation with Heinz Liesbrock," trans. Michael Robertson, in Liesbrock, ed., *Stephen Shore: Photographs 1973–1993* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1995), p. 32]. Gursky has recalled that the Eaucilaire book, "was like a bible to me. When I look at it now, I find that there is a lot of nonsense in it, too." See "Ich glaube eher, dass es eine allgemeine Sprache der Bilder gibt": Andreas Gursky im Gespräch mit Andreas Reiter Raabe," *Eikon* 21–23 (1997): 21. Hereafter this interview is cited as "Reiter Raabe interview [1997]."
31. See "Düsseldorfer Künstler (IV) Ausflug: Ein Interview von Isabelle Graw mit Andreas Gursky," *Artis* 42 (January 1990): 54.
32. In the Jocks interview [1999], for example, Gursky relates his "'ausserplanetarische Warte'" ["extraterrestrial perspective"] to an experiment with drugs in the mid-1970s (p. 258). See also "Ein Gespräch zwischen Andreas Gursky und Bernhard Bürgi, 6. Januar bis 11. Februar 1992," in Bürgi, ed., *Andreas Gursky*, exh. cat. (Zürich: Kunsthalle, in association with Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne, 1992), p. 10.
33. See, for example, the Reiter Raabe interview [1997], p. 20: "[Q:] There is that Becher myth. Was it important for you to study with them? [A:] At the time of my studies it was not yet that myth. Moreover, I wasn't sure whether I should consider myself an artist. I was rather insecure about myself, but the conditions of working with the Bechers were great. We were only five or six students."

34. Gursky to Veit Görner: "I don't intentionally raise issues intrinsic to art in order to reformulate them in modern terms. In my opinion, a context-related procedure such as this leads to dull results, because the calculated approach denies the irrational laws of creating a picture the necessary freedom. Nonetheless, parallels with historical styles are apparent in many of my pictures. . . . As I have already said in interviews, the history of art seems to possess a generally valid formal vocabulary which we use again and again. It would perhaps be interesting for you art historians to find out why an artist who is not versed in your subject such as myself still has access to this formal vocabulary." From " . . . im Allgemeinen gehe ich die Dinge langsam an" / " . . . I generally let things develop slowly," excerpts from correspondence between Gursky and Görner, 1998, in the text supplement to Görner, ed., *Andreas Gursky: Fotografien 1994–1998*, exh. cat. (Wolfsburg: Kunstmuseum, 1998), p. 10. In German and English. Hereafter the exchange of letters is cited as "Görner interview [1998]." See also the Jocks interview [1999], p. 265.

35. See Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: at the University Press, 1983), especially pp. 123–64.

36. Jocks interview [1999], p. 253.

37. That is a crude summary of Friedrich's radically original style, which is analyzed in subtle detail in Joseph Leo Koerner, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), especially chapter 6, "Friedrich's System," pp. 97–121.

38. Although Bernd Becher had applauded the *Pförtnerbilder*, he did not welcome Gursky's subsequent departure from the typological method. He declined to endorse Gursky's candidacy for the stipend, explaining that he did not feel such financial support was good for young artists. Kaspar Koenig solicited the necessary second recommendation from Gerhard Richter.

39. Jean-François Chevrier has imaginatively explored the artistic implications of the contemporary photograph-as-object in "Die Abenteuer der Tableau-Form in der Geschichte der Photographie" / "Les Aventures de la forme tableau dans l'histoire de la photographie," in Chevrier, *Photo-Kunst: Arbeiten aus 150 Jahren: du XXème au XIXème siècle, aller et retour*, exh. cat. (Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie, 1989), pp. 9–81. In German and French.

40. Gursky has noted, for example (in conversation with the author), that there is nothing new about stock markets and commodities exchanges; what justifies them as icons of contemporary consciousness is their new-found currency in the media. See also Michael Krajewski, "Kollektive Sehnsuchtsbilder: Andreas Gursky im Gespräch," *Kunstbulletin* no. 5 [1999]: 13. Hereafter this interview is cited as "Krajewski interview [1999]."

41. See Weski, ed., *Siemens Fotoprojekt 1987–1992 / Siemens Photographic Project* (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn Verlag, 1993). In German and English.

42. See the Görner interview [1998], p. 9; and the Jocks interview [1999], p. 263.

43. For example: "[Q]: How do you arrive at your pictures? [A]: There is no strict procedure. Sometimes it is entirely spontaneous; I barely step out the door before something attracts my attention." Jocks interview [1999], p. 257. Also: "Essentially, nothing is foreclosed, because every single pictorial decision is ultimately intuitive. I do not work systematically, dedicating myself to a single theme for a period of years. The crucial thing is the direct grasp of reality, which provides the cornerstone for the next picture." Krajewski interview [1999], p. 12. And: "It is always an immediate visual experience that triggers the photograph." Reiter Raabe interview [1997], p. 18. And: "I appreciate the seemingly coincidental circumstances which I can't include in my concept and react spontaneously to them, without knowing whether a picture taken like this is going to make sense." Görner interview [1998], p. 8.

44. In an interesting interview in December 1992, Gursky said that he planned to withdraw from what had become a burdensome schedule of exhibitions in order to concentrate for a year on "an intense working period." See "Auszüge aus einem Interview von Thomas Seelig mit Andreas Gursky, Düsseldorf, 12. Dezember 1992," in Thomas Seelig, "Die Nachfrage bestimmt die Arbeitsweise: Künstlerische Fotografie zwischen Inhalt und Vermittlung" [unpublished diploma thesis, Fachhochschule Bielefeld, 1993], p. 24. Hereafter the interview is cited as "Seelig interview [1992]."

45. For example: "[Q:] Do you see any points of dependency upon other artists that might turn out to be a problem? [A:] I am in such a tough spot with Jeff Wall. I have made pictures that you would readily take for a Jeff Wall. But these I won't show. I know that I admire him, he is a great model for me. I am trying to get along with that in the most honest way possible and to let the influence run its course." Seelig interview [1992], p. 23.

46. The picture's title is in itself revealing. Gursky generally titled his pictures after the places in which they were made. In this case, before making the photograph, he asked permission of the couple who appear in it. Later, he asked them what they had been discussing and used the answer as his title: the sixteenth-century Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno.

47. The game of art-historical name-dropping reached an unintentionally comic extreme in an essay by Carter Ratcliff, which denounces Gursky's photographs as shallow "picture-puzzles. . . . the chief point is to see how quickly you can get their references to well-known innovations in postwar American art." Ratcliff, "The Seeing Game," *Art in America* 86 no. 7 [July 1988]: 87.

48. One of Fischer's notable efforts outside his commercial gallery was the exhibition *Konzeption-Conception*, which he organized with Wedewer in Leverkusen in 1969 [see note 6 above], and which was among the first to identify the work of the Bechers with the Conceptual/Minimal movement.

49. See Jürgen Harten, "Der romantische Wille zur Abstraktion" / "The Romantic Intent for Abstraction," in Harten, ed., *Gerhard Richter Bilder / Paintings 1962–1985 . . . mit einem von Dietmar Elger bearbeiteten Catalogue Raisonné / with a catalogue raisonné edited by Dietmar Elger* (Cologne: Staatliche Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and DuMont Buchverlag, 1986), pp. [36]–[38], and Elger cat. nos. 134–44, 300–301, and 350–59. In German and English.

50. Richter, quoted in "Interview with Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 1986," in Richter, *The Daily Practice of Painting: Writings and Interviews 1962–1993*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Obrist, trans. David Britt (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, in association with the Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London, 1995), p. 143.

51. See Harten, ed., *Gerhard Richter Bilder*, essay pp. [40]–[41], cat. nos. 194/6, 194/7, 194/12–18, 247/1–11, 334/1–11, 348–49, and 362–67.

52. Robert Rosenblum was the first scholar to recognize and systematically trace a continuous thread of Northern modernism that led from German Romanticism to American Abstract Expressionism without passing through Paris. See Rosenblum, *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975). Since the leitmotif of the book is artists' search for "the sacred in a modern world of the secular" (p. 218), Rosenblum does not engage the post-Conceptual, postmodern, photographic implications of Richter's then very recent work. On the other hand, Rosenblum's may have been the first American book to reproduce a painting by Richter (*Evening Landscape*, 1970; fig. 186, p. 124).

53. For all of its conceptual acrobatics, the picture originated in the simplest of visual experiences: as Gursky was reading a book on a sunny day, the eidetic presence of the light-struck page momentarily trumped the sense of the text. Gursky's page of Musil is a string of partial and complete non sequiturs, produced by a cut-and-paste method that favors the look of the page over its meaning and so simulates the original experience. Nevertheless, plate 56 (one of four realized versions of the image) does contain a sentence that might be construed as a Gursky credo: "At such moments, one realizes that, apart from the world for everybody, the solid one that may be explored and analyzed, there exists a second one, fluid, unique, visionary, irrational, that is only seemingly congruent with the first one, and which is not merely a figment of our hearts or minds, as people believe, but every bit as real and concrete as the generally recognized one."

54. In *Ein-heit* [U-ni-ty, 1991–94], an ambitious meditation on German history from 1933 through reunification in 1989, Schmidt includes several deadpan details of generic text, each evocative of a different period and cultural sensibility. See Schmidt, *Ein-heit* (Munich: Siemens Kultur Programm, in association with Scalo, Zurich, 1996), pp. 61, 63, 93, 118, and 218. An American edition of the book is titled *U-ni-ty* (New York: Scalo, 1996).

55. In 1996, for example, Gursky traveled to Atlanta, intending to photograph the summer Olympics. Just as the larger scale of Genoa had defeated his attempt, in 1991, to build upon his success in Salerno the year before (plate 9), the sprawling event in Atlanta—housing for athletes, administrative and press operations, installations for the games themselves—was so widely dispersed that he couldn't hope to make a picture of the whole thing, which is what he had in mind. Serendipitously, however, he found himself enthralled by a hotel atrium designed by Atlanta architect John Portman—an epiphany that sparked a new series of pictures, beginning with *Atlanta* (1996; plate 30) and extending through *Times Square* (1997, plate 49; another Portman atrium) to *Shanghai* (2000; plate 33).

56. The only other picture crafted in this way (and therefore involving a similar gap between the date of the initial negatives and the date of the completed work) is *Lake Garda, Panorama* (1986/1993), reproduced in Marie Luise Syring, ed., *Andreas Gursky:*

Photographs from 1984 to the Present, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle, 1998), p. 76.

57. For example the four-part work *Siemens, Augsburg* [1993], reproduced in Zdenek Felix, ed., *Andreas Gursky: Photographs 1984–1993*, exh. cat. (Hamburg: Deichtorhallen, in association with Schirmer/Mosel, Munich, 1994), pp. 88–89.

58. Even while deploying this old-fashioned documentary strategy, however, Gursky was capable of giving free rein to his experimental instincts. For example, *Schiesser, Diptych* [1991]; reproduced in *Andreas Gursky: Images*, exh. cat. [Liverpool: Tate Gallery, 1995], pp. 42–43] at first seems to present itself as a continuous rectilinear panorama. But the viewer soon notices that, while the two parts are pictorially compatible, they are anything but spatially continuous. Indeed, the attempt to reconstruct Gursky's twin vantage points in respect to the subject is as deliciously frustrating as it would be for the Athens diptych of 1995 [see note 60, below].

59. For example, I have been unable to identify with certainty more than two vehicles that appear in both frames but in different positions; most of the few repetitions have not moved. And, oddly, this: the three umbrellas that appear at the right edge of the frame are the same ones in both pictures, but in different relative positions.

60. Similar in mechanism and spirit is Gursky's *Athens, Diptych* [1995; reproduced in Syring, ed., *Andreas Gursky*, pp. 102–3], a nighttime view in which the city is surveyed from a height. By ingrained habit, the viewer is inclined to read the two frames as an interrupted panorama. As with the before-and-after instinct aroused by the Cairo diptych, this spatial expectation initiates a fool's errand. Gursky reports that even native Athenians have found themselves unable to say where he was standing for each view and in which direction he was looking.

61. In fact, Ruff made the picture without visiting the site, by composing it from negatives he ordered from a local professional photographer. Gursky did not learn this until years later, when he and Ruff visited the Ricola factory together.

62. To avoid puzzling readers, I feel obliged to point out that Gursky digitally purged the outer tier of computer banks from the lower left and right corners of fig. 54.

63. Gursky had invented this strategy the previous year for his first picture based on a Portman interior (*Atlanta*, 1996; plate 30). In the earlier picture, the battlementlike profile of the balconies signals that the right and left halves of the image have been made from different viewpoints. Thanks to the unbroken planarity of the balconies in the New York atrium, no such clue is apparent in *Times Square*.

64. See the Krajewski interview [1991], p. 14.

65. For much of the 1990s, Gursky used a machine that was unable to scan negatives directly, so he was obliged to make an interpositive (a positive transparency derived from the negative) in order to translate the chemical image into digital code. To avoid this extra step and the resulting slight degradation of the image, he occasionally began by making a positive transparency in the camera. Now, however, he is able to scan his negatives directly.

66. See William J. Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1992).

67. Garry Winogrand, quoted in Jeffrey Fraenkel and Frish Brandt, eds., *The Man in the Crowd: The Uneasy Streets of Garry Winogrand* (San Francisco: Fraenkel Gallery, in association with D.A.P., New York, 1999), between plates 10 and 11.

68. From the videotape of a slide presentation at the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, February 4, 1982; the exchange appears on p. 9 [of 13] of a transcript of the tape, of which a copy is on file in the Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

69. For one example among a great many, a major essay on Gursky concludes with the assertion that, "whilst retaining its reproductive functions, photography has become a reflective medium which can generate various different types of perception"—a statement that applies equally well to László Moholy-Nagy's work of the late 1920s. See Syring, "Where is 'Untitled'?: On Locations and the Lack of Them in Gursky's Photographs," in Syring, ed., *Gursky*, p. 7.

70. See John Szarkowski and Maria Morris Hambourg, *The Work of Atget*, vol. 3, *The Ancien Régime* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1983), p. 176.



PLATES



1. Klausenpass. 1984







3. **Neujahrsschwimmer (New Year's Day Swimmers).** 1988





4. **Schwimmbad Ratingen (Ratingen Swimming Pool). 1987**



5. **Sonntagsspaziergänger, Flughafen Düsseldorf (Sunday Strollers, Düsseldorf Airport). 1984**









6. **Krefeld.** 1989



7. **Seilbahn, Dolomiten (Cable Car, Dolomites). 1987**





8. **Niagara Falls.** 1989









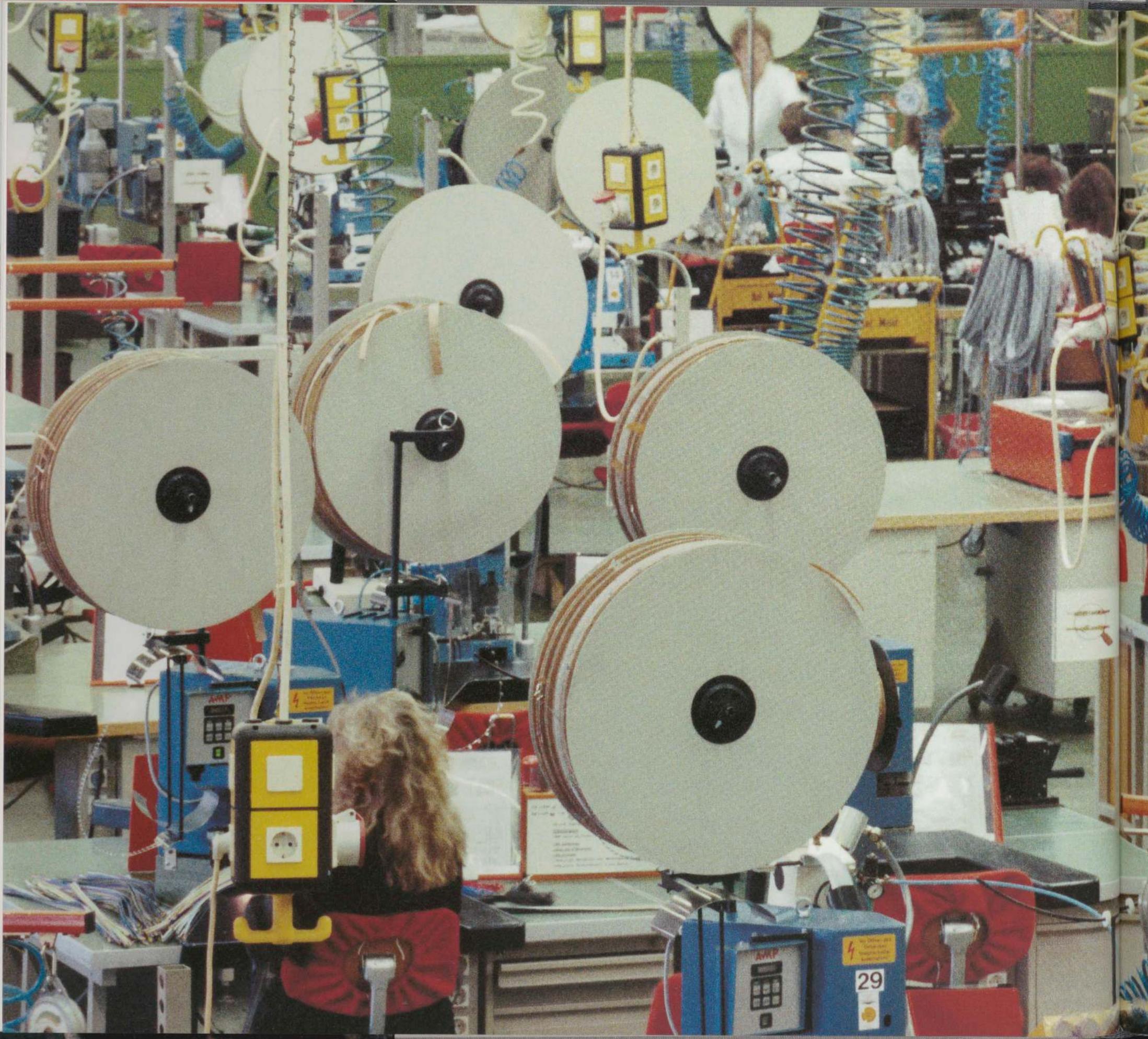


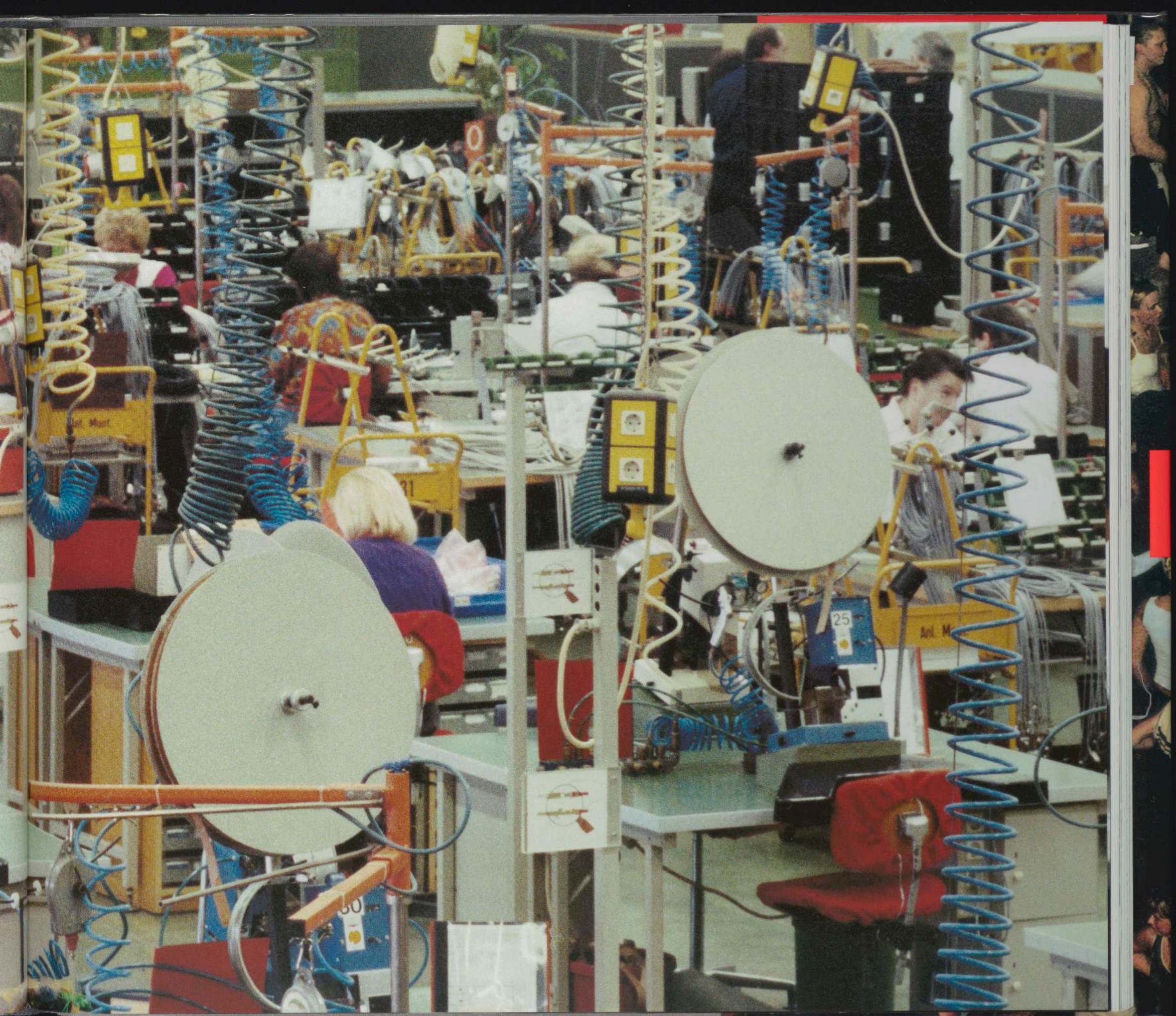
10. **Siemens, Karlsruhe.** 1991



















12. **Autobahn, Bremen.** 1991



13. **Yogyakarta.** 1994



14. Angler, Mülheim a.d. Ruhr (Anglers, Mülheim). 1989





15. **Ruhrtal (Ruhr Valley)**. 1989





16. **Breitscheider Kreuz (Breitscheid Intersection)**. 1990





17. **Albertville, 1992**







19. **Hühner, Krefeld (Chickens, Krefeld). 1989**









21. **Restaurant, St. Moritz.** 1991









25. **Ohne Titel I (Untitled I)**. 1993







27. **Happy Valley I.** 1995







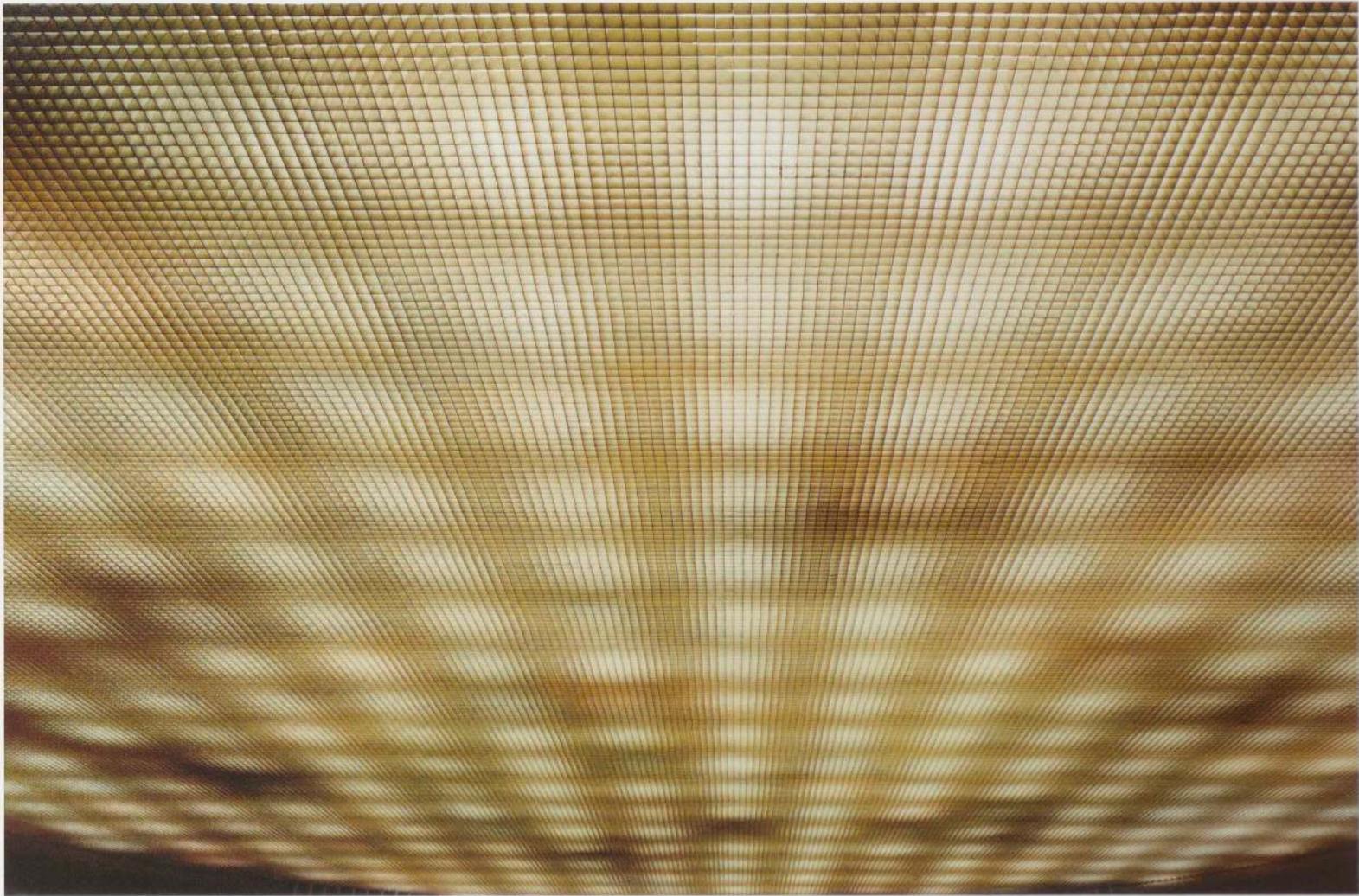






























36. **Grand Hyatt Park, Hong Kong. 1994**

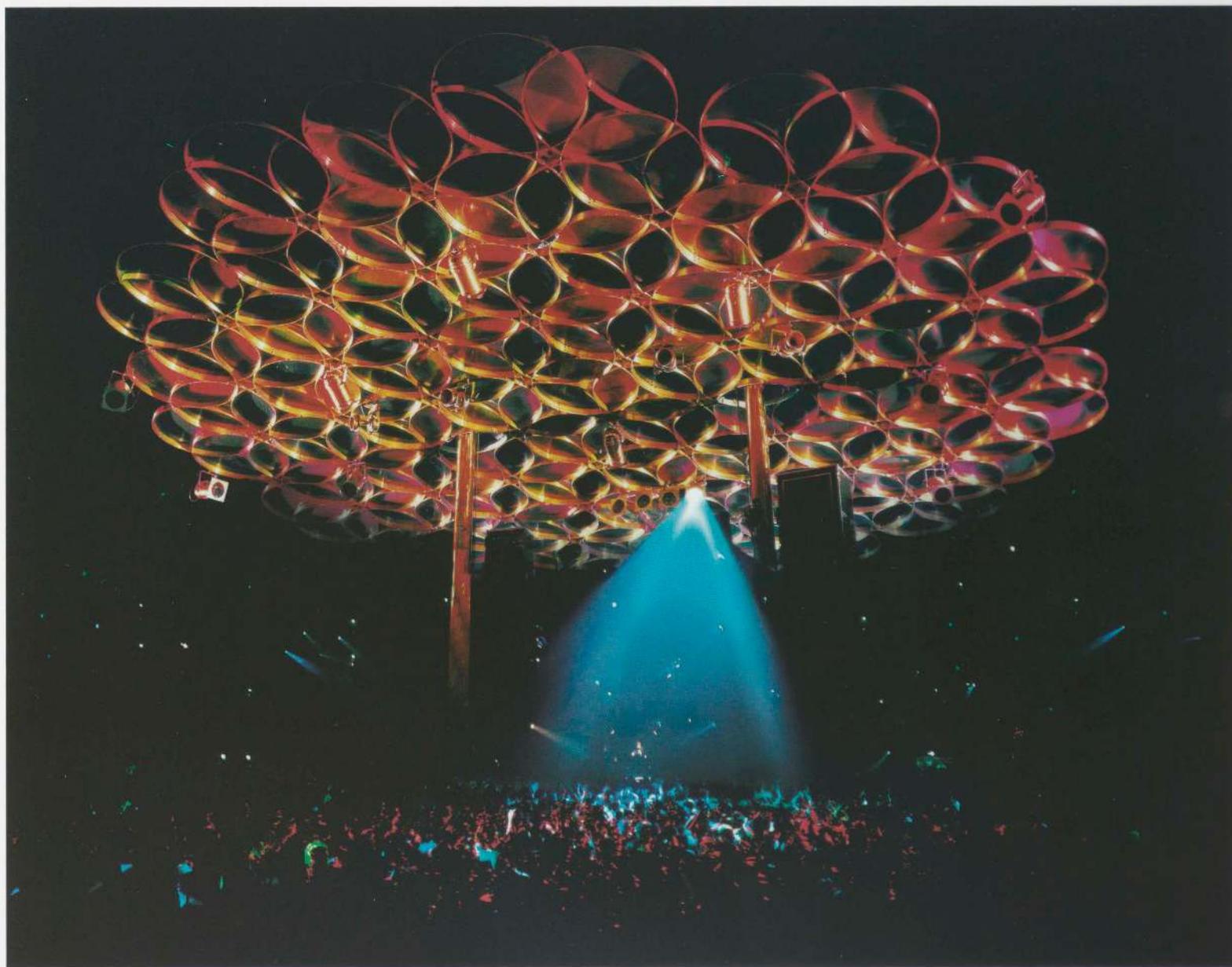


37. Hong Kong Stock Exchange, Diptychon (Hong Kong Stock Exchange, Diptych). 1994





38. **May Day I.** 1997



39. **Ohne Titel II (Untitled II)**, 1993





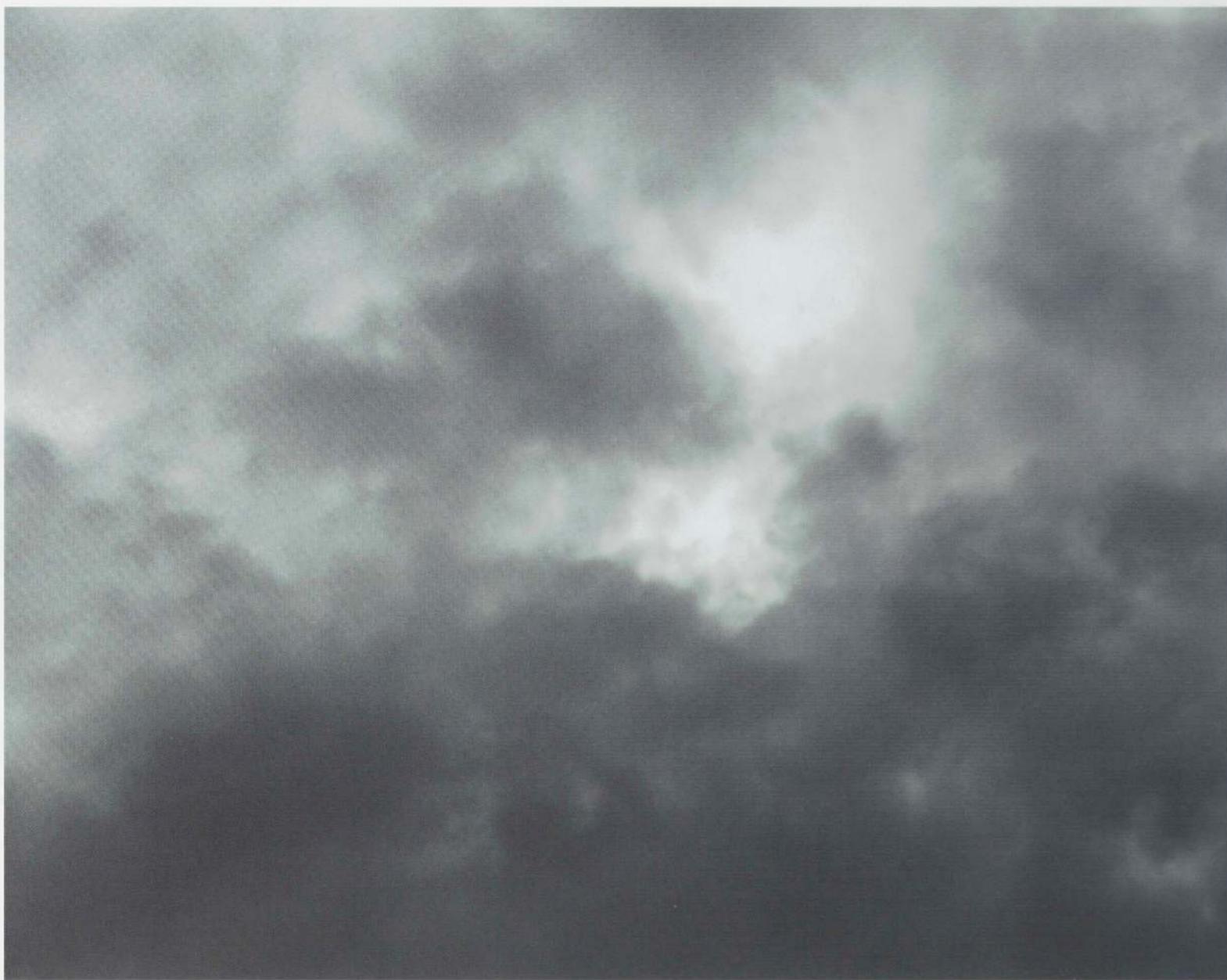
40. **May Day III.** 1998





41. **Ohne Titel VII (Untitled VII)**, 1998













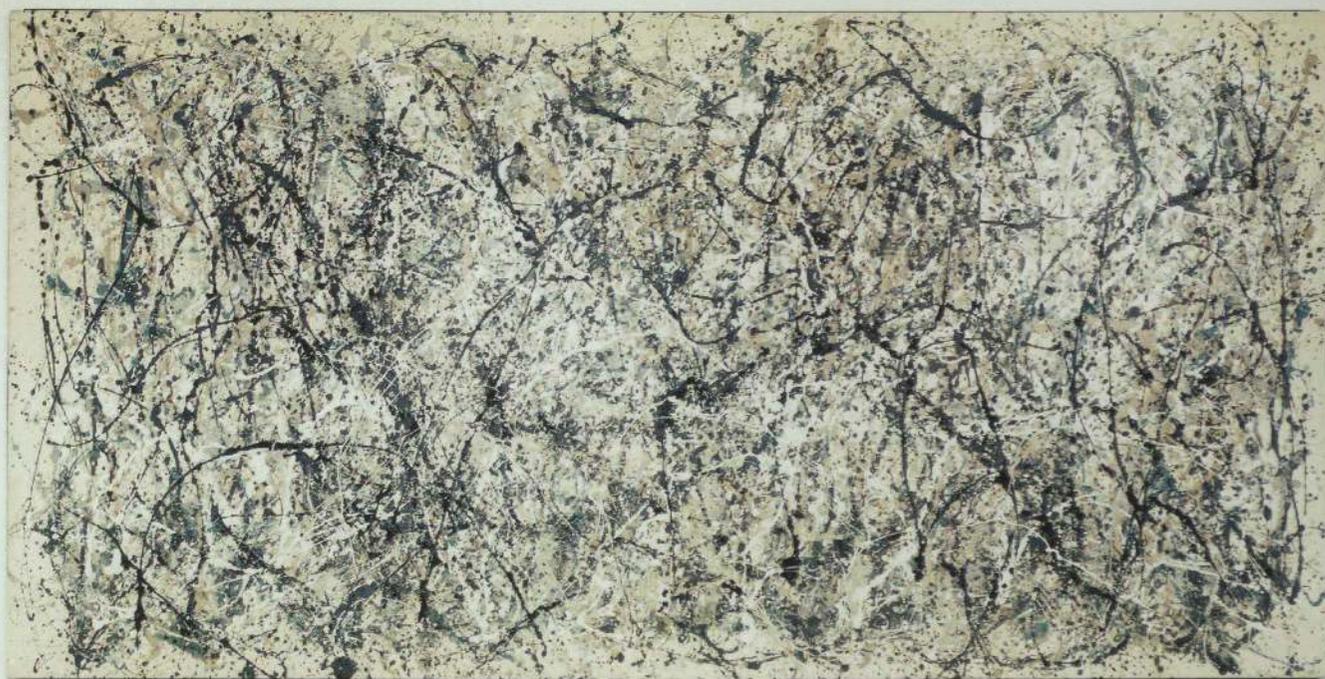


44. **Bundestag, Bonn (Parliament, Bonn). 1998**





45. **Ohne Titel VI (Untitled VI)**. 1997









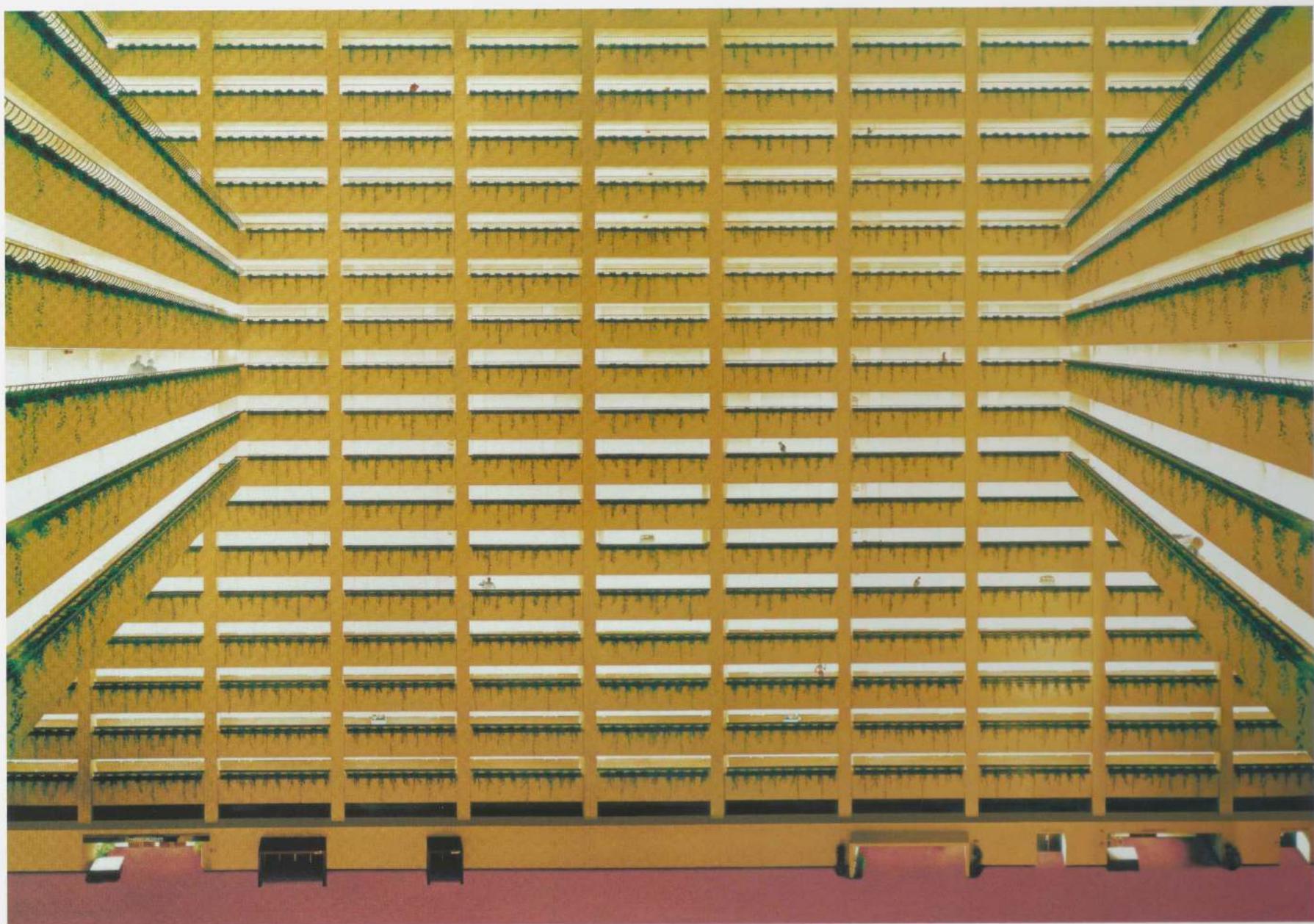








49. **Times Square.** 1997









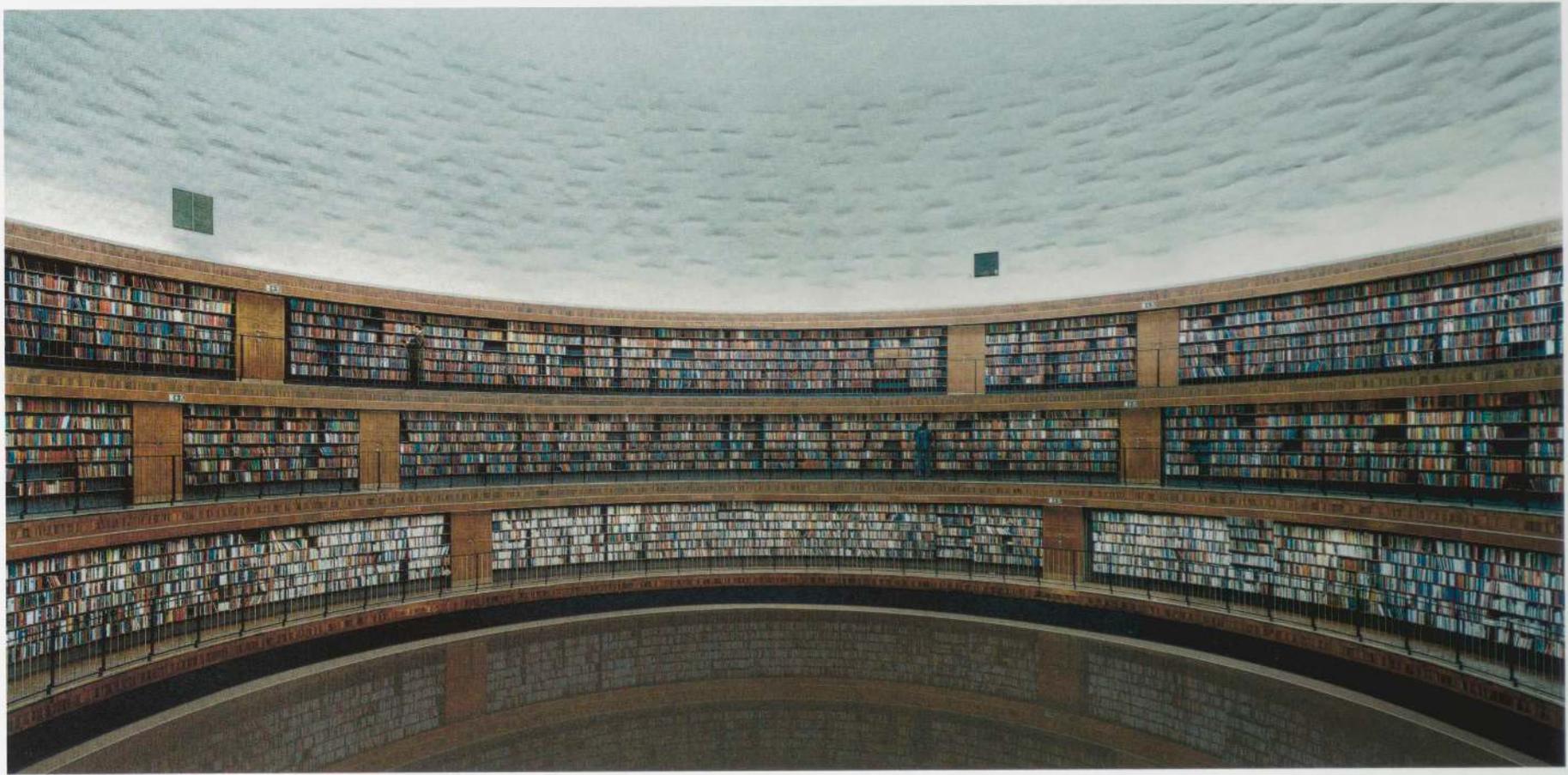


52. **Ohne Titel X (Untitled X)**. 1999





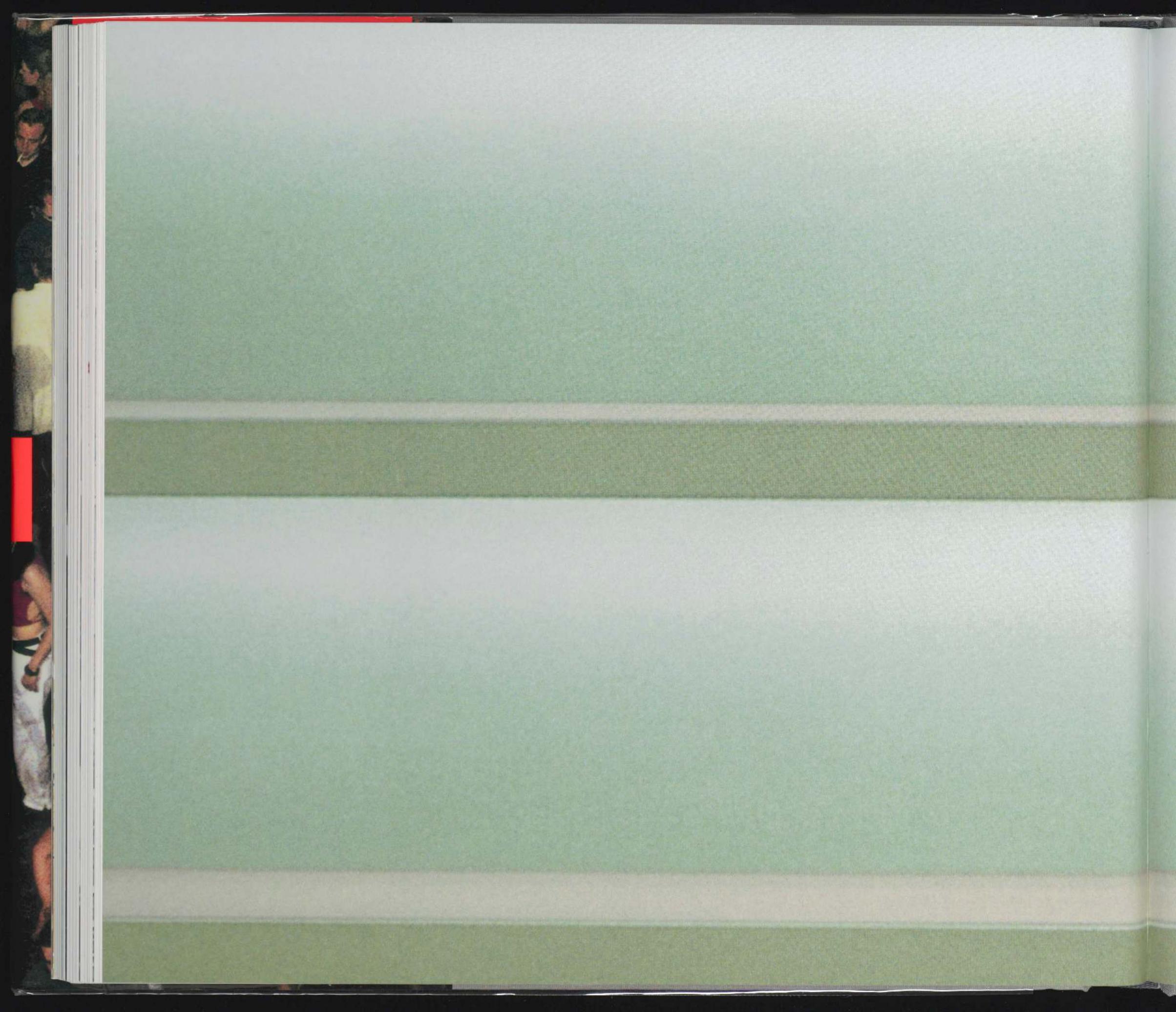




55. **Ohne Titel XII (1) (Untitled XII (1)).** 1999



wie die Seerosen auf dem Wasser nicht nur aus Blatt und Blüten und Weiß und Grün bestehen, sondern auch aus »sanftem Daliegen«. Gewöhnlich stehen sie dabei so ruhig, daß man das Ganze nicht mehr bemerkt; das Gefühl muß ruhig sein, damit die Welt ordentlich ist und bloß vernünftige Beziehungen in ihr herrschen. Es ist ein Sinken oder Steigen des ganzen Menschen auf einen andern Plan, ein »in die Höhe Sinken«, und alle Dinge verändern sich in Übereinstimmung damit, man könnte sagen, sie bleiben dieselben, aber sie befinden sich jetzt in einem anderen Raum oder es ist alles mit einem anderen Sinn gefärbt. In solchen Augenblicken erkennt man, daß außer der Welt für alle, jener festen, mit dem Verstand erforschbaren und behandelbaren, noch eine zweite, bewegliche, Singuläre, Visionäre, Irrationale vorhanden ist, die sich mit ihr nur scheinbar deckt, die wir aber nicht, wie die Leute glauben, bloß im Herzen tragen oder im Kopf, sondern die genau so wirklich draußen steht wie die geltende. Es ist ein unheimliches Geheimnis, und wie alles Geheimnisvolle wird es, wenn man es auszusprechen sucht, leicht mit dem Allergewöhnlichsten verwechselt. Er begriff seine Geschichte. Hunderte von menschlichen Ordnungen sind gekommen und gegangen; von den Göttern bis zu den Nadeln des Schmucks, und von der Psychologie bis zum Grammophon jede eine dunkle Einheit, jede ein dunkler Glaube, die letzte, die aufsteigende zu sein, und jede nach einigen hundert oder tausend Jahren geheimnisvoll zusammensinkend und zu Schutt und Bauplatz vergehend, was ist dies anderes als ein Herausklettern aus dem Nichts, jedesmal nach einer anderen Seite versucht? (Und keine Spur davon, das in Zyklen erfassen zu können!) Als einer jener Sandberge, die der Wind bläst, dann eine Weile lang die eigene Schwere formt, dann wieder der Wind verweht? Was ist alles, was wir tun, anderes als eine nervöse Angst, nichts zu sein: von den Vergnügungen angefangen, die keine sind, sondern nur noch ein Lärm, ein anfeuerndes Geschnatter, um die Zeit totzuschlagen, weil eine dunkle Gewißheit mahnt, daß endlich sie uns totschiagen wird, bis zu den sich übersteigenden Erfindungen, den sinnlosen Geldbergen, die den Geist töten, ob man von Ihnen erdrückt oder getragen wird, den angstvoll ungeduldigen Moden des Geistes, den Kleidern, die sich fortwährend verändern. Was diese Renoviersucht des Daseins zu einem Perpetuum mobile macht, ist nichts als das Ungemach, daß zwischen dem nebelhaften eigenen und dem schon zur fremden Schale erstarrten Ich der Vorgänger wieder nur ein Schein-Ich, eine ungefähr passende Gruppenseele eingeschoben wird. Und wenn man bloß ein bißchen achtgibt, kann man wohl immer in der soeben eingetroffenen letzten Zukunft schon die kommende Alte Zeit sehen. Die neuen





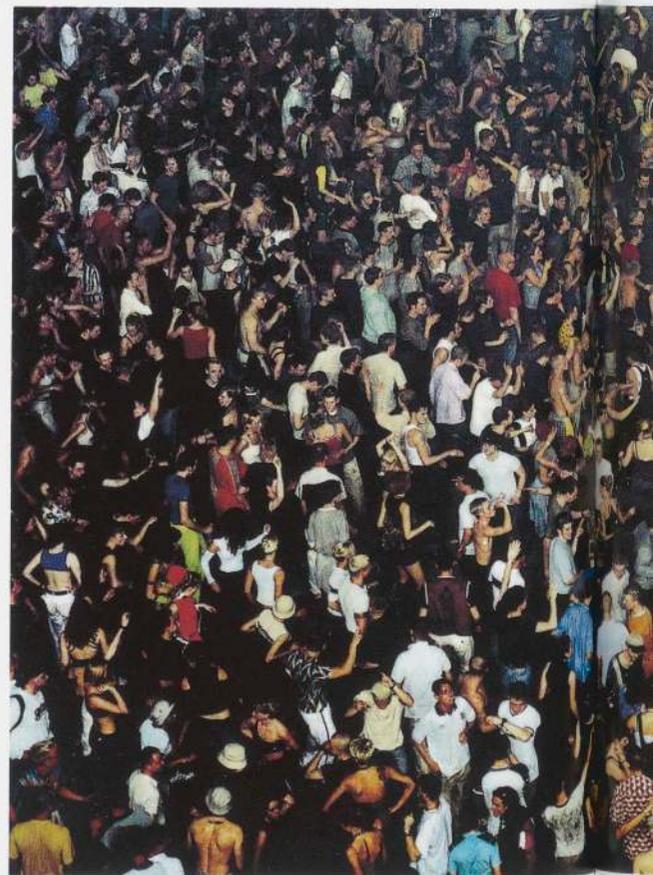


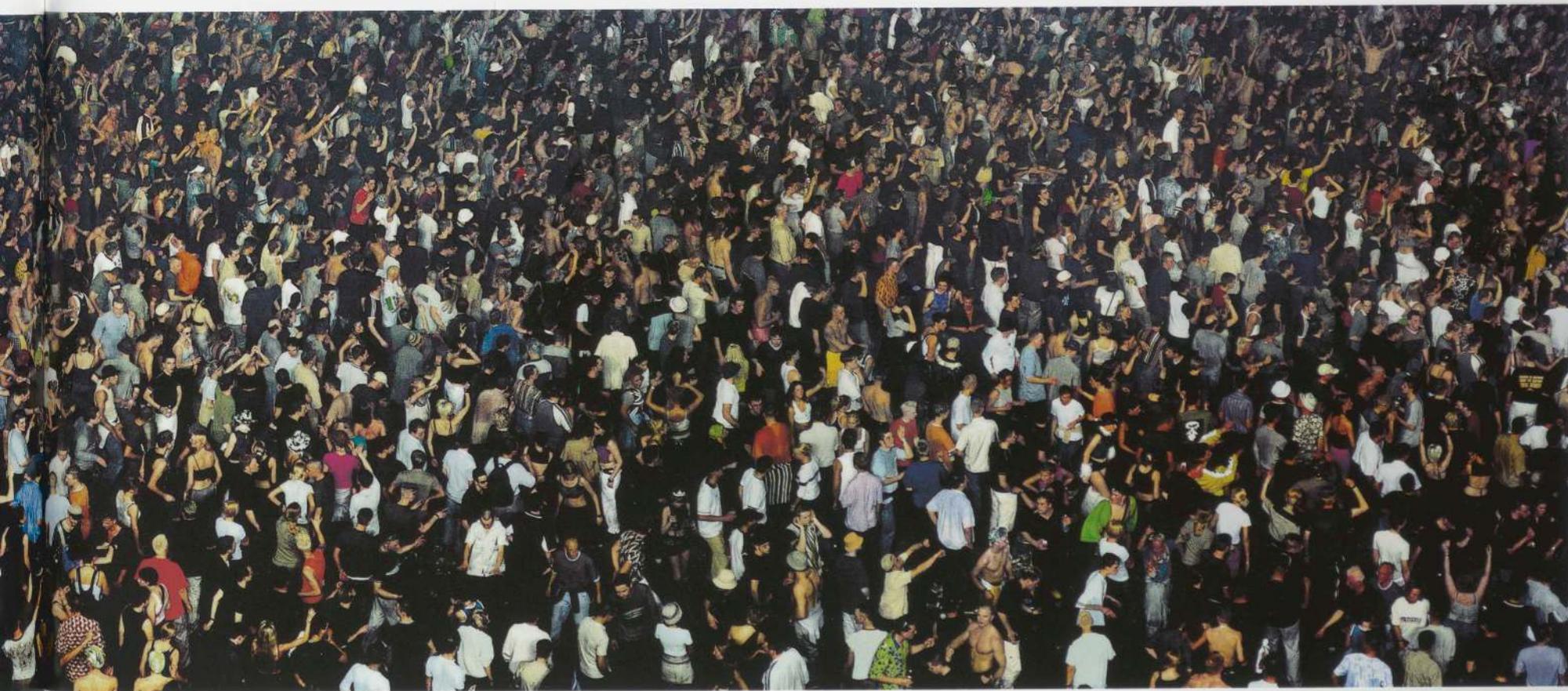
57. Toys "R" Us. 1999











LIST OF PLATES

All of the works by Andreas Gursky that are reproduced in this book, and all of the works in the exhibition that it accompanies, are in the collection of the artist. The latter are lent by the artist, courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, and Monika Sprüth Galerie, Cologne. They are chromogenic color prints, printed with a white margin. In some cases the back of the print is laminated to Plexiglas and the print is framed under glass; in other cases the face of the print is laminated to Plexiglas. In all cases the work is finished with a wooden frame, whose outside dimensions are given here.

Gursky does not record the precise dimensions of the image, and it proved impractical to gather that information for this book. Moreover, image dimensions have occasionally varied slightly within the edition of a given work. The approximate dimensions of the image in a given work, however, may be calculated as follows: the frame is generally between 1 1/2 and 2 inches (4 and 5 cm) wide, and the white margin around the image is generally between 6 1/4 and 7 1/2 inches (16 and 20 cm) wide. Thus the approximate size of the image may be calculated by subtracting roughly 8 to 10 inches (20 to 25 cm) on all four sides—or a total of 16 to 20 inches (40 to 50 cm) from each dimension of the frame size. For example, the image area of a work whose frame dimensions are 6 ft. 1 1/4 in. x 7 ft. 5 in. (186 x 226 cm) measures approximately 55 1/4 x 70 1/2 in. (140 x 180 cm).

Finally, Gursky adopted his current style of presenting his works toward the end of the 1980s. Before that (in other words, for such works as plates 1 through 5), the image area of his prints was in the range of about 20 x 24 in. (50 x 60 cm) to about 24 x 30 inches (60 x 80 cm). [Two such prints—of *Ratingen Swimming Pool* [1987] and *New Year's Day Swimmers* [1988]—are in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York.] For his retrospective at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf in 1998, Gursky reprinted his early photographs in a somewhat larger size and mounted and framed them in a style corresponding to his recent work, so as to unify the exhibition. That practice has also been applied to the present exhibition. To further elide the difference in scale between earlier and later works, Gursky used vertical frames for some horizontal images. In those cases (plates 1, 2, and 5), the method outlined above for calculating the image area obviously does not apply.

1. **Klausenpass.** 1984
36 3/16 x 31 7/8 in. (92 x 81 cm)
 2. **Zürich I.** 1985
36 3/16 x 31 7/8 in. (92 x 81 cm)
 3. **Neujahrsschwimmer**
(**New Year's Day Swimmers**). 1988
51 3/16 x 61 1/2 in. (130 x 155 cm)
 4. **Schwimmbad Ratingen**
(**Ratingen Swimming Pool**). 1987
42 1/2 x 51 3/16 in. (107.5 x 131 cm)
 5. **Sonntagsspaziergänger, Flughafen Düsseldorf**
(**Sunday Strollers, Düsseldorf Airport**). 1984
29 15/16 x 24 in. (76 x 61 cm)
- Pages 56–57: detail of **Ratingen Swimming Pool** (plate 4)
6. **Krefeld.** 1989
36 3/16 x 24 in. (92 x 61 cm)
 7. **Seilbahn, Dolomiten**
(**Cable Car, Dolomites**). 1987
40 15/16 x 50 3/8 in. (104 x 128 cm)
 8. **Niagara Falls.** 1989
59 1/16 x 47 1/4 in. (150 x 120 cm)
- Pages 64–65: detail of **New Year's Day Swimmers** (plate 3)
9. **Salerno.** 1990
6 ft. 2 in. x 7 ft. 5 in. (188 x 226 cm)
 10. **Siemens, Karlsruhe.** 1991
69 1/8 in. x 6 ft. 8 7/8 in. (175.5 x 205.5 cm)
 11. **Tokyo Stock Exchange.** 1990
6 ft. 2 in. x 7 ft. 6 9/16 in. (188 x 230 cm)
- Pages 72–73: detail of **Siemens, Karlsruhe** (plate 10)
- Pages 74–75: detail of **Tokyo Stock Exchange** (plate 11)
- Pages 76–77: detail of **May Day IV** (plate 59)
12. **Autobahn, Bremen.** 1991
6 ft. 2 in. x 7 ft. 5 in. (188 x 226 cm)
 13. **Yogyakarta.** 1994
53 3/16 x 68 15/16 in. (135 x 175 cm)
 14. **Angler, Mülheim a. d. Ruhr**
(**Anglers, Mülheim**). 1989
68 15/16 in. x 6 ft. 11 7/16 in. (175 x 212 cm)
 15. **Ruhrtal (Ruhr Valley).** 1989
68 1/2 in. x 7 ft. 3 13/16 in. (174 x 223 cm)
 16. **Breitscheider Kreuz**
(**Breitscheid Intersection**). 1990
6 ft. 1 1/4 in. x 7 ft. 11 1/2 in. (186 x 243 cm)
 17. **Albertville.** 1992
68 1/2 in. x 6 ft. 9 1/8 in. (173.5 x 206 cm)
 18. **Cairo, Diptychon**
(**Cairo, Diptych**). 1992
Two frames, each 51 x 60 13/16 in. (129.5 x 154.5 cm)
 19. **Hühner, Krefeld**
(**Chickens, Krefeld**). 1989
42 1/2 x 50 in. (108 x 127 cm)
 20. **Genoa.** 1991
66 15/16 in. x 6 ft. 6 3/4 in. (170 x 200 cm)
 21. **Restaurant, St. Moritz.** 1991
69 1/8 in. x 6 ft. 8 15/16 in. (175.5 x 205.5 cm)
 22. **Schiphol.** 1994
6 ft. 1 1/4 in. x 7 ft. 3 7/16 in. (186 x 222 cm)
 23. **Turner Collection.** 1995
69 5/16 x 7 ft. 8 15/16 in. (176 x 236 cm)
 24. **Prada I.** 1996
52 13/16 x 7 ft. 5 in. (134 x 226 cm)
 25. **Ohne Titel I**
(**Untitled I**). 1993
6 ft. 1 1/4 in. x 7 ft. 4 3/16 in. (186 x 224 cm)

26. **Aletschgletscher**
(**Aletsch Glacier**). 1993
70 $\frac{11}{16}$ in. x 7 ft. $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (178.5 x 215 cm)
27. **Happy Valley I**. 1995
7 ft. 5 in. x 6 ft. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (226 x 186 cm)
28. **Paris, Montparnasse**. 1993
6 ft. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. x 13 ft. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (205 x 421 cm)
- Pages 112-113: detail of **Library** (plate 54)
29. **Engadine**. 1995
6 ft. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. x 9 ft. 6 $\frac{9}{16}$ in. (186 x 291 cm)
30. **Atlanta**. 1996
6 ft. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. x 8 ft. 4 $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (186 x 256 cm)
31. **Brasília, Plenarsaal I**
(**Brasília, General Assembly I**). 1994
6 ft. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. x 8 ft. 5 $\frac{15}{16}$ in. (186 x 259 cm)
32. **Hongkong and Shanghai Bank**. 1994
7 ft. 5 in. x 69 $\frac{5}{16}$ in. (226 x 176 cm)
- Pages 122-123: detail of **Hongkong and Shanghai Bank**
(plate 32)
33. **Shanghai**. 2000
c. 9 ft. 2 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. x 6 ft. 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (c. 280 x 200 cm)
34. **Autobahn, Mettmann**. 1993
6 ft. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. x 7 ft. 5 in. (186 x 226 cm)
35. **Sha Tin**. 1994
6 ft. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. x 7 ft. 10 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (186 x 241 cm)
36. **Grand Hyatt Park, Hong Kong**. 1994
7 ft. 5 in. x 69 $\frac{5}{16}$ in. (226 x 176 cm)
37. **Hong Kong Stock Exchange, Diptychon**
(**Hong Kong Stock Exchange, Diptych**). 1994
Two frames, each 6 ft. 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. x 8 ft. 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
(191 x 263.5 cm)
38. **May Day I**. 1997
6 ft. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. x 7 ft. 5 in. (186 x 226 cm)
39. **Ohne Titel II**
(**Untitled II**). 1993
70 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. x 7 ft. 1 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (180 x 216 cm)
40. **May Day III**. 1998
6 ft. 2 in. x 7 ft. 3 $\frac{7}{16}$ in. (188 x 222 cm)
41. **Ohne Titel VII**
(**Untitled VII**). 1998
6 ft. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. x 7 ft. 4 $\frac{3}{16}$ in. (186 x 224 cm)
- Pages 142-143: detail of **Engadine** (plate 29)
42. **Ohne Titel V**
(**Untitled V**). 1997
6 ft. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. x 12 ft. 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (184.8 x 374.6 cm)
43. **EM, Arena, Amsterdam I**. 2000
9 ft. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. x 6 ft. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (276.2 x 206.3 cm)
44. **Bundestag, Bonn**
(**Parliament, Bonn**). 1998
9 ft. 3 $\frac{13}{16}$ in. x 6 ft. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (284 x 207 cm)
45. **Ohne Titel VI**
(**Untitled VI**). 1997
6 ft. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. x 7 ft. 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (186 x 239 cm)
46. **Klitschko**. 1999
6 ft. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. x 8 ft. 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (207 x 261 cm)
47. **Tote Hosen**. 2000
6 ft. 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. x 16 ft. 8 in. (204.4 x 508 cm)
48. **Chicago Board of Trade II**. 1999
6 ft. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. x 11 ft. $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (207 x 336.9 cm)
- Pages 158-159: detail of **99 Cent** (plate 58)
49. **Times Square**. 1997
6 ft. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. x 8 ft. 2 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (186 x 250.5 cm)
50. **Los Angeles**. 1999
6 ft. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. x 11 ft. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (205 x 360 cm)
51. **Ohne Titel III**
(**Untitled III**). 1996
6 ft. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. x 7 ft. 3 $\frac{7}{16}$ in. (186 x 222 cm)
52. **Ohne Titel X**
(**Untitled X**). 1999
9 ft. 3 $\frac{13}{16}$ in. x 6 ft. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (284 x 207 cm)
53. **Prada II**. 1997
65 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. x 10 ft. 4 $\frac{7}{16}$ in. (166 x 316 cm)
54. **Bibliothek**
(**Library**). 1999
6 ft. 9 in. x 11 ft. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (205.7 x 360 cm)
55. **Ohne Titel XII (1)**
(**Untitled XII (1)**). 1999
9 ft. 2 in. x 6 ft. $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (279 x 185 cm)
- Pages 174-175: detail of **Prada II** (plate 53)
56. **Rhein II**
(**Rhine II**). 1999
6 ft. 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. x 11 ft. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (203.8 x 357.5 cm)
57. **Toys "R" Us**. 1999
6 ft. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. x 11 ft. $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (207 x 336 cm)
58. **99 Cent**. 1999
6 ft. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. x 11 ft. $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (207 x 336 cm)
59. **May Day IV**. 2000
6 ft. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. x 16 ft. 8 in. (207.6 x 508 cm)



EXHIBITION CHRONOLOGY

Compiled by Stefan Altevogt

ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

1987

1. Düsseldorf Airport

1988

2. Galerie Johnen & Schöttle, Cologne

1989

3. Centre genevois de gravure contemporaine, Geneva
4. 303 Gallery, New York
5. Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld

1991

6. Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich
7. Galerie Johnen & Schöttle, Cologne
8. 303 Gallery, New York
9. Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Paris
10. Künstlerhaus Stuttgart

1992

11. Kunsthalle, Zurich
12. Victoria Miro Gallery, London
13. Galleria Lia Rumma, Naples, Italy

1993

14. Monika Sprüth Galerie, Cologne

1994

15. *Andreas Gursky: Fotografien 1984–1993*. Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (February 4–April 10). Traveled to: De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam (May 20–July 3)
16. Le Case d'Arte, Milan

1995

17. 303 Gallery, New York
18. Lumen Travo, Amsterdam
19. Rooseum — Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö
20. *Andreas Gursky: Images*. Tate Gallery Liverpool
21. Galerie Mai 36, Zurich
22. Portikus, Frankfurt am Main

1996

23. Galerie Jean Bernier, Athens
24. Galerie Ghislaine Hussenot, Paris
25. Galleri Specta, Copenhagen
26. Victoria Miro Gallery, London
27. Monika Sprüth Galerie, Cologne (November 8, 1996–January 11, 1997)

1997

28. Galerie Mai 36, Zurich
29. Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich
30. Matthew Marks Gallery, New York (November 15, 1997–January 3, 1998)

1998

31. *Currents 27: Andreas Gursky*. Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee (February 27–April 26). Traveled to: The Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle (June 19–September 20); Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (November 13, 1998–January 3, 1999); Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio (January 24–March 28, 1999)
32. *Andreas Gursky: Fotografien 1984–1998*. Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (May 23–August 23). Traveled to: Fotomuseum Winterthur (November 7, 1998–January 3, 1999); Serpentine Gallery, London (January 21–March 7, 1999); Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (March 27–May 16, 1999); Castello di Rivoli, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin (June 4–September 9, 1999); Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon (October 14, 1999–January 2, 2000)
33. *Andreas Gursky: Fotografien 1984 bis heute*. Kunsthalle Düsseldorf

1999

34. Van Abbe entr'acte, Eindhoven
35. Matthew Marks Gallery, New York (December 3, 1999–January 15, 2000)
36. Regen Projects, Los Angeles (December 9, 1999–January 29, 2000)

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1985

- Studenten der Kunstakademie Düsseldorf*. Künstlerwerkstatt Lothringer Strasse, Munich

1986

- Ausstellungsräume Brückenstrasse, Düsseldorf
7 Fotografen. Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich

1987

- Photoarbeiten I*. Galerie Wittenbrink, Munich

1988

- Zeichnung, Druckgrafik und Photographie*. Galerie Mosel & Tschechow, Munich
Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich
Galerie Johnen & Schöttle, Cologne

1989

- Erster Deutscher Photopreis '89*. Galerie Landesgalerie, Stuttgart
Galerie Ralph Wernike, Stuttgart
Galerie Ghislaine Hussenot, Paris
Galerie Bruges La Morte, Bruges
Erste Internationale Foto-Triennale. Villa Merkel, Esslingen
Andreas Gursky, Thomas Ruff, Thomas Struth. Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles
303 Gallery, New York
Parallel Views. Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam
Galleria Lia Rumma, Naples
The Periphery, Part I: Andreas Gursky and Thomas Struth. P.S. 1, Clocktower Gallery, New York
In Between and Beyond: From Germany. The Power Plant, Toronto
Photo-Kunst. Graphische Sammlung, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (November 11, 1989–January 14, 1990)

1990

- Aperto*, Venice Biennale. Venice
De Afstand. Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam
Der klare Blick. Kunstverein München, Munich
The Past and the Present of Photography—When Photographs Enter the Museum. Organized jointly by The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (September 26–November 11) and The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto (November 20–December 16)
Thomas Ruff, Andreas Gursky, Candida Höfer, Günther Förg: Fotografie. Schuhhaussaal, Kunstverein Ulm (December 9, 1990–January 13, 1991)

1991

- 10 Jahre Kunstfonds.* Kunstverein Bonn
Andreas Gursky, Fischli/Weiss, Boyd Webb. Galerie Ghislaine Hussenot, Paris
Kunst im öffentlichen Raum. Photoprojekt München, Munich
Aus der Distanz. Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf
Sguardo di Medusa. Castello di Rivoli, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin
Bremer Kunstpreis 1991. Kunsthalle Bremen
Renta-Preis 1991. Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nuremberg

1992

- Doubletake: Collective Memory & Current Art.* Hayward Gallery and South Bank Centre, London (February 20–April 20). Traveled to: Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (January 8–February 28, 1993)
Mythos Rhein. Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen
Qui, quoi, où? Un Regard sur l'art en Allemagne en 1992. Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris
Distanz und Nähe. Organized for international tour by the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart. Traveled to: Prague (1992); Kraków, Katowice, Berlin, Ljubljana (1993); Rijeka, Rotterdam, Ankara, Izmir (1994); Vancouver, Calgary, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Washington, D.C. (1995); Riga, Kawasaki (1996); Tochigi, Kyoto, Melbourne, Sydney (1997); Tel Aviv, Athens, Thessalonica, Moscow, St. Petersburg (1998); and Odessa (1999)

1993

- Industriefotografie heute.* Neue Pinakothek, Munich (April 30–June 27). Traveled to Sprengel Museum, Hannover (July 14–September 12)
Die Photographie in der deutschen Gegenwartskunst. Museum Ludwig, Cologne
Symposion: Architektur und Fotografie. Henry van de Velde Gesellschaft, Hagen
Stipendiaten für zeitgenössische deutsche Fotografie der Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung 1990 bis 1992. Museum Folkwang, Essen (December 9, 1993–January 23, 1994). Traveled to: Galerie Robert Doisneau, Centre Culturel André Malraux, Vandoeuvre-les-Nancy (March 22–April 30, 1994)
Gursky, Meuser, Schön. Galerie Tabea Langenkamp, Düsseldorf
Deutsche Kunst mit Photographie. Die 90er Jahre. Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt am Main

1994

- Vis-à-vis: Fotografien aus Lothringen und dem Ruhrgebiet.* Ruhrlandmuseum, Essen (March 18–June 5). Traveled to: Centre Culturel André Malraux, Vandoeuvre-les-Nancy (September 5–October 29)
The Epic and the Everyday: Contemporary Photographic Art. Hayward Gallery and The South Bank Centre, London
Zum gleichen Thema. Städtische Galerie Nordhorn
La Ville: Intimité et froideur. Galerie des Archives, Paris
Los Géneros de la pintura. Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas
Junge deutsche Kunst der 90er Jahre aus Nordrhein-Westfalen: Die Generation nach Becher, Beuys, Polke, Richter, Ruthenbeck. Sonje Museum of Contemporary Art, Kyongju (October 7, 1994–February 10, 1995). Traveled to: Hong Kong Arts Center, Hong Kong (May 5–21, 1995); Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei (June 3–August 6, 1995); Sun Tec Exhibition Center, Singapore (August 30–September 2, 1995); Cultural Palace of the Working People, Beijing (October 23–November 5, 1995); National Museum of Modern Art, Osaka (December 14, 1995–February 27, 1996); National Gallery, Bangkok (April 5–30, 1996)
Reverendo Brasília neu gesehen. Galeria Athos Bulcão, Teatro Nacional, Brasília (September 9–25). Traveled to: Museu de Imagem e Som, São Paulo (October 4–25); Palácio Gustavo Capanema, Rio de Janeiro (January 26–February 23, 1995); Museu Metropolitan de Arte, Curitiba (March 9–April 2, 1995); Usian do Gasômetro, Porto Alegre (April 6–26, 1995); Centro Cultural da UFMG, Belo Horizonte (May 4–25, 1995)
Technik: Fotografie. Teil 1. Galerie Busche, Berlin (December 3, 1994–February 2, 1995)

1995

- Fotografiska Museet, Stockholm* (with Willie Doherty)
Artistes/Architectes. Le Nouveau Musée Villeurbanne, France
Dicht am Leben/Close to Life. Dritte Internationale Foto-Triennale Esslingen 1995. Villa Merkel, Bahnwärterhaus, and Galerien der Stadt, Esslingen
Fotografie nach der Fotografie. Aktionsforum Praterinsel, Munich
Des Limites du tableau. Musée départemental d'art contemporain de Rochechouart
 Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

1996

- Im Kunstlicht.* Kunsthaus Zurich
Fotografien in der Gegenwartskunst. Prospect '96. Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt am Main
Fondo, figura y lluvia. Galeria Antoni Estrany, Barcelona
Serielle Strukturen: Die Sammlung I. Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich
Tableaux de la vie moderne. Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels
Private View. Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle
Stadtansichten. Otto Nagel Galerie, Berlin
 Sydney Biennale. Sydney
 Galerie Specta, Copenhagen (with Thomas Huber)
Fotografia nell'Arte Tedesca Contemporanea. Claudia Gian Ferrari Arte Contemporanea, Milan (September 9–November 9). Traveled to: Foro Boario, Modena (November 24, 1996–February 9, 1997)

1997

- Belladonna.* Institute for Contemporary Art, London
Tuning Up # 4. Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg
Young German Artists 2. The Saatchi Collection, London
Absolute Landscape: Between Illusion and Reality. Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama
Zürich: Ein Fotoportrait. Kunsthaus Zurich
Positionen künstlerischer Fotografie in Deutschland nach 1945. Berlinische Galerie, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (September 7, 1997–January 11, 1998)
On The Edge: Contemporary Art from the Werner and Elaine Dannheisser Collection. The Museum of Modern Art, New York (September 30, 1997–January 20, 1998)
A Nice Group of Pictures. Dan Bernier Gallery, Santa Monica, California
Alpenblick. Die zeitgenössische Kunst und das Alpine. Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (October 31, 1997–February 1, 1998)
Landschaften/Landscapes: Michael Bach, Andreas Gursky, Axel Hütte, Michael van Ofen, Andreas Schön. Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf (December 20, 1997–February 22, 1998)
Airport. The Photographers' Gallery, London

1998

- Citibank Private Bank Photography Prize 1998.* The Photographers' Gallery, London
Silos: Robin Collyer, Axel Hütte, Andreas Gursky. FRAC Centre, Orléans
The Global City. Gemeentemuseum Helmond, The Netherlands

Le Sentiment de la montagne: Visions contemporaines.

Musée de peinture et de sculpture, Grenoble

Das Versprechen der Fotografie: Die Sammlung der DG Bank.

Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (October 1998–January 1999). Traveled to: Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hannover (March–May 1999); Centre Nationale de la Photographie, Paris (June–August 1999); Akademie der Künste, Berlin (January–March 2000); and Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt am Main (January–March 2001)

1999

Insight Out: Landschaft und Interieur als Themen

zeitgenössischer Photographie. Kunstraum Innsbruck (February 20–May 8). Traveled to: Kunsthau Hamburg (July 27–September 5), Kunsthau Baselland Muttentz, Basel (October 9–November 21)

Reconstructing Space: Architecture in Recent German

Photography. Architectural Association, London

Zwischen Abbildung und Experiment: Fotokunst 1950–1990

aus der Sammlung Garnatz. Städtische Galerie Karlsruhe

Zoom: Ansichten zur deutschen Gegenwartskunst: Sammlung

Landesbank Baden-Württemberg. Organized by the Kunstverein Stuttgart and Landesbank Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart; shown simultaneously at five venues in Stuttgart and Esslingen (May 20–June 13, 1999). Traveled to: Städtisches Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach (July 11–August 29, 1999) and Kunsthalle zu Kiel (November 24, 1999–January 9, 2000).

Forum: Robert Grosvenor, Andreas Gursky, John Wesley.

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Views from the Edge of the World. Marlborough Chelsea, London

Tomorrow for Ever. Photographie als Ruine. Kunsthalle Krems

(March 21–May 16. Traveled to: Museum Küppersmühle, Duisburg (October 29, 1999–January 30, 2000)

The Big Picture: Large-Format Photography. Middlebury

College Museum of Art, Middlebury, Vermont

Räume. Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria (with Lucinda Devlin and

Candida Höfer)

An Expanded View: Recent Acquisitions: Photography.

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Von Beuys bis Cindy Sherman: Sammlung Lothar Schirmer.

Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich

Contemplating Pollock. Victoria Miro Gallery, London

Dokumentarfotografie: Förderpreise 1997/1998.

Museum Folkwang, Essen

Grosse Illusionen: Thomas Demand, Andreas Gursky,

Edward Ruscha. Kunstmuseum Bonn (June 17–

August 15). Traveled to: Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami (October 10–November 28)

Das Gedächtnis öffnet seine Tore. Städtische Galerie im

Lenbachhaus, Munich (October 23, 1999–March 19, 2000)

Unschärferelation: Fotografie als Dimension der Malerei.

Kunstverein im Marienbad, Freiburg im Breisgau

(November 26, 1999–January 9, 2000). Traveled to:

Kunstmuseum Heidenheim (March 26–April 30, 2000),

Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken (June 22–August 13, 2000)

Photo España 99. Festival Internacional de Fotografía, Madrid

(with Thomas Ruff, Edward Ruscha, and Andres Serrano)

Full Exposure: Contemporary Photography. New Jersey Center

for Visual Arts, Summit, N.J.

2000

Ansicht Aussicht Einsicht. Kunstsammlungen der Ruhr-

Universität Bochum and Museum Bochum (January 29–

March 12). Traveled to: Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst,

Leipzig (April 2–May 28), and Galeria Bunkier Sztuki,

Krakowie (July 21–August 13) (with Candida Höfer,

Axel Hütte, Thomas Ruff, and Thomas Struth)

Landmark Pictures. Busch Reisinger Museum, Harvard

University, Cambridge (with Edward Ruscha)

Let's Entertain. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

(February 17–April 30, 2000). Traveled to: Portland Art

Museum (July 7–September 17, 2000); Musée national

d'art moderne, Paris (November 15–December 18, 2000);

El Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Internacional Rufino

Tamayo, Mexico City (June 6–August 8, 2001);

and Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, Miami

(September 14–November 25, 2001)

Walker Evans & Company. The Museum of Modern Art,

New York

How You Look at It. Sprengel Museum Hannover (May 14–

August 6). Traveled to: Städelsches Kunstinstitut

and Städtische Galerie, Frankfurt am Main (August 23–

November 12)

Architecture without Shadow. Centro Andaluz de Arte

Contemporáneo, Seville, and Centro de Cultura

Contemporánea, Barcelona

Sydney Biennale. Sydney

Photography Now. Contemporary Arts Museum, New Orleans

Szenenwechsel XVIII. Museum für moderne Kunst,

Frankfurt am Main

Recent Acquisitions. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

Herzog & de Meuron. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

Collection 2000. Tate Modern, Bankside, London

Architecture Hot and Cold. The Museum of Modern Art,

New York

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago

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Compiled by Stefan Altevogt

ON AND BY GURSKY

Numbers in square brackets cross-index catalogues, brochures, and reviews of one-person exhibitions to corresponding entries in the Exhibition Chronology.

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- Amsellem, Patrick, and Lars Nittve, eds. *Andreas Gursky*. Exh. cat. Malmö: Rooseum — Center for Contemporary Art, 1995. Text: Hans Irrek, "Den Intensiva Rumsupplevelsens Dokument" / "Documents of Intense Spatial Experience" (n.p.; in Swedish and English) [19].
- Bamberger, Tom, ed. *Currents 27: Andreas Gursky*. Exh. brochure. Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1998. Text: Bamberger, "Andreas Gursky," pp. 3–6 [31].
- Bradley, Fiona, ed. *Andreas Gursky: Images*. Exh. cat. Liverpool: Tate Gallery Liverpool, and London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1995. Texts: Fiona Bradley, "Introduction" (pp. 8–12); Greg Hilty, "The Occurrence of Space" (pp. 14–56); and Lewis Biggs, "Brave New World" (pp. 58–64) [20].
- Bernard Bürgi, ed. *Andreas Gursky*. Exh. cat. Zurich: Kunsthalle Zürich, and Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 1992. Text: Bürgi, "Ein Gespräch zwischen Andreas Gursky und Bernhard Bürgi. 6. Januar–11 Februar 1992" (pp. 4–37) [11].
- Felix, Zdenek, ed. *Andreas Gursky: Photographs 1984–1993*. Exh. cat. Hamburg: Deichtorhallen, and Amsterdam: De Appel Foundation, in association with Schirmer/Mosel, Munich, 1994. Text: Felix and Saskia Bos, "About the Exhibition" (pp. 5–7); Rudolf Schmitz, "Neither Murder nor Baptism: Andreas Gursky's Holistic View" (pp. 7–14). Also published in German, as *Andreas Gursky: Fotografien 1984–1993* [16].
- Görner, Veit, ed. *Andreas Gursky: Fotografien 1984–1998*. Exh. cat. Wolfsburg: Kunstmuseum, 1998. Accompanied by a supplement including the following texts: Görner, "... im Allgemein gehe ich die Dinge langsam an" / "... I generally let things develop slowly," pp. 3–7 [German], 7–10 [English]; and Annelie Lütgens, "Der Blick in die Vitrine oder: Schrein und Ornament. Zu den neuen Bildern von Andreas Gursky" / "Shrines and Ornaments: A Look into the Display Cabinet: Andreas Gursky's New Pictures" (pp. 10–15 [German], 15–19 [English]) [32].
- Herbert, Lynn M., ed. *Andreas Gursky*. Exh. brochure. Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum, 1998. Text: Herbert, "Just What Is a Photograph These Days?" (pp. 3–4) [31].
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- Irrek, Hans, ed. *Andreas Gursky: Montparnasse*. Exh. cat. Frankfurt am Main: Portikus, in association with Oktagon, Stuttgart, 1995. Texts: Irrek, "Fragmente einer Weltsicht" (5–19); and interviews conducted by Ursula Trübenbach and Irrek with Jean Dubuisson, architect of the apartment building represented in *Paris, Montparnasse* (pp. 21–24), and with tenants Benkiran (pp. 25–26), Laufer (pp. 27–28), and Marbach (pp. 29–30) [22].
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- Syring, Marie Luise, ed. *Andreas Gursky: Photographs from 1984 to the Present*. Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle, and Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1998. Texts: Syring, "Where is 'Untitled'?: On Locations and the Lack of Them in Gursky's Photography" (pp. 5–7); Rupert Pfab, "Perception and Communication: Thoughts on New Motifs by Andreas Gursky" (pp. 9–11); and Lynne Cooke, "Andreas Gursky: Visionary (Per) Versions" (pp. 13–17). Also published in German, as *Andreas Gursky: Fotografien 1984 bis heute* [33].
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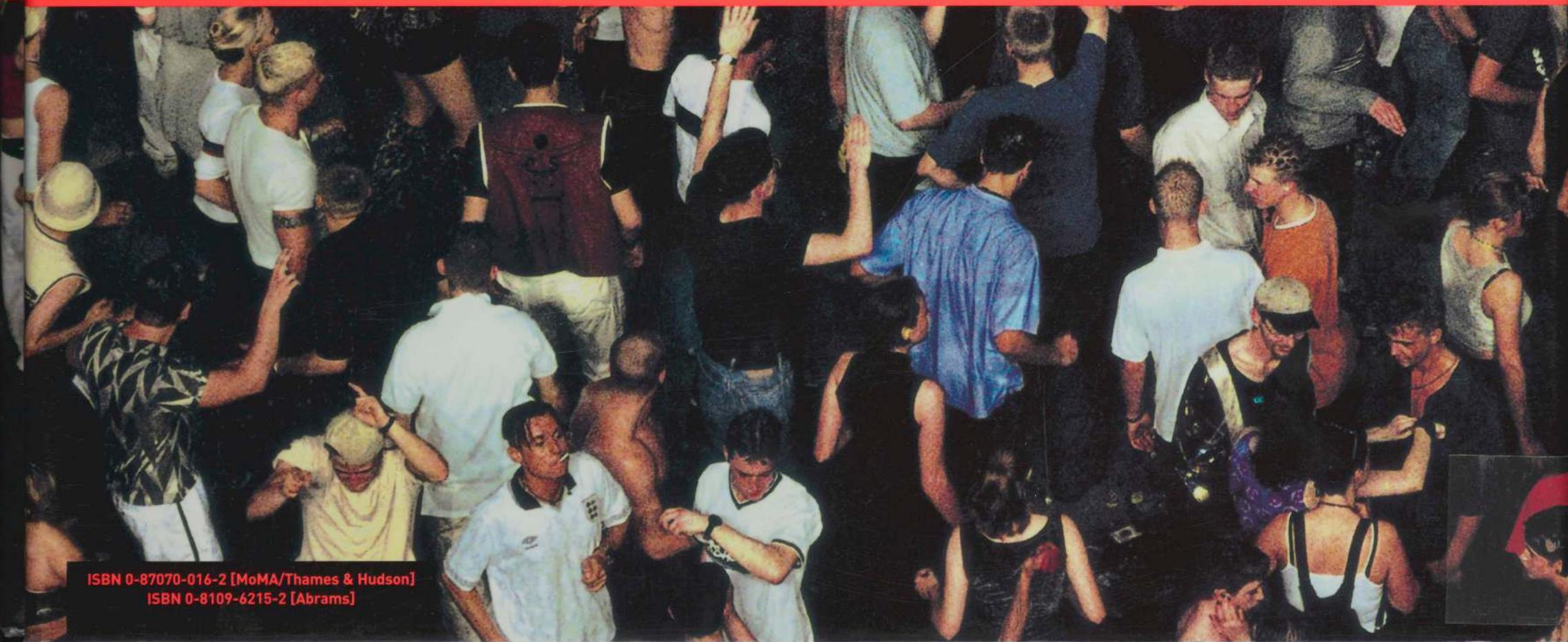
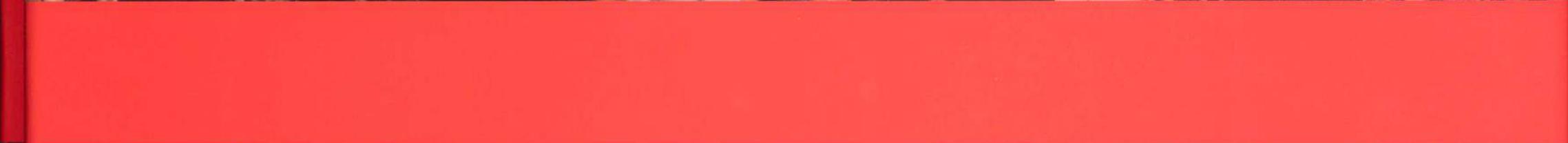
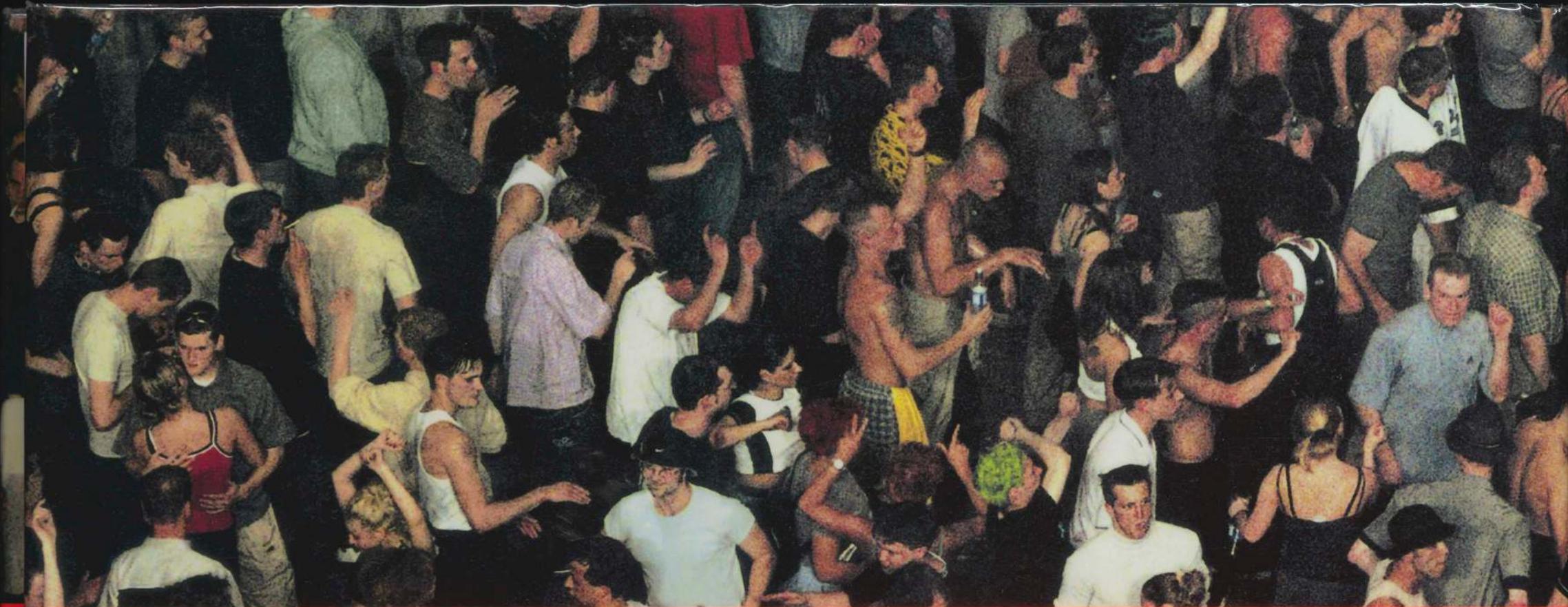
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