

**ANDREAS GURSKY**

23 September 2012 – 13 January 2013

Curators: Andreas Gursky and Beat Wismer

Sponsor: NATIONAL-BANK

The oeuvre of the Düsseldorf-based, internationally renowned photographic artist Andreas Gursky (born in Leipzig in 1955) offers in contemporary photography a new approach to realism. Often highly conceptual in his approach, Gursky makes full use of photo montage using digital technology. For his major exhibition at Museum Kunstpalast, Gursky selected 60 works from his oeuvre. Some of the more recent pieces are to be shown to the public for the first time in this one-off show. Rather than following a chronological order, the exhibition mixes new and old, small and some very large-scale works, offering new and unusual perspectives on Gursky's photographic art.

Gursky's subjects encompass architecture, landscape and interiors, as well as large-scale events attended by huge crowds. The Düsseldorf exhibition spans from the early 1980s through to the very recent series such as *Ocean I-VI*, 2010, and *Bangkok*, 2011.

*"What I do it is not purely photography", Gursky comments on his own work. "All of my pictures draw from direct visual experience, from which I develop a pictorial idea, which is then tried and tested in the studio in terms of its worthiness of being used for a picture, and finally developed and rendered precise on the computer."* (Andreas Gursky)

Nearly all of Gursky's photographic works are based on a multitude of shots. These are elaborately condensed together on a computer, becoming one integral composition. Gursky's aim is neither to achieve documentary objectivity, nor to present a subjective perspective, but to create a synthesis of visual structures, and construct a perfect individual picture or series.

*"Invariably, Gursky initially starts off by searching for images, and in a second step invents his picture. Gursky's pictures do not appear out of nowhere, they are always based on a picture which existed previously. No matter, to what extent - he works on the 'pre-picture' until it finally matches what he had in mind."* (Beat Wismer, Generaldirektor Stiftung Museum Kunstpalast)

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Particularly the series *Bangkok*, even more so than his cycle *Ocean* based on satellite images, testifies that Gursky is both an artist who works conceptually and a painter working with photography. The works show no hints as to the location of motifs, merely the title "*Bangkok*" suggests the location of the depicted shoreless flowing water.

The gaze on the Chao Phraya flowing through Bangkok, which does not fall upon the river from high above, but from a boat landing stage, the observation of the changing play of light on the water's surface, as well as the aesthetic breaks caused by the waste floating in the river, gave Gursky the impulse for this new series. With a refined sense for painterly density, he examined the possible variations with a view to compositional aspects. He finally developed a total of ten works from the river's light-shadow camouflage. In contrast to the *Ocean* work series, Gursky exclusively used portrait format for *Bangkok*. This lends each individual piece a meditative dimension.

Alternating between reality and fictional effect, especially the works of the *Bangkok* series exhibit a high degree of abstraction and offer scope for a wealth of painterly associations. They are reminiscent of Art Informel, or of Abstract Expressionist pictures by Clifford Still or Barnett Newman.

One key work which – among others – will be shown for the first time in this exhibition is the large-format photographic piece titled *Qatar* dating from 2012. This work depicts a giant liquid gas tank which has been completely drained for cleaning purposes on board one of the transport ships departing from Qatar on a regular basis.

In order to photographically capture the huge dimensions of the space, which appears like a safe or strong room, and in order to be on the same level as the kneeling figure becoming visible in the milky-transparent tent on the left-hand side of the picture, Gursky had to descend 40 metres down a ladder into the tank clad with gold shimmering aluminium panels. With the miniscule size of the person present in the giant tank and the array of light reflections in the vast, somewhat eerie enclosed space, the picture composer Gursky achieves a strong poetic impact.

Gursky's photographic art shown in the Düsseldorf exhibition illustrates that the artist chooses his vantage point in correspondence with the motif and subject of the picture. With the aid of digital image processing, some of his extremely large-scale works summarise the multi-tude of perspective possibilities – front view, top view, bottom view or overview. Many of his works thus exhibit a perspective ambivalence between distanced overview and focussed detail sharpness. Works such as *Chicago Board of Trade III* (1999),

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*Madonna* (2001) or *Boxenstopp* (pit stop, 2007) are based on a very complex image composition which, rather than emphasising a central perspective, give all details equal value.

Andreas Gursky, who with his works makes a considerable contribution to the international significance of contemporary German photography, studied Visual Communication with Michael Schmidt from 1978 to 1981 at the Folkwang University in Essen, at the institute for the training of professional photographers founded by Otto Steinert. He subsequently continued his studies at the Academy of Art in Düsseldorf, where from 1985 until his graduation in 1987 he was master student of Bernd Becher. Along with artists including Candida Höfer, Axel Hütte, Thomas Ruff, Jörg Sasse and Thomas Struth, Andreas Gursky was part of the group of Becher students who coined the term "Düsseldorf School of Photography".

In 2010 Andreas Gursky was appointed professor at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art, where he teaches free art.

### Catalogue:

Accompanying the exhibition, a 112-page catalogue is published by Steidl, comprising textual contributions from Hans Irrek, Beat Wismer and John Yau.

Museum shop price: approx. 30 Euro

Retail price: 38 Euro, ISBN 978-3-86930-554-7

### Opening hours:

Tue-Sun, 11 am – 6 pm, Thu, 11 am – 9 pm

### Entrance fees:

10 Euro regular, 8 Euro concessions, including group fee per person from 10 persons, 23 Euro family ticket

Combined ticket including collections and all other exhibitions (collection presented in the Palast wing from approx. 1 October 2012): 12 Euro regular, 10 Euro concessions, including group fee per person from 10 persons, 27 Euro family ticket

***The Museum Kunstpalast Foundation is a public-private partnership between the city of Düsseldorf, E.ON AG and METRO GROUP.***

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