

PROJECTESD

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JOCHEN LEMPERT

Opening: 9th February, 19:30 h.

Exhibition: 09.02 > 03.04.10.

Tuesday to Saturday, 11:00 to 19:00h

Jochen Lempert's work is a combination of art, scientific research, documentation and conceptualism. He photographs the natural world and its inhabitants. He searches for the animal world in places where its occurrence is not so well evidenced, recording life in a broad diversity of environments, from natural history museums to street life, from remote places to banal objects and situations. He compiles his "artless" black-and-white, hand-developed photographs in a phenotypical archive of images covering an ample spectrum, from common everyday views, to compositions that tend towards complete abstraction. His interest in animals as a subject is further complemented by his exploration of the properties and materiality of the photographic medium. His work defines a unique artistic position, detached from the dominant trends and canons of contemporary photography.

For his fourth exhibition at ProjecteSD, Lempert presents a selection of recent works. Serial works are combined with single pictures. Figurative motifs are linked with photographs whose subject can't be easily discerned due to its experimental approach. This is the case in *Glow-worm (Movement on 35 mm Film)*, a photographic image fragmented in four parts which shows a stream of light over a black background. What the image portrays is the movement of a glow-worm over a strip of film. Lempert's former practise as experimental filmmaker has clearly left indelible marks on his photographic work. *Continental Drift* depicts another almost cinematic sequence of photographs. At much larger scale this time, an enigmatic blackened cloud in the sky develops in a progression of forms. These images, of some sort of dramatic romanticism, which look more charcoal drawings than conventional photographs, somehow bring to mind Bruce Conner's film *Crosswords*⁽¹⁾. *Continental Drift* is subtly connected to the next series, an older piece, *Works by Charles P. Alexander from 1915 to 1974* (2005) which shows in 7 photographs of book pages, the scientific investigations of the American biologist on crane flies, as published in various science journals over a period of time in different countries. Seriality and repetition, the notion of the archive and the unavoidable reference to research are found in this work.

Kiangs is a set of two almost identical photographs. As the artist himself explains: "In the year 1990, I took a picture of a group of Kiangs at the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin. I came back in 2005 and, not remembering this, rephotographed them. The two images turned out to be very similar". Difference emerges from this act of repetition.

On another wall of the gallery, two single pictures are juxtaposed. *Etruscan Sand* shows an abstract, almost painterly composition which is in turn a photogram of sand. The other, *Zur Photosynthese*, an image of an urban landscape where tree leaves are tangled by a blow of wind over a patterned wall. One can certainly find visual coherence between the two, although the logic of the juxtaposition remains at the same time intentionally elusive. An even more complex link is established between two other works: *Untitled* and *Transmission I*. Layers of shadows and light contrapose in the first, a 6 photo composition showing an image of plant leaves. This work is challengingly paired to a macro view of another leaf, which resembles a gridded composition or a complex network of structures.

In another arrangement, *Untitled (Constellation)*, a vibrating swarm of life is hardly discovered over a dark out of focus garden background in a configuration of quietly mesmeric force. A fleeting moment is captured in the thin foreground of the image, as it is also the case in the four part series *Fly*.

Of compelling simplicity, and activating multiple readings, Lempert's work defies classification. As Brian Schollis⁽²⁾ pointed out: "Far from being mere "nature studies," Lempert's photographs are evidence of an artistic sensibility compelled to wrest order from circumstance, and, through the tight control of progression, variation, focus, scale, and exposure, to make of this order something enchanting".

⁽¹⁾ Film by Bruce Conner where he used United States government archival footage of the first nuclear test series of the post-war era at Bikini Atoll on July 25, 1946. Conner played with space and time, taking the viewer through the atom bomb test 27 times, from various camera perspectives and at different speeds.

⁽²⁾ Brian Schollis. *Jochen Lempert at Culturgest, Lisbon*. Brian. Published in *Aperture* 197 (Winter 2009).

Jochen Lempert (*1958, Moers, Germany) lives and works in Hamburg. Before choosing photography as the medium for his artistic work, Jochen Lempert (Moers, Germany, 1958) dedicated himself to the practice of experimental film within the Schmelzdahin collective (1979 - 1989). In parallel to this activity, between 1980 and 1988, he studied biology at the Friedrich-Wilhelms University in Bonn. In 1995 he received the prestigious Ars Viva 95/96 Photographie Prize. Most recently, he was guest professor at the HFK in Hamburg and last year he won a residency at the German Academy's Villa Massimo in Rome. His work has been shown mainly in Germany and central Europe: Sprengel Museum Hannover (2008), Kunstverein Ulm (2007), Fotomuseum Winterthur (2007), Museum Folkwang, Essen (2005), Museum for Contemporary Art, Siegen (2005), Bonner and Freiburg Kunstverein (1998). Recent shows include, *Field Work*, first survey exhibition outside of Germany, which was shown first at Culturgest Lisbon and later travelled to Domaine de Kerguéhennec in France. The artist is currently preparing a solo exhibition for the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, opening next April 2010. His work will be also shown in the next edition of Photoespaña (June 2010) and in the Contemporary Art Museum Saint Louis, Missouri (May 2010).

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