

Johnen Galerie

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Candida Höfer: *Palacio Real Madrid V 2000*, 2000, C-print, 47 1/4 inches square; at Sonnabend. (Review on p. 128.)

Candida Höfer at Sonnabend

Commissioned at the beginning of the 19th century, some of the decorative programs of the Casa del Labrador in Aranjuez, near Madrid, depict workaday, agrarian scenes, displayed in a palatial setting built for the amusement of a future king. Candida Höfer's chromogenic color print *Casa del Labrador Aranjuez I 2000* describes one of the museum's extravagantly formal, boxlike rooms, gilt moldings framing the vaguely tatty murals. In *Casa del Labrador Aranjuez III 2000*, a symmetrical vista telescopes through parted drapes and the decorations of connecting rooms. Höfer's studies suggest the presence of the privileged who once came to call and waited in these rooms. She locates the effects of time in the weathering of furnishings and through the presence of modern stanchions, ropes, runners and the transparent partitions that direct visitors to the activities of looking and moving on.

A stanchion and a partially furled carpet distance the viewer from the Rococo reliefs of the putti, masks and vases of a

salon in *Palacio Real Madrid IV 2000*. Höfer observes the room's symmetry, its matched tables, drapes and tiebacks flanking a clock face set into a sphere of allegorical figures supported by Atlas. These furnishings recall for Höfer the history of this royal palace after its accidental destruction by fire in 1734; many of its important furnishings were thrown from windows and saved, and the palace was rebuilt quickly and entirely of stone. Large at roughly 4 feet on a side, Höfer's prints open like a window to these worlds.

Höfer also included interiors of a grandiose, modern bank and several images of libraries and theaters of different eras. The impersonal circumference of the contemporary atrium and ascending levels of *Biblioteca UNED Madrid III 2000*, recall the hovering presence of the dome and stacks of Andreas Gursky's essay on a similar subject, *Library* (1999). Like Gursky, Höfer is a former student of the photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher. Like the Bechers, she is drawn to the observation and documentation of variations within categories. Made in the same state-of-the-art processing laboratory Gursky uses in Düsseldorf, Höfer's prints are distinguished by the proportions and elegance of their scale, a generosity of palette and, through the character of her investigation, a palpable sense of history.

—Edward Leffingwell