

Johnen Galerie

GUGGENHEIM

Candida Höfer

2000



Deichmanske Bibliothek Oslo II, 2000. Chromogenic print, edition 6/6, 47 1/4 x 47 1/4 inches (120 x 120 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Purchased with funds contributed by the Harriett Ames Charitable Trust 2000.122. © 2009 Artist's Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

Candida Höfer began taking color photographs of interiors of public buildings, such as offices, banks, and waiting rooms, in 1979 while studying at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Over the ensuing years, she has perfected her strategies for eliciting psychological undertones from her architectural subjects. In her stately photographs Höfer adopts a stance somewhere between detachment and direct involvement. While she does not aim for pure objectivity, as evidenced by her often slightly oblique camera angles, she remains at a certain distance, subtly observing and recording what she sees. Although Höfer's pictures rarely include people, vestiges of human activity are often evoked or replaced by inanimate surrogates, like a line of empty chairs or a cluster of tables. She frequently photographs archival spaces where information is collected, dispersed, or displayed, such as museums and libraries. Her systematic portrayal of these locations creates another kind of archive. Seen together, Höfer's works address society's abiding need for classification and uniformity. In *Deichmanske Bibliothek Oslo II* (2000), a few figures inhabit the vast library, which is structured by a seemingly endless succession of books, a series of monumental columns, and the receding grid of the ceiling. The rigid geometry of the scene is not imposed through any kind of digital manipulation. Höfer's defining compositional choice is her point of view (in this case, as if floating from above), surveying the orderly arrangement of systems of knowledge. In reality one moves quickly through these ordinary rooms, unaware of their extraordinary geometry, but in her photographs it is given sustained attention.