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CANDIDA HÖFER

Presenhuber, Hauser & Wirth
Zurich

People tend to compare the work of Candida Höfer with that of "Struffsky" Thomas Struth, Thomas Ruff, and Andreas Gursky. The four overlapped as students under the teachers Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Düsseldorf Art Academy. But while there may be family resemblances among the Becher protégés, Höfer, the eldest, has cultivated her own spare esthetic.

Recent color photographs of museum interiors were included here. Unlike Sleuth's famous images of museum galleries, Höfer's are devoid of people. What catches the eye are the odd details she shrewdly exploits. In *Palacio Real Madrid IV*, a Rococo furniture exhibition's haughty gilded ornamentation is undercut by the fact that the room's carpet has been casually rolled back, exposing its pale underside to the camera. Likewise, *Schindler House Los Angeles VII* is all raw beams, pure light, and irregularly textured gleaming concrete. It's a paradise of modern minimalism--except for the electrical wires draped across the rafters like Eden's snake.

In counterpoint to such subtle notes, Höfer also plays with stark angles. In one photo of a giant auditorium, *Bourse du Travail Calais IV*, the rows of seats arc across the photo and toward the viewer as if they were swinging rapidly around an axis.

The paradox of Höfer's work is that while she has eliminated people from these photos, the images are more intimate, more lively, than those of Struth, Ruff, or Gursky.

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