

Thomas Struth

Opening
24 September 2015 at 7 pm

On view
24 September – 5 December

Hours
Tuesday – Saturday
3 – 7 pm

We are delighted to announce an exhibition of works by Thomas Struth, showing large size photographs made in the context of three different recent projects that deal with aspects of the contemporary world and the collective subconscious: places of scientific and technological research, Disney's theme park and works made in Israel and Palestine.

Since 2009 Struth has been photographing places of industrial innovation and scientific progress. Thus he approaches the complexity of technical developments and enables an insight into usually inaccessible areas, which at the same time leave uncertainty about meaning and function of the depicted. They show what lies behind the technological innovation and objects we use every day, but do not really understand. In this sense these images depict the unconscious of our society in the digital era. At the same time they are a continuous study of the entanglement in a one-sided belief in progress. The increasing degree of fascination for the tools we construct to investigate into scientific and material progress distract us from the equal need for progress on a social and political level.

The second group of photographs was taken at Disneyland in California. It allows an insight view into the western image-making industries. Similar to earlier photographs, these pictures often show deserted panoramas, which appear somehow disconcerting for an amusement park attracting fifteen million visitors per year. Reduced to their outer setting, they unveil their nature as artificial, illusory worlds of papier-maché. At the same time they refer to the great effort and precision with which these worlds are being staged.

Between 2009 and 2014 Thomas Struth travelled to Israel and Palestine six times as a part of the project *This Place*, which was initiated by the photographer Frédéric Brenner. *This Place* explores the complexity of Israel and the West Bank, as place and metaphor, through the eyes of twelve internationally acclaimed photographers.

Struth's visits were informed by listening to the stories of his guides and other people he met along the way, "my exploration was about observing the human drama and what seemed to touch me most. In essence, it was about the reading of the signifiers and the pictorial possibilities of the place". And, in eschewing the colossal for the personal, Struth set himself "the challenge of how to condense an epic narrative into a still image". In the show we will present the image of the "Church of the Holy Sepulchre" in Jerusalem and of a laboratory at the Weizman Institute, a place of scientific research in Rehovot.

For Struth, the act of journeying and seeing when scouting for locations is crucial. He combines a personal analysis of an instinctive sense and narrative of a place with a formal topological view, to create a composition that elucidates something revelatory.

Thomas Struth is one of the leading artists in contemporary photography. Born in Geldern near Cologne in 1954, from 1973 to 1980 he studied at the Düsseldorf Academy from 1973 to 1980. From the beginning he started to explore the possibilities of photography as psychological research. Since 1976 he takes pictures of urban landscapes, from 1980 he photographs museum visitors looking at paintings, thus exploring the different relationships between painting and photography, art and the viewer. Later he works on a broader range of subjects, working always in theme groups.

His work has been shown extensively in museums throughout the world. In 2014, the Metropolitan Museum in New York presented their comprehensive collection of Struth's works, in 2003 they staged a large retrospective Struth exhibited at the Prado in Madrid in 2007 and at the Madre in Naples in Spring 2008. Important solo exhibitions have include a European retrospective exhibition tour from 2010 to 2012 *Thomas Struth, Photographs 1978-2010*, shown at Kunsthau Zürich; K20, Düsseldorf; Whitechapel, London and Museu Serralves, Porto. His works are in the collections of MoMA and the Metropolitan in New York, the Tate Gallery in London, the Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo and Kunsthau Zürich among many others. In March 2016, Museum Folkwang in Essen will be the first of several museums in Germany and the US, presenting a retrospective tour of Struth's works from 2005 to the present, focusing on new technology and visual manifestations of scientific research.