



Helmhaus Zürich

6 December 2013 to 26 January 2014

WELT – BILDER 5 / WORLD IMAGES 5

Georg Aerni (*1959 in Winterthur, Switzerland; lives in Zurich)

Bieke Depoorter (*1986 in Kortrijk, Belgium; lives in Ghent)

Naoya Hatakeyama (*1958 in Iwate Prefecture, Japan; lives in Tokyo)

Elisa Larvego (*1984 in Geneva, Switzerland; lives in Geneva)

Zanele Muholi (*1972 in Durban, South Africa; lives in Johannesburg)

Daniel Schwartz (*1955 in Olten, Switzerland; lives in Solothurn)

Cécile Wick (*1954 in Muri, Switzerland; lives in Zurich)

Tobias Zielony (*1973 in Wuppertal, Germany; lives in Berlin)

The fifth exhibition in the *Welt – Bilder / World Images* exhibition series at Helmhaus Zürich puts the focus on people, their living conditions and the way their lives are shaped by governmental and private powers. How do they deal with these situations in different cultures? A broad spectrum of current international photography provides answers, and poses questions.

What if the home you live in is earmarked for demolition because a new highway has been planned? What if an entire district with a fully functioning infrastructure is to be resettled on the outskirts of the city – shifting from a vibrant community life to a sterile high-rise existence? What if government measures mean that the school run suddenly changes from a two-minute hop to a three-hour commute? What if rapists who systematically target lesbians are allowed to run around free? What if nobody – neither your parents nor the state – cares about you as a teenager?

People in Japan, China, India, Mexico, the USA and South Africa are confronted with such problems, and react to them with remarkable adaptability. Because they have no choice. As mere pawns in the game of more powerful interests, they try to come to terms with new situations. For the Californian teenagers hanging around on the street with no hope for the future, this involves seeking escape in the synthetic drug crystal meth. In South Africa, the lesbian community has succeeded in achieving a very special coming-out: forced underground for years due to the dangers they faced, they now display their new-found confidence in public, in spite of the fact that so-called “corrective rape” is still frequent. For the children of Candelaria, life has changed dramatically since the US authorities closed their school – officially on financial grounds, but unofficially to close the border – with the result that they now have to get up at 5.30 a.m. and take a three-hour bus ride to school. Their stoicism is impressive.

These stories are not told overtly, but instead reveal themselves through the context of the photographs. Their presence is latent. That is what makes the images all the more unsettling. It also shows that this is not conspicuous photo-reportage, but a form of photography that aims to reveal what is hidden in the background and shed light on aspects of life that otherwise remain in the shadows. The themes addressed here provoke mixed emotions. And the ways in which the eight artists approach and present their subject matter is no less varied. These photographs of the world, these specific visual worlds, thus convey individual world views.

What motivates all of these photographers is their interest in the other, in the unfamiliar. They have an urge to render visible the differences that play out simultaneously in our

lifeworlds. In the tug of war between these divergent cultural forms, there are economic and religious views, infrastructural, social and security policies, and even sexual issues being asserted. What we glean from this exhibition is far more diverse than, and even antithetical to, the much-cited notion of the “global village”. The five *Welt – Bilder / World Images* exhibitions that have been held since 2005 have put forward 41 different and at times contradictory insights into a subject matter of limitless scope. This long-term project curated by Andreas Fiedler and Simon Maurer is now documented in five commentated illustrated volumes published by Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg, forming a kind of compendium of contemporary photography.

The *Welt – Bilder 5 / World Images 5* exhibition includes two artists who have participated in major international exhibitions (Venice Biennale, Documenta) in recent years yet whose works have hardly ever been shown in Switzerland: Naoya Hatakeyama from Japan and Zanele Muholi from South Africa. Tobias Zielony from Germany recently drew acclaim with a solo exhibition at the Berlinische Galerie. They are joined by three established photographic artists from Switzerland: Georg Aerni, Daniel Schwartz and Cécile Wick. The young newcomers Bieke Depoorter (26) from Belgium and Elisa Larvego (29) from Switzerland round off this group.

The exhibition *Welt – Bilder 5 / World Images 5* begins with a series of photographs by Berlin-based artist **Tobias Zielony** of Trona, a small south-western US town plagued by unemployment and drugs. Whereas the teenagers of Trona appear to be on the verge of losing their way in life, young Belgian photographer **Bieke Depoorter** shows people in their own homes and gives an intimate insight into the living conditions of her host families in Egypt, the USA and Russia. In the same room, the photographs of Afghanistan by **Daniel Schwartz** provide a searing analysis of history and the present day. In the last room on this floor, **Cécile Wick** presents views of landscapes and cities whose geographical locations are indiscernible, dissolving into a subtly nuanced all-over in tones of grey. South African artist **Zanele Muholi** presents black-and-white portraits of lesbian, transgender and gay people, mostly in the townships. The exhibition continues on the second floor with the formal clarity of photographs by **Georg Aerni**, exploring the impact of large-scale transformation in Asian megacities such as Mumbai. In the same room, the photographic-sociological research undertaken by **Elisa Larvego** in two villages on the US-Mexican border can be seen. The exhibition concludes with a conceptual work by **Naoya Hatakeyama**, showing life in Tokyo along a twenty-kilometre highway.

The exhibition is accompanied by the fifth publication in the *Welt – Bilder / World Images* series. The **book** includes high-quality reproductions of almost all the works shown in the exhibition, as well as texts by Andreas Fiedler, artistic director of KINDL – Zentrum für zeitgenössische Kunst in Berlin, and Simon Maurer, director of Helmhaus Zürich, providing background information on the photographs. The publication was designed by sofie’s Kommunikationsdesign, Zürich, and is distributed by Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg.

Events

Four years ago, during the *Welt – Bilder 3 / World Images 3* exhibition, Helmhaus Zürich began organizing two **concerts** to accompany each exhibition. Since then, there have been 36 concerts – each one unique, because it takes place in an unrepeatably setting in which music and art are interwoven. Stars such as Stephan Eicher and Pierre Favre have performed at the Helmhaus, as have new talents such as Vera Kappeler and Evelinn Trouble. The musical programme is in the hands of Juliana Müller, who has chosen two

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outstanding young musicians for *Welt – Bilder 5 / World Images 5*: the Swiss-based Chinese lute virtuoso and composer Yang Jing and the French-Palestinian singer and oud player Kamilya Jubran with Swiss-Liechtenstein accompanist Werner Hasler on trumpet and electronics. The concert programme thus fittingly reflects the exhibition's meeting of cultures.

Various **talks** offer an opportunity to examine the themes of the exhibition in more depth. A conversation with artist and photographer Daniel Schwartz, whose images of Afghanistan and Pakistan are shown in the exhibition, will address the relationship between art and politics. The "5 o'clock thesis" is devoted to new documentary forms in photography: Daniel Morgenthaler will be joined by publisher and gallerist Walter Keller, guest curator at Landesmuseum Zürich. As usual, there will also be guided tours for adults and children.