Alan Johnston
Thomas Struth: Unconscious Places

Exhibition 28 November 1987- 10 January 1988

Alan Johnston

Alan Johnston was born in 1945 and lives and works in Edinburgh. From 1972 to 1973 he studied in Germany where he had his first museum exhibition in Wuppertal in 1974. During this period drawing became of primary importance to him and indeed drawing as the basis of all art activity remains the core of his work.

Johnston is essentially a Northern European artist. The tradition of the spiritual landscape established by Caspar David Friedrich and Edvard Munch is of immense significance to him. What links Johnston to these artists is his particular use of landscape as mental space. Although his work is completely abstract, his subject is the artist in the landscape. His concern is with the intensity of visual experience and his use of space and form alongside the obsessive verticality of his compositions implies an on-going spiritual quest.

Since his return to Scotland in 1973 with a sharpened sense of nationhood and a knowledge that he could operate against a background of European tradition and modernism Johnston has forged a unique and distinctive language.

Johnston's new work is no longer exclusively about landscape experience, but involves itself with all experience known to the artist. *What I was looking for is this: a total visuality of experience: a total sensibility in seeing which governed all ideas of space, interval and time*. The drawings are caught up in a web of time, space and music- a mosaic of echoes.Looking at them is, in the artist's own extraordinary phrase *like seeing hearing*.

Alan Johnston's work has been shown in Europe, America and Japan. This however is his first solo museum exhibition in Scotland. It has been organise in collaboration with The Piers Arts Centre, Orkney and will tour to The Orchard Gallery, Derry and Arnolfini, Bristol.

Thomas Struth: Unconscious Places

Thomas Struth counts as a formative influence a work dedicated to the streets and places of a Germany past: A. E. Brinkmann's *Deutsche*

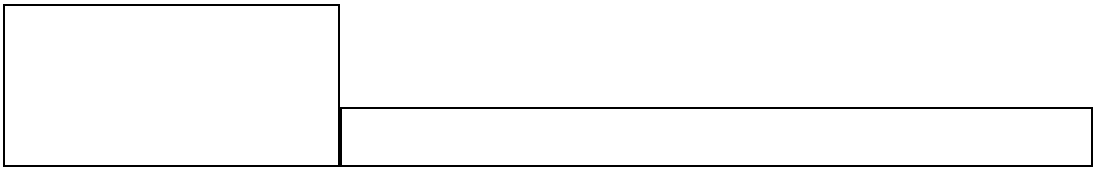
Stadtbaukunst in der Vergangenheit. The photographs of Struth reveal not only the street and its past; they allude in their form to a knowledge of the city expressed as an ideal.

It is no coincidence that the imagery of Munich, Rome, Edinburgh is set with Duisburg, Leverkusen, Charleroi. The photographs state our twentieth century continuum without contrast of emphasis: moral or aesthetic. Yet the statues of Piazza Augusto Imperatore mingle equally with the humble ornaments of Dieselstrasse. In this continuous urbanity the city is placed with its past, aspiration and physical detritus.

Struth is a photographer who looks at where we live and work. He places himself and his camera discretely in our streets seeing the pathos and blandness of our metropolitan life. But within a stern and controlled vision is an intensely human concern. When combined with his find sensibility it provides a visual testament of unique clarity.

It is apposite that Thomas Struth's first major exhibition is seen in Edinburgh, a city renowned for its role in the development of photography and architecture. In recent years Struth has been working in Scotland and the exhibition will include a selection of works made here alongside photographs including Tokyo, New York, Munich, Rome and Paris.

This exhibition has been organised by Kunsthalle Berne. It will continue to Westfalisches Landesmuseum Munster and Portikus, Frankfurt am Main.



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