

Renate Buser: TOKYO

Renate Buser's work could be described as a hybrid between photography, stage design and film. Whether she "animates" architecture via photographs that have been installed at an 45° angle to each other, or creates impossible spatial concurrency with analogically manipulated images: for Buser, photography is not merely a copy of reality, but an extended field of experimentation – an ongoing attempt to translate a two-dimensional medium into a three-dimensional and time-involving dimension.

The new works on view at Galerie Gisèle Linder emerged from a four-week-long residency in Tokyo. Maybe the term "emerged" isn't accurate here, as Buser's photography is always the product of a long-term and literally multilayered process, which, after taking pictures on site, is continued in the studio. The artist, who had been working with architecture, facades, and the possibilities of their perspective transformation for many years, was inspired by the cinematic qualities of Tokyo. Urban utopias, like those familiar from movies like Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* or Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, encountered her in Tokyo in reality. The coexistence of hyper-modern architecture and the historical quarters with their narrowly nested alleys and gaps, built the starting point for the conception of the exhibition TOKYO.

Like a location-scout, Buser took pictures of streets, places and buildings reminiscent to film scenes, in order to re-use them for her own staging. The shooting on site already contains a temporal dimension. The pictures were taken in black-and-white with a large-scale camera and long exposure times, to preserve a maximum of detail-density. Elusive, narrative moments were captured with the video camera in color. In the post-production process, Buser populates her stills with living props, which move around "live" in the photographic backdrops. The way this is done may appear absurdly archaic in times of photoshop and the various possibilities of digital image editing. But it's exactly this unveiled analog, and to a certain degree uncontrollable "crafted-ness", which interests Renate Buser. After the black-and-white photograph has been blown up to over-life size dimensions, it is adopted to the dimensions of the room, so that the horizontal level (sort of flipped down in the flat image), runs parallel to the floor again. Living animals and people act now in the photograph – thus transformed into a stage: a monstrous rat poses in front of Tokyo's famous fish market, and a raven sits on a power pole in a narrow alley – in fact, it's a rod installed in front of the photograph, matching the cables behind in perfect disguise. These *tableaux-vivants* have then again been photographed, this time in color, which highlights the alienated figure-ground-relationship. Buser doesn't cheat in her montages: the process, even if on second glances, remains transparent. Sometimes, the real space appears behind the photograph, or the fixtures or the image planes are visible. Also the slightly shifted proportions evoke surreal moments and demand for a closer inspection.

The street scene with the power cords appears a second time in the exhibition – this time in large scale and with the raven missing in it –, installed in the inside of the gallery window. Like in previous works, which directly communicated with the existing architecture by virtually transforming it, Buser works with a perspective cut through the real space. But instead of making the walls transparent, and flipping the inside out, Buser now transplants urban scenarios from one place to another.

Looking out through the gallery window from the inside, instead of Basel's Elisabethenstrasse, one is confronted with a view into the narrow streets of Tokoyo's historic district. Vice versa, the gaze from the outside in, instead of a frontal view of the gallery's interior, offers a vanishing point projection of facades in a Berlin courtyard. With her

photographic trompe-l'oeils, Renate Buser confuses inside and outside, volume and picture plane, concave and convex, and challenges our perception. Walking past the work „Torre Catalunya” two photographs of the same building spatially installed at a T-angle, one gets the impression as one is surrounding the high-rise building. But instead of its back-view, one finds the same view than before on the alleged “other” side – a very simple trick, but with an astounding effect. The large-scale print “Shinjuku/Omoide Yokochō” shows a delivery boy with his cart sneaking around the corner of a narrowly winded street crossing. The scene, witnessed by Buser in real time and documented with the video camera, had been re-enacted in her studio with an actor. The image is part of a larger installation in progress, which aims to simulate a spatial view impossible in reality: the simultaneous perception of the exact same moment from four different angles. In Buser’s work, the virtual space becomes real and vice versa, staging and reality interfuse, the studio serves as an analogue 3D-simulation. Architecture loses its static and becomes something like an animated raree show or panorama, animated by the spectator who participates in the experiment.

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