

PRESS RELEASE

URSULA SCHULZ-DORNBURG. THE LAND IN-BETWEEN – PHOTOGRAPHS FROM 1980 TO 2012

4 JULY TO 9 SEPTEMBER 2018

Städel Museum, exhibition annex, upper floor

Frankfurt am Main, 3 July 2018. The photographer Ursula Schulz-Dornburg (b. 1938) has been devoting herself to border landscapes, places of transit and relics of past cultures for more than forty years. With the aid of thirteen extensive workgroups and altogether more than 200 works, the Städel Museum is offering the first comprehensive institutional survey of the artist's oeuvre ever in the exhibition "Ursula Schulz-Dornburg: The Land In-Between – Photographs from 1980 to 2012", to be presented from 4 July to 9 September 2018. Schulz-Dornburg, who was born in Berlin and now lives in Düsseldorf, devotes herself in her photos to cult and culture sites in Europe, Asia and the Near East, and above all to the visible and invisible borders of these continents and regions. Her analogue black-and-white photographs are testimonies to no-longer-existing landscapes, past political systems, cultural milieus in the process of dissolution, and expiring societies. Distinguished by ethnological curiosity and an archaeological perspective, the images are on the interfaces between documentarism and political photography, between concept art and a sense of the responsibility to provide insight. Schulz-Dornburg is interested in the marks human beings have left behind in the landscape in the course of lengthy historical processes, as well as in recent political changes of the kind brought about, for example, by the Golf Wars (between 1980 and 2003).

"Photography is one of the Städel Museum's main focusses in terms of research and collecting alike. Ursula Schulz-Dornburg is an excellent example of the expansion of genre boundaries. Her photographs belong to a realm between documentation and concept art. One of the aims of our exhibition, which we designed in close cooperation with the artist, is to make her oeuvre perceivable in its entirety and put it in art-historical context", comments Städel director Dr Philipp Demandt.

**Städelsches Kunstinstitut
und Städtische Galerie**

Dürerstraße 2
60596 Frankfurt am Main
Phone +49(0)69-605098-170
Fax +49(0)69-605098-111
presse@staedelmuseum.de
www.staedelmuseum.de

PRESSEDOWNLOADS UNTER
www.staedelmuseum.de

PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
Axel Braun, Leitung
presse@staedelmuseum.de

Franziska von Plocki
Phone +49(0)69-605098-268
Fax +49(0)69-605098-188
plocki@staedelmuseum.de

“One of the distinguishing features of Schulz-Dornburg’s work is that, already very early on, she travelled to places that have only turned up on the Western cultural map more recently. Sometimes we encounter oasis and desert, war and antiquity, past beauty and present destruction in one and the same picture. It is this often unbearable ambiguity that makes Schulz-Dornburg’s oeuvre as unique as it is visually powerful – the manner in which she brings together seemingly irreconcilable opposites, in terms of both aesthetics and content, without reconciling them”, emphasizes Dr Martin Engler, head of the Städel Museum’s collection of contemporary art.

The exhibition

Revolving around the artist’s aesthetic “in-between”, “The Land In-Between” unites photographs taken between 1980 and 2012 – works from the Städel collection, the artist’s own archive and private lenders. In her art, Schulz-Dornburg walks the fine line between concept art and journalistic coverage, politics and aesthetics. One of her best-known workgroups provides striking evidence of this: *Transit Sites, Armenia* (1997–2011), to be featured in our show. The photos focus on bus stops in post-Soviet Armenia. Here the photographer isolates her subjects from their surroundings, thus making them the sole objects of attention. Derelict modernist buildings bear witness to lost utopias.

The series *Vanished Landscapes, Iraq, Marsh Arabs* (1980) shows architectures doomed to extinction: Schulz-Dornburg travelled from the mud-walled houses on the Shatt al-Gharraf to those built of reed in the marshlands. *Vanished Landscapes, Iraq, Mesopotamia* (1980) links historical sites with the immediate present of recent wars. Her chief photographic interest is in man-made structures. For *Vanished Landscapes, Palmyra, Syria* (2005/2010) for example, she photographed reduced burial sites shortly before the so-called Islamic State destroyed the larger buildings. Deserts are symbols of transit areas, and it was precisely there that Schulz-Dornburg stopped off. In *15 Kilometres along the Georgian-Azerbaijani Border* (1998/99) she presents us with a world that seems infinitely remote. Her fine sense of dark and light also finds expression in the *Ararat* series (2004–2006) – in the constant shifts between sun and clouds, rain and mist.

On the occasion of her *Kronstadt* series (2002), Schulz-Dornburg photographed surreal-looking metal bodies whose functions are not always obvious to the beholder at first sight. The abandoned buildings in her *Opytnoe Pole* (2012) and *Chagan* (2012) series likewise have a virtually fantastical quality about them. For her *Solar Positions* (1991/1992), the artist entered the interiors of chapels to translate, by photographic means, the macrocosmic movement of the earth into the microcosms of sacred architectures.

The creative process

Ursula Schulz-Dornburg's series, some of which comprise several dozen photos, will be presented on the upper floor of the Städel's exhibition annex, arranged in grid-like manner in tableaus covering entire walls. Despite their many fundamental differences, these often very extensive series share the same formal concerns as the *Typologies* – individual photos arranged in grids and likewise forming large-scale tableaus – carried out from the 1960s onward by the photo artists Bernd and Hilla Becher. Both oeuvres are decisively indebted to the influence of American Concept Art and Minimal Art. Particularly in the presentation, however, the differences become obvious. Schulz-Dornburg's series often have no temporal conclusion or exhibit deliberate gaps that lend them a certain openness in terms of content and form alike. Her photographs always retain their individual character; their contextualization, however, would be nearly impossible without their serialization. Free of adherence to rigid disciplines, styles or worldviews, they occupy a realm between ethnology, archaeology, photography, documentarism, concept art and a sense of responsibility towards society.

Biographical details

Ursula Schulz-Dornburg was born in Berlin in 1938. In the years 1959 and 1960 she studied at the Institut für Bildjournalismus in Munich. In 1967 she spent time in New York, where she absorbed the influence of artists like Dan Flavin, Michael Heizer, Lawrence Weiner and Walter De Maria. She moved to Düsseldorf in 1969. From the early 1980s onward, she travelled and explored Europe, Asia and the Near East, primarily with a medium format camera and a focus on transit points, border landscapes, cultural sites and relics of past cultures. Her work is represented in the collections of such prestigious museums as the Art Institute of Chicago, the Tate Modern in London, the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Schulz-Dornburg has participated in ground-breaking group exhibitions, for example "Conflict, Time, Photography" at the Tate Modern, London in 2014. Her most recent major solo exhibitions were "From Medina to the Jordanian Border" at the Pergamonmuseum, Berlin in 2011 and "Niemandslcht" at the Kunstmuseum Bochum in 2011/12. In 2016 she was awarded the AIMIA / AGO Photography Prize of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

URSULA SCHULZ-DORNBURG:

THE LAND IN-BETWEEN – PHOTOGRAPHS FROM 1980 TO 2012

Exhibition dates: 4 July to 9 September 2018

Curators: Dr Martin Engler (Head of the Collection of Contemporary Art, Städel Museum), Iris Hasler (Research Assistant, Städel Museum)

Location: Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

Information: www.staedelmuseum.de

Visitor services and guided tours: +49(0)69-605098-200, info@staedelmuseum.de

Opening hours: Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun 10 am – 6 pm, Thu + Fri 10 am – 9 pm, closed Mondays

Admission: 14 EUR, reduced 12 EUR, families 24 EUR; free admission for children under twelve years of age. Groups of at least 10 persons who would normally be charged the full admission fee: reduced admission fee per person. Groups are required to book in advance: please call +49(0)69-605098-200 or contact info@staedelmuseum.de

Advance ticket sales online at: tickets.staedelmuseum.de

Admission to the special exhibition is free for members of the Städtelscher Museums-Verein.

General guided tours of the exhibition: Thursdays at 6 pm and Sundays at 12 noon. The number of participants is limited; no previous reservations necessary.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive programme of events and activities. For current information on the programme, go to www.staedelmuseum.de

Exhibition catalogue: *Ursula Schulz-Dornburg: The Land In-Between – Photographs from 1980 to 2012*, edited by Dr Martin Engler, MACK Verlag, museum edition in German, 300 pages, 39.90 €, bookshop edition in German and English.

Social Media: The Städel Museum is communicating the exhibition in the social media with the hashtag #SchulzDornburg.