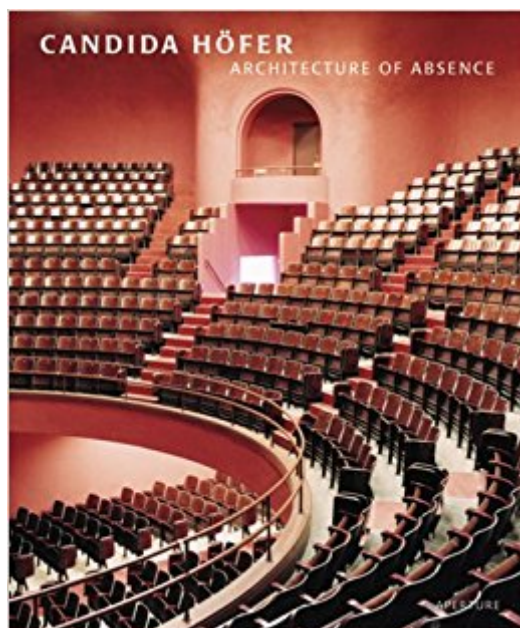


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# Candida Höfer: Architecture Of Absence



## Synopsis

Candida Höfer creates meticulously composed images of public and institutional spaces marked with the richness of human activity, yet largely devoid of human presence. Whether a photograph of a national library or a lounge at Volkswagen's headquarters, Höfer's images ask us to conduct distanced, disengaged examinations through the windows she creates. The collected images present a universe wholly constructed by human intention, unearthing patterns of order and logic imposed on these spaces by their absent creators and inhabitants. *The Architecture of Absence* examines Höfer's oeuvre and its relationship to the work of other noted students of renowned professors Bernd and Hilla Becher.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Seen as a collection, her rhythmically patterned images present a universe of interiors wholly constructed by human intention, unearthing patterns of order, by their now absent creators and inhabitants. *Architecture of Absence* examines Höfer's unique oeuvre and the relationship of her architecture work to that of the 'Becher Circle' - noted students of the Dusseldorf Academy's renowned professor Bernd Becher, including Thomas Ruff, Thomas Struth, Andreas Gursky, and Axel Hutte." --HotShoe International  
"The drive toward immaculate order in all this work is haunting."  
-- The Chicago Tribune  
"In interviews, Höfer has said that she's attracted to the beauty and symmetry of her subjects: she likes libraries for the way the books stack up, the shapes they make, not for their social meaning... [but] no matter how hard you try to look at the pictures as pure

patterning or color, they still speak of our odd rituals for collecting, preserving, and celebrating scraps of culture. The books in her photographs may be closed, but they are still books, which makes Höfer more of a cultural historian than she'll ever admit." -- Jori Finkel --Photo District News"Höfer uses emptiness, along with light, composition, and depth of field, as a formal element in her photographs. Objective documentary photography? Why settle for that, when a quick read between the lines reveals so much more." --Departures

Candida Höfer studied photography under Bernd Becher from 1976 until 1982. Since 1975 she has had solo exhibitions in galleries and museums throughout Europe and the United States, including the Hamburger Kunsthalle, Germany; the Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland; the Centre Photographique d'Ile de France; Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco; Johnen & Schottle, Cologne; and Sonnabend Gallery, New York.

A most have for contemporary photographers, German photographer Candida Hofer expresses the loneliness in modern daily life, using architecture as a medium. Trough this review of his work we can appreciate how she has developed a body of work through 30 years of capturing architecture landscape such as museums, theaters, rooms, universities, and buldings to express that sometimes we create to express ourselves, fill a void, or other reasons, but eventually it's nothing more than emptiness.

A quiet humor wanders like a ghost through the laconic photos of Candida Höfer -- no people can be seen but via the devices of the rooms, libraries, hotels, halls, museums, canteens -- one can suspect still the existence of human beings indirectly. With a similar humor understanding the physicist Georg Christoph Lichtenberg once wrote: "If the posterity of the year 35.000 (or another planet's class of sensible nature) would find a lady suit completely undone and if they wanted to determine the figure of the ladies who would have been covered with that, -- what figure would come out?" The aesthetic experiments of the German Photographer Candida Höfer activate such associations. One of her book publications is entitled "Room Monuments" (of course without any human being). Before the beginning of her studies (learning from the renowned professors Bernd and Hilla Becher in Duesseldorf, Germany) Candida Höfer had taken photographs of Turkish fellow citizens in business, tea-rooms and parks. The people then disappeared from her photos. Was this the bad influence of her studies with the married couple Bernd and Hilla Becher, who had photographed only the industry architecture of the German Ruhr district maniacally (stubbornly

ignoring all that connections between Nazi-politicians and steel-industry, around Hitler and Krupp, Goebbels and Thyssen) ? Or is there hiding a shock, Candida Höfer experienced, as the role of her father, Werner Höfer, a famous TV-talkmaster in the 1960's, was criticized by investigating journalists, checking his own role in the Nazi-era? Did this chase the daughter in a kind of social phobia? Although there is a coffee-table book of Candida Höfer with live (locked in zoo animals) she mostly preferred to make pictures of prepared, dead animal bodies in museum collections. Is such a misanthropic distance necessary to create a counterbalance against traumata, suffered by the modern mass culture? Writers like Canetti (Austria) or Saul Bellow (USA) reacted with comparable feelings -- or philosophers like Arthur Schopenhauer (Germany) or Ortega y Gasset (Spain). Perhaps there is a third evident explanation of Candida Höfer's decision how to work (besides the Becher-studies and the father trauma): the minimalist aesthetics theory of the Bauhaus tradition; quiet, empty rooms help to fulfill a meditative, calmed, laconic life-style attitude -- a task to which the painting of Piet Mondrian or Josef Albers also felt obliged -- why not photography as well?

As with other Becher students, Hofer's images are captivating because of their expansiveness and detail - neither of which are reflected in the layout of this book. The images are tiny for no apparent reason. This effectively reduces Hofer's amazing work to a series of oversized postage stamps. Unless the design is intended as a tongue-in-cheek acknowledgment of the title, this dilettante overview is a miserable failure. I suggest purchasing Candida Hofer, A Monograph. It is large, bold and a substantial compendium of her work.

The collaborative work of Constance W. Glenn, Mary-Kay Lombino, and Virginia Heckert, Candida Hofer: Architecture Of Absence is a spectacular full-color monograph featuring the photos of Candida Hofer, who has taken snapshots of cultural centers such as libraries, museums, theaters, cafes, waiting rooms, universities, and churches for over thirty years. The images reveal structures created to gather, organize, and perpetuate human purpose. An introductory essay guides the reader through the photographer's intent and efforts in capturing such locations on film, but the majority of Candida Hofer: Architecture Of Absence is simply devoted to the sweeping images themselves - empty of people at the time the picture is taken, yet showing rows of seats or broad hallways just waiting to be filled. This is an exceptional and welcome addition to architectural as well as photography collections.

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