

JACKY STRENZ

Kurt-Schumacher-Str. 2 60311 FRANKFURT am MAIN

Moritz Scheper, in: Artforum Critics' Picks, June 2017

ARTFORUM

Arne Schmitt

JACKY STRENZ
Kurt-Schumacher-Str. 2
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As is often the case with Arne Schmitt's photographs, the selection of them here can be mistaken, at first glance, for architecture photography. But his sober black-and-white works, which combine an engagement with architecture and city planning in low-key compositions without gimmicks, go far beyond that. In this exhibition, the shots are the tip of an iceberg of invisible research activity.

The series "In new Splendor," 2017, examines the built heritage of an insurance group in the northwest of Cologne's city center, which Schmitt reveals to be the point of intersection for different discourses. Michel Foucault's thesis from his late 1970s lectures *The Birth of Biopolitics*—the beginning of neoliberalism is to be located in the reformation of the German Republic after 1945—is key for this artist. Correspondingly, he traces a corporate history that addresses not only Germany's economic miracle but also the development of neoliberal ideology's dishonest dealings and signature managerial style that openly opposes state and labor union interference.

The group's business broke up in the aftermath of 9/11, and their former headquarters now houses luxury apartments. One learns all of this in an advertisement for the new development, which Schmitt has furnished with thorough footnotes and included here. It is this subtext that first brings the photographs to full expression and allows one to perceive, for example, the Third Reich-derived style preferred by the insurance group's patriarch. Not coincidentally, numerous sculptures by Arno Breker—Hitler's favorite sculptor—still stand on the grounds today. Suddenly, the sobriety of these images is transformed, and historical contamination filters into the present day.

Translated from German by Diana Reese.



Arne Schmitt, *In new Splendor (7)*, 2017, ink-jet print, 14 x 11".

— Moritz Scheper

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