

Kunstraum Medici, Solothurn

Daniel Schwartz. Photographs from 1973 to the Present (3 May to 18 July 2026)

Most of the photographs that Daniel Schwartz selected for his exhibition at the Kunstraum Medici are unpublished works from an archive dating back to 1973. That the selection is small, viewed in relation to his complete works, makes it at once precise and surprising. The presentation of unframed prints is modelled on *Tracings*, Schwartz's 2023/24 exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Lucerne. As the end result of a project lasting many years, *Tracings* likewise entailed sifting through the archives for photographs from disparate contexts that under specific headings might be juxtaposed to generate a narrative about the world. The exhibition at the Kunstraum Medici homes in on four such keywords: Space, Terrain, Action, Object. At its centre are 41 gelatin-silver prints flanked by six large-format works – Schwartz is an exclusively analogue photographer and works mainly in black and white – laid out on four tables. The theme of the exhibition is as simple as it is ambitious: it is a probing of photography itself and what it tells us about seeing.

Schwartz, a photographer who has won international acclaim far beyond his native Switzerland, coined the term “informed photography” to describe what he does. For many decades a traveller through regions in crisis, he insisted on seeing the unseeable, and with the concerned gaze of a true humanist captured images of human vulnerability, the fleeting dramas of everyday life, natural processes, and buildings and structures from many different periods. He has repeatedly revisited places of adventure and conflict, doggedly digging himself in long after public attention has moved on elsewhere. Merely depicting “events” is of no interest to him, however; his quest is rather for images of enduring relevance that as metaphors can hold their own, independent of the daily news cycle. Schwartz returned to his hometown of Solothurn in 2010, yet has remained a traveller through space and time. Here, his library, darkroom, collection and archive have merged together in a modern-day version of the Renaissance *studiolo*, becoming a place for scholarship, study, collecting and reflecting, and in Schwartz's case for dialogue and communication, too.

The exhibition's four display tables reveal not just Schwartz's work, but also his own reading of it. This interrogation of his own images, their motifs, their content, their formal and technical properties, gives rise to multifarious connections and complexities. Laid out on tables as if for scholarly scrutiny, the images invite viewers to embark on a comparative study of Schwartz's photography. While his mysterious view into the River Aare (2017) was taken just a stone's throw away from the Kunstraum, the other works tell of far-away places and cultures. Yet the subjects, motifs and materials, to say nothing of the aesthetics and information packed into a single shot, invariably tell of universals. This is borne out by “Ruins of an Ideology,” a triptych composed specially for this exhibition, whose images reflecting the transience of political power were taken in Beijing (1987), Bordeaux (1992) and Kabul (1998).

The large formats exhibited on the walls include two early object photos of bell peppers (1980 and 1986), whose sculptural quality and gleaming surfaces recall the bronzes of the Franco-Romanian sculptor Constantin Brâncuși. Their finely nuanced greyscales are especially striking and point to Schwartz's early fascination with textures, as well as his ongoing reflections on photography as a medium. They are also a cogent articulation of one of the fundamentals of his entire oeuvre: the blurring of the divide between photojournalism and art.

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