

Opening Thursday, 27 April 2017, 18-21h

For over four decades Irmel Kamp has been photographing architecture, conducting long-term research projects focused on a single style or region. The current exhibition presents a selection from two of her most substantial bodies of work: *Modern Architecture in Tel-Aviv 1930-1939*, is the result of a five-year research encompassing more than 600 buildings, realized by Kamp between 1987-1993, prior to the large-scale preservation efforts of the city and to UNESCO's recognition of it as a world heritage site in 2003; The second project, *Les Années Trente*, realized between 1996-1997, revolves around modern architecture of the 1930s in Brussels. Both compose an archeology of sorts of a *local* "International Style". Rather than depicting "machines for living in" - Le Corbusier's seminal maxim - the buildings in Irmel Kamp's photographs are distinctly "lived-in" and not quite so mechanic, imbued with a sense of place and time and a poetics of presence.

Kamp does not employ a typological gaze in the vein of Bernd and Hilla Becher, rather, she portrays particulars, vernacular expressions, buildings embedded in their surroundings and shaped by their circumstances. In Tel Aviv, aluminum shutters of closed-off balconies seem to gaze back blankly at the viewer, while bulky air conditioning units dot the façades. Vegetation abounds: in one image we see a branch protruding from the edge of the photo, masking a balcony behind its foliage; in another a palm leaf casts an almost ornamental shadow upon a smooth stucco surface. Humans are nearly entirely absent from these images, but their traces are to be seen - a garbage bin resting casually on the edge of a sun-washed sidewalk, or a car wrapped in a dust-cover, whose folds' contrast with the buildings severe geometry, betray the presence of inhabitants.

These are meticulous architectonic studies, yet they also attest to a photographic fascination with, and sensitivity towards, volume, surfaces and tone. In the photo of Maison Wolfers, a red brick three-story town-house built in 1930 by Henry Van de Velde, the whole image seems to nearly collapse onto the brick raster. Details are revealed on second glance: shaded shutters on the first floor seem blotched or marked, there are discreet signs of wear and tear, tones vary. Upon closer examination, a graffiti tag is just barely discernable, betrayed only by the relative paleness of its surroundings, a result, one can only assume, of attempts at removal.

Kamp's images, like the buildings she depicts, alternate between systematic rigor and idiosyncrasy. The perspective from which she shoots is never uniform, and not necessarily comprehensive either, nor do her portraits shun later additions, or "corruptions", of the original building's design. The modern, utopian, ideal of pure and universal functionalism is here juxtaposed with its realization - confronted with the inevitability of the passage of time and decay.

Boaz Levin

Irmel Kamp (born in 1937 in Düsseldorf) lives in Aachen and Stäfa, Switzerland

Her works have been included in numerous exhibitions in such institutions as the Ludwig Forum Aachen; Suermondt-Ludwig Museum, Aachen; Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin; Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt; and Raum für Kunst, Aachen; and internationally at the Jewish Museum, Vienna; Goethe-Institut, Lyon; ETH Zurich; Columbia University, New York; The Genia Schreiber University Art Gallery, Tel Aviv; and at the Moravian Gallery, Brno.

Her works are included in the collections of the Ludwig Forum Aachen; ikob, Museum für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Eupen, Belgien; Paul Sack Collection, San Francisco; und J.P. Morgan Collection, New York.

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