

Irmel Kamp - Zink
7 March - 30 May 2020

When looking down on the city of Paris, there is a special bluish-white, dull shine on the roofs. This comes from zinc, which Georges-Eugène Haussmann ordered to be used across the city. The material was mined in Kelmis on the German-Belgian border, and Irmel Kamp also comes from this area.

She began her very first series in the late 1970s: pictures of buildings with zinc façades that she systematically photographed in a certain area. The project took several years, only ending when entirely completed.

Armed with her medium-format camera and tripod, Irmel Kamp began exploring her interest in architecture in the late 1970s. As she puts it, architecture brought her to photography. She sees certain formal, but also narrative qualities in buildings that others would overlook, as is shown by her Bauhaus series from Tel Aviv. She has been familiar with the area of eastern Belgium across the border from Aachen ever since her childhood.

All the zinc façades are directed toward the west. They are the buildings' faces, confidently confronting the weather. And like a face, years and traces of experience collect on the zinc sheet metal. The beginnings of the oxidation process are clearly visible. And yet, the supposed damage repairs itself: it evens out over the course of the years because the patina constantly replenishes itself.

On the one hand, Irmel Kamp is interested in archival completeness. It is an almost scientific methodology with which she collects and arrests her objects. At the same time, her mode of beholding does not isolate the object from its surroundings. Quite consciously, it shows the flower borders, the power lines, the low walls in the garden, the horse in a paddock. Even if no human figures are visible, she is interested in the people that undertake these interventions, dwell in these houses, live these lives, she says.

In modern zinc processing, the term "preweathering" is used, meaning that the material is subjected to wind and weather before its use. For Irmel Kamp's series, the weather always plays an important role. She waits for what she considers just the right lighting: high cloud cover, no sun. Only then can the velvety depth of the zinc present itself to the fullest. Its shadows, traces, and lesions are a process of storing information. A surface reaction, like photography itself.

Text: Silke Hohmann

Irmel Kamp (born in Düsseldorf in 1937, lives in Aachen)

Irmel Kamp's photography has been shown at numerous exhibitions in Germany, including shows at Ludwig Forum Aachen, Leopold-Hoesch-Museum, Düren, Ikob - Museum für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Eupen, Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum, Aachen, Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin, Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt, and Raum für Kunst, Aachen.

In addition, she has exhibited internationally in shows at Jüdisches Museum, Vienna, Goethe-Institut, Lyon, ETH Zürich, Columbia University, New York, The Genia Schreiber University Art Gallery, Tel Aviv, and at the Museum of Applied Arts, Brno.

Her works are also included in the following collections: Ludwig Forum Aachen, Ikob - Museum für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Eupen, Belgium, Paul Sack Collection, San Francisco, and J. P. Morgan Collection, New York.

The exhibition will be on view at Soy Capitán, Prinzessinnenstrasse 29 in Berlin-Kreuzberg.

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