Batia Suter
OCTAHEDRAL

Curator:
Francesca Marcaccio Hitzeman

20. Jan -
30. March
2024

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OCTAHEDRAL

Batia Suter's installation presented in NŌUA, *Octahedral*, is a captivating exploration of architectural shapes and photographic artistry. Suter digitally manipulates images sourced from old books and magazines, presenting them in two expansive montages within the gallery space.

The first projection showcases significant architectural structures across history, resonating personally with the artist. Meanwhile, the second projection features an animated sequence of plastic food containers, creating an ongoing, fluid display of evolving forms and shapes. The still images present a continuous slideshow where subjects morph seamlessly, intertwining Suter's photographs taken in Bodø into the exhibition's fabric.

The architect office Rintala Eggertsson Architects' design for the gallery creates a deliberate contrast with the buildings depicted in the videos, highlighting the evolution of contemporary photographic practices. This deliberate pairing emphasizes architecture's role in narrative storytelling, influencing our intellectual and perceptual understanding, shaping individual experiences, memories, and social interactions.

Initially appearing fragmented and detached from their original contexts, these depictions now form a cohesive, animated arrangement, pulsating with an organic coherence that invigorates the gallery. Suter's amalgamation of elements from disparate times and cultures encourage a profound contemplation of architecture's enduring impact on our perceptions, memories, and collective consciousness. Suter's exhibition serves as a conduit-shaped by human experience, prompting reflection on our surroundings, the significance of the structures we create, inhabit, and engage with, and how these constructs mold our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world.

Batia Suter
Installation views 'Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize 2018' / The Photographers' Gallery, London

ARCHITECTURAL ECHOES: PHOTOGRAPHIC DISCOURSE

By Francesca Marcaccio Hitzeman

Batia Suter's latest work, *Octahedral,* provides a visceral encounter with the rich complexities of architecture, memory, and the human experience. Through this exhibition, Suter illuminates the multi-layered dialogues within contemporary photography, invoking the spectral presence of archival practices and their timeless resonance.

The exhibition unfurls an intuitive montage of found imagery, masterfully composed of digitally manipulated pictures excavated from old books and magazines. A personal selection, these images are those that have provoked a physical reaction in Suter, sparking a profound exploration into the strength of structures and photographs. Suter's work treads the path of affect theory, questioning how and when we are touched and triggered at an unconscious level, thereby transforming the viewer's encounter with the photographic object.

At the heart of the exhibition is a monumental installation that generates hypnagogic spaces where images communicate based on their inherent logic. Suter orchestrates a succession of visual ricochets, creating an astonishing alchemy—an autonomous poetic form that offers an alternative to our historical knowledge, transporting us to unexplored realms. This installation manifests an uncanny 'architectural experience,' offering a dynamic, immersive showcase of how buildings and monuments throughout history continue to evolve and interact with their inhabitants. Each structure emanates a distinct aura, bearing witness to our collective memory and perceptions.

The installation operates on the principle of construction and deconstruction, using digital manipulation to explore the tension between the specificity of the depicted buildings and the universality of the human experience of architecture. This spatial storytelling process underscores the symbolic power of architecture's visual language in shaping our intellectual record and thought processes. The buildings, often likened to human bodies with their facades acting as faces, evoke a sense of the uncanny, and as they interact, they seem to animate, revealing a dynamic energy and a nuanced interplay of tension and dissonance. Suter's careful manipulation of images evokes a liminal realm where photographs transform into surreal, dreamlike forms.

In this context of architectural expression, the yearning for a nuanced portrayal of used buildings lies within the intricate dance between their physical state and the underlying narratives they convey. It's akin to traversing an elastic rollercoaster, oscillating between the ingenious adaptations born out of necessity, the resilient forms of survival, and the improvised structures, all exuding a redolent aura steeped in nostalgia and faint traces of colonial echoes. On one hand, there's an almost magical quality encapsulated within the simplicity and pragmatic ingenuity of these modest constructions. They speak volumes about the resilience of communities, their ability to thrive amidst limitations, and the creative solutions born out of necessity. This aspect evokes a sense of admiration for the human spirit, celebrating the beauty found in everyday architecture—a tribute to survival and endurance.

Conversely, the narrative shifts dramatically when considering the imposing grandeur of high culture monuments and temples. These colossal structures hold an undeniable allure, commanding attention and reverence. The allure of grandeur often goes hand in hand with a sense of power, authority, and control, sometimes bordering on the imposition of a singular narrative or ideology.

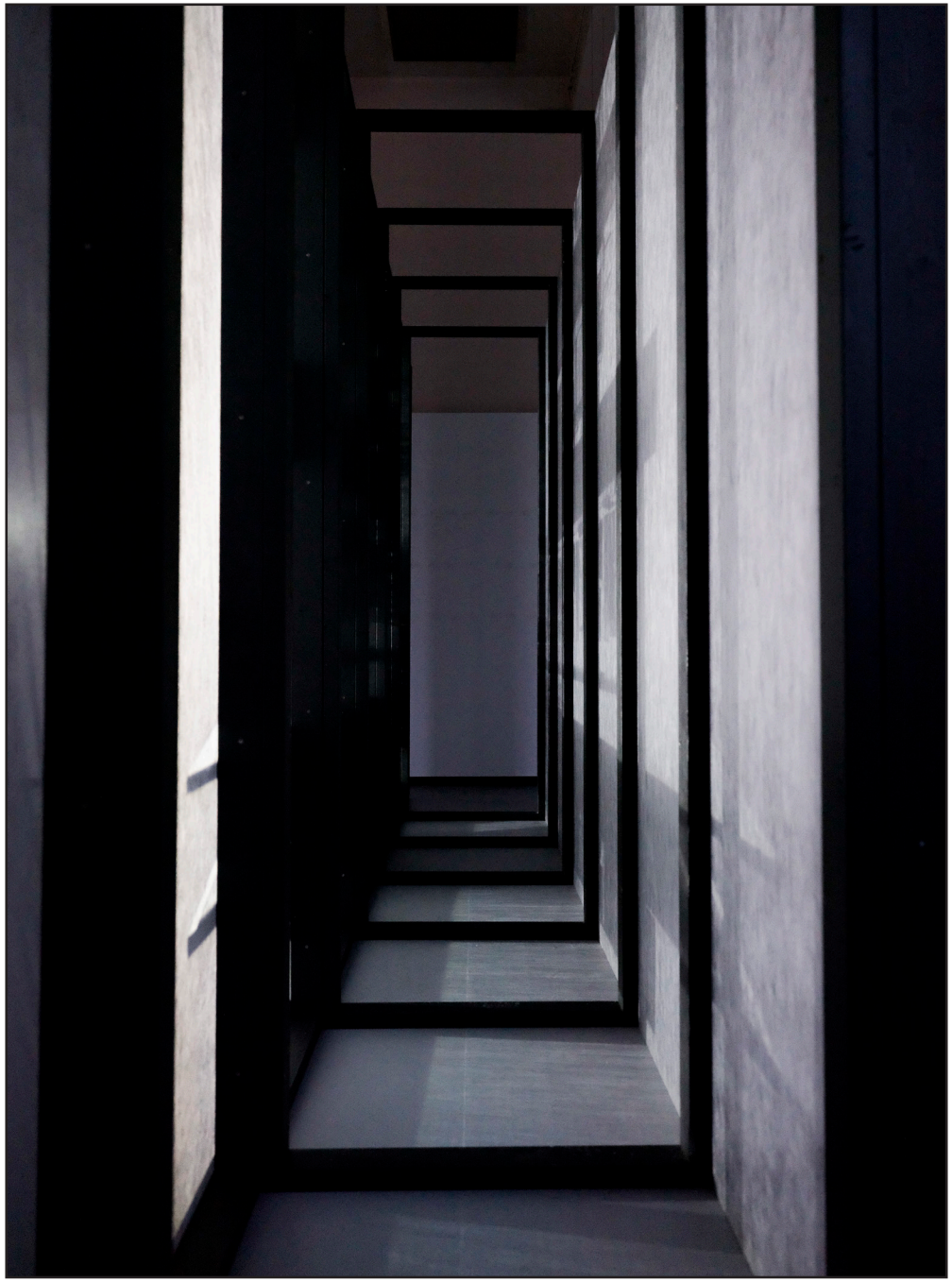
This dichotomy encapsulates the very essence of human nature—an ongoing struggle between the pursuit of excellence and the ethical implications intertwined with it. In sharp contrast, a smaller screen showcases a video work, a kinetic mosaic of images of food containers intersecting unexpectedly with images drawn from various sources. A prototype of a plastic container stands as a metaphor for a living, evolving building, reflecting a deeply human characteristic. This recalls the constructivist concept of the social condenser, viewing architecture as a tool to shape social interaction and experience. Suter's approach reflects a nonhierarchical interpretation of culture and art history, creating a constellation of interconnect-

ed references. Her work resonates with the theoretical metaphor of the rhizome, a concept rooted in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, signifying a constantly evolving network of knowledge. This rhizomatic approach mirrors the dynamic ways in which photographic ideas and materials are reconfigured within contemporary art.

In the field of creative media, especially, the rhizome has been a pervasive concept and is a useful metaphor for thinking about dynamic ways to map seemingly disparate forms of ideas and their meanings held in the constantly changing connections we make between them. The subjects in *Octahedral* weave a tapestry of imaginative transformation, forging a visual taxonomy of shapes. The slideshow format, instead of revealing an overall aesthetic relationship between images, compels the viewer to form one-to-one connections between them.

Batia Suter's exhibition *Octahedral* not only delves into the nuances of contemporary photographic practices but also serves as a profound interrogation of power structures inherent in the relationship between photography and architecture. Through her meticulous curation of found imagery and skilled digital manipulation, Suter prompts a critical reflection on the hierarchy embedded within historical visual archives. Her deliberate juxtaposition of everyday structures and cultural monuments within the exhibit challenges the established norms in photography, echoing a narrative questioning the architecture of oppression. In echoing early photographic dialogues, Suter's work highlights the malleability of historical visual archives, inviting viewers to contemplate the evolution of photography's role in shaping societal narratives. Her artistic approach parallels the historical trajectory of photography and the visual arts realm,from capturing the mundane to portraying grandeur, mirroring the transitions seen in past avant-garde experiments to contemporary socio-political reflections through the lens of photography.

Suter's exhibition acts as more than a showcase of creative prowess; it becomes a platform that invites audiences to interrogate the intricate relationship between architecture, power dynamics, and the evolving language of photography across time. By challenging established hierarchies and structures through her curated visual narratives, Suter prompts viewers to engage critically with the broader societal implications embedded within the images, fostering a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between art, architecture, and socio-political constructs.



Batia Suter
Octahedral
Installation view, NOUA, Bodø 2024

BIOGRAPHIES

Batia Suter (CH/NL)

The Swiss-born, Amsterdam-based artist Batia Suter (b. 1967) studied at the art academies of Zürich (CH) and Arnhem (NL), and was also trained at the Werkplaats Typografie.

Suter produces monumental installations of digitally manipulated images for specific locations, and works on photo-animations, image sequences and collages, often using found historical pictures.

In 2007 and 2016 she published the artist books Parallel Encyclopedia and Parallel Encyclopedia #2, based on compositions of images taken from old books she has collected along the years. Her other books; Surface Series (2011), Radial Grammar (2018), and Hexamiles (Mont-Voisin) (2019), are evocative montages of found images exploring the diverse resonances of geological shapes and landscapes, visual surfaces and image structures.

The underlying themes of Batia Suter's practice are the 'iconification' and 'immunogenicity' of images, and the circumstances by which they become charged with new associative values.

Her work intuitively situates old images in new contexts to provoke surprising reactions and significant possibilities. By this method, and with an attuned sensitivity to hidden harmonies and expressive accidents, Suter thus generates hypnagogic spaces where pictures can communicate by their own logic, in a force field of imaginative metamorphosis.

Francesca Marcaccio Hitzeman (IT/HK)

Francesca Marcaccio Hitzeman is an independent curator, art consultant and writer specializing in photography and contemporary art. She holds degrees in Art History and Fine Art Photography from UAL and she received a bursary for the London Royal College of Arts Curating Programme and she was selected for the Emerging Curators residency at the Otis College in Los Angeles in 2019.

Francesca draws on her international perspective to connect artists and audiences across cultural and geographic boundaries, working with a variety of clients including galleries, museums, art fairs, institutions, and private collectors. Francesca has held various roles at esteemed institutions, galleries and festivals including the Whitechapel Gallery, International Center of Photography, Jeeum Gallery and Savignano Photography Festival. She is currently based in Hong Kong.

Rintala Eggertsson Architects (FI/NO)

Dagur Eggertsson and Sami Rintala are the founders of Rintala Eggertsson Architects, a Norway based architecture firm, which bases its activities around furniture design, public art, architecture, and urban planning.

The work of Rintala Eggertsson Architects has been exhibited at the Maxxi Museum in Rome, Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the National Art Museum of China and with the project 'Corte Del Forte' at the 2018 Venice Biennale. The company has received prestigious awards over the years such as The Global award for Sustainable Architecture, Wan 21 for 21 Award, Architizer A+Award, Travel & Leisure Award, American Architecture Award, and the International Architecture Award. Their projects and texts have been published in architecture magazines such as Abitare, Area, Architectural Review, A+U, L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, D'A Magazine, AMC architecture, Detail, Domus, Topos, and Wallpaper as well as New York Times and Wall Street Journal. Eggertsson and Rintala have taught architecture in Europe, Australia, and North America and in 2019 as Gensler Visiting Professors at Cornell University in New York.

INFORMATION

Opening hours
Thur - Sun 12-16

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Free entry

The exhibition is supported by
Creative Europe, Bodø2024, Arts Council Norway, BKH and The Mondrian Fund.

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Batia Suter
Octahedral, 2024

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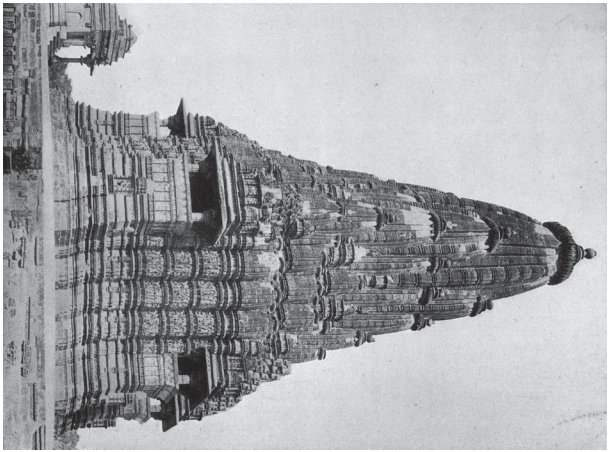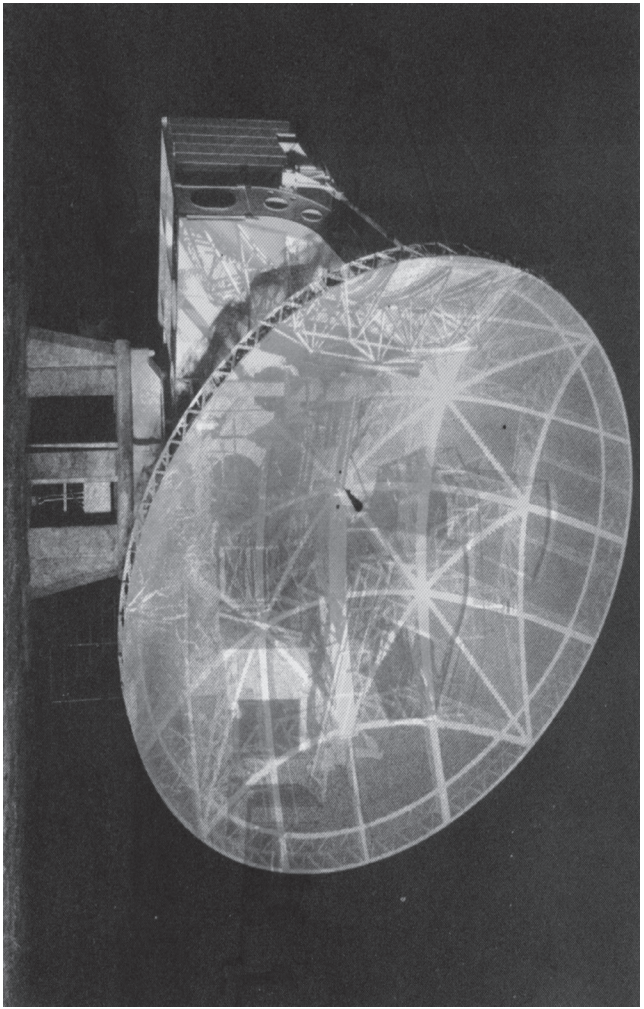
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