Shrines and ornaments: a look into the display cabinet
Andreas Gursky's new pictures

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1. PROLOGUE

They climbed a mountain. "Behold," said the king, "this is my kingdom. It stretches as far as the eye can see." The stranger looked down into the valley. A river meandered through green pastures, the spires of a city shone in the sun, and on the horizon snowy mountain peaks could be discerned. The king said: "Half my kingdom and my daughter shall be yours if you do me a service". "What must I do?" asked the stranger. "I wish you to make pictures of everything in my kingdom - of meadows, mountains, cities, ports, houses, factories, ballrooms. I want to rest assured that the splendour and beauty of my kingdom are recorded for posterity." "And what about your people?" asked the stranger.

2. VIEWPOINT

Over the past three years Andreas Gursky has distanced himself increasingly from panoramic photography. It is becoming clear that by interpreting photography as a process of ordering what he sees, he "sees everything"[1]: seeing everything is part of the picture. The total is only one way of transmitting a section of reality, *pars pro toto*. To counteract the illusionistic perspective of photography, Gursky has begun to use horizontal compositions more frequently. In his new pictures he layers objects over each other; thus the motifs of his pictures gradually change. Whether he is depicting crowds of people, architecture or shelves, after having concentrated on factories between 1990 and 1993, Gursky's pictures have become more abstract. Void, plenitude, structures are taken to extremes[2]. This is also the case with the classical motif of the landscape.

Gursky's *Rhein* of 1996 is no longer the river of *Neujahrsschwimmer* (*New Year Swimmers*) of 1988, but the extract of a landscape, liberated of all evidence of human presence; the broad river with its frayed banks and Canalettoesque view of Dusseldorf has been transformed into a canal through no man's land. Sharp as a paper knife, the horizon cuts the picture exactly in half. You want to negotiate the barrier-like banks and arrive at a point beyond the horizon, grasp something vertical - a tree, a human being, however tiny – but there's nothing there. Above you the sky, below you the river, in whose waves the grey of the sky is reflected as silver mottled with green, bounded by fields. On these banks Gursky has overcome his tendency towards the narrative. His pictures have often been admired precisely for their narrative qualities. Your eye could wander through them and pause where you liked. It was also easy to detect the influence of Old Master paintings. This was not in fact Gursky's intenti on, but neither did he mind. Today, apart from film, the longing for pictures which teli us stories based on reality is fulfilled by photography rather than painting. If, like Gursky, you believe in a general pictorial language, it makes "no difference whether you concern yourself with abstraction

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[1] 1. Rudolf Schmitz, *"Weder Mordfall noch Taufe. Andreas Gurskys angstfreier Blick aufs Ganze"*, in: *"Andreas Gursky, Fotografien"*, Deichtorhallen Hamburg, De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam 1994, pp. 7-14.
[2] Exceptions are for example *Hong Kong Grand Hyatt Park*, 1994, and *Singapore I*, 1997.

as a painter or as a photographer"[3].

Abstraction is an integral part of this general pictorial language. Abstraction in photography offers parallels to Moholy-Nagy's photograms and other experiments out of the Bauhaus dark room, awakens associations to the New Vision, which presented things in an unusual perspective, creating abstract compositions out of a stack of plates, a radio mast or an onion sliced open. This is not the photographic tradition Gursky is referring to when he talks about abstraction. Apparently he is striving for an increasingly strict formal order to harmonise the external with the internal picture. There is less and less space for anecdotes: "[...] there is a particular place with a view over the Rhine which has somehow always fascinated me, but it didn't suffice for a picture as it basically constituted only part of a picture. I carried this idea for a picture around with me for a year-and-a-half and thought about whether I ought perhaps to change my viewpoint... In the end I decided to digitalise the pictures and leave out the elements that bothered me"[4].

Compared with his earlier riverscapes, then, Gursky's Rhein is an abstract picture of stripes whose composition awakens associations not with Canaletto, but with Barnett Newman[5] or Agnes Martin. On a realistic level, Gursky manages to deindividualise a place through the photographic medium. A place lacking all topography, like shoe shelves devoid of shoes.

In view of photographs such as *Rhein*, *Prada I*, *II* or *Ayamonte*, which were all taken in 1997, I cannot avoid discussing the issue of truth in photography. Can we trust these pictures, whose purism and perfection are so seductive? If Gursky were a painter this question simply would not arise. Indeed, we expect a painted picture to offer us a subjective view of the world. "Unlike a painted picture, where the viewer takes the place of the painter in a kind of role play, [...] the viewer of a photograph immediately creates a relationship to the object represented in the picture"[6]. Unlike painting, photography depends so much on a picture of reality which can be checked on by the viewer so that there is always the potential suspicion that it has been manipulated[7], especially since the computer-assisted processing of photographs has become not only part of the handicraft of the graphic designer in advertising, but also of the artist, offering the widest range of possibilities, from magic tricks to surrealism[8].

Although there is a general consensus that painting and photography are equals with regard to their relationship with reality - which is one of illustration and interpretation - digitalised photography seems to be flawed, technically, due to its ambivalence as a medium, and ethically, because it bears the stigma of a lie. The painter David Hockney, who also photographs, says, "[...] photography has to put up with the fact that painting and drawing will change it. As soon as you start processing a photograph with a computer you are a draughtsman or painter"[9]. Jeff Wall, on the other hand, who deliberately crosses the limits of possibility[10] with his large-format, digitally processed scenarios,

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[3] "Instead, I believe in a general language of pictures." Intervew with Andreas Gursky, *Eikon*, 21/22, 1997, pp. 18ff.

[4] Gursky *ibid*.

[5] See Gursky in: Correspondence Andreas Gursky - Veir Görner, this catalogue.

[6] Ulf Erdmann Ziegler, "Magische Allianzen I", in: *Magische Allianzen. Fotografie und Kunst*, Regensburg 1996, p. 262.

[7] Cf. Boris Groys, "Die Wahrheit in der Fotografie", in: *Logik der Sammlung. Am Ende des musealen Zeitalters*, Munich, Vienna 1997, pp.127-144.

[8] Cf. the catalogue 'Fotografie nach der Fotografie,' a project of the Siemens Cultural Programme, Munich 1996.

[9] David Hockney in an interview in *Art*, February 1998, at an exhibition of his photographs at the Ludwig Museum, Cologne, p. 23.

[10] Jeff Wall on his work *Dead Troops Talk*, 1991/92: "*I started working on it in 1987, when I observed that digital picture processing was developing rapidly. I sensed that the new technology would contribute a great deal to the importance of this work. Because digital montage is such an artificial process I had the feeling it would allow me to create the kind of detachment I thought was necessary between the sinister, gruesome aspects of the subject and my own treatment of it.*" Frank Wagner, "Fragen an Jeff Wall", in: Gregor Stemmrich (ed.), *Jeff Wall. Szenarien im Bildraum der Wirklichkeit. Essays und Interviews*, Dresden 1997, p. 329.

recognises that just as painters throughout history have constantly altered and expanded their technique and materials, using them to visualise the image he sees in his mind's eye, so have photographers. This is also how I interpret Gursky's attitude to photography, although his pictures are convincing precisely because they remain within the limits of possibility[11].

3. PRADA AND PIRANESI

I was first confronted with *Prada I* at the Berlin Art Fair in 1996. Atlanta was hanging right next to it in the same bay. The two - storey, elongated showcase for smart designer shoes and the enormous courtyard of a hotel were like brother and sister, initially because of the similar colours - pink, green and white - but on closer inspection also because of the architecture and lighting. The shoes are displayed on shelves built into the wall. A plinth protrudes from the lower shelf. Indirect neon lighting in each compartrnent glows around the shoes. The display cabinet thus becomes a shrine[12] containing objects worthy of veneration. On the one hand, Gursky assimilates the current aesthetic of the designer boutique in which goods are displayed like rare works of art, and on the other, a Prada shop would never show its summer and winter collections in the same display cabinet[13].

The pergolas surrounding the atrium of the multi-storey hotel are also lit indirectly. The shadows thrown by the alternating trellises and balustrades onto the architectural elements create an apparently endless series of boxes, which seemingly float in the air. A paradox: shrines piled on top of each other. Similarly, the entire, gigantic courtyard of the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Atlanta (which hosted the 1996 Olympic Games) is a single, multi-storey shrine, decorated with a red carpet and plants.
Yet rather than a showcase for fine goods, the hotel courtyard is the habitat of housekeeping trailers and members of the hotel staff, who appear, in this architectural context, as rare examples of an even rarer species. You do not see them at work. They are resting, chatting or seem to be in contemplative mood. This is how one would like to imagine the photographer surveying the scene as he stands at one of the railings.

The Prada showcase is so architectural that Gursky could not avoid presenting it in his second version of the picture as just that: *Prada II* shows the empty, illuminated cabinet heightened by one storey. The shrine becomes a temple. The dimensions of this work -166 x 316 cm - make it almost as large as Gursky's biggest horizontal-format picture to date, the geometric façade of the *Montparnasse* apartment block in Paris, taken in 1993. The format of *Montparnasse* has since been superseded by another display cabinet: *Ohne Titel V*. Six layers of shelves are filled with Nike, Reebok and other sports shoes. The Prada esque obsession with brand names is presented as a mass performance -and there lies the irony[14]. And yet -as has already been observed in Montparnasse - mass products can also be varied[15]. Who would have thought that mundane sports shoes could look so individual? Everyone is an original.
Gursky says of himself that he works slowly and only creates a few pictures a year. Usually everything

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[11] *"[...] But I don't invent pictures; this is a major difference between me and Jeff Wall. There was a time when I was quite influenced by him, and I consider him one of the most interesting photographic artist of our time."* Gursky in *Eikon*, cf. note 3, p. 19.
[12] The German word "Schrein" (shrine) has two meanings: in its archaic sense it can mean a cupboard as well as the more usual container of relics. Related words: "Sarg" (coffin), "Truhe" (coffer). In this sense, *Prada* is related with *Ayamonte*, which shows the urn houses in an Italian cemetry.
[13] Thanks to Veit Görner for this observation.
[14] A further irony is that Gursky really did see Prada shoes displayed like this in a boutique in Düsseldorf, but that the showcase was specially built for the photograph in the Matthew Marks Gallery.
[15] See picture and text book on Andreas Gursky, *Montparnasse*, Portikus, Frankfurt 1995.

has been said by one picture. Sometimes several are needed to develop an idea[16]. You could also say "to take the idea to its conclusion," as the idea of *Atlanta* is taken to its conclusion in *Times Square* (1997), whose subject is also the courtyard in a hotel complex designed by John Portman[17]. Unlike *Atlanta*, this picture does not draw the gaze downwards over trellises, passages and greenery. To the left and right of the picture in *Times Square* two horizontally positioned buildings draw the viewer's gaze towards the opposite row of buildings, leading to a head-on visual collision with the gigantic façade. The artificial lighting on every floor absorbs the space between the balcony railings and the wall. Architecture thus becomes a serial, abstract picture.

Although by contrast with *Atlanta* the entrance area of the courtyard is visible and the formal structure of the façade is less detailed, the architecture in *Times Square* is less easily comprehensible and, megalomaniacal as it is, irrational. In front of the yellow light, tiny human beings, now merely schematic, appear strangely unphysical, as if they were in front of an X-ray screen. The entrances to the foyer are the size of mouse holes. *Montparnasse* was at least recognisably residential: there were windows, all kinds of curtains, an interior and an exterior. *Times Square*, on the other hand, is a hybrid, glistening mega - interior-exterior. Portman's building is shown as a blow-up of pergolas and balconies, which in the 1920s were elements of the democratic New Building architectural movement. With his head-on perspective, Gursky breaks the conventions respected by architectural photographers[18], who have recently had to tolerate questions such as: "Is it photography that first brings architecture to life? Does photography anchor architecture to specific features, or is it capable of revealing certain qualities otherwise lost in use? Does photography encourage a certain superficiality? Do genuine spatial qualities suffer in photographs?"[19]. *Times Square* answers the question quite clearly with no, whilst hypostatizing the surface of the architecture, emphasising qualities which in normal use would not be apparent.

Is Gursky using photography to criticise architecture? At the very least he shows the hypertrophy of Portman's buildings. In Gursky's pictures the rationalistic principle of form following function becomes a nightmarish scenario. *Times Square* is a piace of homelessness, alienation, loneliness, claustrophobic in its very spaciousness. This is what links Gursky's abstract spaces with Piranesi's architectural visions: they are bottomless, unrestrained, extreme. It is not just the fact that Gursky's view of Portman recalls the design principles equated with the late-baroque visionary Piranesi in 'Postmodern Architecture':

"[...] the tendency towards the monumental, distorted proportions and symmetry [...], ironical exaggeration and the ambivalence of many statements (constructible/not constructible, interior/exterior, light/darkness, construction/destruction)"[20]. There's more to it than that: unlike the

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[16] Interview in *Eikon*, p.19.

[17] The American architect (Portman & Associates) made a name for himself in the 1970s with a new type of grand hotel built around a gigantic courtyard filled with plants, shops, restaurants and offering space to stroll. Portman's buildings are considercd the American answer to the European grand hotels of the nineteenth century. The Plaza Hotel in Atlanta, built in 1976, is one of his major works.

[18] A good example of official photography of Portman's Regency Hyatt, Atlanta (Gursky's *Atlanta*) are the pictures in John Portman, edited by Paolo Riani, Paul Goldberger and John Portman, Milan 1990. Portman's official photographers, Michael Portman and Timothy Hursley, photograph the courtyard at a steep angle from the foyer so that the lift shaft and the filigree steel sculpture by Richard Lippold jut into the courtyard and the balconies and trellises of the pergolas merely provide the framework for the 'immaterial' square of light that is the glass roof. In Bernhard Fitner's article. "John Portman: Architecture is not a Building", puhlished in Art in America, March/April 1973, however, the courtyard is photographed frnm above.

[19] Gerrit Confurius, editorial, in: *Daidalos no. 66, (Fotografie als Argument)*, December 1997, p. 15.

[20] Cf. catalogue: *Inventionen. Piranesi und Architekturphantasien der Gegenwart*, Kunstverein Hannover 1981. Concerning Piranesi's modernity, see also: Annelie Lütgens, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Bilder von Orten und Räumen*, Hamburg Kunsthalle 1994.

architectural visions of Daniel Libeskind or Lebbeus Woods, who concern themselves explicitly with Piranesi[21], Gursky's pictures, paradoxically, are based on existing, entirely functional architecture.

As far back as 1992, Gursky succeeded in blurring the interior architecture of the airport building in the photograph *Paris, Charles de Gaulle*: in the middle of the courtyard, fountains surround a shining metal funnel (a fountain, a ventilation shaft?); covered conveyor belts cross overhead, linking various storeys.

Groups of travellers move along in the curved, transparent tubes. Everyone is on a journey, concerned with getting from A to B, but where these tubes begin and where they lead to remains unclear. The internal logie of the space pictured is incomprehensible to the viewer; it remains mysterious, like Piranesi's endless prison steps and the ant-like people climbing them. Yet there are still spatial structures in *Paris, Charles de Gaulle* which are recognisable as such. This is not the case in *Times Square*. The wide space of the courtyard becomes a flattened, schematic façade, the calculable becomes incalculable, what is visible turns in on itself.

In Gursky's photographic experiments with abstraction it is not only architectural spaces whose inherent structures are dissolved in favour of an abstract pictorial structure. Gursky explores the basis of our spatial experiences - the coordination system of homo sapiens. Between 1993 and 1996 he produced four works which deal with the "above" and "below" of natural and constructed spaces. The surface of a grey carpet (*Ohne Titel I*, 1993) contrasts with the colours of a sunset (*Ohne Titel II*, 1993). And the Vasarely esque ceiling of a conference room (*Brasilia, Plenarsaal*, 1994) is coupled with artificially lit sand (*Ohne Titel III*, 1996). Each one of these pictures has its specific all-over structure (carpet, sand, celestial colours, a grid of lights), and each one, taken in light perspective, is more than a monochrome surface. Yet the viewer still cannot look at these pictures from a normal position, as there are no fixed points in them. These four photographs are meditations on the limits of photography as a medium[22].

4. BROKERS AND RAVERS

"Rocketing share prices on the world's stock markets: the stock exchanges of Asia and Europe were in high-flying mood on Monday. The merger between British companies Glaxo Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham encouraged investors' merger fantasies, the feared military confrontation between the United States and Iraq failed to materialise and in Asia the attitude prevailed that, after the recent structural reforms, the financial crisis was under control"[23].

If events on the international financial markets can be described in words typical of a pleasure park brochure (rocket, mood, fantasies), it would seem, on the one hand, that the remark made by Siegfried Kracauer in his essay entitled Das Ornament der Masse - "Capitalism does not rationalise too much, but too little" - is still worth considering. On the other hand, Gursky's pictures of stock exchanges and discothèques should be seen as two sides of a coin. Both are places in which people come together in masses and act in a way that is incomprehensible to outsiders. They are to a certain extent exclusive masses. The raised viewpoint of the photographer makes no secret of the fact that he is also an outsider[24].

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[21] Cf. Christian W. Thomsen, *Experimentelle Architektur der Gegenwart*, Cologne 1991, the chapter on Lebbeus Woods; see also Libeskind in Lütgens, *ibid*.

[22] However, this series of pictures by no means cause Weißes Rauschen ("white rustling"). See Ulf Erdmann Ziegler, "Ameisen im Amüsierbetrieb: Andrcas Gursky", in: Ziegler, *Magische Allianzen* (cf. note 6), p. 51. For *Brasilia, Plenarsaal*, 1994, see also Neville Wakefield, "Das Verschwinden der Fluchtpunkte (Vanishing Points)", in: *Parkett*, no. 44, Zürich 1995, pp. 78-82.

[23] Report in the *Tagesspiegel* newspaper of February 3, 1998.

[24] Unlike Wolfgang Tillmans, for example, whose photographs taken in clubs or on church days show that he

Gursky is by no means interested in finding out what these people are doing, but rather in their formal qualities as a mass collective. Thus we experience them in the stock exchanges of Singapore, Hong Kong and Chicago in colourful uniforms, clustered like bunches of grapes, in layers, grouped like islands, creating a multitude of patterns. In his stock exchange pictures, I believe that Gursky is exploring the question as to whether so abstract and at the same time so chaotic a space has its own choreography. How many different types of patterns are there? And as a viewer of the picture, one wonders whether the disciplined seating in the Hong Kong stock exchange, compared to the shapeless swarm in the Chicago stock market, says anything about the respective social structures of the countries concerned. It would, however, be presumptuous "to want to discern the suffering of the world in a photograph of a bank building" (or a stock exchange)[25].

If one considers the process of abstraction which Gursky's photographs have undergone in recent years and which subjects have aided this process, one has the impression that factories are no longer the place where masses of workers congregate, but the stock markets. Kracauer's famous remark, "The hands in the factory correspond to the legs of the Tiller girls"[26] is no longer true. The factories are mostly populated by robots, the stock exchanges by independent agents, and the word "revue" has been superseded in the fashionable jargon of cultural critics by "rave". Of course it is tempting to draw parallels between the masses of brokers on the stock exchange and ravers in the discos: those who work in uniform (without producing anything) during the week are dancing in ecstasy at the weekend. The individual loses himself in the mass, which, as such, "finds" itself. Uniformity also prevails in the disco, where stockbrokers and Siemens employees become indistinguishable from one another.

Kracauer's essay, *Ornament der Masse* (Decoration of the Masses) is a valuable aid to a sharper focus on the specifics of Gursky's mass scenes compared with their historical forerunners. Kracauer distinguishes between purposeless decoration of the masses (girls, sport) to which the viewer reacts aesthetically, and ordered decoration, employed to demonstrate formal, political solidarity (military parades, marches, May celebrations)[27]. His observations, made in the 1920s, refer to phenomena which the Nazi regime later perfected. Max Ehlert's photographs of the National Socialist Party Day celebrations from 1933 to 1937 show how the regime aestheticises its mass military parades. The 'Stock Exchange' system is anything but purposeless, but the masses involved in it function in different formations and do not present a uniform picture. Their activity is more target-oriented than their form, and this distinguishes them from the conforming mass of a military parade. They are different from the patterns of a revue or a stadium because they have no function as performers who aim to make the audience react aesthetically towards them. Unlike Ehlert's sportsmen and SA troops, Gursky's stockbrokers and dancers are decorative without being aware of it.

The structure of unregimented masses is particularly prevalent in the work of the German-American photographer Andreas Feininger. The former Bauhaus teacher, who was interested in formal structures and graphic effects, took his photographs at the end of the forties in New York, which for him represented the facelessness of modern society. Be it employees having their lunch break on Fifth Avenue or holidaymakers enjoying the beach on Coney Island, Feininger's black and white photos,

"belongs".

[25] Hubert von Amelunxen, "Die Arkade der Fotografie". Zu einigen disparaten Momenten von Architektur und Fotografie, in: *Daidalos*, no. 66, December 1996, p. 75.

[26] Siegfried Kracauer, "Das Ornament der Masse", (1927), in the volume of essays of the same title, Frankfurt am Main 1977, p. 54.

[27] *Ibid.*, p.51.

usually taken with a zoom lens, express what cultural critics mean when they refer to faceless masses: disjointedness and anonymity[28]. In the 1995 picture of a mass event, Union Rave, Gursky's camera captures thousands of faces, every one recognisable and different in its enthusiasm (even if the enthusiasm is directed at the DJ), while his 1997 work, *May Day*, ironically separates mass and ornamental elements. Here, the ornament of the masses becomes an ornament *above* the masses: a red sculptural object hanging from the ceiling dominates the whirl of the dancers while the spotlight over the DJ pours blue light over him like the holy spirit. Only a few feeble rays reach the dancers far below. "In the same rational way that people are dominated by behavioural patterns in real life, they immerse themselves in the physical and thus perpetuate current reality"[29].

5. EPILOGUE: IN THE MUSEUM

Masses of grains of sand, masses of illuminated grid patterns, human masses, architectural masses: we are only really alone in a museum. Not a sound, not a movement in front of Jackson Pollock's monumental work *One: Number 31* painted in 1950. The only traces of action are in the painting. Every art lover dreams of once being able to enjoy the Museum of Modern Art and its works so exclusively, and anyone who has experienced the streams of visitors that come to the museum every day knows that there is no situation more unrealistic than the peace and solitude celebrated by Gursky in front of a Pollock painting, which is one of the highlights of the museum. Let us remind ourselves of all the things that are *not* visible in Gursky's 1997 photograph, *Ohne Titel VI*: casually dressed young people carrying rucksacks or large shoulder bags standing in front of the Pollock painting, yet turning to other paintings in the room, a child taking a snapshot of the painting, a woman in a coat holding a map of the museum and observing the child taking the photograph. All this can be seen in Thomas Struth's 1994 photo *Museum of ModernArt I, New York*. Struth places the painting, which is over five metres wide, in the background. The museum visitors, photographed as they move and thus blurred in the photograph, jut into the painting, which is hung very low due to its dimensions. Struth has constructed his picture in such a way that the grey carpet on which the visitors act takes up almost as much space as the wall with Pollock's painting. As a photographer, Struth is comparing *his* representation of 'action' with the traces of the artist's movements frozen in the painting.

Not so Gursky: he places Pollock's horizontal-format painting right in the middle of the photograph, between a strip of ceiling and a strip of carpet. The concealed row of lights above the painting, the same grey colour as the ceiling, blurs the upper end of the wall, which is rendered immaterial by the indirect lighting. It is even less clear where the wall on which the painting is hanging ends and the carpeted floor begins, for under the painting and its narrow shadow the light creates a diffuse area of *chiaroscuro*. The Pollock painting seems to be floating on a cushion of air.

Only once before has Gursky photographed a rnuseum situation to date: I also see *Turner Collection, London* (1995) as a pictorial reflection on how loose forms (in this case Turner's atmospheric, misty-grey landscapes) and fixed forms (picture frames, walls, skirting boards, parquet floor) relate to each other. If you observe the composition in stripes in *Ohne Titel VI* it becomes clear, in surprising contrast with *Turner Collection*, that loose and fixed forms are not clearly delineated. The square format of the picture limits the loose form of the drips of paint, but the picture's quality as an object appears considerably more solid than its environment. At the same time, the strict, horizontal border

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[28] *"Coney Island beach on a Sunday in July. Once again I had to use my 1000 mm zoom lens to express my feelings in the face of these 'human ant hills'. I wondered where it would all end if the current uncontrolled rate of reproduction were to continue unabated. The inhabitable space on earth is limited, and over a thousand species of animals and plants have already been exterminated by man. Without worldwide birth control I can only imagine atomic war and the end of life on earth"*. "Andreas Feininger on his picture *Sunday on the beach at Coney Island, New York City*", 1949 in: *Andreas Feininger, Photographs 1928-1988*, Schaffhausen 1997, p. 143.
[29] Kracauer 1977, pp. 61-62.

of Pollock's flowing painting reminds one of Gursky's 'abstract' representation of the Rhine. A major idea behind both these purist scenarios is the concept of the heroic in abstract art. Even if Gursky transports Jackson Pollock's painting into a contemplative sphere, he is not afraid of creating a link between this masterpiece of perfectly formed forrnlessness and the Prada principle. *Ohne Titel VI* is also a look into the display cabinet: a shrine for an ornament.