

Peter Downsborough - Photographs

11.12.14 > 06.02.15

Opening: 11th of December, 7 pm

This exhibition could have been titled "Geometrizing life in the photographic work of Peter Downsborough", after Lucy Lippard's notion of photography*, mainly because the third exhibition by Peter Downsborough at àngels barcelona focuses on the conceptual photographic work that the artist has been consistently producing since 1978 and that has been of major relevance in his multidisciplinary artistic practice which includes sculpture, works on paper, photographs, films and books.

In the early 1970s Peter Downsborough used photography in order to document the different view points of his sculptural work and used serial photography in order to document the space and perception according to the different movements of the spectator as exemplified by his first book which contained photographs, "Two Pipes Fourteen Locations", 1974¹.

The combination of seriality in Downsborough's use of photography and his interest in vernacular architectural settings (industrial zones, suburban homes, gas stations, train tracks, etc) inscribes his work within a critical response to the architecture and the new modes of production that emerged in late capitalism, thus placing his work within the logic of acceleration, consumption and repetition, also found in conceptual photographic works of the same period by artists such as Dan Graham, Sol LeWitt and Ed Ruscha. His intention is not to produce spectacular, or sublime, images but rather to explore the relationship between time and place by using the camera's viewfinder as a structuring tool, by never cropping his images post-exposure and by avoiding metaphorical illusions by not giving titles to his photographs, thus only naming them by giving the place and date, as their reference, in the style of a traveling diary.

The series of images presented here introduce the viewer to the specific use that the artist makes of photography in which the urban settings of contemporary society have increasingly become our most "natural" environment and thus where structures, time and space make themselves more evident to our eyes.

With **D Train, 1978** (Group of 5 photographs), the relevance of composition, in the arrangement of elements within a single image, functions as a way of creating "time-lapse" photographs as if they were sequences representing the coming and going of moving objects with a static camera, inscribing themselves in duration and space such as it happens with the tracking shots in cinema, thus inviting the viewer to reflect on the process of displacement. As we can see in **Divisions#3, 1980 > 2002** (Group of 6 photographs), Downsborough's photographs investigate the traditional use of space as an object. Through displacements, discontinuities and ruptures, he enters into a dialogue with the space offering the spectator new forms of seeing and interacting thus becoming a constant element to be considered in his entire artistic practice. Thus the camera becomes a structural tool and the photograph a view of place structured in time, the capture of a fragment of the world to show his ideas.

Finally, **Walmer, 2008** (Group of 9 photographs), recalls Downsborough's interest in vernacular architecture as a way to record the place of the "ordinary", interacting with the notion of reality and standing between documentation and abstraction.

As the artist mentioned: "The photograph can be seen as a way of seeing, not as a moment captured, but, a place photographed...The photograph as a view of a place/structured as to its time". PD, (Peter Downsborough, 'Statement', FLASH photo news, no.9 Dec-Jan 1982, p.5). Thus for the artist photography becomes a way of thinking/seeing rather than being used in a purely documentary style, a way to participate conceptually in the critical debate of contemporary society.

In that regard àngels barcelona published in 2013 the 99th book of Peter Downsborough, **a place _ Barcelona**, that will be available for €10. It is the sixth publication in the series "a place" (since 1977, all 29,7 x 21 cm, 20 pages, black-and-white, print run 500 examples) in which a set of "Two Lines" is combined with one single photograph.

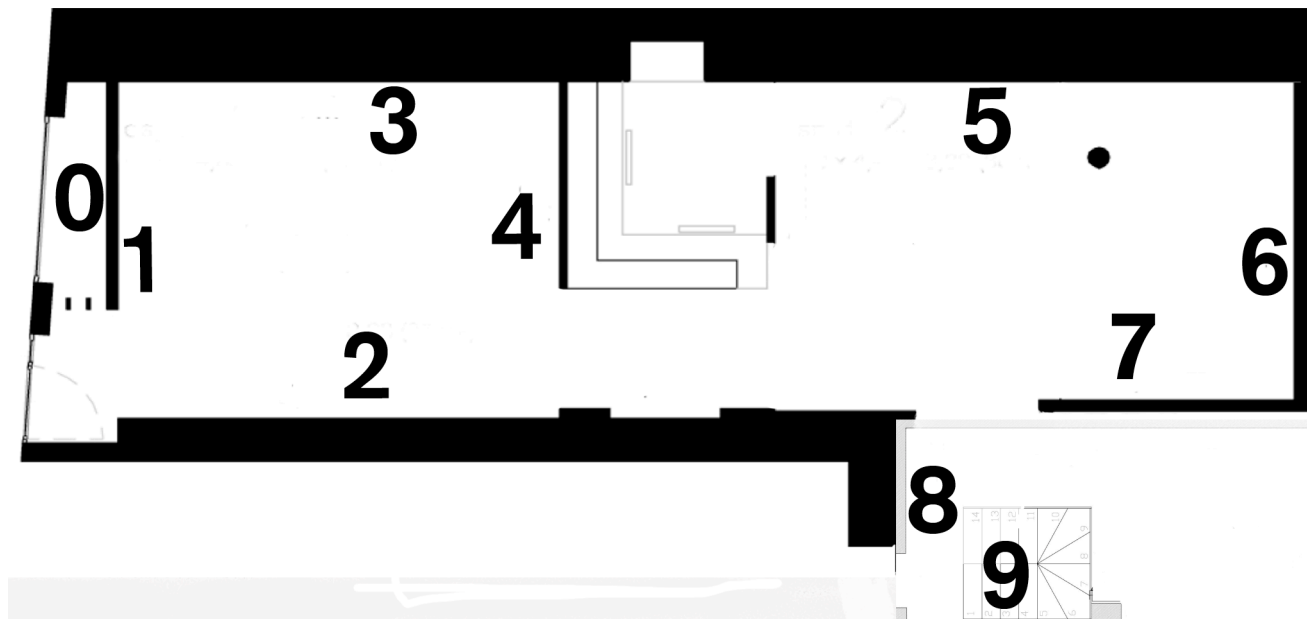
(*)"Anyone taking a photograph is geometrizing life". Lucy R Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, University of California Press; Reprint edition (7 April 1997).

Peter Downsborough (1940, New Brunswick, NYC. Lives and works in Brussels). A versatile artist, he has worked with multiple mediums over the course of his career. After initially studying architecture, he began to produce sculptural works, works on paper, photographs, films, and books. Downsborough maintains a complex relationship with architecture and typography, while also drawing on the achievements of the early avant-garde (Bauhaus, De Stijl) and Minimal Art. In terms of form, his is highly rigorous and exhibits a powerful geometric sense, restricting itself primarily to the use of line, plane, negative space (cutting away), and delimitation. At the core of his oeuvre we find an investigation of place and the viewer's relationship to architectural surroundings. This investigation of spatial rhythms and linear geometry also appears prominently in his black and white photographs of urban cityscapes.

Downsborough's work has been exhibited extensively, at venues including the Vienna Secession, the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (solo), MRAC, Sérignan (solo), the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva (solo), the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (solo), BALTIC, Gateshead, Centre Pompidou, Paris, Fabra & Coats, Barcelona (solo), and many more. His work is part of collections such as: MOMA, New York, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Mamco, Geneva, MACBA, Barcelona, National Gallery, Ottawa amongst others. He has produced site-specific projects for public spaces in cities such as Lyon, Liège, Nîmes, New York, Lodz or Warsaw.

¹ "From the beginning of the seventies, I photographed the *Two Pipes* in different contexts, as in the book "Two Pipes Fourteen Locations"(1974). The *Two Pipes* made a division or "cut" in the plane of the photograph, the image was cut in two, and this created a tension between the foreground and the background". (Marie-Thérèse Champesne, Notes. Conversation with Peter Downsborough. Brussels: Facteur Humain, 2006.pp. 40-41)

Exhibition map

**0- Untitled, NYC, 1978**

B/W photograph Silver gelatin print on fiber based paper.
Image: 30x40 Frame: 60x50 cm.

1- Dyptich, NYC, 1978

B/W photograph Silver gelatin print on fiber based paper.
Image: 13 x18 cm. (x2) Framed: 40 x 60 cm.

2- D-train, 1978

Group of 5 B/W photographs. Silver gelatin print on fiber based paper.
Image: 19x 28 cm/EA Framed: 33x43 cm/EA

3- Untitled, NYC, 1978

B/W photograph Silver gelatin print on fiber based paper.
Image: 30x40 Frame: 60x50 cm.

3- Untitled, Brussels, 2012

B/W photograph Silver gelatin print on fiber based paper.
Image: 30x40 Frame: 60x50 cm.

4- Untitled, NYC, 1978

B/W photograph Silver gelatin print on fiber based paper.
Image: 30x40 Frame: 60x50 cm.

5- Divisions#3, 1980-2002

Group of 6 B/W photographs. Silver gelatin print on fiber based paper.
Image: 19x 28 cm/EA Framed: 33x43 cm/EA

6- Walmer, 2008

Group of 9 B/W photographs. Silver gelatin print on fiber based paper.
Image: 15x 23 cm/EA Framed: 26x35 cm/EA

7- Untitled, Barcelona, 2013

B/W photograph Silver gelatin print on fiber based paper.
Image: 30x40 Frame: 60x50 cm.

8- Untitled, NYC, 1978

B/W photograph Silver gelatin print on fiber based paper.
Image: 30x40 Frame: 60x50 cm.

9- Untitled, Brussels, 1988

B/W photograph Silver gelatin print on fiber based paper.
Image: 30x40 Frame: 60x50 cm.