

PRESS RELEASE

Jens Knigge
Kontakt

Exhibition 06.04.2023 – 17.05.2023

Preview Thursday, April 6 2023, in the presence of the artist

Text :
Elisa Bernard

The exhibition *Kontakt* presents the work of German photographer Jens Knigge. For the first time in our gallery, a large number of the artist's series will be put into dialogue.

As varied as they are, the seven series in the exhibition have in common an ancient printing process : platinum-palladium, of which Jens Knigge is an undisputed master. The German title *Kontakt* refers to the contact printing inherent in this photographic technique, which imposes the size of the negative on the final image. This alternative technique offers a wide variety of tones, from cold, metallic black to warm brown.

" The platinum/palladium print runs like a common thread through my various series. Essentially, it will be because materiality is very important to me in my work. Collecting light with the film plate and developing it in the darkroom, then transferring this image to hand-coated platinum/palladium paper, all of this corresponds to my understanding of the balance between the artistic component in the sense of idea and composition, and the demanding manual work with paper. "

Jens Knigge

It is not so much contact with the other that is at stake in his work, as the rare occurrences of human figures reveal, but rather the intimate relationship with the material of the world.

Rather than embracing it, Jens Knigge's photographs brush against reality. They are created from this special relationship with the world and convey a certain nostalgia for images. The inalterability and durability of the platinum-palladium print technique are certainly a major factor in this. But it seems that it is more in the viewer's experience of the image that we must look. Through their visual effect, Jens Knigge's photographs manage to stand between us and reality, as if they had flown out of the field of images to hold our attention.

The physical presence of Jens Knigge's platinum-palladium prints is remarkable. The subtlety of the shades of grey achieved by this technique lends a precious dimension to everything behind the lens.

The texture of the subjects photographed is magnified and the treatment of the material does not crush the reliefs but makes it delicate. The particular materiality of platinum-palladium creates a tension between the nature of the subject and its treatment.

The ambivalent beauty of forms is a recurrent preoccupation in the work of Jens Knigge, beyond the pre-eminence of the subject itself. It is in this frontal relationship with the photographed object, which is reminiscent of the aesthetics of the New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*), that the artist deploys his photographic writing.

The series *Single Used* and *To the Center of the Earth* are a succession of photographic still lifes, in which elements of transparent disposable crockery and plumb lines for measuring verticality are sublimated. In these two series, Jens Knigge inventories the forms of industrial objects that bear witness to man's technical mastery, with an eye that places the objects on the borderline of formal abstraction. However, whereas the plastic bottles and other cutlery in *Single Used* are transfigured in their form and texture with a palette of greys that dissolves the contours, the plumb lines are presented from a more analytical angle of the search for formal perfection and subjected to stronger contrasts.

This desire to systematically record the world is expressed in particular in the *Northern Light* and *Baikal - Sacred Sea* series. The use of the optical circle contributes to reducing the boundary with the subject, where the work on nuances tends to make it disappear. The natural landscape is photographed to the point of abstraction.

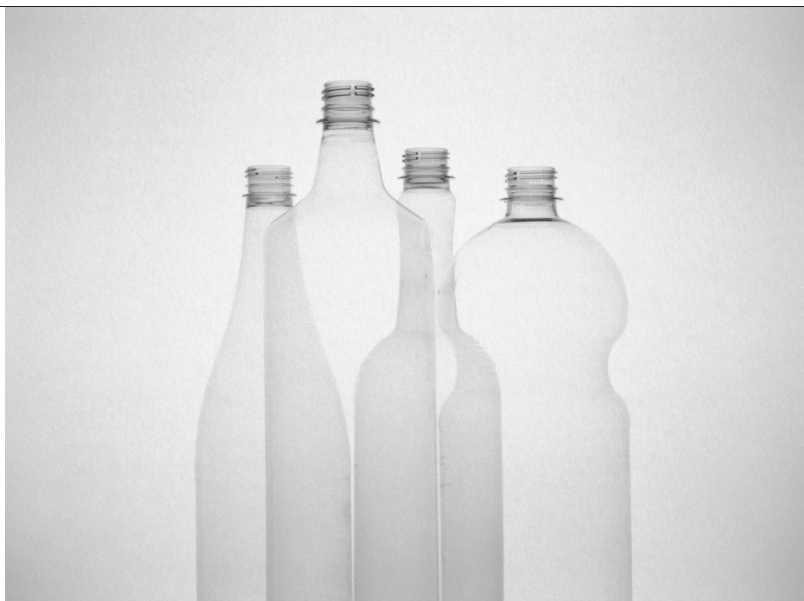
Jens Knigge's work is coupled with an anxious look at environmental issues through series that point to the frantic consumerism that characterizes our time and the fragility of the natural world. In *Single Used*, crockery is transformed into elegant still lifes, while the fragile dance of a plastic bag floating in the water is shown in *Days of a Bag*. In nine large-format photographs, this series translates the fragility of a plastic bag, placed directly on the sensitive paper, and whose initial manufactured purity is seen to crumple, twist and damage itself. The resulting paradoxical shapes appear like jellyfish and remind us of the danger that such mirages represent for marine animals. These photographed objects are single-use, unique as is the image produced itself, a precious platinum-palladium photogram that is much more durable than the object represented.

Architecture is also a major photographic subject in the work of Jens Knigge. The brutalist forms of Le Corbusier are at the heart of the images of La Tourette and those of David Chipperfield of the photographs of the Literaturmuseum in Marbach, Germany.

The materiality of the print contrasts with the austerity of the blind facades of the religious building designed by Le Corbusier, while it highlights the contrasts of materials and light that make the Museum of Literature in Marbach a place that fades into the landscape. The grey shades of platinum-palladium magnify the concrete, a major element of the identity of the two buildings. Jens Knigge is interested in the direct simplicity of the lines, the curves and the variations of light. The artist isolates the architectural elements to transform them into plastic subjects in their own right.

Jens Knigge's photographs are driven by the search for the substance of things, by this insatiable quest whatever the object photographed.
Jens Knigge's work will be shown at Art Paris from 29 March to 2 April 2023.

Images available
for the press



Jens Knigge, *Prima Materia - Bottles, Single Used series*, 2020
Platinum/palladium print, edition of 7, 11,7 × 15,8 cm



Jens Knigge, *Couvent de La Tourette Stairway Roof Garden Architectures series*,

Platinum/palladium print
Edition of 10, 17 × 12 cm

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Obligatory mention : ©Jens Knigge courtesy Galerie Esther Woerdehoff

Images available
for the press



Jens Knigge, *Baikal - Sacred Sea N°5*,
Baikal - Sacred Sea series, 2020
Platinum/palladium print, edition of 7, 20 cm

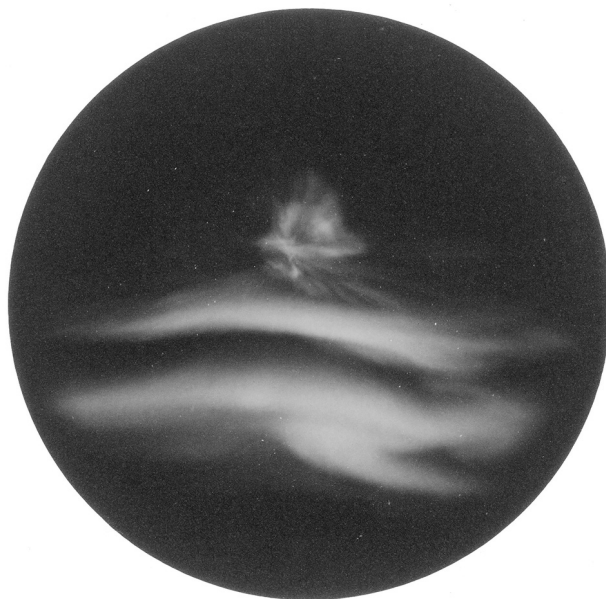


Jens Knigge, *Plate N°1*, série *Wonderful Life*, 2021
Platinum/palladium print, edition of 7, 14 × 14,2 cm

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Images available
for the press



Jens Knigge, *Northern Light - Aurora N°6*,
Northern Light series, 2015
Platinum/palladium print, edition of 10, 9,3 cm



Jens Knigge, *To the Centre
of the Earth - Plate N°3*
*To the Centre
of the Earth* series, 2021

Platinum/palladium print
Edition of 7, 16,5 × 11,7 cm

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Obligatory mention : ©Jens Knigge courtesy Galerie Esther Woerdehoff

BIOGRAPHY

Artist

Jens Knigge

Born in 1964 in Eilenburg, Jens Knigge grew up in East Germany and studied to become an engineer. In 1987 he moved to Berlin, where he still lives today, and in 1993 he started working as a photographer, with portraits of jazz musicians and architectural photography.

In 1998, as the use of digital photography became more widespread, he decided to devote himself to the archaic technique of the platinum palladium print taught to him by the great printer Wolfgang Moersch. His photographs, taken in the camera, are printed by contact, with an artisanal approach that limits the edition of his photos to a few copies.

Starting from austere subjects: medieval or contemporary architecture, the detail of a structure, a snowy landscape, he reveals sublime shades of grey, with an extreme sensitivity to light and shadows, to shapes and textures and a photography at the limits of abstraction. Since 1996, he has published several books and regularly exhibits his work, mainly in Germany, Japan and the United States.

Solo shows

2022

Galerie Caroline O'Brien, with Witho Worms, Amsterdam, Netherlands

2020

Matière primaire, with Didier Goupy, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Paris, France

2018

Garden of the Zodiac Gallery, Omaha, Nebraska, United-States

2017

Northern Light, Johanna Breede Photokunst, Berlin, Deutschland

2014

Platinum Prints, Johanna Breede Photokunst, Berlin, Deutschland

2012

Le Thoronet, La Tourette, Johanna Breede Photokunst, Berlin, Deutschland

2006

Gallery Fotosphere, New York, United-States

2005

General Consulate of Germany, New York, United States

2002

Zikesch Art Consult, Karlsruhe, Deutschland

Josef-Sudek-Atelier, Prague, Czech Republic

2001

Gallery Imago-Fotokunst, Berlin, Deutschland
Kunstallianz 1, Berlin, Deutschland

1999

Gallery Imago-Fotokunst, Berlin, Deutschland

Group shows**2022**

Winter, Johanna Breede Photokunst, Berlin, Deutschland
Photo Basel, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Basel, Switzerland

2021

Paris Photo, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Paris, France
Untitled, Johanna Breede Photokunst, Berlin, Deutschland
Fotografie-Forum Aachen, Monschau, Deutschland
Photo Basel, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Basel, Switzerland
Unseen Photo Fair, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Fotografie Festival StädteRegion, Aachen, Deutschland

2019

Paris Photo, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Paris, France
Magic of Silence, Johanna Breede Photokunst, Berlin, Deutschland

2018

Museum Kunst der Westküste, Alkersum, Deutschland
Paris Photo, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Paris, France

2017

Paysages photographiques : réinventer le réel, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Paris, France
Favorite Images, Johanna Breede Photokunst, Berlin, Deutschland

2015

Paris Photo, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Paris, France
The Window, Johanna Breede Photokunst, Berlin, Deutschland
AIPAD, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, New York, United-States
Glittering Through Eternity, Kiyosato Museum of Photographic Arts, Japan

2011

DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague, Czech Republic

2010

Kiyosato Museum of Photographic Arts, Japan

2009

Tammen-Gallery, Berlin, Deutschland

2008

OMC - Gallery for Contemporary Art, Huntington Beach, CA, United-States

2006

16th Gmundner Symposion for Contemporary Art, Austria

2005

Kiyosato Museum of Photographic Arts, Japan
Corporate and Museumframe, Richmond, United-States
photographers:network selection, Siegen, Deutschland

2004

The Photographers Gallery-Printsales Gallery, London, United-Kingdom

2003

Gallery Imago-Fotokunst, Berlin, Deutschland

2000

Kunsthaus, Ahrenshoop, Deutschland

Publications

PRIMAMATERIA, essai de Ralf Hanselle, 2020
Contact Northern Light, Distanz Verlag, 2016
Concrete Photography / Konkrete Fotografie, textes de Gottfried Jäger, Rolf H. Krauss, Beate Reese, Kerber Verlag, Bielefeld, 2005
Photography Concrete / Fotografie konkret : 16. Gmundner Symposion für aktuelle Kunst, édité par Josef Linschinger, 2007
Werkstufen : Treppen in Industriellen Raumcatalog, Kunstallianz 1, Berlin
PHOTONEWS, 2001
Josef Sudek Studio, 2000
Wasserzeichen, catalogue, éditions Hohes Ufer Arenshoop, 2000

Collections

Centre Canadien d'Architecture, Montréal, Canada
Citigroup Art Collection, London, United-Kingdom
Consulat général d'Allemagne, New York, United-States
Musée des Arts Photographiques de Kiyosato, Japan
Kunstallianz 1, Berlin, Deutschland
Collection Jäger, Deutschland