

Press Release

Friday, November 23, 2007, at 5 p.m. the Aarhus Art Building presents the opening of:

Annette Merrild

The Room Project

September 23 – January 13, 2008

In her photo project *The Room Project* the Danish photographer Annette Merrild (b. 1972) takes as her starting point the experience of being a stranger – a state she can draw on from being a student at the Art Academy in Hamburg. Inspired by the question of whether her glimpse of a small slice of German life would change her look at the German people in general she began taking pictures of her neighbours' living rooms.

On several occasions in the years 2001-2005 – and in a number of different countries and cities – Annette Merrild photographed living rooms in apartment buildings occupied by members of the middle class. The criteria for choosing the living rooms was based on the size and dimension of the rooms in the first photographs from Hamburg; thus all photographs are square and lead the onlooker's eyes through the rooms and out of the windows in the end wall. In this way the photographs from Hamburg, New York, Copenhagen, Barcelona, Warsaw, Manchester, Tallinn, Istanbul and Lyon look very much like one another on a formal level. In spite of the monotony of the rooms and the artist's focus on similar groups of occupants the photos function as a template that highlights cultural differences as well as the residents' individual tastes in customizing their homes.

The exhibition is constructed by means of the interior decoration system GRID, which is used instead of a traditional presentation of the works on the walls. This mirrors the architecture of the

apartment buildings, and enables the visitors at the exhibition to move around in a model of an urban structure with streets and squares, from which the photographs make it possible to “look into” people’s private homes.

Since the photographs are presented without any information about the individual residents other than the city in which they live, the visitors are called upon to form their own image of the residents based on their own associations. The nuances in the photographs plus the little shifts in relation to recognizable and familiar objects awaken the visitor’s desire to define the rooms in relation to social status, culture and nationality. In this way the works call upon reflections about whether the onlooker’s own cultural background influences the way in which we look at what is foreign to us.

In connection with the exhibition *The Room Project*, a catalogue of 280 pages in English and German with reproductions of a number of photographs plus descriptions of the origin of the project has been published. The exhibition has come into being as a collaboration between Peter J. Lassen, the creator behind the exhibition system GRID, and Kunsthallen Nikolaj in Copenhagen, where *The Room Project* has been presented in the summer of 2007 to great acclaim. After the exhibition at the Aarhus Art Building *The Room Project* will be presented at Istanbul Modern in the period September 23, 2008 – January 25, 2009.

For further information, press material or appointments for interviews please contact Anne Fogtmann Madsen at +45 86 20 60 55 or send a mail to af@aarhuskb.dk. Press photographs can be downloaded from our web site: www.aarhuskunstbygning.dk.

Sincerely,

Thorsten Sadowsky
Director, The Aarhus Art Building