

TIMM RAUTERT

die welt
und
die spiegel

September 6 – October 25, 2025

Artist talk and book presentation of *Weltraum*: September 20, 4 pm

Timm Rautert was born in 1941 in Tuchel, West Prussia. He lives and works in Essen and Berlin. From 1993 to 2008, he was a professor of photography at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in Leipzig. Since the 1970s, Rautert has worked alongside his artistic practice as a photojournalist and has exhibited his works internationally in museums and galleries. In 2008, he was awarded the Lovis Corinth Prize. A major retrospective of his work was presented in 2021 at the Museum Folkwang in Essen and in 2023 at the Bombas Centre d'Arts in Valencia, Spain. His series *Leipzig 1972*, created in collaboration with Ute Eskildsen, is currently on view at the Museum Grassi in Leipzig. Among his most recent solo exhibitions are: Haus für Fotografie, Prague (2018); Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (2016); Kunsthalle im Lipsiusbau, Dresden (2014 with former students); Museum für Photographie, Braunschweig (with Adrian Sauer) and Kunsthau Essen (both 2011); Sprengel Museum, Hanover (2007); and the Museum of Fine Arts, Leipzig (2006). He has participated in group exhibitions, including at Kunstpalast Düsseldorf (2024); Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich;

For five decades, Timm Rautert has shaped how we perceive photography, exploring its possibilities and limits. His series *Bildanalytische Photographie* ("Image-Analytical Photography"), begun in 1968, is considered groundbreaking for its radical exploration of the medium's fundamental grammar. Early on, Rautert moved away from the notion of photography as solely mimetic, revealing the medium's inherent ability to construct reality. His first solo exhibition at Galerie Nordenhake – and his first in Berlin – presents the important German photographer in a more comprehensive manner, featuring two current series, an installation, and several key works from the 1970s.

In *Weltraum* ("Space", 2014/2015) the depicted architecture emerges as the main protagonist. Rautert's photographs allow us to wander through a building devoid of people, past conference halls and meeting rooms that range from opulent to austere, as well as monumental staircases. At the same time, we encounter a site of changing significance: the current headquarters of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome was originally designed as the Italian colonial administration building. Construction stopped when Italy entered World War II and only resumed in the 1950s, now as the FAO headquarters.

With *Weltraum*, the artist explores not only the complex history of this historically charged building but also the strategies of self-representation embedded in its architecture. Constructed in a fascist style, the various rooms were decorated individually by the member states of the UN's oldest and largest organization. By documenting these national stagings, Rautert also makes a fundamental statement about the nature of photography: as in his Image-Analytical Photography series, he demonstrates how reality is shaped and conveyed through photographic means. In doing so, he engages with the reflection on the construction of nations, history, and identity as a theme inherent to the medium itself.

In the series *Manhattan Mirror* (2012), architecture again becomes the key presence. People appear, but never at the center of the composition, rendering them symbols of bustling urban life. Rautert shows the city through its reflections: the skyscrapers of New York, a metropolis that played an early and central role in the artist's work, become collaged fragments of an opaque, alienated city. This perspective also invites critical readings of urban change. The images are grouped and, in some cases, displayed with mirrors and artificial stones on shelves, creating a dialogue between the depicted architecture and the viewers themselves.

Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge (both 2023); Kunsthalle Düsseldorf; Fondazione MAST, Bologna (both 2020); Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2016); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2015); Tate Modern, London (2008); Fotomuseum Winterthur (2001); and Kunsthaus Zürich (1990). His works are held in major international collections, including the Berlinische Galerie, Berlin; Museum Folkwang, Essen; Centre Pompidou, Paris; MMK Frankfurt am Main; MoMA, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Leipzig; Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden; Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge (MA); Art Institute of Chicago; Getty Museum, Los Angeles; San Francisco MoMA; and the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

The installation *Vier Spiegel und ein Stein* ("Four Mirrors and a Stone", 2024) consists of a single stone positioned at the center of the room, surrounded by four mirrors and their reflections. While the stone appears in the real mirrors, it vanishes in the photographs. The surfaces of the photographed mirrors appear as uniform, monochrome surfaces, incapable of reflecting the world. The installation references a quote from Malcolm Lowry's novel *Under the Volcano*: "He would have been glad of a mirror to ask himself that question. But here was no mirror. Nothing but stone." Like in *Manhattan Mirror*, Rautert creates a striking, almost poststructuralist juxtaposition of the signified and the signifier, between what is constructed and its origin, rethinking photography as a mediator between these categories.

Early on, in his Image-Analytical Photography (1968–1974) and the partially exhibited series *Deutsche in Uniform* ("Germans in Uniform", 1974) – where he portrays different professional groups in their uniforms – Rautert understands photography as an intellectual process. It interrogates the relationship between the depicted and reality while simultaneously making critical statements about our present. The power of Rautert's photography lies in its ability to reveal reality's fractured reflections, always resisting a final, conclusive truth.