

Leuven, 29 April 2016

**AGLAIA KONRAD**  
From A to K

29.04.16 >< 18.09.16



## INTRODUCTION

Photography-based artist Aglaia Konrad (°1960, Salzburg) has spent more than 20 years investigating the urban space the world over, from São Paulo and Cairo to Peking, Dakar and Chicago. Her work raises questions about the city and its modernity. She zooms in on the public space and on unusual buildings, she studies the way cities evolve and she explores the borders between sculpture, architecture and photography. Konrad considers the role photography can play in capturing the built world around us. How can architecture be showcased and experienced? And how is it exhibited?

In the exhibition *From A to K* photographs, films and installations crystallize Konrad's interest in buildings and urbanization. Among other things, she will be presenting a new film about a villa on Lake Garda and two series of photographs entitled *Zweimal Belichtet* and *Shaping Stones*. Konrad has also made a new work for the entrance to the museum.

On show in the last gallery is the exhibition experiment *TOKONOMA* on which Aglaia Konrad worked with artists Suchan Kinoshita, Olivier Foulon, Jörg Franzbecker, Kris Kimpe, Willem Oorebeek, Eran Schaerf and Walter Swennen.

Curator: Eva Wittocx

## **AGLAIA KONRAD: BIO**

Aglaia Konrad (°1960, Salzburg) lives and works in Brussels. She became known by her participation in the documenta X as well as her involvement in an array of meaningful exhibitions dealing with the city as a theme: "Cities on the Move", 1998 and 1999 in Bordeaux, New York, London, Helsinki, and Vienna, "Metro>Polis", Brussels 2000, Shanghai Biennale 2000, "Future Cities" in Canada 2004, "KOPIE CITY" in the Kunsthaus Graz 2004, "Spectacular City. Photographing the Future" in NAI - Nederlands Architectuur Instituut Rotterdam / Artforum North Rhein-Westphalia, Düsseldorf, 2006 / 2007. In 1997 the artist was awarded the Otto Mauer Prize of Vienna, in 2003 the Camera Austria Prize of Graz, and in 2007 the Albert-Renger-Patzsch-Prize of the Dietrich Oppenberg Foundation and Photography Collection. Aglaia Konrad is represented by the galleries Nadja Vilenne (Liege) and Galerie Raum Mit Licht (Vienna).

## **VISUAL ARCHIVE**

Konrad's approach is typified by the detailed on-site research that precedes her photographs, films and installations. This preliminary research leads to an ever-expanding archive of visual material. The common factor in this visual archive and also the thread that runs through Aglaia Konrad's artistic practice is her fascination with and love of architecture. She is particularly interested in unusual modernist buildings, urban infrastructure and rather anonymous urban places.

Konrad uses the images from her archive to reflect on various themes which are linked to photography, architecture and urbanism. For example, in her series of photographs she considers (among other things) the ideology of modernism and how it was expressed in concrete. Herself a child of the 1960s, she looks critically at the architecture of that period and the ideas underlying it. She doesn't shy away from a sense of lost utopias, pessimism, perhaps even ugliness.

## **ANALOGUE PHOTOGRAPHY**

Aglaia Konrad takes photographs using an analogue 35mm camera, a choice based not so much on stylistic considerations as on ease of use and habit. That said, 35mm photography does have certain stylistic characteristics and practical consequences which the artist appreciates. For example, the medium compels her to be economical with the material. During and after developing the pictures, Konrad doesn't trim them. Other important factors are the choice of paper, the scale on which a photograph is shown and the way the films and series of photographs are presented. All these aspects influence the character and materiality of an image and can give different impressions of one and the same image.

## ***Undecided Frames***

When Aglaia Konrad studies a building, she takes a number of shots of the same subject. The negatives look similar and the differences between the photographs are minimal, but when it comes to developing them, the artist has to make a choice. For *Undecided Frames* she didn't make that choice but showed two shots side by side. The viewer is therefore confronted by the subjectivity of selecting which is intrinsic to photography. When two almost identical photographs are presented side by side, the viewer inevitably studies them more carefully. Are they two separate images? Is the subject still the same? Which image is real? *Undecided Frames* confronts us with the way we look at things and with the way photography creates a reality. Our eyes switch back and forth between the two images in search of the differences, and the similarities.

## **Architectural photography?**

*Architectural photography* is all about photographing the subject accurately and creating an aesthetically pleasing representation. But one look at this gallery and subsequent galleries makes it clear that Aglaia Konrad's oeuvre cannot simply be classified as architectural photography. She doesn't produce conventional townscapes or typical landmarks, but rather she concentrates on the periphery, the outskirts of the town, urban development projects, building sites, anonymous buildings and the lost utopia of modernist architecture. Neither is the way she presents her photographs typical. The images place the emphasis on the materiality, the tactility and the sculptural qualities of the buildings and endow the architecture with several layers of meaning. She tries to capture all the social, historical and political contexts which influence that architecture and urban planning.

## **Concrete City, 2012**

For this installation Konrad drew inspiration from a famous museum set designed by the Italian-born Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi for the São Paulo Museum of Art in 1968. There the paintings were mounted on transparent glass panels in heavy concrete blocks so that visitors could view them both from the front and back. Konrad based *Concrete City* on the model of that design.

In *Concrete City* she presents her collection of postcards. They are typical tourist postcards from the years 1950-90 featuring architectural urban landmarks. From the time she first started travelling, she collected postcards from the many places she visited. In *Concrete City* she placed the postcards in glass holders in concrete blocks so that the work becomes a monument to modernist concrete architecture, to architecture which was once modern and state-of-the-art and to the (now possibly outdated) ideologies underlying it.

### **Boeing over, 2003**

When Aglaia Konrad travels, she takes photographs of the earth's surface through the window of the aeroplane. With the small plane window as the frame, there is only room for a tiny fragment of the vast earth. Traditional aerial photographs produce an often beautiful, objective view of towns, infrastructure and landscapes. Konrad produces abstract, black and white images. It is impossible for the viewer to ascertain exactly what he is looking at. Reality and abstraction merge. The grainy structure of the Baryta paper heightens the sense of abstraction and emphasizes the materiality.

### **zweimal Belichtet, 2013/2016**

These twice-exposed images came about by accident. They are the result of a typical characteristic of analogue photography. Generally a photographer uses a fast film in dark, indoor conditions and a slow film in bright outdoor conditions. After changing the film, it can happen that the film roll is put back on the wrong negative number with the result that the film is exposed twice and two images are superimposed. In that case the artist has no control over the process and no say in the result.

### **Shaping Stones, 2016**

*Shaping Stones* consists of 25 photographs of buildings and natural elements arranged in a monumental grid. Konrad selected the photographs from her vast picture archive. This is the first time she has shown the series in this way. Again the common factor is sculptural architecture and Konrad's photographs emphasize the sculptural characteristics of boulders and rocks as well as buildings. Moreover, because it is presented in a monumental grid that reaches right up to the ceiling at M, the work responds to M's monumental architecture.

### **ARTIST'S BOOKS**

Publications play an important role in Aglaia Konrad's oeuvre. Like exhibitions, she regards them as a way of organizing space. She also incorporates books into the exhibition at M, including *Atlas vol. I & II* (2000) and the series of hand-crafted *Copy Cities* (2003/4). A new artist's book *From A to K* has also been published to tie in with this exhibition.

## FILM

As well as considering how photography can visualize architecture, Konrad explores the possibilities of film. She sees film as a way of experiencing a building. Konrad uses 16mm to shoot a film. Like her analogue photography, it has stylistic, practical and economic consequences for her approach.

### Preliminary research

Those characteristics of the film roll necessitate an intensive period of research and prospection before the actual filming. This research is a fundamental stage in Konrad's creative process. She concentrates on the structure of the building, on the light and how the light changes throughout the day, and on her personal experience of the building, thereby creating a first mental shortlist of the building's characteristics. Konrad begins filming without a written script. The shots are sequenced as and when the images are edited.

### Architectural experience

However, Konrad does not allow the viewer to experience the building in a systematic manner. She is not looking to document the space. We may wonder where the building is, who made it and for whom, but that information is not relevant to the artist. In her films Konrad wants to create an architectural experience rather than a literal reproduction. The absence of people and also of sound is interesting. It has the effect of making the space the focus of the story and the building the (main) protagonist.

### A house as sculpture

As a viewer you become disoriented. But just as you lose your sense of orientation, your attention shifts to the spatial experience of light, rhythm and material. In her films, as in her series of photographs, she explores the borders between sculpture and architecture. She investigates the sculptural potential of architecture and the way concrete is used sculpturally. The camera focuses on the textures, the details, on the subtle incidence of light and the shadows. Because the camera moves slowly, the viewer is also disposed to slow down and take the time to experience the architecture.

### La Scala, 2016

For her recent film Konrad headed for the villa *La Scala* on Lake Garda in Italy which was built by the Italian architect Vittoriano Vigano for the French sculptor and magazine editor André Bloc. This brutalist house with Japanese features consists of two concrete slabs acting as floor and roof with glazed sliding doors in-between. This gives the impression of 'inside' and 'outside' spilling over into each other, an aspect Konrad plays with in her film. The split-screen projection emphasizes this sense

of inside-outside. The reflection of the glass, the shadows and the incidence of light play the lead role. The transparency of the building was a decisive factor in selecting the images for the eventual montage. Konrad retained the flashes of light typical of shooting with 16mm film, and they give the film its rhythmic and disruptive character.

### **Carrara, 2010/11**

A film and series of photographs about a marble quarry may not seem typical of Konrad's oeuvre. But for the artist the Carrara marble quarry is where everything comes together: sculpture, architecture, the relationship with the landscape, history and current events, order and chaos. Moreover, nowhere is the relationship between architecture and sculpture as obvious as in these quarries. After all, the history of architecture and art owe a great deal to the marble found here. There are also visual links between the marble quarry and architecture. Indeed, it is not difficult to draw a parallel between cathedrals and the 30-metre-high, carved out vaults of the quarry. The black and white photographs and the film emphasize the sculptural and abstract qualities.

## **OTHER WORKS**

### **Rückbaukristalle, 2016**

As she makes her way through a town, Konrad is in the habit of picking up debris from demolished buildings. That debris is on display in RÜCKBAUKRISTALLE in galleries 24 and 25. So waste material is given a new lease of life (like the glass panels of the Astro Tower in Brussels) – one side rough and unworked, the other side worn and gleaming.

### **Frauenzimmer, 2016**

*"Frauenzimmer is an Austrian word I grew up with. It has something of a double meaning. It dates back to the seventeenth century when men and women occupied separate spaces. The servants were women too. Hence the name, quite simply: women's rooms. The word can be used both in the singular and in the plural; the definite article differentiates between the two. At the end of the nineteenth, beginning of the twentieth century people also started to use the word as a term of abuse for women who didn't conform to the principles of morality. They were the women people looked down on: unmarried women, suffragettes, lesbians. My mother used it to refer to the strange women in the village. But you could say that that person who was excluded from the village community acquired spatial freedom."* (Aglaia Konrad)

In the enclosed space of the *Frauenzimmer* Konrad built an installation with glass recuperated by the company ROTOR from the demolished Astro Tower in Brussels. For Konrad the glass from the tower

refers to the irony of glass architecture popular in the 1980s. An all-glass building gives a sense of transparency. But that is only an illusion because the buildings were built using mirror glass. Here in the *Frauenzimmer* the glass becomes an object that triggers the projection of thoughts and associations and invites reflection and contemplation.

## **TOKONOMA**

*TOKONOMA* is a work by Suchan Kinoshita on which Aglaia Konrad has worked with artist friends. Kinoshita took the semantic meaning of the word as her starting point. 'Toko' can be translated as 'raised floor' or 'bed' and 'ma' refers to the physical space between the structural elements.

*TOKONOMA* is a group artwork to which different artists contribute. Consequently, every time it has been presented since 2012 the installation has taken a different form, depending on the works the participating artists have contributed to it. This extraordinary concept for a group exhibition is shown here for the third time, after Liège and New York. The works are arranged along a diagonal line and the process by which the work has evolved largely determines the result. Consequently, *TOKONOMA* is a cross between performance and sculpture. Contributing artists: Olivier Foulon, Jörg Franzbecker, Kris Kimpe, Aglaia Konrad, Willem Oorebeek, Eran Schaerf, Walter Swennen and Suchan Kinoshita.

## **PUBLICATION**

Artist's book – Aglaia Konrad. From A to K

Edited by Emiliano Battista and Stefaan Vervoort, *Aglaia Konrad From A to K* is based on an original idea by the artist. The book was structured and designed as an encyclopaedia using an alphabetical list of words such as '(pre)Architecture', 'Book', 'City', 'Concrete', 'Elasticity', etc. It comprises a generous selection of hitherto unpublished visual material. It also contains essays and personal statements by Friedrich Achleitner, Hildegund Amanshauser, Elke Couchez, Penelope Curtis, Michiel Dehaene, Steven Humblet, Moritz Küng, Spyros Papapetros, Angelika Stepken, Edit Tóth and others and interventions by the artists Koenraad Dedobbeleer and Willem Oorebeek.

*Aglaia Konrad From A to K* was published by Koenig Books, Cologne in April 2016 to tie in with Aglaia Konrad's solo exhibition at M — Museum Leuven.

€35



## **LIST OF WORKS**

### **HALL**

Gelbes Fenster, 2005  
yellow film on window

### **ROOM 23**

6 memo's for the beloved, 2016  
system - curiosity - memory - form - display - sympathy  
lithographs

Katzenbaum, 2016  
UV print on honeycomb cardboard  
strong remains (2 AD), 2013/2014  
UV print-on-stone

China rushes, 2009  
videos, color, sound, various length?, 20 monitors  
Czech Bar (Vienna), 2016  
slide projection, 53 slides, color

Dakar Cuts, 2001/2016  
UV print on honeycomb cardboard, various dimensions

Carrara Cut, 2013  
30 b/w digital prints on archival paper, pasted on 3 aluminium sheets  
Atlas, vol. I and II, 2000  
2 artist books in a linnen slipcase, silkscreen, b/w, bound in linnen

Concrete City, 2012  
112 / 132? postcards on glass, concrete cubes

### **PUBLICATIONS FROM AGLAIA KONRAD**

2002. Elasticity.  
200 x 270 mm, 248 p  
NAi Publishers, Rotterdam, The Netherlands and Éditions de L'Aquarium Agnostique, Valenciennes, France and Argos Editions, Brussels, Belgium  
Grafische vormgeving: Mevis & Van Deursen  
Tekst: Eran Schaerf, Antonio Guzman, Daniel Kurjakovic

2005. Iconocity  
165 x 259 mm, 224 p  
deSingel, Antwerp, Belgium and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne, Germany  
Grafische vormgeving: Aglaia Konrad, Willem Oorebeek  
Tekst: Willem Oorebeek

2008. Desert Cities  
309 x 230 mm, 236 p.

JRP/Ringier, Christoph Keller Editions, Zurich, Switzerland  
Editor: Johan Lagae  
Grafische vormgeving: Mevis & Van Deursen, Lina Maria Grumm, Janna Meeus  
Tekst: Brigitte Franzen, Miles Glendinning, Eric Denis, Lionel Devlieger

2011. Carrara  
290 x 215 mm, 136 p.  
Roma Publications, Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
Auteurs: Aglaia Konrad, Angelika Stepken  
Grafische vormgeving: Roger Willems, Aglaia Konrad

## **ARTIST PUBLICATIONS**

1993. Aglaia Konrad  
Kunstverein Salzburg, Austria

1995. Mexico City  
A. Konrad, Brussels, Belgium

1997. Aglaia Konrad (Mexico City 1995, Rio de Janeiro 1996)  
297 x 210 mm, offset, 32 pages, edition of 250  
editor: AR/GE Kunst, Bolzano, Italy

1997. Aglaia Konrad APB.BXL  
3 books, 297 x 210 mm, 2 books b/w laser copies, 1 book color photocopies on tracing paper, 332 p.  
total, edition of 35  
A.Konrad, Brussels, Belgium  
book #01: 100 pages  
book #02: 142 pages  
book #03: 90 pages

1998. Sao Paulo  
210 x 297 mm, offset, 32 pages, edition of 500  
A. Konrad, Brussels, Belgium

2000. Atlas, vol. I and II  
2 artist books in a linnen slipcase, 39 x 31 cm, silkscreen, b/w, bound in linnen,  
768 pages each, edition of 4 + 4  
A. Konrad, Brussels, Belgium

2003/2004. Copy Cities  
12 Cahiers, DIN A4, photocopy, color & b/w, edition of 7  
Aglaia Konrad, Brussels  
01 Urban Creatures (142p), 02 Desert Cities (40p), 03 Dakar (Survey # 01) (64p), 04 Les Jumelles (48p),  
05 Elasticity Spread (36p), 06 Suburbs (32p), 07 Dakar Cuts (64p), 08 Seoul (Survey # 02) (40p),  
09 Undecided Frames (68p), 10 Some Cities (20p), 11 Makowsky's Bungalow Colony, High Falls, NY (24p), 12 Hoover Over (72p)

2013. Zweimal belichtet  
280 x 380 mm, 16 pages, edition 150  
A.Konrad, Brussels, Belgium

## **ROOM 24**

Full Circle Avebury, 2016  
1 gelatin silver print on baryta paper

*RÜCKBAUKRISTALLE*, 2015  
variable dimensions

La Scala, 2016  
16mm transferred to video, color, split-screen, 2 x 4:3, sound, 12x12 min (ca 12)

Concrete & Samples I Wotruba Wien, 2009  
16mm transferred to video, color, 4:3, no sound, 13.37 min

Concrete & Samples III Carrara, 2010  
16mm transferred to video, color, 4:3, no sound, 19.00 min

## **ROOM 25**

Demolition City  
20 gelatin silver print on baryt paper, framed

zweimal belichtet (Paris 1999 - Sittard 2000), 2016  
3 Lambda C-prints  
zweimal belichtet (Paris - Berlin 1999), 2016  
3 Lambda C-prints  
zweimal belichtet (Mexico D.F. 1995), 2016  
3 Lambda C-prints  
zweimal belichtet (Cambridge - Wells 2013), 2016  
5 Lambda C-prints  
zweimal belichtet (Cairo - Vienna 2005), 2016  
4 Lambda C-prints

## **ROOM 26**

Shaping Stones, 2016  
25 b/w digital prints on paper, pasted onto? wall

Frauenzimmer, 2016  
wood, glass panels

## **TOKONOMA**

### **OUTSIDE**

Tokyo, 2010  
Osaka, 1994  
UV-print on vinyl

## **LOCATED IN DIFFERENT ROOMS**

Undecided Frames (Madrid 2009), 2013  
digital b/w prints mounted on archival carton, stamp, plexibox

Undecided Frames (Cairo 2004), 2013  
digital print mounted on archival carton, stamp, plexibox

Undecided Frames (Tokyo 2010), 2013  
digital b/w prints mounted on archival carton, stamp, plexibox

Undecided Frames (Chongqing 2006), 2013  
digital print mounted on archival carton, stamp, plexibox

Undecided Frames (Beijing 2006), 2013  
digital print mounted on archival carton, stamp, plexibox

Undecided Frames (Sardinia 2013), 2013  
digital print mounted on archival carton, stamp, plexibox

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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Wednesday closed

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	Tickets reception desk	Online tickets (°)
+ 26 year	€12 *	€9 *
+ 26 year & concessions	€10 *	€7 *
13-25 year	€5	€3
0 - 12 year	Gratis	Gratis

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## PRESS IMAGES

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