

Quentin Bajac

Preface

Quentin Bajac is The Joel and Anne Ehrenkranz Chief Curator of Photography at The Museum of Modern Art, New York. He was chief curator at the Musée national d'art moderne-cabinet de la photographie at the Centre Pompidou and worked in the Photography Department at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, before.

Translation: Sue Cubitt

Katharina Gaenssler belongs to the generation of fine art photographers who emerged after the 'tableau form' era.

Photography of the 1980s and 1990s was dominated by a trend in framed, separately hung, often large-format, 'lasting' work which projected a number of photography's pictorial preoccupations. Since the early noughties, however, Gaenssler has taken the opposite view. She focuses on what is ephemeral (wall installations doomed to disappear) and moveable (books). She uses photography to deconstruct and construct spaces – many of which relate to the production and presentation of works of art, for example museum spaces, artists' studios, collection depots and storage areas. Her works are complex and composed of thousands of individual images. Ignoring the conventional rules of perception, they posit – via the gallery wall or the page of a book – two different, complementary formats, both of which revisit the space in a very special way. The first format functions synthetically, like a wall mosaic made up of thousands of photographic images captured from different viewpoints. This format offers a simultaneous view, in situ, very often redoubling the place where it is exhibited. It is all-encompassing and monumental, forcing the viewer to engage with it physically and to re-examine the

exhibition space itself. The second format functions sequentially, via a book-page format where tens and thousands of the same images are brought together in a sequence that enables the reader to read the spaces at close quarters, in detail, analytically. The book you are now holding in your hands represents a comprehensive overview of all the installation and book projects Katharina Gaenssler has worked on to date. It represents an innovative style of catalogue raisonné, offers new insights into her œuvre and is a fully-fledged artist's book in its own right.