

DANZIGERPROJECTS

Matthias Schaller
“Elfering - 1642”
April 16 - May 22

Matthias Schaller was born in Dillingen, Germany, in 1965. Over the last decade he has been widely exhibited and published in Europe but “Elfering -1642” will be his first U.S. gallery show.

Beginning in 2000 with his photographic study of Andreas Gursky’s studio, Schaller has focused almost exclusively on people-less interiors. Whether photographing photographers’ and architects’ studios (*series Werkbildnis I and II*), Cardinals’ desks of the Roman Curia in the Vatican (*Purple Desk*), Venetian interiors on the Grand Canal (*Controfacciata*), 150 Italian opera houses (*Fratelli d’Italia*), artists’ palettes (*Das Meisterstück*), original astronaut suits (*Disportraits*), or the architecture of Oscar Niemeyer (*As Curvas*), Schaller’s series or sequences engage with the spirit of objects and place and convey the notion that the marks we leave, the objects used, or the environment inhabited says as much about the selected individual as their physical presence. All his different works follow this strategy of indirect portraiture.

The title “Elfering - 1642” refers to the famous German collector, Gert Elfering, and the number allocated by Christie’s to Elfering’s single owner sale in October of 2005. The auction comprised 135 works that Elfering had defined as the distillation of his interests, and featured the most famous pictures by the masters of fashion and editorial photography - Irving Penn, Helmut Newton, Richard Avedon - as well as works by Man Ray, Thomas Struth, Hiroshi Sugimoto, and Robert Mapplethorpe. The sale fetched over \$7 million and its success signaled the ascension of the editorial/fashion genre to the highest levels of price and desirability in photography.

A longtime admirer of Schaller’s work, it occurred to Elfering that before parting with the masterpieces in his collection he should commission Schaller to photograph the work in Christie’s New York showrooms. In this way he would have an original new body of work as well as a unique souvenir. The idea resonated with Schaller who observing the work laid out on the floor prior to hanging saw this rather than the actual wall hanging as the singular metaphor for the event.

In this way and as a completed series, Schaller’s photographs encompass the many complexities and ironies of the concept while at the same time incorporating the power of the objects about to be sold into their own luminous interiors. The finished works - beautiful, compelling, and intriguing pictures in their own right - stand as a remarkable example of enlightened patronage while remaining resolutely true to Schaller’s own vision of creating a portrait of both a collection and a collector.

This summer Schaller will present his series "*Das Meisterstück*" in the Picasso Museum in Münster/Germany.

In 2011 the Cini Foundation in Venice/Italy will organize on occasion of the 54th Biennial of the Arts an anthology show of his work from 2000–2009, accompanied by the book "*Disportraits*" with introduction and interview by Germano Celant.

Books on Matthias Schaller:

The Mill (2007), Controfacciata (2008), Purple Desk (2009), all with Steidl publishers.

For more information:

www.danzigerprojects.com

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