



Götz Diergarten: *Untitled (Berlin—Alexanderplatz Diptych)*, 2008, C-print on acrylic glass, 29½ by 39¼ inches each; at Kicken.

BERLIN

GÖTZ DIERGARTEN

KICKEN

Götz Diergarten studied with Bernd and Hilla Becher late in their tenure at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, and his recent exhibition of new work at Kicken proved him to be among the more interesting of the pair's students. His approach is similarly systematic and painstaking, and while he photographs in color, it is usually with a cool, reduced palette. In a 2005 series from the south of France, a typology of beach cabanas devoid of people, he explores variations of functional architecture, as did the Bechers. The closely cropped images contrast strips of blue sky with the little black and white structures, creating shallow abstractions from architectonic form. However, in the new work, we see Diergarten turn his camera on artificially illuminated interior spaces, condensing complex motifs into single images or diptychs.

For his current, ongoing series, titled "METROpolis," Diergarten goes underground into European subway systems. He intends to visit 20 European capitals to study their subterranean architecture. The first results are from Amster-

dam, Brussels, Budapest, London and Berlin. In each city, Diergarten examines the rail network overall and then selects a few stations with exemplary tracks, platforms and connecting passages. The part thus represents the whole—a classic *pars pro toto*.

At times he makes real spaces look illusory. By focusing on a wall with an empty advertisement billboard in the Budapest Klinikák station, he creates a flat image that looks like an abstract painting. Elsewhere, he uses wide-angle shots to exaggerate the depth of corridors, as in London's tube system at Highbury and Islington.

Situated in the former Eastern sector of the city, Berlin's Alexanderplatz is a massive complex of passageways and multiple stories. The artist reduces the station to a diptych showing an intermediary level with squat, greenish iron support columns that have been recently restored. The scene is bathed in an oddly dramatic light. Anyone who has walked through the legendary Alexanderplatz station knows that it is neither as clean nor as overwhelmingly sparse as it appears in Diergarten's representation. Lacking is any trace of the hundreds of thousands of people who rush through this ancient station day in and day out. Diergarten turns it into a surreal stage, so enigmatic and eerie that it brings to mind the former crime scenes that Joel Sternfeld photographed.

—Matthias Harder