

Götz Diergarten

Kicken

Berlin

Like his celebrated teachers Bernd and Hilla Becher, Götz Diergarten is fascinated with typologies. Unlike the Bechers, however, whose photographs document industrial structures, the 32-year-old Diergarten uses his camera to record a nostalgic world made redolent with narration. His most recurring themes are found along the Belgian, English, and French seacoasts, particularly Normandy, where his parents have a vacation home.

In the photographs shown here, bathing huts stand side by side with military precision. Even when the size, shape, and colors of these simple structures are rigidly regulated by local authorities, owners find ways to personalize them. Colors vary in tone; windows and doors reveal unexpected formal nuances; and house num-

bers are displayed in a range of sizes and styles. The effects of wind and weather add distinctive patinas to the facades.

Diergarten works in series, usually producing an overview of a beach complex, then individual "portraits" of each structure. These demonstrate the conceptually rigorous, frontal, frame-filling approach of the Bechers, but Diergarten's subjects are photographed in crisp color, thus lending another dimension to the theme-and-variations principle. And since



Götz Diergarten, *Untitled (Neustadt)*, from "Fassaden III," 1998, C-print with Diasec, 31½" x 23½". Kicken.

this naive architecture was created for recreation, the images emanate a more playful air.

The artist is well versed in the traditions of American color photography, including the achievements of William Eggleston and Stephen Shore, and can thus be seen in an art-historical context different from that of the Bechers. In the end, however, it is not influences that matter here but the artist's distinctive and finely tuned esthetic sensibility. Even his most trivial subjects reveal an unexpected beauty and grace.

—David Galloway