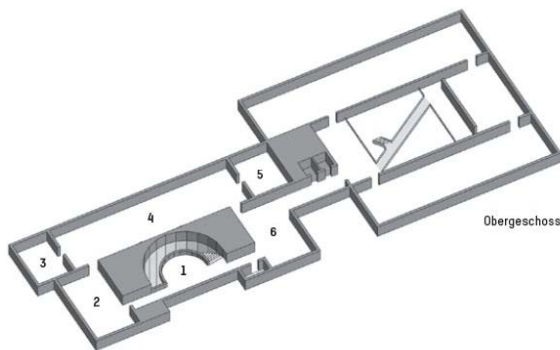


# INDUSTRIOUS

Marco Grob & hiepler, brunier,

March 2 - May 6, 2012



## Introduction

The Kunstmuseum Bern has acquired quite a reputation for outstanding photography exhibitions (Balthasar Burkhard, Cécile Wick, Paul Senn et alia), and is continuing this tradition with its presentation of the photographic project **INDUSTRIOUS**.

Internationally famous Swiss portrait photographer Marco Grob and renowned Berlin photographer duo David Hiepler and Fritz Brunier were commissioned to undertake worldwide artistic research for the centenary anniversary of the international Holcim Group. The commission entailed a portrayal of Holcim employees and the concern's production plants.

The artists were free to interpret the proposed project in their own way, and the visual language ensuing from their research and efforts was combined to produce a comprehensive and fascinating illustrated volume. Thus Holcim created a framework for the photographers to independently and ultimately realize a work of fine art – which in turn inspired the Kunstmuseum Bern to organize **INDUSTRIOUS** as an exhibition project.

Our curators have chosen to exhibit a selection of the images as largeformat black-and-white photographs and arranged the show by juxtaposing portraits with locations, thereby underpinning the suggestive power of the individual pictures.

Internationally famous Swiss photographer Marco Grob involves his sitters as partners in dialogue by dynamically implementing his camera. He eloquently succeeds in capturing rare insights into their lives and characters. The Berlin-based photographer duo Hiepler and Brunier communicates the arresting atmosphere of the industrial plants in images marked by uncanny precision,

illustrating reality in a way we otherwise would not be able to perceive at a single glance.

## 1

«Photography depicts facts.» This assertion has long been a subject of debate. The variety of ways in which a photograph can be manipulated makes boundaries between reality and virtual reality fluid. Thus viewers of photographs can often no longer really determine whether they are confronted by actualities or see only the essence of the real in some modified form. However, in the case of Marco Grob and hiepler, brunier, fine-art documentary photography equates with truth. Their images mirror the objective world in a state of unbelievable precision. Possessing a dignity not unlike that of a statesman, laborer *Garagada Mammadrasulov* (Garadagh, Azerbaijan, 2010) turns his deeply furrowed face with lips pressed tightly together to look into the far-off distance. His eyes follow the direction of his raised welding helmet, while he negligently bears the heavy cables slung casually over his shoulder. At first glance his gaze seems caught in another world. However, his image only reflects what he actually is. The work of hiepler, brunier is marked by the same degree of astounding precision (*Wadi*, India, 2011). The large format measures 225 x 300 cm and provides a spectacular backdrop. It has the quality of a model and thus appears to have been arranged. Viewed close-up the observer discovers infinite details. Here hiepler, brunier deviate from their characteristic exaggeration of the deserted state of scenes. The foreground is dominated by bustling activity while the massive steel and concrete constructions tower in the background. People ride their motorbikes to work as others hurry along the street or talk to one another. Here we find that truths are documented and represented.

## 2

Marco Grob photographed Holcim employees all around the world over a period lasting more than a year. He began his tour in July 2010 in Switzerland and continued to the following destinations: Belgium, Spain, Italy, Romania, Hungary, Azerbaijan, Canada, USA, Colombia, Chile, Lebanon, Costa Rica, then returned to Switzerland, leaving it again to proceed on to Guinea, India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, and finally Australia. The photographer strived to portray people who he thought reflected the

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Partner of the Kunstmuseum Bern

character of the locations where they worked and whose faces breathed the imprint of their personalities. He did not base his choice of faces on «mere appearances» but by «reading» them, by making them reveal something of themselves as if opening up a book. Marco Grob's mode of work deviates from that of the classics of the genre, because he neither sets his models within exacting compositional structures nor dramatically enhances his images of them in any way. As a photographer he has sure instinct for seeking out people whose existence he can grasp and is able to capture due to his very prompt reactions while working. The models he selected and who agreed to sit for photo sessions were requested to do so in a space that was fitted out as a mobile studio. To commence with, the models stated their names and occupations within the company on video. The short statements were used for a video installation in the entrance hall: its nine monitors will there welcome visitors to the Kunstmuseum Bern for the duration of the exhibition. Marco Grob holds his Hasselblad in his hands to take the pictures. With his free hand he signals for the model to adopt a stance while inciting the sitter to look at the camera. And then he immediately presses the shutter-release button. The dynamism with which he employs his camera involves people as partners in dialogue, seizing glimpses of their personalities, and not as models striking a pose. The photographer describes his working methods as follows: «It's the nervousness that pushes me on to capture the glow which, if I'm lucky, lasts a few minutes.» Marco Grob succeeds in depicting people as they behave when they feel as if they are not being observed by others: They look at us questioningly, surprised, absent-mindedly smiling, or appear to be ruminating on something, lost in thought, or thinking about themselves, sad about something hidden. In the artist's words: «They told stories about every aspect of life. Frequently about work, work which had sometimes been carried out by whole families and generations who had been bound to the cement plant often for more than 40 years. A whole life long.» This permeates the atmosphere of the individual photographs and is intensified into an over-arching motif due to the choreography of the hanging sequences. The people and their stories are unique in every way, but they are nevertheless all interconnected by their work, where they are involved in identical production processes in practically all parts of the world.

### 3

Marco Grob and his assistant Tara Rice recorded the impressions and experiences from the beginning of the project to its conclusion on video. The resulting film was edited by Kate Barker-Froyland – who also helped film the footage – and produced by Simone Eymann. It enables us to look backstage, so to speak, and see the maneuvers and devices of a photographer of international standing. The exhibition takes our museum visitors on a journey around the globe, whereby they can participate in production processes, taking a unique and rare view behind the scenes.

### 4

Marco Grob, David Hiepler and Fritz Brunier very strongly oppose any form of illusionistic pictorialism – a fine-art photographic style that seeks to depict reality while also striving to symbolically depict the frame of mind or values of people when portraying them. In comparison, the work of hiepler, brunier constitutes the amplification of reality in visualization. Their photographs of in-

dustrial plants display characteristic motifs and selection of details as well as a specific consciousness for moods achieved by lighting. Their painstakingly sharp focus makes every square centimeter of depicted space so distinct it looks as if we were viewing it through a magnifying glass. This is most obvious in the photographs of architectural details (*Siggenthal II*, Switzerland, 2010; *Prachovice I*, Czech Republic, 2010; *Prachovice II*, Czech Republic, 2010; and *Laegerdorf I*, Germany, 2010). But the same can be said for the other works too. Thus the two artists succeed in setting the gigantic round tower of a cement factory in one and the same picture within a broad expanse of landscape, whereby we can distinctly perceive the much dented corrugated iron roofs in the foreground with the same sharp focus as the traditional rice paddies kilometers away in the distance (*Cilacap I*, Indonesia, 2011). With views such as these the artists allude to the interface between industry and nature. The photographs evidence the omnipresence of technology and nature functionally commingling. This is not always apparent at first glance, unlike the gargantuan machine nestling like some insect in the snow-covered Russian landscape (*Shurovo I*, Russia, 2011). Indeed, some (*Wadi III*, India, 2011 and *Wuxue I*, China, 2011) demand a closer inspection before we can perceive a similar entwining of the two elements.

Marco Grob's face, half-length, and figure portraits are devoid of the slightest hint of obscurity. Every detail is shown with absolute clarity, such as the gold teeth in his smile and unshaven stubble of the jaw of *Yasin Ahmadov* (Garadagh, Azerbaijan, 2010), or his soiled collars. The photographer has captured an infinite number of details of the face. The image presents reality in a way that we could never perceive at a single glance. This extreme amplification of reality in visualization has an almost unreal, almost abstract quality. The photographs by hiepler, brunier and those by Marco Grob have been hung face to face so they enter into a dialogue in the exhibition. In this way the images of architecture, machines, and how they merge into the landscape relate to the portraits of Holcim employees, an impression that is heightened by the corresponding neutral backgrounds of the latter pictures. Both have been isolated from one another: The people are shown separate from their work places, the work places are devoid of people. And nevertheless plants and people are intrinsically linked together, and this interconnection extends also beyond the borders of countries and states. Thus the viewer can recognize site-specific details in every photograph by hiepler, brunier. The key large-format work (*Huaxin I*, China, 2011) shows an industrial plant in China. The strictly symmetrical composition dividing the picture in equal parts appears to reflect the Socialist system in China, while the other above-mentioned photographs from India (*Wadi III*, India, 2011) verify a romantic notion of the country. Despite their regional differences, both plants are linked to one another. And the same counts for the people in the portraits – we not only can read their personalities in their articulate faces, but can also find bits of equipment about them that relate to the type of work they do, as in the case of Carlos Valencia (Cerro Blanco, Chile, 2010) wearing protective work clothing and a safety helmet. Another very striking artwork is the central triptych representing three Sri Lankan laborers (*Sajeewa Udayasiri Fernando, Thilanka Abeyweera, Dinesh Thushara Sampath*, Palavi, Sri Lanka, 2011). The photographer intentionally juxtaposed the images of the three men. They work together every day. They are a team and conduct themselves as such. However, they are also depicted as individual personalities.

## 5

A good year long the photographers David Hiepler and Fritz Brunier were free to inspect and explore Holcim's cement and concrete plants as well as its quarries where the raw material for the cement production is mined. In July 2010, the commission took them from Berlin initially to Switzerland and then they continued on via Germany to the Czech Republic, Scotland, USA, Ecuador, Mexico, Russia, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Australia, and finally to China. During their tours through and around the plants and quarries they selected sites for their photographs. The artists described their working methods as follows: «We were astounded as we took it all in, considered our approach, our position. Ultimately, there was only one position: the one in which we found ourselves, that of the detached observer in a foreign world. We've tried to find images that portray more than superficial sensations, ones that capture the density of the sites, that do not judge, but that convey our fascination to the viewer. The result is images of a subjective reality which show what we have seen without trying to ultimately portray either the industry, or Holcim in general.»

hiepler, brunier took the photographs using a tripod and a special camera made to order following their specifications. With the aid of a converter, the tones of the color photographs were transformed into black-and-white. During postproduction the photographs were not edited in any way to change forms and structures so that the photographs represent real sites. In contrast to Marco Grob's portraits, narrative elements seem to virtually lack altogether in the pictures taken by hiepler, brunier. In essence, their photographs capture the enchanted atmosphere characteristic for specific locations. This is brilliantly exemplified in a picture of the Indonesian Cilacap region. From the platform of the enormous construction a view on a mystical landscape with lakes is being opened up. Despite the enchanted air of these images, nothing has been hidden, nothing covered up, only facts are presented in total clarity and without playing on emotions.

When we view the photographs we feel as if we only see details and sections of whole plants. The arrangement of the picture is formally balanced, with a self-contained context of forms. Every picture's composition speaks for itself alone, however, in the series they merge to form a whole. The plants photographed in *Ste. Genevieve* (*Ste. Genevieve I*, United States, 2010), *Prachovice* (*Prachovice III*, Czech Republic, 2010), and *Shurovo* (*Shurovo II*, Russia, 2011) are very similar but still unique at every location.

## 6

Many people of different trades, skills, and professions must work together smoothly so that a plant producing cement and its ingredients can function properly and efficiently. However, the heart of each plant is undoubtedly the work that is carried out there, being the prerequisite for production. It necessitates sometimes also very strenuous labor. In the course of the project Marco Grob developed a strong fascination for the laborers and employees on the plants who took on such tasks. They are strong and they are proud. The photographer has made portraits of them with the attributes that have become part of their personalities after many years of hard work: be it their protective suits, helmets, safety goggles, be it faces besmeared with dirt and articulate of the strenuous labor involved in their daily routines at the plants. We see very little of the man in *Joao de Souza* (Eclépens, Switzerland, 2010) dressed in his full protective suit, helmet,

safety goggles, and mask. Nevertheless, Marco Grob succeeds in capturing the presence of an individual person by merely depicting the characteristic stance of his «model». He has an extraordinary intuition for situations, something that eludes most other observers. Thus Marco Grob does not fail to notice that one of the workers, after an accident that happened a long time ago, misses the last joint on one of his fingers (*Son Tran Van II*, Vietnam, 2011), or in another case, that the protective helmet has left an imprint on the back of a worker's head (*Benoît Crombois*, Obourg, Belgium, 2010). The photographs open up a world to us of labor in one of the heavy industries, a world that we normally would not have the opportunity of seeing from within. hiepler, brunier's works contrast the photographic portraits to the extreme. The night shots separate the industrial plants like phantoms from their surroundings. A lit-up steel construction towers like part of a missile into the dark sky (*Ste. Genevieve*, United States, 2010), the production site is transformed into nocturnal scenes of an amusement park (*Laegerdorf II*, Germany, 2010). In the case of a seemingly even more alienated apparition arising from an inside view of an American cement plant (*Ste. Genevieve II*, United States, 2010), the beams of light converge to form the illusion of an arena and we can only see upon looking again that the image is of a production plant.

### Biography Marco Grob

Marco Grob was born in 1965 in Olten (CH) where he grew up. He gained his first experience as a photographer in Los Angeles. Afterwards he returned to Switzerland where he opened his own studio. From 2003 he began with portrait and fashion photography. His work brought him international renown. He took pictures of political personalities, as well as those from the film and music industry. *New York Magazine*, *Time*, *Esquire*, *Vogue*, and *Vanity Fair* are only a few of the magazines he took photographs for. Additionally he has also worked for Walt Disney Studios, Louis Vuitton, and the BBC. He has received various prizes for his work, among them the important Hasselblad Master Award in 2007. In 2011 he received the art prize of the canton of Solothurn. Since 2008 the photographer lives in New York City. His commissions take him all over the world.

### Biographies David Hiepler and Fritz Brunier

David Hiepler was born in 1969 in Lank-Latum (D) and grew up in Düsseldorf and Basle. Fritz Brunier was born in 1972 in Krumbach (D) and grew up in Bad Wörishofen in the Allgäu region (D). Both photographers received their training at the Lette Verein in Berlin. Since 1996 the Berlin based artists work together under the name of hiepler, brunier,. Their work has been shown in various exhibitions in Germany and Switzerland as well as in Paris, St. Petersburg, and Edinburgh. Their photographs have been merited with many awards, among others, from the European Architectural Photography Prize, Cannes Lions, and New York Festival. Besides many other commissions they have worked as photographers for David Chipperfield Architects, Audi, Swiss Re, AD Deutschland, and *Zeit Magazin*. hiepler, brunier mainly photograph real sites and situations. Landscapes and architecture are among their preferred subject matter.

## Holcim

In 1912 in Holderbank, Switzerland, a company was founded by building a cement plant that expanded to become a leading international supplier of cement and its ingredients, ready-mix concrete, and asphalt. In the 1920s, the company began investing Europe-wide and thereafter also overseas. 100 years after being founded, Holcim Ltd. is present in 70 countries over all the continents of the world and employs 80'000 people. The company will be celebrating its centenary anniversary with a book of photographs that is dedicated to its employees. The pictures made for the commission that was given to the three photographers gave rise to the exhibition in the Kunstmuseum Bern. The images are not only depictions of the very foundations of a large international corporation but also an artistic study.

<b>Duration</b>	02.03. – 06.05.2012
<b>Opening</b>	Thursday, March 1, 2012, 6:30 p.m.
<b>Entrance fee</b>	CHF 14.00/red. CHF 10.00
<b>Opening hours</b>	Mondays closed Tuesday, 10 a.m. – 9 p.m. Wednesday -Sunday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
<b>Holidays</b>	Good Friday 6.4.2012: closed Easter 8./9.4.2012: 10a.m. – 5p.m. Ascension 17.5.2012: 10a.m. - 5p.m. Pentecost 27./28.5.2012: 10a.m.-5p.m.
<b>SBB RailAway-Offer</b>	Benefit from 10% savings on train tickets, transfer and entrance fee. The RailAway-Offer is available at all train stations and at the Rail Service on 0900 300 300 (CHF 1.19/min). More information: <a href="http://www.sbb.ch/exhibitions">www.sbb.ch/exhibitions</a>
<b>Private guided tours</b>	T +41 31 328 09 11, F +41 31 328 09 10 <a href="mailto:vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch">vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch</a>
<b>Curators</b>	Matthias Frehner and Regula Berger

## AGENDA

### Öffentliche Führungen

Sonntag, 11h: 4./18. März, 15. April  
Dienstag, 19h: 6./20. März, 3./24. April

### Frühlingsferienkurs für Kinder:

#### «Gestalten mit Schere und Leim»

Dienstag, 17. April und Donnerstag, 19. April, 10h – 12h  
Anmeldung unter [www.faeger.ch](http://www.faeger.ch)

### Kinderworkshop: Sonntagmorgen im Museum

Sonntag, 29. April, 10h30

Anmeldung: T 031 328 09 11, [vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch](mailto:vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch)

Kosten: CHF 10.00

## CATALOGUE

### Industrious. Marco Grob & hiepler, brunier,

Hrsg. Kunstmuseum Bern, Matthias Frehner und Regula Berger, Holcim IP Ltd. ISBN 978-3-033-03243-9. CHF 49.00

## ARTISTS' EDITION

### hiepler, brunier, industrious

Exklusiv zur Ausstellung: auf 30 Ex. limitierte Mappe mit je 7 Prints, je 30 x 40 cm. CHF 950.00

Vorzugspreis für Mitglieder Verein der Freunde und Bernische Kunstgesellschaft: CHF 760.00

## ARTISTS' BOOK

### hiepler, brunier, stillgestellt,

Künstlerbuch mit 31 Aufnahmen, 21 x 22,5 cm. 1. Auflage, Panatom Book, 2012. CHF 24.80

## SET OF POSTCARDS

### hiepler, brunier,

Set mit 12 Karten und Umschlägen. CHF 20.00

The exhibition and the catalogue are supported by:

