

Foreword from the exhibition catalogue**Matthias Frehner****INDUSTRIOUS**
Marco Grob & hiepler, brunier,

In photography, so-called "applied art" plays a central role. Portrait photography, reportage and news photography, industrial and architectural photography, police photography, advertising, fashion and travel photography – all these ways of documenting reality are, first and foremost, the result of a commercial assignment. When it comes to handing out such assignments, skill and technical know-how are of course of central importance. For commercial photographers, when individual skill is combined with the development of a recognizable personal style, the road to art is opened up. It's not that commercial photography on its own can't be art, it's that art begins where technical virtuosity leaves off – with the development of a personal visual language, adding a new idiom to what we are accustomed to. Naturally the transition between commercial photography and pure art photography – that is, photography which has no other, external purpose – is fluid. Hired by Holcim to go around the world and photograph the company's employees and its cement, aggregates and ready-mix cement plants for its 100th anniversary, these three photographers are illuminating examples of how art can arise out of a commercial working relationship. Marco Grob, now a sought-after international portraitist, has long been more than just an interpreter of pre-defined poses. Through his dynamic use of the camera he involves his subjects as partners in a dialog. As a result, they are not posing. They are granting us insights into who they are personally, while at the same time allowing us to perceive something of the contemporary "Condition humaine". With their incredible precision and depth of field the Berlin-based photographers Hiepler, Brunier are able to produce an image of an industrial plant that conveys a magical, atmospheric mood, manifest only to sensitive viewers familiar with the place.

In the exhibition "Industrious, Marco Grob & hiepler, brunier," at the Kunstmuseum Bern you can clearly see the artistic strategy of these three photographers – more so than via the medium of the photo book "Industrious", which Holcim has given to all of its ca. 80,000 employees to celebrate the firm's anniversary. On the one hand, it's easier to see the quality of the pictures in the large, wall-sized format, as even the tiniest unsteadiness, imperceptible in the book format, is "de-masked". Viewing a whole row of images together also allows for an experience of simultaneity, reinforcing and fixing the mood of the individual shots. The dialog between "empty" space (Hiepler, Brunier concentrate solely on architecture and machinery) and working men and women (shot by Grob in front of a neutral background) make for moments of artistic suspense. With their installational staging, Marco Grob, David Hiepler and Fritz Brunier create a "magic of precision" and with it take their rightful place as important photographers. As a serious contribution to contemporary photography, we are very pleased that this exhibition will be hung both at the Kunstmuseum Bern as well as, afterwards, at the old factory hall in Holderbank. After the classic museum space, a presentation at the original location is a chance for a new, deeper way of viewing this autonomous photographic art.

The Kunstmuseum Bern has systematically cultivated contemporary photography through its internationally recognized exhibitions of, among others, Balthasar Burkhard, Cécile Wick, Ueli Berger and Paul Senn, and it has a staff capable of optimally handling such a project. My thanks

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go first to Holcim. After two successful previous partnerships (the exhibitions "Mahjong – Contemporary Chinese Art from the Sigg Collection" in 2005 and "Horn Please – Narratives in Contemporary Indian Art" in 2008) we are delighted to be cooperating again with this globally operating Swiss firm. We consider it a great sign of trust that, in parallel to the development of the photo book for the firm's centennial, we were able to sort through the extensive photo material provided by Grob and Hiepler, Brunier and put together an exhibition based on our own ideas. We are very appreciative of such a fruitful and long-lasting cooperation. This cooperation has helped us as a museum to contribute to bringing out the artistic value inherent in these fine photographic reportages. Our thanks also go to Holcim's Chairman Rolf Soiron and its Chief Executive Officer Markus Akermann for their cooperation. We also would like to express our thanks to Art Director Charles Blunier from the advertising agency KSB Krieg Schlupp Bürge for the excellent publication, as well as to the frame maker Christoph Flückiger for his support. For their efforts, I would personally like to thank Regula Berger, the curator of the exhibition, and the photo specialist René Wochner, who handled the technical implementation on the museum side. Collaborating with these three strong artistic personalities was a pleasant challenge for all those involved in the project. I can certainly say that, over the course of our long discussions, we all learned a great deal from each other.

Matthias Frehner
Director of the Kunstmuseum Bern