

## Roger Humbert | Concrete Photography

Photograms from 1950 to 1970

Opening: Wednesday, 5 June 2019, 6 – 8 pm

Duration of exhibition: 6 June – 13 July 2019

Concrete Photography strives for a pure photography that focuses on itself and is detached from iconography and symbolism. Born in Basel in 1929, photographer Roger Humbert is a pioneer of Concrete Photography and has produced an extensive oeuvre from the 1950s to the present day. Fabian & Claude Walter Galerie presents Humbert's important position in 20th century photography in a solo exhibition, which shows a selection of photograms from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, created with experimental light sources and formal elements, as well as late works created in the past 20 years.

Roger Humbert describes his photography with a short and yet complex sentence: "I photograph the light". Based on the theories of the English photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn around 1916, concrete photography concentrates on the mysterious quality of light. Further stations in the history of development are the well-known *Schadographs* by Christian Schad, the *Rayographs* by Man Ray, and the photograms, luminograms, and photomontages by László Moholy-Nagy taken at the Bauhaus.

Although the first international exhibition on the subject, entitled *Ungegenständliche Photographie*, was shown in 1960 at the Gewerbemuseum Basel, the term Concrete Photography came up a few years later. In 1967, *Galerie aktuell* in Bern presented the experimental photographs of the young Swiss avant-garde photographers Roger Humbert, René Mächler, Jean-Frédéric Schnyder and Rolf Schroeter to the public for the first time under the title Concrete Photography.

Roger Humbert, who worked as a trained photographer and graphic designer, began creating photograms in the darkroom in the mid-1950s. Humbert and his photographic contemporaries were looking for a new modern, experimental visual language - a photography without a camera. He denied the image, detached himself from the object and understood light as a decisive, image-generating element. The art and literature historian Bernd Stiegler compares in the publication *concrete photography as programme* Humbert's work in the darkroom with that of a natural scientist. In the laboratory, Humbert carried out scientific experiments with photography and tried to find out what it meant to capture light photographically by using form elements such as stencils, grids and punch cards.

Humbert's photograms have been exhibited worldwide, including Tokyo, Osaka, São Paulo, Milan, Anvers, Rome, Paris, Berlin, and New York. They demonstrate how the use of elementary photographic means together with a subjective creative power could open new paths in contemporary art. In today's world, in which digitalization once again calls photography into question and many artists are reverting to old photographic techniques, Roger Humbert has remained true to his important artistic work. (Text: Alessa Widmer)