

ROGER HUMBERT | The Language of Light

28 August – 19 September 2021

Opening: Saturday, 28 August 2021, 12 – 5 pm

Concrete Photography strives for a pure photography that focuses only on itself and is detached from iconography and symbolism. Swiss photographer Roger Humbert, born in Basel in 1929, is a pioneer of Concrete Photography and has produced an extensive body of work from the 1950s to the present day. In the exhibition *The Language of Light*, Fabian & Claude Walter Galerie presents the wide-ranging oeuvre of Humbert and elaborates the history of the development of Concrete Photography. This comprehensive look focuses on five groups of works: Photograms, Abstract Colour Photographs, Concrete Photography Digital, Subjective Photography and Spectral Photographs.

- 1) **Photograms:** Using experimental light sources and form elements as well as light cards, Humbert created photograms and luminograms from the 1950s to the 2000s. 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.¹ 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.
- 2) **Abstract Colour Photographs:** In the abstract colour photographs of 1972, Roger Humbert placed Plexiglas elements on a glass plate, let colored light shine on the elements from below, and took analog photographs of the abstract colour composites. Humbert exhibited these works only once in the 1970s. After 50 years, these images are shown again on occasion of exhibition *The Language of Light*.
- 3) **Concrete Photography Digital:** In recent years, Humbert has transferred his work in the darkroom to the digital image space, creating digital Concrete Photographs. Like its analog predecessors, the focus lies on the mysterious quality of light. This is now being explored using new, digital photographic techniques.
- 4) **Subjective Photography:** To create the colour reflection of his subjective, digital color photographs, Humbert worked with various colour filters to create the colours and gradients in the image. Humbert describes these photographs as a study with light and colour that is significant to the next chapter of his concrete photography: Spectral Photography.
- 5) **Spectral Photographs:** The term and the meaning are functionally a connection with the sunlight and an optical bench with a prism placed at the end. Spectral Photographs, which are also taken digitally, are complex in processing. When a white beam of sunlight passes through a convex lens and other transparent geometric objects, the light beam is directed to the prism and is deflected, at the same time decomposed into the colors that are visible to our eyes.

In our time, digitalization once again challenges photography and Roger Humbert turns to precisely this difficult question. For Humbert, photography is still a "field of perception at the back of the visual space", which he formulates with the above-mentioned light images and clearly demonstrates how the use of elementary photographic together with a subjective creative power can open up new paths in contemporary art. For Roger Humbert, the exploration and research of light has been at the center of his work until today.

¹ Stiegler 2017: Bernd Stiegler, *Roger Humbert: concrete photography as programme* page 14.