

Michael Schmidt

1 April – 26 June 2022

Michael Schmidt (1945–2014) numbers among the most important German photographers of the postwar period. Over five decades, Schmidt photographed a diverse oeuvre that includes urban landscapes, portraits, depictions of nature, and still lifes. Central themes are his home city of Berlin, the significance of history, and history's consequences for society.

While it was in a sober documentary style that Schmidt captured urban spaces still marked by historic upheavals in his early series such as *Berlin-Wedding* (1976–78) and *Berlin after 45* (1980s), his powerful group of works entitled *Truce* (1985–87) testifies to his discovery of photography as an expressive tool: these radically subjective photos, taken shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall, reveal a dystopian psychogram of this divided city in the waning days of the Cold War. The more conceptual project that followed, *U-ni-ty* (1989–94), devotes itself to Germany's reunification process in light of an examination of political systems that sees Schmidt for the first time combine found pictures with his own photographs in a complex arrangement.

This exhibition brings together selected groups of works to present what is Austria's first survey of Michael Schmidt's career, a presentation that makes clear how the artist worked continually to renew both his themes and his modus operandi with an ever self-critical eye. Exemplary of this is the large series *Food* (2006–10), in which he employs color photographs showing standardized products and the conditions under which they are produced as an allusion to globalized consumer culture.

Presented in cooperation with the Foundation for Photography and Media Art with the Michael Schmidt Archive, the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume in Paris, and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid.