

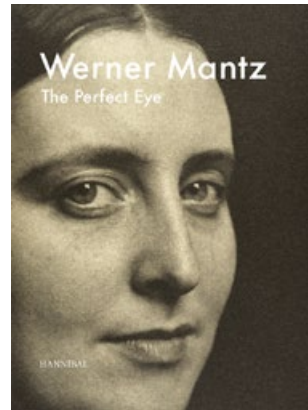
Werner Mantz – The Perfect Eye

WERNER MANTZ

Werner Mantz (1901–1983) was a prominent architectural and industrial photographer who began his career in the 1920s. His work occupies a unique historical position thanks to his visual language, technical prowess and use of natural light. As one of the most important photographers of the New Building movement, Mantz's oeuvre bridges the gap between the often-anonymous nature of commissioned photography and the modernist, artistic avant-garde movements of the interwar years, such as the Bauhaus. In the 1970s, Mantz was even hailed as the 'missing link' in the history of international photography.

To date, only thematic selections from Mantz's wide-ranging oeuvre have been exhibited. This monograph sets the record straight by showcasing, for the very first time, his immense versatility. *Werner Mantz – The Perfect Eye* contains over 300 predominantly vintage images, ranging from architectural photography, advertising shots and portraits of adults and children, to views of industry and mines, religious subjects, shops, restaurants and interiors, as well as roads, public spaces, landscapes and travel photographs. That Mantz's oeuvre belongs to the canon of international photography is indisputable.

With text contributions by Frits Gierstberg, Stijn Huijts, Huub Smeets, Charlotte Mantz and Clément Mantz.



A retrospective publication that sheds new light on Werner Mantz's innovative photography



PHOTOGRAPHY

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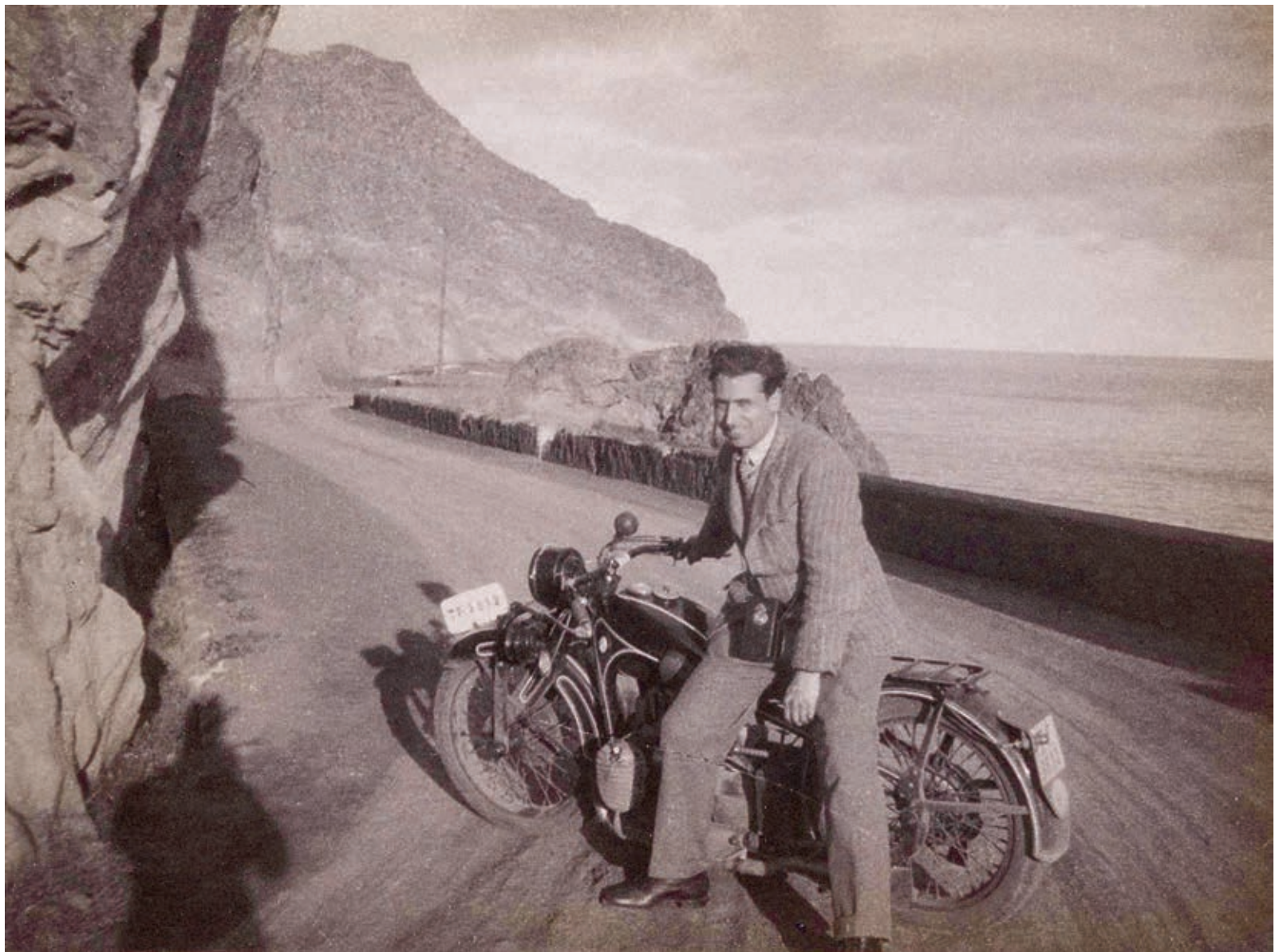
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Werner Mantz

The Perfect Eye

HANNIBAL



Werner Mantz, Canary Islands, 1931
Possibly photographed by Karl Mergenbaum. Coll. NFM.

Foreword

This monograph is published by the Werner Mantz Foundation on the occasion of the major retrospective exhibition at the Bonnefanten in Maastricht. It includes over 300 predominantly vintage photographs by the renowned German-born photographer Werner Mantz (1901-1983), who died almost forty years ago. Mantz was born on the Hohenstaufenring in Cologne to a family with Jewish origins. He started working in Maastricht in 1932, and made the city his home in 1938.

Werner Mantz's work has frequently been shown in group and solo exhibitions, both during his lifetime and posthumously. His work is represented in over thirty museum collections, spanning four continents, including the Museum Ludwig, the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Museum of Modern Art New York, the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Tate Modern, the Centre Pompidou and the Tokyo Photographic Art Museum. Previous presentations, however, have only ever focused on Mantz's German period or specific themes within his otherwise wide-ranging oeuvre. This is the first genuinely comprehensive and coherent exhibition dedicated to Werner Mantz. His immense versatility is borne out by the works themselves: from architecture photography to advertising images, portraits of young and old, by way of industrial and mining photos, religious images, photos for shops, restaurants and interiors, to roads, public spaces and landscapes. His travel photographs and his free work, particularly of Cologne and Maastricht, also demand attention.

The fact that Werner Mantz's versatility is being showcased for the first time, when he demonstrated it throughout his career, is precisely what makes this retrospective and monograph so urgent. His work has received considerable attention locally, regionally and internationally, but strangely enough not in the Netherlands, other than in Limburg. We can now demonstrate, in no uncertain terms, why Mantz's oeuvre (also) belongs in the canon of Dutch photography.

Within the artistic and cultural-historical context of the Bonnefanten, Werner Mantz and his photographic legacy are of inestimable importance. The fact that the museum has owned some 150 original photographs since 1977 is a powerful indication of this significance. With his portrait studio on the Vrijthof in Maastricht, Mantz made a vital contribution to the social life of this city, where he had arrived as an immigrant in the 1930s. In addition to portraits, the Maastricht production includes a series of photographs of the old city centre.

For the Bonnefanten – a provincial museum with an international outlook – his commissioned work from the 1930s is particularly relevant: his photographs of roads for the Provinciale Waterstaat Limburg, the State Mines and of new buildings by Limburg architects, including the prominent designer Frits Peutz who created the iconic Schunck fashion house and department store in Heerlen. Of course, the famous photographs that Mantz took of the Modernist architecture in Germany between the wars should also be mentioned here.

Werner Mantz's architectural photography has a unique and internationally recognised place within the history of the medium. His visual language and use of natural light, combined with his technical craftsmanship, form the bridge or 'missing link' between commissioned work – an often anonymous and functional practice – and the artistic photographs associated with the Modernist and avant-garde movements of the inter-war period, such as the Bauhaus.





Façade of the Pickenhahn Hairdressing Salon, Drususgasse 5-7, Cologne (GER), 1926.

Architect: Wilhelm Riphahn. Coll. ML.

Cologne Housing Estates

The 'Siedlungsbau' [housing estates] are amongst the most famous examples of Modernist architecture in Cologne. These unprecedented suburban developments were typically constructed to linear plans: multi-level volumes with shops, schools and churches, and good connecting roads. In line with the concept of the garden city, the creation of green spaces was also important. Architect Wilhelm Riphahn, whom Werner Mantz had met in 1926, played a central role in designing the Cologne Siedlungsbau of the 1920s and early 1930s, together with the architect Caspar Maria Grod. Mantz documented the numerous estates in great detail, including those of Buchforst (formerly Kalkerfeld), Riehl and Zollstock. He also took iconic photographs of certain sub-developments at the sites, which were known by nicknames such as the 'Blauer Hof' [Blue Estate] and 'Weisse Stadt' [White City]. Famous images include the façade shots in which the shadows of the rhythmically arranged balconies disclose the interior structure; the equally rhythmic placement of balconies seen from an oblique angle; the diagonal placement of the residential blocks with shop signs ('Apotheke'); and his strictly symmetrical pictures of the monumental housing volumes offset by cloudy skies (Mantz would wait patiently for just the right climatic conditions).

His archive forms the most comprehensive record of Modernist architecture in Cologne. He invariably utilised shadows, and thus the position of the sun, to highlight the individual façades and typical shapes, such as the symmetry and varied rhythms in the layout of the buildings. Mantz's photo of the Blauer Hof, which he captured from the inside looking out, is exceptional in its rarity. The perspective could be that of a resident looking out of the building; when viewed 'objectively', however, the shot bridges the divide between a close-up of the architecture and a distant view of the same. It connects the small detail with the big line, and the interior layout with the monumental exterior form. Moreover, the photograph clearly communicates the materiality of the building, such as the use of steel and glass.

Modernist architecture generally tends to be synonymous with pristine white façades. Yet many of the Siedlungen were originally painted in bright colours, as can be deduced from the nickname Blauer Hof. In the case of the latter building, Riphahn & Grod employed a colour scheme created by the Cologne-born Constructivist artist, Heinrich Hoerle. He used blue for the building's interior and white for the exterior walls. The ground floor was given a grey tone, and the cornices, as well as a number of small windows, were red. In recent years, a number of Siedlungen have been restored

to their former glory. Mantz's photos were key reference points for these projects. He also photographed the Vogelsang housing development, amongst other projects, for the GAG real estate group. The GAG archive also contains photographic records of architectural sketches, interior drawings, scale models and floor plans. The latter show, amongst other things, that these flats were aimed at working women.

Although it is no longer clear why he did this, Mantz would sometimes cut up his architectural photographs and use the pieces to create montages. The archive contains works in which elements from one image are combined with those from another. For instance, a view through a gate or a window might be made to look different – or more beautiful? – when compared to reality.

Building entrance, housing estate in Kalkerfeld, Cologne (GER), circa 1930.

Architects: Wilhelm Riphahn and Caspar Maria Grod. Coll. ML.







Balconies, housing estate in Kalkerfeld, Cologne (GER), circa 1930.
Architects: Wilhelm Riphahn and Caspar Maria Grod. Coll. ML.



Church of St Peter Canisius, housing estate in Kalkerfeld, Cologne (GER), 1931.

Architects: Wilhelm Riphahn & Caspar Maria Grod. Coll. NFM.



Housing estate in Buchforst (left) opposite the 'Blauer Hof' and the 'Weisse Stadt' (both right), Cologne (GER), 1930. Architects: Paul Pott and Theodor Merrill. (left) Architects: Wilhelm Riphahn and Caspar Maria Grod. (right) Coll. GAG / SK.



Villa Rozenhof, Heerlen (NL), 1937-1939. Garden design engr. A.E. Dinger. Coll. NFM.



Dr Bodenheimer's house, Lentstrasse, Cologne (GER), 1928.

Architect: Josef Ruff. Coll. ML.





Stairwell, King Willem II College, Tilburg (NL), 1932.

Architect: Jos Wielders. Coll. NFM.







Façade, The Church of Our Lady, Dijon (F), 1956. Coll. BF.



Façade, Rome (I), 1937. Coll. BF.