

The Archive

A Pictorial Essay by Nico Bick

Nico Bick

Artist contribution – September 30, 2004

The editors of *Open* invited the photographer Nico Bick (Arnhem, 1964) to produce a pictorial essay, especially for this issue, about archives, the places in which the tangible proofs of the past are collected and stored. Nico Bick lives and works in Amsterdam. His work is characterized by a penchant for the ostensibly unremarkable, the ordinary aspect of a place. For this assignment he photographed the archives of the International Institute for Social History, the National Institute for War Documentation and the Municipal Archives in Amsterdam as well as the National Archives in The Hague. He focused on the storage space and not on the content of the archives of its users. He aims to ‘make the structure of the storage clear, as well as making visible the collective memory, which is contained in places that are public, but at the same time hidden’.











Nico Bick studied photography at the Royal Academy of Art in the Hague. As a visual artist he investigates the use of (public) space. Characteristic of his early work is a preference for inconspicuous places that appear to be so familiar that nobody seems to notice them anymore. Nowadays he directs his view at spaces with a tangible tension between the public and the private domain. In a time in which everybody can produce digital photos easily, Bick feels a strong need for an uncompromising analogue approach. With patience and careful observation he creates, together with a large format camera, series' of highly detailed images to focus the attention on both the space – in the absence of its users – and the meaning of the places he photographs.

Tags

Image, Memory, Public Space

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