

The Staff of Life.

Aerial Photographs by Georg Gerster

Georg Gerster (born 1928 in Winterthur) started out on his first photography flight in 1963, in Sudan. Since then he has not only travelled all the world's continents, but also succeeded in raising the traditional plane shot to the status of an aerial image. Today Gerster is regarded as an international pioneer of aerial photography. For decades, his images shaped the visual identity of Swissair and his publications have drawn millions of readers. "I see my best aerial photographs as a jump-start for flights of the imagination. The aerial image is a tool of reflection: from a height you see not only what is there, but also what might be – an inventory of our possibilities."

The exhibition at the Fotostiftung Schweiz is showing 50 highlights from a 50-year career. It revolves around that burning issue of available resources: in the face of a world population of more than 7 billion people, food is destined to be a key question in the years to come. Already global food production resembles an ominous agricultural monopoly: a small number of large producers, international concerns and globally-operating investment funds are securing huge amounts of territory so as to gain maximum yields from the earth. There is less and less space for small-holder production models.

From this point of view, Georg Gerster's images also have an eminently political component – albeit without putting forward any bold and simple accusations or answers. As the photographer himself writes: "Land use reflects more than just constraints of a pedological, operational, legal, topographical or macro-economic nature, land use also reveals something about mind-sets and psychological states." Anyone who delves into Gerster's work may, by all means, allow themselves to be seduced by the beauty of the surfaces, may indulge in the aesthetic of the images – and thus recognise what is at stake.

Peter Pfrunder

The **catalogue** *The Staff of Life. Aerial Photographs by Georg Gerster* (english/german, CHF 10.-) is a kind of travelogue through the exhibition. In his 50 commentaries on 50 of his images, the photographer provides insight into the geographical and ecological backdrops to his photographs.

Film screening *Georg Gerster* (2004) by Michael Hegglin (12 mins.) in the Seminar Room of the Center for Photography on the hour and the half-hour (from 11.30am to 5.30pm).

Works by Georg Gerster: The works are for sale; information at the reception desk.

Fringe events

Tuesday, 9 April, 12.15 to 12.45pm: *Bildfokus am Mittag* with Teresa Gruber.

Wednesday, 17 April, 7.30pm: *Über den Wolken. Eduard Spelterini (1852–1931), Ballonpionier und Fotograf.* Lecture by Hilar Stadler, director, Museum Bellpark, Kriens.

Sunday, 5 May, 11.30am: *Tour of the exhibition with Georg Gerster.*

Wednesday, 22 May, 7.30pm: *«Wir starten!» – Walter Mittelholzer (1894–1937) als Flieger und Fotograf.* Lecture by Nicole Graf, director, images and maps, ETH library, Zurich.

Guided tours of one of the exhibitions at the Fotostiftung Schweiz or the Fotomuseum Winterthur: Wednesday, 6.30pm, Sunday, 11.30am. Programme available at Infoline: +41 (0)52 234 10 34.

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Georg Gerster

Born 30 April 1928 in Winterthur. Studied German and English at Zurich University, where he received his doctorate. 1950-56 science editor with the *Weltwoche*, Zurich. Since 1956 free-lance publicist with science reportage and aerial photography as his special areas. Extended travels throughout the world, including the Antarctic. For three decades aerial photographs by Gerster on Swissair posters and wall calendars shaped the visual identity of the airline. Gerster has made regular contributions to the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and the *National Geographic Magazine*.

Publications (a selection)

- 1959 *Sahara - Reiche, fruchtbare Wüste*, Ullstein, Berlin
- 1961 *Sinai - Land der Offenbarung*, Ullstein, Berlin
- 1964 *Nubien - Goldland am Nil*, Artemis, Zurich
- 1968 *Kirchen im Fels. Entdeckungen in Äthiopien*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart
- 1975 *Der Mensch auf seiner Erde*, Atlantis, Zurich
- 1980 *Brot und Salz*, Atlantis, Zurich
- 1985 *Flugbilder*, Birkhäuser, Basel
- 1988 *Die Welt im Sucher*, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Zurich
- 1990 *Face of the Earth*, Quark-Kodansha, Tokyo
- 1990 *Amber Waves of Grain*, Harper Weldon Owen, New York
- 1996 *Siebenbürgen im Flug*, Edition Wort und Welt, Munich
- 2003 *Flugbilder aus Syrien*, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz
- 2003 *Flug in die Vergangenheit. Archäologische Stätten in Flugbildern*, Schirmer/Mosel, Munich
- 2004 *Weltbilder*, Schirmer/Mosel, Munich
- 2005 *Mit den Augen der Götter. Flugbilder des antiken und byzantinischen Griechenland*, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz
- 2006 *Swissair posters*, Schirmer/Mosel, Munich
- 2007 *Griechische Inseln in Flugbildern*, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz
- 2007 *Blicke auf Rumäniens Vergangenheit*, Wort+Welt+Bild, Munich
- 2008 *Paradise Lost. Persia from Above*, Phaidon, London/New York
- 2009 *Irans Erbe*, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz
- 2009 *Kreta in Flugbildern*, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz
- 2010 *Ungarns Erbe*, Wort+Welt+Bild, Munich
- 2012 *The Sites of Ancient Greece*, Phaidon Press, London/New York

Colophon Exhibition

Curator: Peter Pfrunder

Communication / Administration: Séverine Spillmann

Art education: Sabine Münzenmaier, Teresa Gruber, Astrid Näff, Fanny Vogler

Graphic Design Exhibition: Jean Robert & Käti Durrer

Scans / Enlargements: ERC Uster

Museum technician: Oliver Gubser

Installation: Roger Rimmele (manager), Giuliano Bruhin, Theres Liechti, Matthias Schilliger, Yves Schneibel