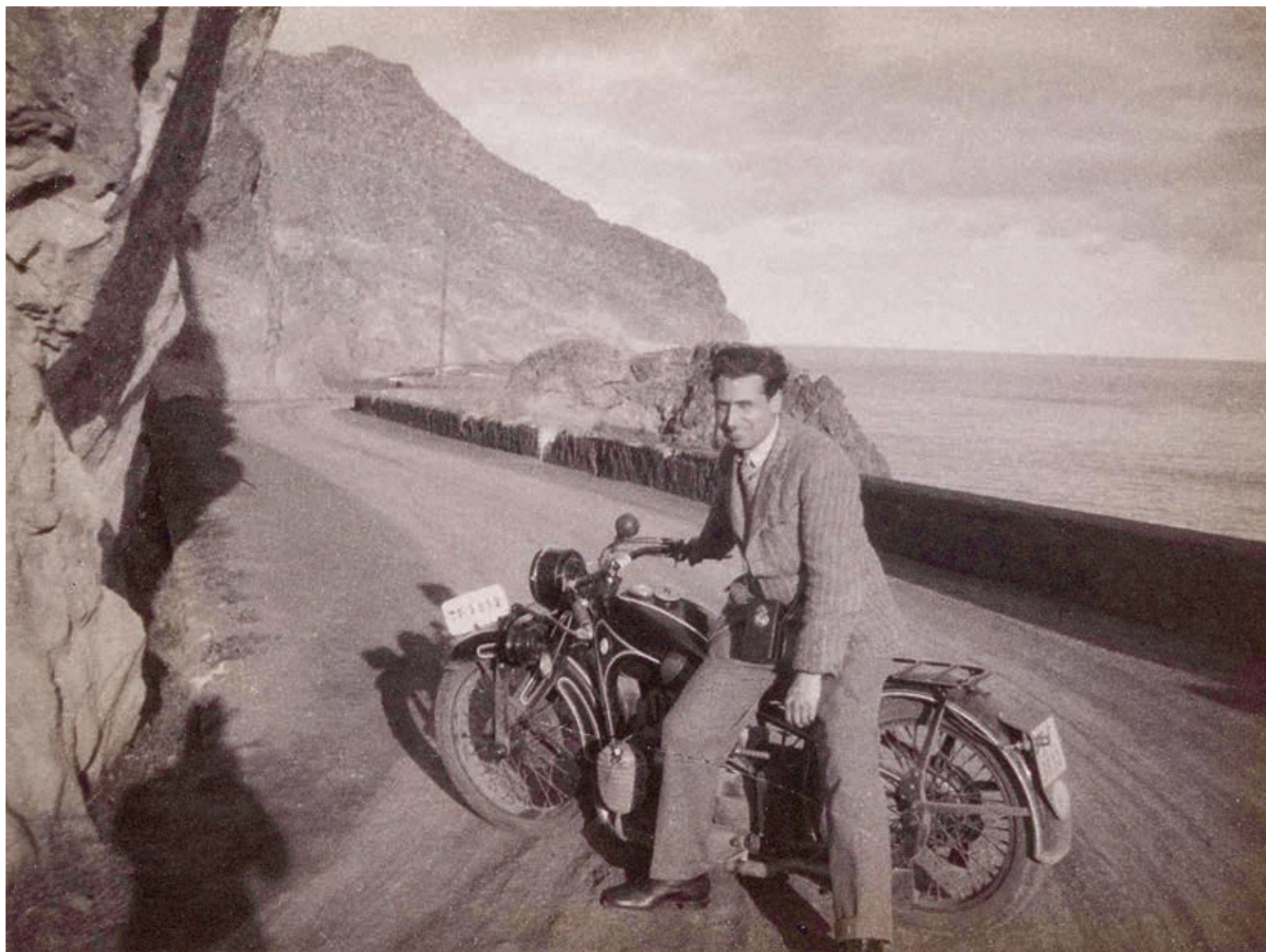


Werner Mantz: The Perfect Eye

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.

[* Willem K. Coumans, from *Werner Mantz, fotograaf*, published by the Werner Mantz Foundation, 1995, p. 19.

Mantz photographed in all simplicity and with purely photographic means, in the conviction that “a good building makes a good picture”. He developed his own photographic signature, complying with the formal principles of the subject and putting himself at the service of his clients, whose architectural concepts he captured and communicated in an image. Mantz was able to grasp the spirit of contemporary architecture and express it photographically. [* In this sense, he remains an inspiring exemplar within the field of architectural photography today.

[** Richard Pare, *Photography and Architecture: 1839-1939*, Montreal (Canadian Centre for Architecture), 1982, p. 25.

“What is distinctive in the German photographers is the understanding of the radical changes in the architectural vocabulary that led to a similarly radical change in the photographer’s view of architecture. The purity of the new architecture found a felicitous collaboration in the work of Werner Mantz and other German photographers. Mantz was particularly aware of the revolutionary quality of contemporary architecture and seized upon it to make a series of meticulous photographs that reflected the spirit of new architecture.” [**

In mounting this exhibition, we have been able to rely upon the expertise of Frits Gierstberg, curator of the Nederlands Fotomuseum in Rotterdam. At our invitation, he formulated an exhibition concept that not only does true justice to Werner Mantz’s multi-faceted qualities, but also cements, once and for all, his international standing and significance as a photographer. Frits Gierstberg has also made important textual contributions to this monograph. The museum and the Werner Mantz Foundation owe him, and the directors of the Nederlands Fotomuseum, an enormous debt of gratitude for this exceptional and rewarding collaboration. Our thanks also go to the many lenders (SK Stiftung Kultur Cologne, Museum Ludwig Cologne, Historisch Centrum Limburg and the Nederlands Fotomuseum Rotterdam) and to the heirs of Werner Mantz, especially his son and daughter, Clément and Charlotte, for their dedication to the project.

The professionalism of the publisher, Hannibal Books, has been crucial to the production of this book, and is both a guarantee of its quality and international distribution. Finally, we thank the funders and sponsors who have made the publication possible.

The Werner Mantz Foundation is responsible for this monograph and is also the co-initiator of the exhibition in the Bonnefanten. Established in 1989 by William Graatsma, then director of the Jan van Eyck Academy and based in Maastricht, the Foundation aims to further promote Werner Mantz’s work and photography in general, particularly the practice of working with natural light. Numerous activities have been developed with these objectives in mind: exhibitions, publications and four awards for (young) photographers, the recipients of which include Thomas Struth, Rineke Dijkstra, Kim Zwartz and Gosbert Adler.

The Foundation has endeavoured to be an inspiring sounding board for both the guest curator and the Bonnefanten team, and at critical moments has been an important intermediary between the various parties involved, thereby maintaining the project’s momentum. Furthermore, the Bonnefanten and Werner Mantz Foundation are convinced of the strength of their collaboration. Not only did they take the initiative for the exhibition and the long-awaited monograph, but they also assumed responsibility for its production. The end result is an exhibition and publication of international significance. We could not imagine a better book to accompany Mantz’s retrospective at the Bonnefanten than *Werner Mantz: The Perfect Eye!*

Stijn Huijts, Director Bonnefanten
Huub Smeets, Chairman Werner Mantz Foundation

Werner Mantz: The Perfect Eye

Frits Gierstberg

Introduction

He is often described as the 'missing link' in the evolution of photography during the 1920s. When the history of photography during this period was actively being written, his work might have forged the connection between the artistic avant-garde of the time and the artisanal and functional practice of the discipline. The belated recognition of photography's artistic potential subsequently led to the 'rediscovery' of Werner Mantz. His architecture photos were included in one of the most prestigious international art exhibitions, the 1977 *documenta* in Kassel. Since then, it has become obvious that the quality of Mantz's oeuvre lies not so much in his role as a link figure, but more in the combination of three characteristics: his craftsmanship, his innate understanding of his subjects, and his immense creative ability to develop his own coherent visual language within the often-narrow framework of a commission. Mantz had The Perfect Eye.

He seemed to have no secrets about the latter. It simply amounted to making the sun and the clouds work for him, as he once wrote in an advertisement for his 'Atelier für Licht-bilder' [Studio for Light Images]. But he was inimitable. Compared to other contemporaneous German architectural photographers – such as Arthur Köster, Lucia Moholy, Albert Renger-Patzsch and Hugo Schmölz – his work is just as solid and idiosyncratic as the buildings he photographed. Furthermore, Mantz was not just a photographer who happened to be commissioned by one of the most important architectural firms associated with the Modernist 'Neues Bauen' [New Building] movement in Germany: his work actually epitomises Modernism in the purest sense of the term. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that a number of his photographs are international icons of this architectural period.



Flooding in Cologne, Frankenwerft, 1920.

Photo Werner Mantz. Coll. ML.



Flooding in Cologne, Grosse Witschgasse, 1920.

Photo Werner Mantz. Coll. ML.

Mantz did not just photograph architecture, however, and not just in Cologne. This fact has been relegated to the background in the reevaluation of his work. In addition to the portraits that he took in Cologne and Maastricht, he was also able to expand his portfolio with a wide range of commissions. In the Netherlands, too, he had the requisite number of architectural clients. Moreover, he photographed industry, industrial products, interiors, artworks, mining installations and roads. Furthermore, he received work from the religious world. He took pictures of historic Maastricht of his own volition and photographed several other European cities on his 'photo trips'. This versatility has never previously been showcased.

The beginning

When Werner Mantz photographed a converted hair salon in the centre of Cologne in 1926, it marked the beginning of a brilliant career as an architectural photographer. Although his visual language was closely aligned with contemporaneous photographic innovations, he did not belong to the artistic avant-garde of his day. Indeed, he seemed to feel little kinship with his more progressive photographer colleagues in Cologne and beyond. Was he aware of the traditions within his profession? What is certain, however, is that he photographed the quintessential architecture and townscapes in Cologne in 1919 and 1920. He trained his camera on the historic city, the cathedral and several Romanesque churches, mediaeval houses, the old city gates and towers, (equestrian) statues and various streetscapes. From the towers of the Dom, he captured an expansive view of the Rhine. Mantz was then still a student in Munich. [1]

When the Rhine burst its banks in 1920, he photographed the flooded streets and buildings in the historic quarters of Cologne. The pictures, which include rowing boats and gangways, are reminiscent of those of the Venetian acqua alta. Working with a school friend, he turned the photographs into postcards and sold them, thereby earning his first income. Incidentally, he also pasted the photographs of the flood into a small album, which is now in the collection of the Museum Ludwig in Cologne. Much later in life, Mantz explained his interest in urban photography. It was much more than just a hobby:

“Photography was important to me as a means of historical documentation. [...] I was more interested in the historical statement of a picture than its aesthetic value.” [2

It is not immediately discernible from these series that Mantz harboured ambitions to become an innovative architectural photographer. His still somewhat juvenile work, from as early as 1915, includes landscapes and architecture in a traditional, romanticising style that reflects the training he received at the Bayerische Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt für Photographie, Chemie, Lichtdruck und Gravüre [Bavarian Teaching and Research Institute for Photography, Chemistry, Collotype and Engraving] in Munich. [3 The artistic principles then advanced by the school were deeply rooted in the aesthetics of nineteenth-century painting. The four-term course in the production of ‘noble’ prints (e.g. those made with platinum, silver-platinum and palladium) was closely related to this style. Pupils learnt how to achieve painterly effects such as aesthetic blurring, soft contours and shadows, impressionistic overtones and atmospheric perspective. The chemical colouring of prints, which often involved laborious and experimental processes, was also part of the curriculum. When Mantz opened his first private photography studio in his parents’ house in 1921, he concentrated on portraiture in what he termed the ‘Munich style’, an approach he sought to pioneer in Cologne. He was particularly inspired by the work of the photographer Hugo Erfurth. [4 While Mantz’s Cologne portraits from this period seem slightly idealistic to our modern eyes, thanks to their soft contours and half-shadows, the photographer himself described them as a ‘true and raw reality’ that revealed the essence of his sitters. [5 Although his work was not genuinely innovative, it nevertheless shows that he was not afraid of resisting the prevailing trends. He undoubtedly saw a market for this type of work, although he later admitted that the early years of his career were not particularly lucrative. [6 Mantz also specialised in art reproductions. The specific knowledge and skills needed for this type of activity merely confirms his technical prowess. He was able to train his eye further by studying the paintings, prints and drawings that he placed in the spotlight before his large studio camera. He may have been able to develop an affinity for architectural photography through the commissions he received from the sculptor Josef Pabst, who created both façade sculptures and freestanding works. [7 Mantz documented these pieces in situ.

Progressive circles

Real innovation was not far away, however. During the 1920s, Mantz encountered the artists associated with the Kölner Progressiven [Cologne Progressives], a loose grouping of radical, left-wing (if not anarchist) creatives that included painters, sculptors, graphic artists and architects. Members included Gerd Arntz, Otto Freundlich, Heinrich Hoerle, Anton Räderscheidt, Wilhelm Riphahn and Franz Wilhelm Seiwert. Josef Pabst was affiliated to the group although not a core member. The Cologne Progressives had their roots in the city’s Dada movement of 1919. Their ‘Neue Sachlichkeit’ [New Objectivity] was characterised by a geometric visual language and a simplified realism with strong graphic accents. The photographer August Sander was also one of the Cologne Progressives. [8 Sander photographed many of the members’ artworks, thus enabling them to be reproduced in magazines and reach the widest possible audience. Moreover, his photographic reproductions were frequently submitted to exhibitions when the original artworks could not travel. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the painters, sculptors and graphic artists in the group came to revere the documentary possibilities of photography.



Werner Mantz and Karl Mergenbaum, Oberrealschule, Cologne, circa 1917. Coll. NFM.



Window display at the Werner Mantz Studio, Hohenstaufenring 46, Cologne, 1925-1935. Coll. ML.

It is not known whether Mantz knew about Sander's activities or if he saw him as a competitor. They also knew one another through their membership of the Cologne Society of Professional Photographers. Thanks to his contacts amongst the Cologne Progressives, Mantz established a solid network and was undoubtedly aware of new artistic developments in both his own city and further afield. Through Josef Pabst, he met the innovative architect Wilhelm Riphahn, whom he photographed in his studio on several occasions. [9

Architectural photography

When Werner Mantz first started out as an architectural photographer, it was already a profession with certain traditions and conventions. [10 After all, photographing buildings is almost as old as photography itself. Static subjects – such as buildings – were a blessing to early photographers grappling with heavy cameras and long exposure times. Cityscapes became an important artistic genre in the nineteenth century and were purchased by collectors and/or sold to tourists. Photography also had more prosaic applications. Civic authorities and historical societies commissioned photographs of ancient buildings and monuments for documentary purposes. Photography facilitated the preservation of historic architecture, helped with the study of antiquities, and was useful, as a supplement to drawings, during archaeological excavations. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a practice developed in which photographers were commissioned to record the execution of large infrastructure projects, such as bridges, dams, locks and the construction of waterways and railways. Such images can be grouped under the term 'architectural engineering'. The extremely detailed pictures, made by specialised photographers working with large-format plate cameras, provided accurate records and control images for the architects, construction companies, material suppliers, clients and insurance companies involved in the works. Although commissioned for their documentary value, the images produced by the more talented photographers working in this field have a certain aesthetic allure.

Whereas architectural photographers had previously tended to focus on monuments and other individual buildings or objects, the mid-1920s saw a rise in demand for images of Germany's new houses and districts, department stores, restaurants and theatres, industrial installations and factories. This was a completely new phenomenon, as was so much else at the dawn of the Modern Age. People spoke of 'Neues Bauen' [New Building] and 'Neues Leben' [New Living]. When Mantz photographed the aforementioned hair salon in 1926, architectural photography had not yet devised an appropriate visual language for such developments. Yet the rapidly changing political, social and cultural landscape of Germany, and Cologne in particular, meant that it was imperative to find one.



Advertisement, 1920s.

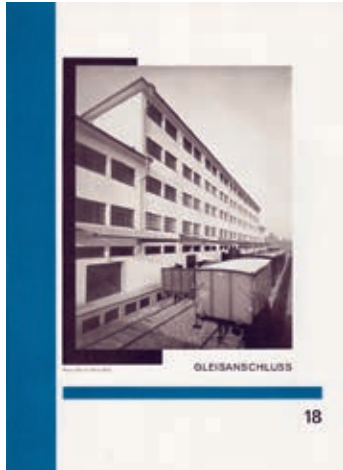
believed pioneering architecture was being created. Mantz's name was not well known in the Netherlands, however, and the number of his architectural commissions remained small in comparison to Cologne. Nevertheless, these Dutch commissions were important to his practice as an architectural photographer, and he captured a wealth of architecture and industrial sites in Limburg in the 1930s and after 1945. [30 His clients included prominent Limburg architects such as Alphons Boosten, Frits Peutz, Toon Swinkels and Jos Wielders.

In around 1932, and more or less by chance, Mantz had the unexpected opportunity to expand his professional activities in the Netherlands to include a completely different genre, namely children's portraiture. "In Heerlen," he wrote in a professional photography magazine in 1952, "I visited an architect but did not receive a commission. There was no building to photograph at the time, but I could nevertheless do him a favour. His young daughter... yes, he would love to have a good photo of her." [31 One assignment followed another. "I had become a photographer of children", Mantz noted. This was partly thanks to the twin-lens Rolleiflex 6x6 camera, which enabled him to view his subject even as the shutter was depressed. This gave him an instant impression of whether or not a shot was successful, a crucial breakthrough given his desire to portray "spontaneous, lively, naughty, wild offshoots". [32 Mantz was famous throughout Limburg for his child and baby photographs. He also visited clients at home to take portraits.

The architect who had asked for a photograph of his daughter was Frits Peutz. [33 He became one of Mantz's most important architectural clients in Limburg. For his office, Mantz took photos of the construction of a sanctuary in Heerlen and, in the same municipality, of the Schunck fashion house and department store, an iconic building of international standing that is often referred to as the 'Glass Palace'. He trained his lens on the striking glass façade and the modern interior of the seven-storey shop with a restaurant and roof terrace. Between 1931 and 1938, Mantz also photographed Peutz's semi-open-air Sint Theresia school and Toon Swinkels' Immaculata teaching training college, both in Maastricht. The results of the assignments are not dissimilar to the photographs he produced in Cologne. He worked in the Netherlands with just as much precision and insight, making exclusive use of natural light and how the sunlight and shadows helped accentuate the architectural forms. This is also evident from the many photographs he took of the new churches being built in Limburg at this time. In 1934, he documented the new Modernist swimming pool in Valkenburg, designed by architect Camille de Smet.

Werner Mantz's commissions from the State Mines are of a completely different nature. [34 In addition to a handful of stone buildings, the coal mines also included industrial constructions made of concrete, iron and steel. Photographing the diverse, seemingly complicated and sometimes unusually large structures in a clear and comprehensible manner was an unusual challenge for Mantz. He even had to adopt an almost vertical camera angle in order to capture the chimneys. His image of a series of cooling towers was praised internationally and became emblematic of a large portion of his oeuvre. More than once, it even served as a model for the basic tenets of New Objectivity photography. Incidentally, industrial buildings were not a new subject for Mantz; he had previously worked on a number of industry-related commissions in Germany – architecture as diverse as the new 'Opel House' in Aachen, the tall chimneys near Frechen, the ADA-Käsefabrik GmbH and Cornelius Stüssgen AG in Rodenkirchen, as well as the construction of new bridges and roads at various sites around Cologne.

Werner Mantz no longer needed to prove his versatility but, even so, it is true to say that the photographic assignment for the Provinciale Waterstaat Limburg [Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management] in the period 1938-1939 defies categorisation. Mantz was asked to photograph new provincial roads throughout an entire year. The result is a long series of landscape photographs in both vertical and



Page from a book published by Cornelius Stüssgen, 1929.

Photo Werner Mantz. Coll. Mantz family.



Page from Prof. Bruno Paul: *das neue Geschäftshaus*, no date

(circa 1930). Coll. Mantz family.

horizontal format that convey the incipient modernisation of the rolling Limburg landscape and the rise of automobile traffic in the region. [35

War and the post-war period

After the notorious 'Kristallnacht' of 1938, Mantz knew that he had to leave Germany. The photographer, who was half-Jewish, emigrated to Maastricht with his parents and aunt. Hitler invaded the Netherlands in 1940. Mantz managed to keep his studio going and was busier than ever once the Germans made it compulsory to carry a passport with a photograph. Maastricht residents would queue from the street up to the attic, where the studio was located, to have their photo taken.

In the post-war years, he moved his successful portrait studio to the Vrijthof. From time to time, nationally renowned and distinguished personalities would ask to have their portrait taken at Mantz's studio. These included musicians and writers, and visual artists such as Aad de Haas and Charles Eyck. He took portraits of songwriter and composer Jules de Corte and the physical chemist and Nobel Prize winner Peter Debye. Looking back at the thousands of portraits that Mantz took, one is struck by the fact that no two images are the same: every picture and sitter feels completely unique. Of particular note are the many portraits of communicants, which reflect the deep-rooted local and regional Catholic traditions of Limburg. Mantz also received multiple and diverse commissions from the religious world: pilgrimages, churches, stained glass works, relics, the reinstallation of the bells of the St Servatius Church and the Maastricht convent of the Zusters Onder de Bogen [Sisters of Mercy of St Borromeo]. In 1955, he turned his camera towards the Missiehuis Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Lourdes [Our Lady of Lourdes Mission House], designed by the Swinkels architecture bureau, in the village of Cadier en Keer.

In the early 1950s, Mantz was also the 'in-house photographer' for the Gemeente-Spaarbank [municipal savings bank] in Maastricht. He photographed the public areas of the bank, the different counters, the offices and the state-of-the-art mobile savings bus. Mantz was also commissioned by the Eerste Nederlandse Cement Industrie (ENCI) [First Dutch Cement Industry], to photograph the new housing estate ('the ENCI-dorp'), designed by the architect Alphons Boosten, which was intended to accommodate the factory's senior staff.

In the early 1960s, Mantz was commissioned by the Boosten architecture office – now headed by his son Theo Boosten – to photograph the Lagere Technische School [Lower Technical School] in Maastricht. Mantz had managed to establish a good relationship with his clients and was thus able to continue his practice in architecture.

Mantz ran his Maastricht studio until his retirement in 1971.

The rediscovery

Mantz's international reputation suddenly skyrocketed in 1975 thanks to a remarkable turn of events. A selection of his photographs from the 1920s and 1930s were included in *Vom Dadamax bis zum Grüngürtel* [From Dadamax to the Green Belt], a major exhibition at the Kölnischer Kunstverein on the artistic and cultural life of Cologne in the early modern era. [36 Mantz's work was shown alongside prints by, amongst others, August Sander and Raoul Ubac, and he was mentioned in the catalogue in the same breath as Albert Renger-Patzsch and Hugo Schmölz. One year later, Mantz, who had not exhibited much in his earlier years, was given a solo show at Rudolf Kicken and Wilhelm Schürmann's Licht-tropfen gallery in Aachen. It was a complete sell-out. A major breakthrough followed in 1977 when Mantz's Limburg mining photos were included in the sixth *documenta* in Kassel. [37 In this exhibition, his work was displayed in the sections *Direkte Fotografie* [Direct Photography] and *Industrie und Technik* [Industry and Technology] respectively, alongside images by Germaine Krull, Albert Renger-Patzsch, Charles Sheeler and Peter



Saint Servatius information sheet, Maastricht, no date (after 1957). Coll. Mantz family.

Royal silk gloss paper. Mantz usually printed the entire negative but, on occasion, would select fragments of the image. After rinsing and drying the print, it could be glossed in a special machine. He gave his prints a sepia tone by processing them with Senol. He also patinated his prints with a type of wax that he had developed himself, the recipe for which was a closely guarded secret (long since lost). When making his prints, Mantz – and, under his supervision, his later business partner Karl Mergenbaum – undoubtedly accounted for the fact that his photos would be reproduced in magazines, i.e. in printed form on as-yet-unknown paper and often in a smaller format than the original.

Notes on the Image Groupings

Frits Gierstberg

Not all the photographs in the different sections belong to the same commission. Similar subjects, themes or compositions have been grouped together, while other selections highlight specific tendencies or affinities in Werner Mantz's oeuvre, be they thematic or aesthetic. Depending on the nature of the assignment, commissions usually result in series of photographs with their own intrinsic coherence or logic. Yet these rarely, if ever, survive in their entirety. The prints reproduced in this book are drawn from a range of collections. Many were reproduced in publications or fulfilled an archival role and, as such, bear visible traces of handling, such as minor areas of damage or discolouration. Mantz often applied his studio stamp to the back of his prints and certain images are accompanied by written notes or instructions for use.

Picture Credits

Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam
[Coll. NFM]

Heirs Werner Mantz, Maastricht

Museum Ludwig, Cologne
[Coll. ML]

Die Photographische Sammlung, SK
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[Coll. UK]

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[Coll. RHCL]

Bonnefantten, Maastricht
[Coll. BF]

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Early Landscapes

Werner Mantz took his first photographs while still a teenager in Cologne. As he later explained, it wasn't just beauty that fascinated him but also the historical significance of a photograph. The Occupation of the Rhineland in 1918 and the flooding of the old town two years later were just two of the exceptional historical events that he captured. He also took early pictures of the Deutzer Brücke, framing it beautifully by choosing the perspective of a covered street. Beyond the city, he photographed the landscape and the Rhine with the occasional historical building, such as a farm or a castle. He also shot picturesque, classical-looking scenes, such as a boat on the water, a farm worker in the field or washerwomen under the bridge near a river. When printing, he occasionally used techniques such as the bromoil process, which allowed him to achieve soft, painterly effects. He probably learnt these skills during his training in Munich.



Am Rhein [On the Rhine], 1918-1919 (bromoil print). Coll. NFM.



Rheinstein (GER), 1919 (bromoil print). Coll. NFM.



Zons am Rhein [Zons on the Rhine], 1918 (bromoil print). Coll. NFM.



Die Pfalz [The Palatinate], 1919 (bromoil print). Coll. NFM.



Perona.

W. Mauts.
1921.



Verona, 1921 (bromoil print). Coll. NFM.

Farm labourer, 1921 (bromoil print). Coll. NFM.



Alt Köln [Old Cologne], circa 1920. (bromoil print). Coll. NFM.

Landscape, 1918-1921. Coll. NFM.



Portraits

Surveying Mantz's many thousands of portraits, one is struck by his ability to capture the unique expression of every sitter through lighting, posture, positioning in the picture plane, background or the occasional prop. Archival prints show that he was making studio portraits of children as a young photographer in Cologne. While these works are clearly influenced by Pictorialism, as evidenced by the soft contours, others betray an openness towards a more lively, spontaneous rendering of the individual before the lens. Mantz stated that he was inspired by the work of the photographer Hugo Erfurth at this time. In his later portraits, he achieved modern-looking compositions through radical, cropped framing. He also made some remarkable portraits of dogs during his Cologne period.

It was in Maastricht, however, that he truly flourished as a portrait photographer. Here, he focused even more intently on children and started to use a 6x6 Rolleiflex. The story goes that Mantz always sought to achieve one-of-a-kind portraits that captured every child's unique emotional aura. If a baby was too young, he might invite the parents to return at a later date. Mantz was famous throughout the region for his portraits of communicants. He worked exclusively with daylight in his studio.

Anonymous child portrait, Cologne (GER), 1924. Coll. NFM.





Anonymous child portrait, Cologne (GER), 1923. Coll. NFM.



Anonymous child portrait, Cologne (GER), 1923-1925. Coll. NFM.



Portrait of Otto Brues, Cologne (GER), 1927. Coll. ML.



Portrait of Alice Wenglor, Cologne (GER), 1922. Coll. ML.



Portrait of Wilhelm Riphahn, Cologne (GER), circa 1926. Coll. ML.



Portrait of Anton Räderscheidt, Cologne (GER), 1923. Coll. ML.

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