

O predmetima i slikama

Of Objects and Images

NAPISAO / WRITTEN BY
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Philipp Schaerer švicarski je arhitekt koji je postao vizualni umjetnik. Odmah nakon završenog arhitektonskog fakulteta zaposlio se kao projektant u uredu Jacquesa Herzoga i Pierrea de Meurona u Baselu. Dok je radio u tvrtci, napravio je niz spektakularnih vizualizacija i digitalnih rendera koje je ured koristio u natječajnim radovima. Radio je i kao arhivist – menadžer znanja bio je termin koji je ured običavao koristiti. Na tom je poslu počeo koristiti program medijske baze podataka kako bi se snalazio među tisućama fotografija i dokumenata kojima se morao baviti na dnevnoj bazi. Zanimljivo je da je nakon odlaska iz ureda 2007., kako bi osnovao vlastitu praksu, Schaererov prvi samoinicirani zadatak bio osvrtna na njegovu dvostruku ulogu u uredu Herzog & de Meuron. Odlučio je istražiti svoju bazu podataka,

Philipp Schaerer is a Swiss architect who became a visual artist. His first job out of the architecture school was as a designer for the office of Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron in Basel. During his stint at the firm, he produced many of the spectacular visualizations and digital renderings used in their competition entries. He also doubled up as an archivist — knowledge manager was the term preferred by the office — a job for which he started to use a media database software in order to keep track of the thousands of images and documents that he had to manage on a daily basis. Interestingly enough, upon leaving the firm in 2007 to establish his own practice, Schaerer's first self-initiated work was a reflection on his dual role at Herzog & de Meuron: he decided to explore his database, which at that point had become a massive personal diary, in search of fragments with which to create new images. His series *Bildbauten* (2007-2009), that brought him immediate international attention, was a series of portraits of imaginary buildings, composed in the frontality language of Bernd and Hilla Becher, and manufactured directly in postproduction software, out of fragments of anonymous constructions mined from his collection. This series of innocent architectures, articulated by their simple profiles and the way they touch the ground, was a response to the complexity and spectacularity of the forced

fotografije / photographs by
PHILIPP SCHAERER

Composite No. 13, 2019. ►
Composite No. 13, 2019



perspectives of commercial architectural renders. They also addressed the ecosystems in which those renders circulate, the myriad blogs and online platforms which act as echo chambers in the dissemination of architectural images today. With their hyperreal textures and minimal compositions, the *Bildbauten* presented themselves as distilled and self-contained architectures, free of context, and perfectly

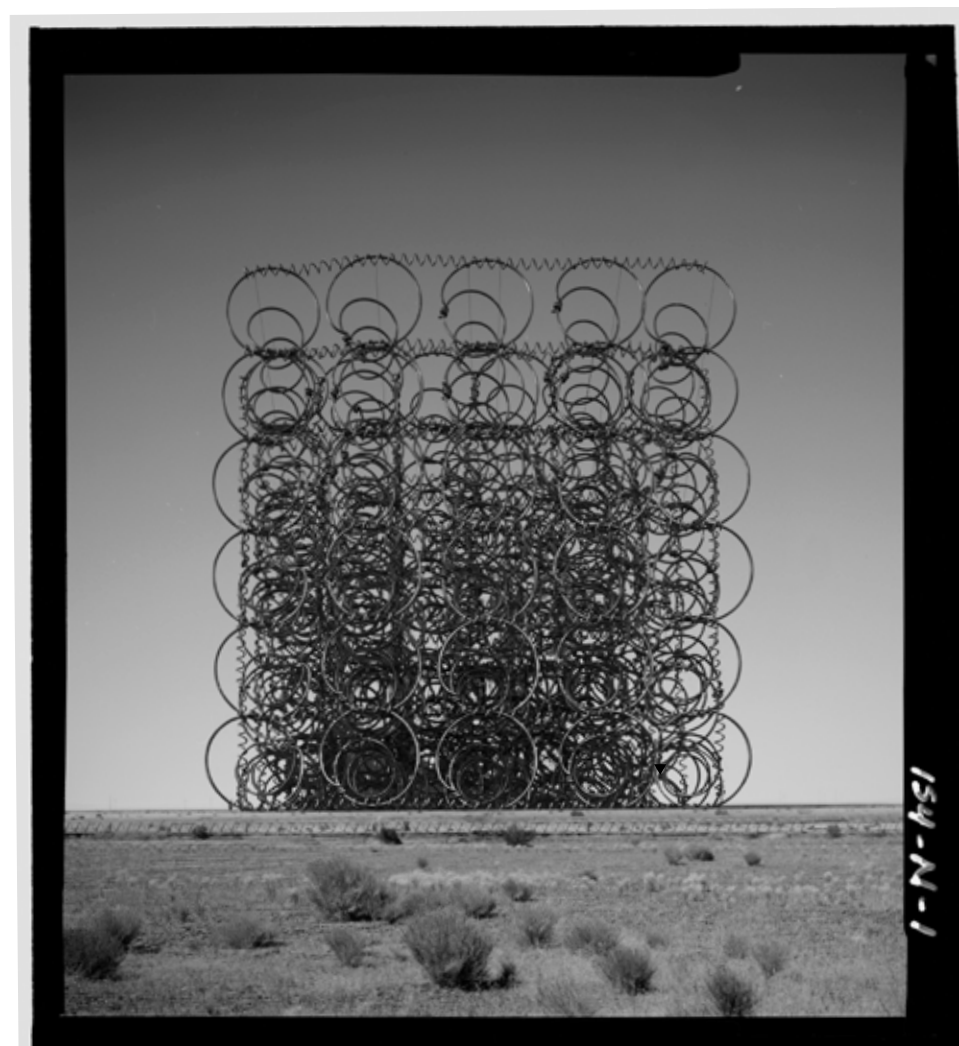
adapted to the reduced attention spans of our current culture of browsing.

Since then, the work produced by Schaerer has been systematically revisiting the two themes already present in his first work. On the one hand, each series is a personal reflection on the act of imaging, often combining different techniques and visual conventions in a single frame in order to disrupt the ways that images are produced and consumed. On the other hand, and irrespective of technique, the images created by Schaerer, with their raw materials, blank

koja je postala golemi privatni dnevnik, s ciljem pronalaska fragmenata pomoću kojih bi stvorio nove slike. Njegov ciklus *Bildbauten* (2007. – 2009.), koji mu je osigurao trenutnu međunarodnu pozornost, serija je portreta imaginarnih zgrada komponiranih u frontalnom jeziku Berndta i Hille Becher i proizvedenih izravno u postprodukcijском programu iz fragmenata anonimnih zdanja preuzetih iz njegove zbirke. Niz nevinih arhitektura, artikuliranih njihovim jednostavnim obrisima i načinom na koji dotiču tlo, odgovor je na složenost i spektakularnost forsiranih perspektiva komercijalnih arhitektonskih rendera. Također se referiraju i na ekosustave u kojima ti renderi cirkuliraju – silne blogove i internetske platforme koje funkcioniraju kao izolirani mjehurići u diseminaciji arhitektonskih slika danas. S hiperrealističnim teksturama i minimalističkim kompozicijama, *Bildbauten* djeluju kao destilirane i samodostatne arhitekture, oslobođene konteksta i savršeno prilagođene smanjenom rasponu pažnje koji karakterizira suvremenu kulturu brzog pregledavanja. Od tada se Schaererov rad sustavno vraća tim dvjema temama prisutnima u prvom djelu. S jedne strane, svaki je ciklus osobni osvrt na čin

Composite No. 31, 2019. ▶

Composite No. 31, 2019



surfaces and elegantly awkward volumes share the anonymous beauty of party walls or industrial architecture. If it were not for the high degree of precision in their proportions — underlined by the accuracy of Schaerer's images

— we would wonder whether the artefacts depicted in the images are truly found, instead of designed.

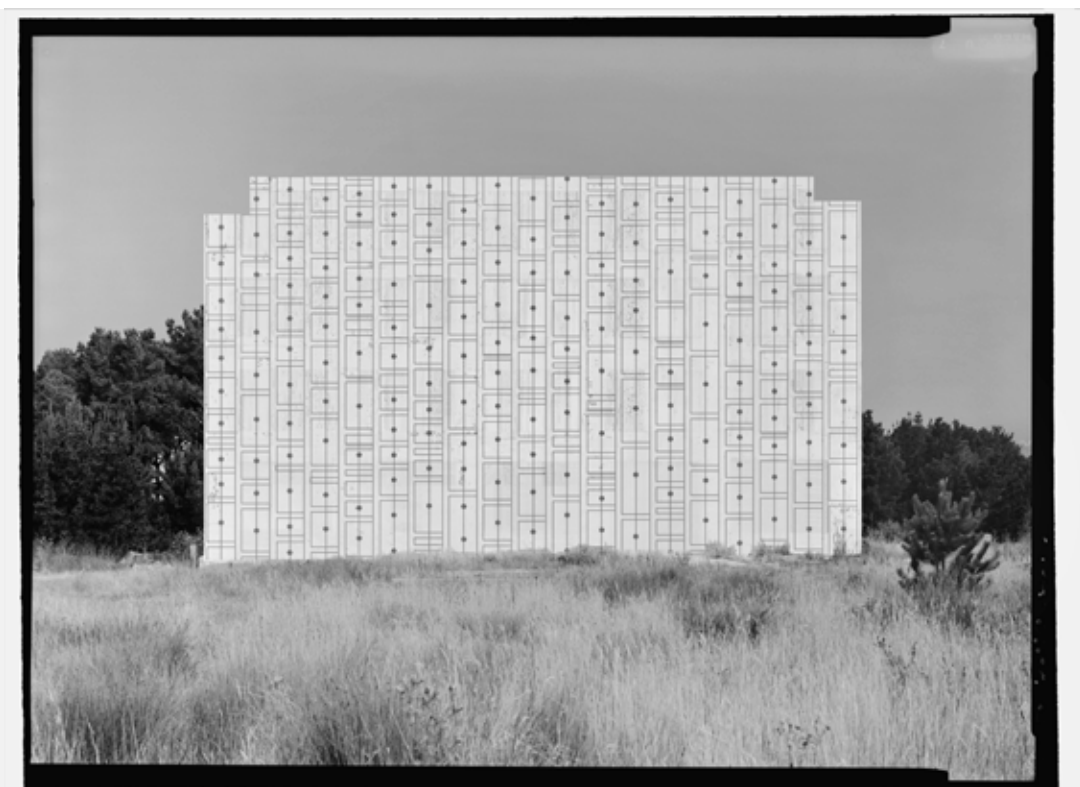
In that regard, the series *Ornament and Découpage* is no exception. The work came out of a commission by Ambra Fabi and Giovanni Piovene, curators

stvaranja slika, često spajajući različite tehnike i vizualne konvencije u jednom kadru kako bi narušio načine na koji su slike stvarane i konzumirane. S druge strane, i neovisno o tehnici, slike koje stvara Schaerer, s njihovim sirovim materijalom, praznim površinama i elegantno nezgodnim volumenima posjeduju anonimnu ljepotu zabatnih zidova ili industrijske arhitekture. Da nema visoke razine preciznosti proporcija, naglašene točnošću Schaererovih slika, pitali bismo se jesu li artefakti prikazani na slikama zaista pronađeni, a ne oblikovani.

U tom smislu, ciklus *Ornament & Découpage* ne predstavlja

◀ Composite No. 28, 2019.

Composite No. 28, 2019





◀ Composite No. 26, 2019.

Composite No. 26, 2019

iznimku. Djelo je proizašlo iz natječaja Ambre Fabi i Giovannija Piovene, kustosa Lisabonskog trijenala arhitekture 2019., koji su od sudionika tražili da se osvrnu na pitanje ornamenta u polju arhitekture danas. Stvarajući petnaest slika koje je prikazao na izložbi, Schaerer je prenio ideju dekupaža, prilično amaterske tehnike dekoriranja bliske kolažu, u polje proizvodnje digitalne slike u kojemu se najbolje snalazi. Time je ponovno stvorio niz napetosti kombinirajući naizgled nekompatibilne izvore i tehnike, a zatim na njima iskoristio svoju vještinu digitalne manipulacije, proizvevši pamtljiv ciklus slika koje poput utvara mijenjaju značenje i poimanu konstrukciju, konstantno osujećujući naše napore da ih u potpunosti definiramo.

Ako slike i jesu kompleksne i nestabilne u svojim brojnim slojevima i mogućim tumačenjima, jednostavne su u kompoziciji i estetici. U svakoj je fotografirani originalni krajolik izvučen iz arhiva i korišten kao platno i polazište koje će biti ukrašeno kompulzivnom upotrebom ornamentalnih uzoraka. Ti su uzorci ponekad već prisutni u malom dijelu originalne slike, i u tom ih slučaju Schaerer izdvaja, pročišćuje

of the 2019 Trienal de Arquitectura de Lisboa, who asked all participants to reflect on the question of ornaments in the field of architecture today. In producing the fifteen images featured in the exhibition, Schaerer translated the idea of decoupage, a rather amateurish decoration technique akin to collage, to the field of digital image making, where he is most at home. In doing so, he once again built a series of tensions by combining seemingly incompatible sources and techniques, only to gloss over them with his mastery of digital

manipulation, leaving in his wake a haunting series of images that, like a mirage, seem to oscillate in their meaning and perceived construction, perpetually thwarting our efforts

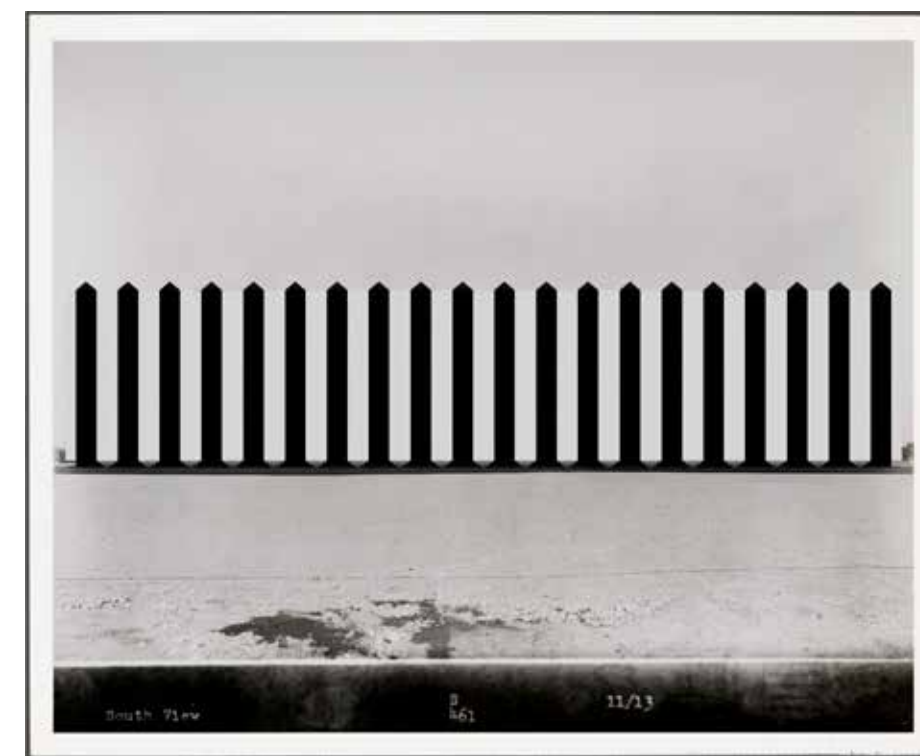
i replicira. Nekad je pak ornamentalna komponenta u cjelini prenesena iz druge slike, ovoga puta s naglaskom na dekorativnim umjetnostima različitih povijesnih razdoblja i lokacija. U svim je slučajevima umetanje ornamenta gotovo neprimjetno; mjestimice je ostavljeno samo nekoliko detalja kako bi se namjerno testirala naša percepcija. Doista, ambivalentnost je ono što ovaj ciklus slika čini posebnim. Trebamo li ova djela čitati kao drevne fotografske artefakte na čijim je površinama intervenirao umjetnik-brikoler, ili su to fotografije stvarnih lokacija na kojima je u nekoj maglovitoj prošlosti sagrađen niz repetitivnih struktura?

S jedne strane, činjenica da je Schaerer odlučio raditi s crno-bijelom fotografijom ukazuje na prvu pretpostavku. Ne samo da je odabrani sirovi materijal arhivski snimak, nego umjetnik čuva i sve tragove tih originalnih fotografskih objekata: negativni rubovi, oznake i bilješke, svaki mogući detalj tu je kako bi nas podsjetio na izvornu fotografiju kao fizički artefakt. Na nekim slikama u ciklusu,

to pin them entirely down.

If the images are complex and unstable in their many layers and possible interpretations, they are simple in their composition and aesthetic. In each of them, an original landscape photograph pulled from an archive is used as a canvas and point of departure to be decorated through the compulsive deployment of ornamental patterns. Those patterns are sometimes already present in a small area of the original image, in which case Schaerer

isolates, clarifies, and replicates them. Other times, the ornamental component is imported wholesale from another image, this time with an emphasis on the decorative arts of different historic periods and locations. In all cases, the insertion of ornaments is almost seamless, with just a few



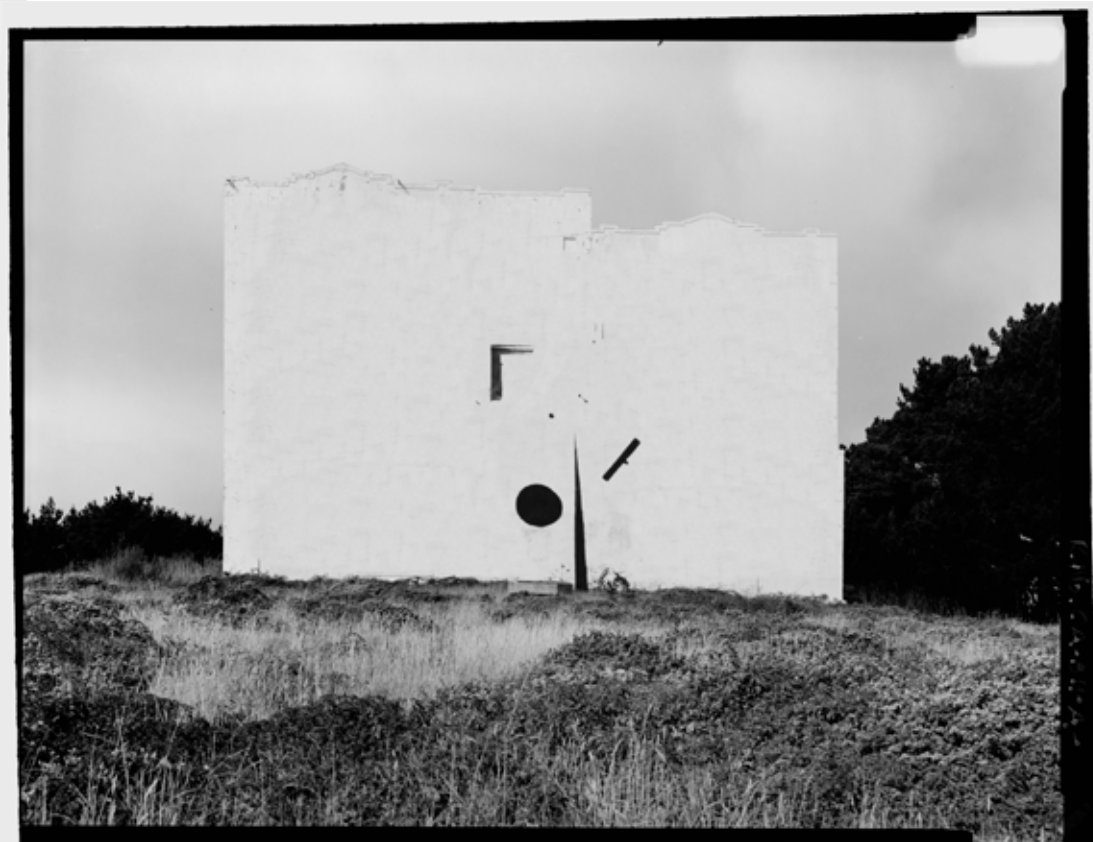
Composite No. 5, 2019. ▶

Composite No. 5, 2019



◀ Composite No. 2, 2019.
Composite No. 2, 2019

Composite No. 19, 2019. ▶
Composite No. 19, 2019



◀ Composite No. 23, 2019.
Composite No. 23, 2019

kao primjerice *Composite No. 8*, Schaerer čak uvodi i blagu sjenu ispod nekih elemenata u rešetci prikazanoj u središtu slike, prisiljavajući nas da se sve više približavamo u nastojanju da dokučimo je li original zaista fizički izmijenjen lijepljenjem elemenata koji daju reljefnost objektu. Nasuprot tome, u radu *Composite No. 34*, ornamentalna rešetka sličnih dimenzija i pozicije djeluje u potpunosti usidrena i integrirana u sliku kao da je zaista izgrađena usred pustinje iz filigranski tankih čeličnih profila i onda prepuštena fotografu da je ovjekovječi svojim fotoaparatom. Ne smijemo zaboraviti da je Schaererov rad duboko ukorijenjen i sudjeluje u historijskim procesima u kojima je umjetnička slika postupno napustila sve tragove svoje predmetnosti. Ako slijedimo putanju koja povezuje drevne

details left there to intentionally challenge our perception. Indeed, ambiguity is at the core of what makes this series of images special. Are we to understand these works as ancient photographic artefacts whose surfaces have been intervened on by an artist turned tinkerer, or are these photographs of actual places where a series of repetitive structures were built in some nebulous past? On the one hand, the fact that Schaerer decided to work with black and white photography seems to point towards the former hypothesis. It is not only that the chosen raw material is archival footage. The artist also keeps all the traces of those original photographic objects: negative edges, marks, and annotations - every single possible detail is there in order to remind us of the original photograph as a physical artefact. In some of the images in the series, *Composite No. 8* for example, Schaerer even goes as far as casting a slight shadow under some of the elements in the lattice depicted in the centre of the image, forcing us to get closer and closer in trying to understand whether the original was really modified physically, with the pasting of elements adding relief to

freske s uljima na platnu, i zatim s ranim fotografskim tehnikama baziranim na staklu ili metalu pa sve do otisaka na papiru, možemo razumjeti kako razvoj dvodimenzionalne slike, koji kulminira digitalnom slikom, predstavlja povijest njezine postupne emancipacije od njezina fizičkog oslonca. Upravo je zbog svoga dubokog razumijevanja tog procesa umjetnik u stanju pažljivo kalibrirati i izbor arhivskih crno-bijelih materijala kao izvorišne građe i niza tehnika kojima na njima intervenira, sve kako bi pripremio svoju igru zaigrane ambivalentnosti.

Dakle, od promišljanja tehnike još su važnije krajnje umjetnikove namjere. I doista, riječ *zaigrano* bitna je ovdje jer je Schaererova želja uključiti promatrača u svoje okršaje sa slikama. Njega ne zanima opskurna rasprava o historijskom luku manipulacije

the object. On the contrary, as in *Composite No. 34*, a similarly sized and positioned ornamental lattice feels entirely grounded and integrated in the image as if it had actually been built out of a filigree of thin steel members in the middle of the desert, then left there for the photographer to immortalize it with his camera.

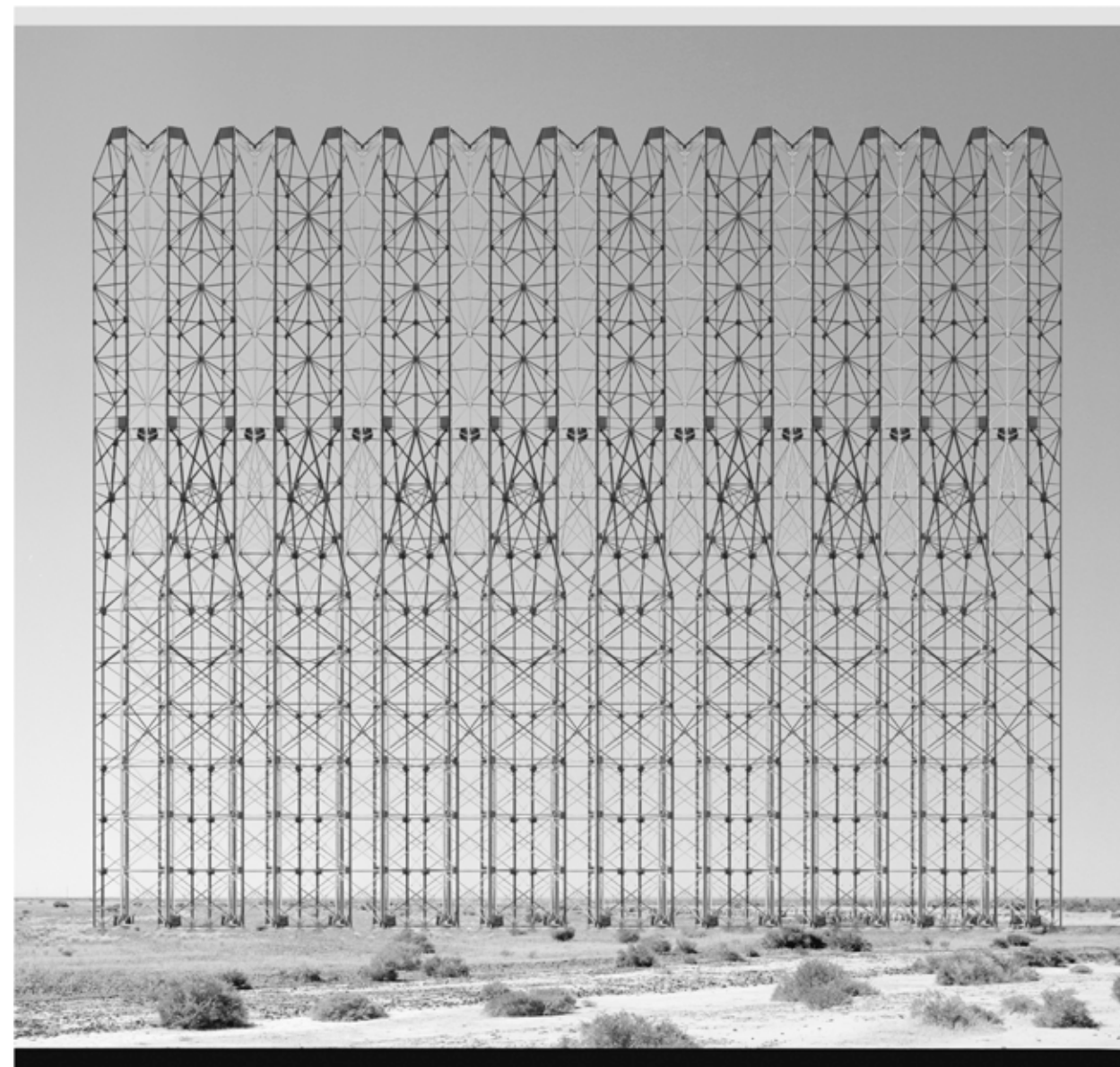
We should not forget here that Schaerer's work is deeply embedded and participating in the historical process by which the art image has gradually left all the traces of its objecthood behind. If we follow the trajectory linking ancient frescoes with oil on canvas paintings, and then with glass or metal-based early photographic techniques, all the way to paper prints, we can understand how the evolution of the two dimensional picture, culminating in the digital image, is the history of its gradual emancipation from its physical support. It is due to the artist's deep understanding of this process that he is able to carefully calibrate both the choice of archival black and white prints as source materials and the range of techniques enacted on them, all in order to set up his game of playful ambivalence.

More important than the considerations about technique are the ultimate intentions of the artist. And indeed, the word *playful* is important here because Schaerer's desire is to involve the viewer in his skirmishes with images. He is not interested in an obscure discussion of the historical arch of image manipulation, but rather in actively involving his

audience in a game of detective. The more we follow and interrogate the clues left by Schaerer in each of the images, the more we understand the sense of humour and the pleasure involved in their making, as we become participants of this delightful and oneiric game played with and between objects and images.

Composite No. 34, 2019. ▶

Composite No. 34, 2019

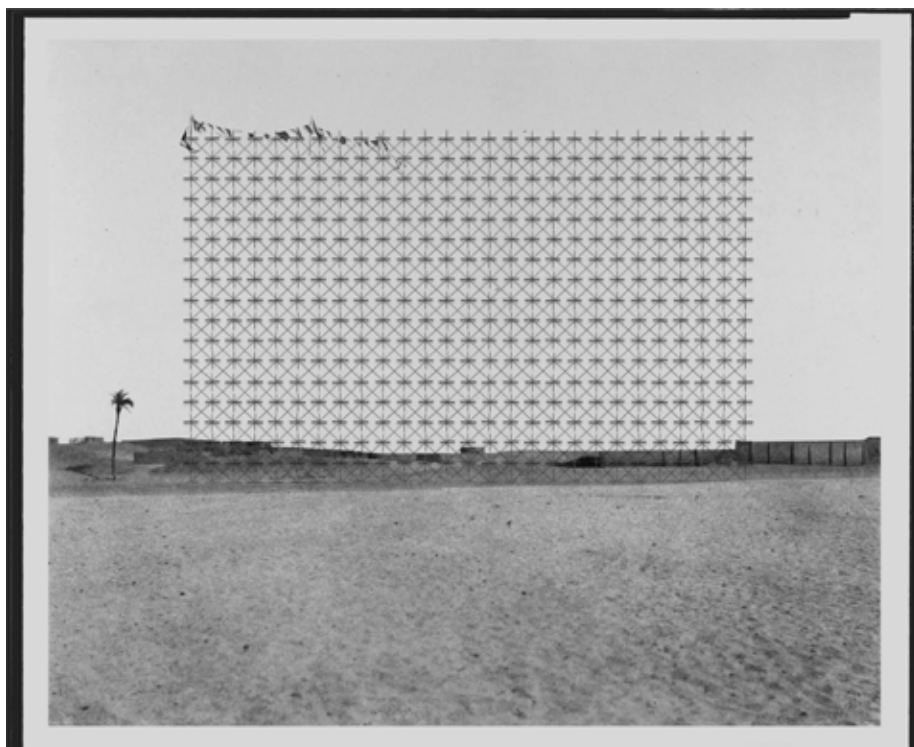


Composite No. 20, 2019.

Composite No. 20, 2019 ▼

slikom, nego aktivno uključivanje publike u detektivsku igru. Što više pratimo i ispitujemo tragove koje nam Schaerer ostavlja u svakoj slici, to bolje razumijemo smisao za humor i užitek prisutne u njihovu stvaranju, jer postajemo sudionici ove divne i oniričke igre koja se odvija sa i između predmeta i slika.

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◀ Composite No. 8, 2019.

Composite No. 8, 2019

