Maximilian Meisse

Photographs of the Legendary Tempelhof Airport

In October 2008 the legendary Tempelhof airport was closed. In 2006 I started on my photo-artistic documentation of this site. Classified as a historical monument, it is the world’s third biggest building and was once the oldest airport in service. In accordance with the designs of Ernst Sagebiel, a student of Erich Mendelsohn, construction work started in 1936. The outbreak of the Second World War prevented the completion of the building project. After the war, the area became an American military base, gaining international fame in the postwar period, thanks to the Allied airlift Luftbrücke.

Different epochs and different uses have left their traces. Tempelhof airport is a microcosm in the midst of the city, a multifaceted, self-contained world. It is this heterogeneous nature which I have explored in my photo series. I was not only interested in the original architecture, which in many places only remains in a dilapidated state, but also in how the postwar decades created bizarre variants of the original forms.

The future of the airport area is still uncertain. It will surely take some years until an adequate solution for its prospective use is found. In October 2008, this photo series was published in a photo collection by the Ernst Wasmuth Publishing House. In summer 2008, these pictures, also sold in limited editions, were exhibited in the Tammen Gallery in Berlin.
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