

Introduction to the body of work 'Cathedrals' by Laurence Aëgerter
Issued as an artist book (as well as single prints),

'Cathedrals' is based on a facsimile book 'Cathedrals and Churches in France',
commissioned by the French Ministry of Tourism, in order to promote French architectural
heritage, edited in 1950.

The Aëgerter artist book consists of 120 photographs taken from the spread in the middle
of the forementioned book. It shows a black/white photograph of the Westside of the
Gothic Cathedral of Bourges, in the middle of France. Aëgerter has photographed these
pages during two hours with an interval of one minute, while dark lines - caused by the
window frame's shadow in her studio - slowly pass over the reproduction in the book until
finally the image is totally swallowed by darkness.

An essential aspect of Aëgerter's artistic concept is her search for strategies to give new
meaning to existing (historical) images. She has interacted with videos, paintings,
photographs, posters and books by extracting from or adding elements to the original.
Within the same concept, 'Trance' and 'The Somnambolic Archive' are works based on
archived photographs reworked in textile and created during the past years. In these works
light is a prominent issue.

Like in her previous artist books, e.g. 'Catalogue of Masterpieces in the Louvre Museum'
(2009) and 'Tristes tropiques: illustrations hors texte' (2011 - in cooperation with Ronald
van Tienhoven), in 'Cathedrals' the artist reinterpretes existing photographs in
publications by developing a special system for each of them.

Lapse of time

The French book about churches and cathedrals was stored in the artist's library. When she
grabbed it because of her research for the photo series 'Cathedrals at Sunset' (2012),
based on a poster of Claude Monet's 'Cathedral of Rouen', it soon became clear to her
that the book by itself could be a theme for new research. In a formal way, 'Cathedrals at
Sunset' relates to this new project, but its contents has a different meaning and does not
directly reflect time.

The images in 'Cathedrals' consist of a stacking of three 'eras'. First of all the frontage of
the 13th century Gothic Cathedral of Bourges, secondly the documentary photography of it
in 1950 and last but not least her photographs of the image spread, including the rusty
staples, in 2012.

'Cathedrals' is a witness of passing time. It registers the geometric play of shadow lines
over the reproduction of the cathedral frontage. It is a very summary intervention,
expressing a shift of minimal imagery elements. Dark lines, straight or tilted, influence the
perception of the original image, resulting in alternating depths of the window parts, as
well as the entrance. A closed door hit by the shadow suddenly seems open, because of
the black hole. Also the intensity of the light, influenced by passing clouds, gives a radiant
quality to the frontage of the cathedral. By doing this, the perception of the same image is
steadily renewed, finally ending up in complete darkness by the imperturbable process. On
close view, however, a zest of diffuse light still is noticeable.

'Cathedrals' materialises the inevitable passing of time in a systematical rhythm of
variations to a bench mark, comparable to compositions in classical music. In the artist

book, Aögerter has chosen a binding in the middle that prevents it from becoming a flip book, forcing the viewer to turn the pages one by one. This strategy of slowness enhances the discovery of changing light, experience the passing of time through the intangible intervals and their effects.