



Karin Apollonia Müller

Photographers' Gallery Photography

Karin Apollonia Müller grew up on a barge on the River Rhine. Her father built her a swing and she remembers the views of the surrounding landscape afforded by her vantage point high above the decks. The same sense of floating disengagement – of being an outsider gazing down on one's environment with disinterested curiosity – permeates her bird's-eye views of Los Angeles. When Garry Winogrand recorded life on the streets of New York, he was one of the crowd – a passionate voyeur; some 30 years later, Müller remains a stranger in a city where so few people walk, that the pavements are empty save for down-and-outs – those who have no options and nothing to lose.

Beside the railway track is a vacant lot. It has been raining so there are puddles on the ground. Gazing at this dank and desolate scene, one spots a man lying on the ground like a piece of flotsam, his head cov-

ered in a sheet of orange plastic. Whether he is dead, hurt or merely asleep seems to make little difference in an area where no one lives and everyone is passing through. A shot of affluent, downtown LA – high-rise offices, billboards, freeways and parked cars – is punctuated by a shanty town. Beside the road, squatters have constructed makeshift dwellings and provided a dog with a kennel. A man sits in front of a tent surrounded by bike wheels, tyres and assorted junk laid out as though on display – to the passing cars. In a different kind of desert – an area of featureless sand outside the city – developers are also trying to create a sense of community. The foreground has been divided into building plots and a cluster of suburban dwellings has been erected in the distance. Soon this wasteland will be someone's home. Despite their dystopian subject matter, Müller's photographs have a desolate beauty. Hazy with dust or heat, her shot of vehicles crawling across a vast landfill site is biscuit-coloured sublime. *Sarah Kent*