

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

ANJA BOHNHOF



The project *Internal Affairs* is a photographic work about the former Ministry for State Security pre-trial detention centres in the GDR. Today, slightly more than half of the once seventeen pretrial detention centres have been made into memorials or stand vacant and are accessible to the public in their disused state. This allows us to get a comprehensive insight into the penal system of a past political regime.

By focusing exclusively on the insides of the cells and detention rooms, my photographs reveal nothing about the location, making it impossible to infer anything about the environment in which these detention centres were created. My work is suggestive of the Ministry for State Security's modus operandi, which meant that prisoners were not allowed any knowledge about where they were imprisoned up until the time of their release.

The interweaving in this series of a museum-like artificiality and a sense of decay brought on by dereliction make it clear that *Internal Affairs* is grappling with the past. However, without the statements reporting the systematic psychological demoralization and blackmailing of the prisoners, the rooms we see cannot clearly be tied in with the GDR's political system. In essence, the place doesn't appear to have looked any different from an ordinary German prison.

In fact, our current reality is also partly recognizable in these pictures of Stasi prisons. Since the doing away with of corporal punishment in the Middle Ages, prison terms are the norm in all "disciplinary" societies. So, going beyond the search for clues about GDR history, the photos reveal a disciplinary principle that is a cornerstone of society and has become an intrinsic part of our social identity – and this can be viewed quite independently of any current political systems. The bleakness and silence of the prison cells can even be seen as a reference to the origins of discipline, which can be found in Western monastic life (for instance, in the Benedictine order).

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28 photographs, c-prints, 60 x 50 cm

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