

CHURCH

Grey-painted church pews invite you to linger. You can sit opposite one another, or side by side, and let your gaze wander around the room. The harsh light from industrial lamps fills the room and sets the mood.

Hung high up on the wall are a series of large format black-and-white photographs. With strong contrasts and blurred movement, the images look like snapshots. A table is tipping over. A woman is screaming, as though desperate. The scenes appear dramatic.

This is *Holterdipolter I–II*, (or ‘Topsy-Turvy I–II’) by Anna and Bernhard Blume, created in 1977 – one of their early works.

The artist couple met in the early 1960s whilst studying together at the Düsseldorf Art Academy.

This visual language runs through their later work. They always work in series, mostly large format black-and-white photographs. Their subjects often combine something tragic with something comical.

The next work blends almost seamlessly into this religious atmosphere. In an adjoining room, a sort of separate chapel, stands a table of candles. When this work was first exhibited, visitors could light one of 51 votive candles in return for a small donation. However, as this artwork now is part of a public collection, they are here for viewing only.

This is Carla Degenhardt’s *Opferstock* (or ‘Offertory’) from 1996. The wishes inscribed on the candles here, however, are not for the salvation of souls – but for the art world itself. One might light a candle for a generous pension, or lasting success, or to become a curator’s darling.

Humorous, yet apt, the work makes a comparison between religious promises of salvation and the desires of many artists for recognition and security. Both worlds – religion and the art world – thrive on hope, faith and established rituals. And in both, people rely on symbolic acts to make their wishes a tangible reality.

Carla Degenhardt studied sculpture under Michelangelo Pistoletto – an artist you’ll encounter later on in the exhibition.

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A sharp knocking sound interrupts you as you look. Where is it coming from? Is someone knocking on a door?

In fact, it's coming from the wooden cabinet to the left of the doorway.

This is *Kasten III* ('Cabinet III') by Leander Schönweger, from 2017.

Does it seem intriguing or perhaps eerie? Pause for a moment. Listen for a while longer, take a closer look. The knocking becomes strange, possibly funny. Just like the tumbling furniture and people in the Blumes' photographs.

Go through the door at the back wall of the church – you're now standing in a corridor.