

CONTEMPORARY ART & PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTIONS

Candida Höfer

Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana Venezia III

2003

Chromogenic development print

59 7/8 x 59 7/8 in. (152.1 x 152.1 cm)

Museum purchase, funds provided by the Caroline Julier and James G. Richardson

Acquisition Fund with additional funds provided by the David A. Cofrin Acquisition

Endowment

2003.31

Candida Höfer studied at the renowned Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and became a disciple of Bernd and Hilla Becher. While maintaining the clarity and simplicity of her teachers' documentary work, she departed from their exterior landscapes and more austere black-and-white photo technique. Instead she explores the nuances of color to photograph the interiors of public buildings such as museums, libraries, theaters, and institutes. Höfer's work is devoid of actual human presence, but suggests it through unexpected detail and the traces of recent use. Her often ornate rooms are full of light and color, while the architecture itself evokes systems of order and its occasional disruption.

This work is part of a series taken in the libraries and marbled palaces of Venice, grand structures that highlight Renaissance illusionism, perspective, and proportion. The floor of the room creates the illusion of three-dimensional space, generating a tension between reality and perception. The diagonal lines of the floor counter a linear perspective that guides the eye to a distant and singular point. Though it is empty of people, reading stands and a random electrical cord suggest frequent use of the room. The image recalls a moment in history that heralded the ascendancy of a Western perspective.

