

art

## Modernist Wasteland Chic

Gay German photographer taps into our subconscious


by Wayne Bund

**T**he glasses occupy his face with a modernist twist: simple and straight edges, plain yet hip. The button-up shirt he wears reeks of formality, while the rolled-up sleeves give off a relaxed look. Although he fumbles over his English, the words he speaks ring out in eloquence.

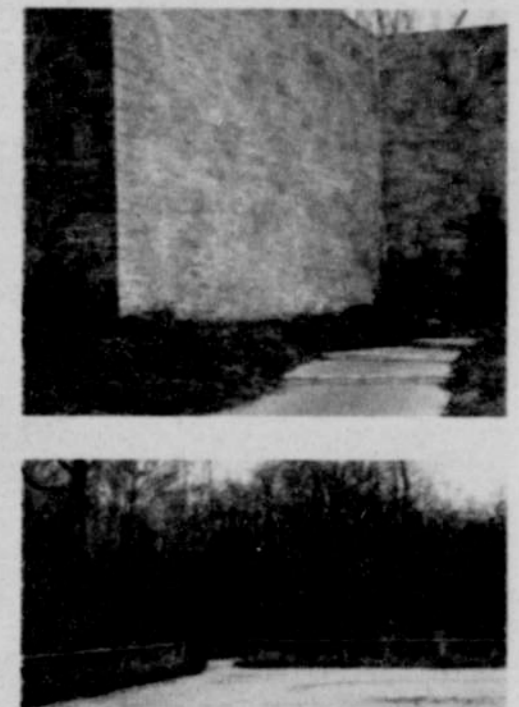
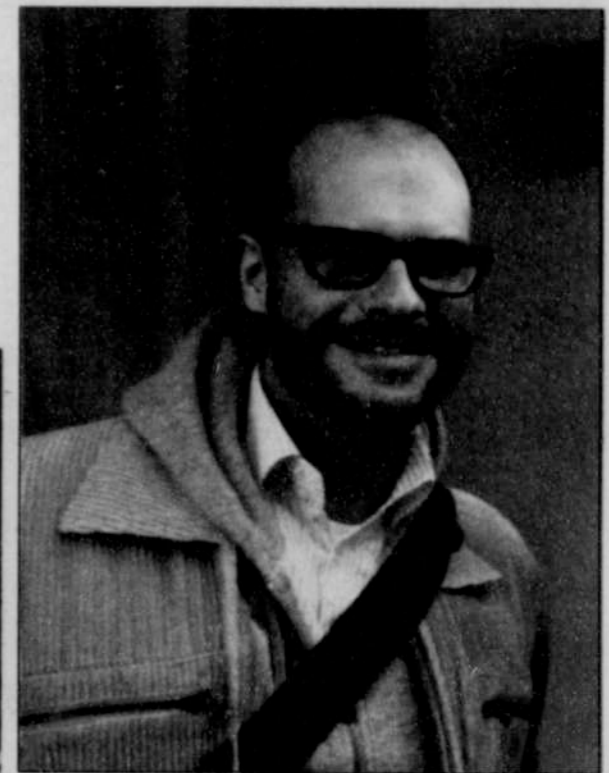
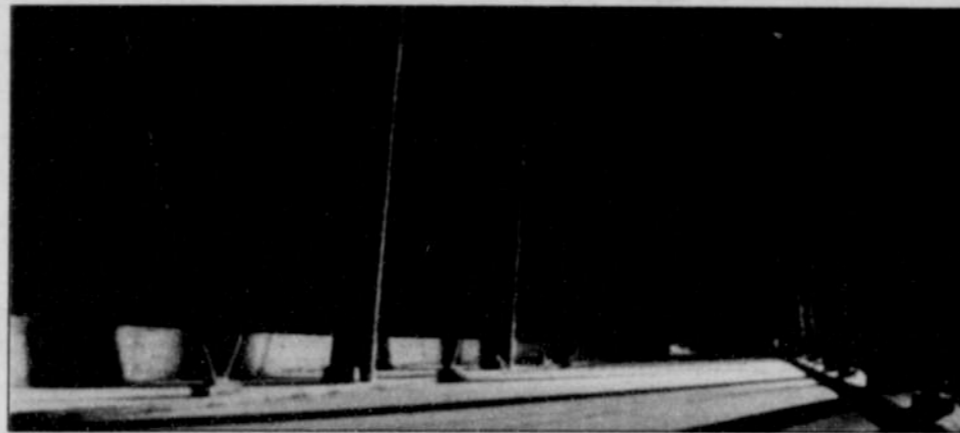
His name is Oliver Boberg, and he recently made a visit to Portland in honor of his first solo exhibition in the Pacific Northwest. The German-based artist is showing his large-format, multi-image photographs at gay-owned Quality Pictures gallery.

While in town on a weeklong whirlwind tour, Boberg not only attended his First Thursday opening but also lectured about his work and process. "I construct new environments for our memory stages," he said at the lecture, which was presented Nov. 2 in collaboration with the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art and Wieden+Kennedy Art Buying. Boberg mentioned in conversation that while he openly identifies as gay, he does not make the content of his work about his sexual orientation.

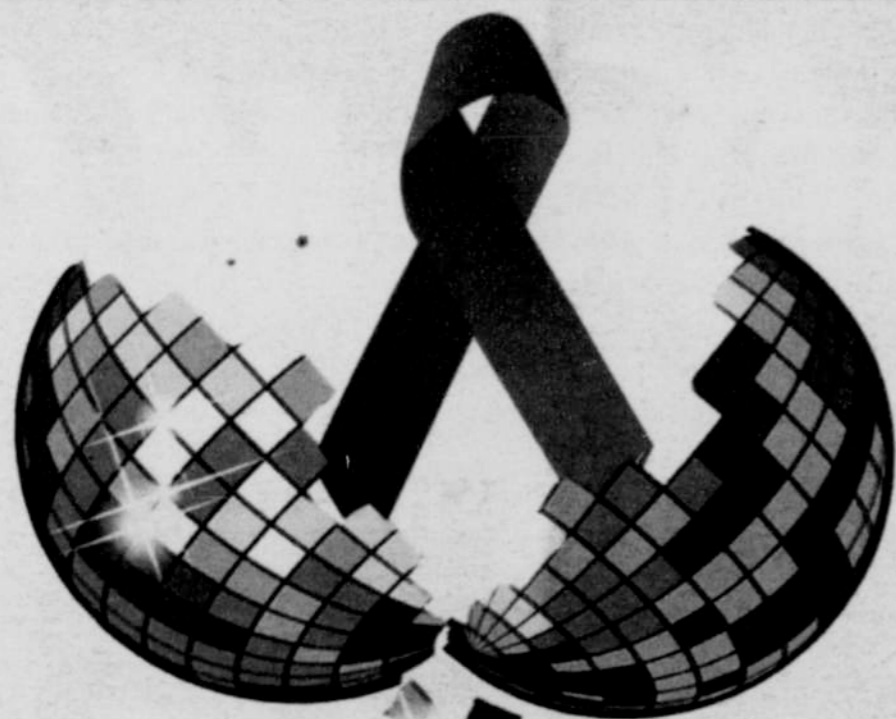
His work has been described by *The New York Times* as "an elegant exercise in Modernist wasteland chic." Upon first glance, the photographs seem like mundane industrial settings: a doorway, an alleyway, a row of shrubbery. What is not apparent in his hyper-real images is that they are constructed. Boberg's process includes finding actual settings, redesigning them, creating a scaled-down set and then photographing the constructed set. What seems to be a routine image is the product of intense process.

Boberg shared during his lecture that his intent in using these everyday, lifeless settings is to access a collective visual memory archive that strikes a chord with a viewer's subconscious memories. Quality Pictures owner Erik Schneider has written, "Boberg is interested in how the relationships of the photos and the connection they uncover alter the viewer's comprehension of what is being depicted." 

OLIVER BOBERG's photographs from the *Seiten/Pages* series and films from the *Nacht-Orte/Night Sites* series are on display through Dec. 29 at Quality Pictures, 916 N.W. Hoyt St.



Oliver Boberg's photographs are deceptively simple conclusions to a complex process.



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