

SUBJECT and OBJECT. PHOTO RHINE RUHR

21 March – 14 June 2020

For the first time, the exhibition *Subject and Object. Photo Rhine Ruhr* will examine the relationships between the different photographic positions that have developed in the cities of the Rhineland as well as the Ruhr and at the regions' art academies since the 1960s. This unique approach is due to the fact that such a rich photography scene was able to develop in western Germany, which has repeatedly produced new and innovative artistic positions with sometimes very different photographic approaches over the past 70 years. According to the thesis, on the one hand this is due to the density of art academies and trade schools that developed in the Rhine and Ruhr regions after the Second World War. On the other hand, it is also a result of artistic socialization through an intensive art-historical discourse, parallel artistic developments within the visual arts, and the engagement with positions of international art that were shown at the major institutions in Düsseldorf, Essen, Cologne, Krefeld, and Mönchengladbach.

An independent photo class was established in the 1970s at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf with Bernd and Hilla Becher. At what is now the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen, where a photo class led by Max Burchartz existed as early as the 1920s (parallel to the developments at the Bauhaus in Dessau), photography was once again taught as an independent specialization starting in 1959, initially under Otto Steinert. Thus, two of the most internationally influential schools of photography emerged in close proximity to each other in Germany. In the vicinity of these two cities, there are further influential institutions with earlier art schools in Krefeld and Cologne in the 1960s and 1970s, where Arno Jansen served as head of the art and photography departments. In addition to the Folkwangschule in Essen and the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, the Kunsthochschule für Medien, which was founded in the 1990s, is another important site for photography in Cologne, where Beate Gütschow has been teaching artistic photography since 2011, following Jürgen Klauke and Tobias Zielony.

The teachers' works exhibit different perspectives on the medium of photography, especially in the artistic context. In Essen there was Otto Steinert with his approach of "subjective photography." In Düsseldorf, Bernd and Hilla Becher, who followed a conceptual approach out of which a photographic practice developed that can also be seen in the tradition of the New Objectivity of the 1920s. In Cologne, in addition to Alfred Will, who was strongly oriented toward the ideas of the German Werkbund and initially trained as a graphic designer, there was Arno Jansen, who dealt with new artistic possibilities of the medium of photography in addition to the traditional genres such as portraits and still lifes. In Krefeld there was Detlef Orlopp, whose work explored abstraction and the process of recognition through the gaze in hyper-precise photographs.

The extent to which teachers in the Rhineland and the Ruhr proclaimed their own artistic work and the subjective or objective photographic approach and thus shaped several generations of young photographers to this day will be discussed and highlighted in the exhibition. The Bechers' legendary class with now internationally celebrated "students" such as Andreas Gursky, Candida Höfer, Thomas Ruff, and Thomas Struth as the Düsseldorf School of Photography is one of the most successful movements in the history of photography.

Graduates from Essen with Timm Rautert, Michael Schmidt, and Joachim Brohm are known and respected around the world for their documentary and artistic approaches. Jürgen Klauke, Astrid Klein, and Rudolf Bonvie developed independent artistic approaches in Cologne which dealt with issues of identity and gender beginning in the late 1960s. At the same time, Katharina Sieverding created her feminist-influenced art in Düsseldorf.

Central positions from all three generations as well as similarities and differences between the artistic approaches will be presented, but above all also positions that have received less attention will be featured and discussed in this context.

The Kunsthalle Düsseldorf hosted an exhibition by Bernd and Hilla Becher in 1969 under the title *Anonymous Sculptures* as well as a major solo exhibition with works by Andreas Gursky in 1998. Following in this tradition, and with a clear focus on artistic photography, *Subject and Object. Photo Rhine Ruhr* explores the different fields of experimentation in the medium between subject and object.

Since the 1920s, not only in Germany, a visually striking spirit of capturing reality through photography has emerged, in which the elementary questions about the significance and meaning of the supposedly real image continue to be asked – especially with regard to the emergence of digital photography and its possibilities for manipulating the real.

The exhibition presents central positions from three generations as well as similarities and differences between the artistic approaches, with a focus on positions that have received less attention. *Subject and Object. Photo Rhine Ruhr* with about 100 artists and more than 600 works undertakes a dialogic and thought-provoking examination of this development for the first time.

With Gosbert Adler, Alexander Basile, Lothar Baumgarten, Bernd & Hilla Becher, Max Beck, Boris Becker, Laurenz Berges, Eva Bertram, Anna + Bernhard Blume, Rudolf Bonvie, Natascha Borowsky, Wendelin Bottländer, Frank Breuer, Joachim Brohm, Ralf Brueck, Susanne Brügger, Louisa Clement; Volker Döhne, Sabine Dusend, Christine Erhard, Jan Paul Evers, Julian Faulhaber, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Annette Frick, Bernhard Fuchs, André Gelpke, Edith Glischke, Philipp Goldbach, Stefanie Grebe, Andreas Gursky, Willy Gursky, Beate Gütschow, Jitka Hanzlová, Volker Heinze, Katlen Hewel, Candida Höfer, Axel Hütte, Arno Jansen, Bernd Jansen, Irmel Kamp, Jürgen Klauke, Astrid Klein, Fatih Kurceren, Alwin Lay, Tamara Lorenz, Knut Wolfgang Maron, Meisterklasse Timm Rautert 2005 (Frank Berger, Viktoria Binschtok, Kristleifur Björnsson, Florian Ebner, Ulrich Gebert, Göran Gnaudschun, Falk Haberkorn, Sven Johne, Staphanie Kiwitt, Alexej Meschtschanow, Ricarda Roggan, Adrian Sauer, Dirk Scheidt; Linda Weiss, Tobias Zielony) Klaus Mettig, Peter Miller, Christoph Muller, Angela Neuke, Thomas Neumann, Simone Nieweg, Elisabeth Neudörfel, Detlef Orlopp, Peter Piller, Johannes Post, Timm Rautert, Max Regenber, Johanna Reich, Heinrich Riebesehl, Sebastian Riemer, Andrea Robbins + Max Becher, Alexander Romey, Tata Ronkholz, Martin Rosswog, Thomas Ruff, Gregor Sailer, Jörg Sasse, Martina Sauter, Morgaine Schäfer, Michael Schmidt, Stefan Schneider, Berit Schneidereit, Ursula Schulz-Dornburg, Wilhelm Schürmann, Helmut Schweizer, Katharina Sieverding, Otto Steinert, Thomas Struth, Anett Stuth, Niklas Taleb, Peter Thomann, Anna Vogel, Walter Vogel, Malte Wandel, Moritz Wegwerth, Christoph Westermeier, Christopher Williams, Petra Wittmar, Lothar Wolleh, Martin Zellerhoff

A catalog in German and English will be published alongside the exhibition.

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