

FOTODOKS

Fotodoks – Festival for Contemporary Documentary Photography

Theme: Vis-à-vis

Partner country: Frankreich

Lothringer13 Halle, Munich

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Overview and captions for the press photos. More images on request.

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All the photographers:



Carolina Arantes, from the Series „First Generation“, 2017, © Carolina Arantes

Carolina Arantes (*1980, F/BR)

First Generation

In 2014 Carolina Arantes began her project *First Generation*. Since then, numerous photos have been taken in which the French photographer with Brazilian roots documents the life of young Afro-French women. The women in Arantes images are united by the fact that they were all born in France and are therefore the generation whose parents emigrated from Africa in the course of the family reunification of France in 1975-80 and found each other again. The young women have grown up in their parents adopted country and have experienced the values of their home country in their parents house. In her images, Arantes accepts the challenge of recording these contrasting worlds in which her protagonists live. A state of suspense between the two cultures, between tradition and the modern, between acceptance and rejection and the search for identity. The project aims at discussing the identity of these women and how they cope with their diverse origin, while living in a culture which is deeply embedded in their tradition.



Mathieu Asselin, from the Series „Monsanto®: A Photographic Investigation“, 2012, © Mathieu Asselin

Mathieu Asselin (*1973, F)

Monsanto®: A Photographic Investigation

For his multiple award-winning book project *Monsanto®: A Photographic Investigation*, the Franco-Venezuelan photographer Mathieu Asselin intensively confronted the scandalous story of the company which was taken over by Bayer AG in 2018. Already in 2012, before the flood of lawsuits against the company arose, Asselin begins his extensive research in Vietnam, Cambodia and the United States. For five years he visited victims and relatives, studied archive material and court files. The results of his examinations revealed not only the long-standing ignorance of the company's proclaimed advanced biotechnology, but also the criminal intrigues of the concern at the cost of independent small and big farmers in order to maintain their monopoly. For Asselin it was absolutely essential to steer the public view to these crimes. The images, regardless of genre – landscape, portrait, still life or facsimile – leave the viewer with anger or incomprehension. Through the targeted comparison with advertisements of the agrarian company or the cross-reference to the tobacco industry, Asselin points out not only their inhuman callousness but positions himself as artist and activist.



Daniel Chatard, from the Series „Niemandsländ“, 2017, © Daniel Chatard

Daniel Chatard (*1996, GER)
Niemandsländ

With *Niemandsländ* Daniel Chatard turns his attention to the brown coal mining region in North Rhine-Westphalia and dedicates himself, with the documentation of the clearing of Hambach Forest, to a theme that had already begun in the 1970s but which reached its zenith in the past years. Already seven years ago, the first activists captured a part of the forest, which is meanwhile reduced to a few hectares, and demonstrated against the never-ending expansion of the Hambach brown coal mining of the energy provider RWE.

The resistance movement has not stopped since. In 2018 it was registered as a 'dangerous place' in order to allow the unlimited identity checks. It is a dramatic, endless war between the economic and political interests against the environmentalists and residents.

Chatard joined the events in April 2017 and not only adapted to the dangerous living conditions of the activists but became a part of them and won their trust. The portraits in the series give us an idea of the closeness and empathy and at the same time have a dream-like optimism. Looking into the future, closed eyes express a steadfast hope. Chatard contrasts these examples of hope against the reality: police marches, moon landscapes, the drastic demolition of architecture and nature. In the role of an observer he visualises the efforts of a relatively small movement at first, whose activism in the last years such as the 'Ende Gelände' achieved dimensions that can no longer be overseen by politics.



Lisa Domin, from the Series „Twin Towers“, 2017, © Lisa Domin

Lisa Domin (*1983, GER)
Twin Towers

Lisa Domin's work *Twin Towers* consists of three black and white photos which couldn't be more full of content: they show a small dinner party, leftovers, two happy faces opposite a serious one. Through gesticulation and mimic one can see that the young woman with the glasses is trying to explain something to her two cheerful table partners with the help of two ladyfingers. What is not obvious from what is shown is the content of the discussion – this is evident in the title of the work. But how does this situation occur? in 2008 the photographer spends several weeks with a New York art historian in Valjevo, a small town in southern Serbia, in order to take a language course. They overnighed in the bedroom of the older lady who slept in the living room and did her best to cater to her guests. One day the granddaughter is visiting. During the dinner the art historian brings up the events of September 2001 and both language tourists are clear that both their hostess as well as her granddaughter have no knowledge of this moment in world history. In view of the omnipresence of the media at the time this is (for us) an almost impossible knowledge gap since it is (our) standard today to be able to call on any information at any time. To declare this event as an unusual exception is due to our individual ability to judge but possibly the self-perception that we propagate should be questioned.



David Fathi, from the Series „Wolfgang“, 2015/2016, © Manipulations by David Fathi 2015–2016 / Image from CERN Photo Archive 1960–1985

David Fathi (*1985, F) Wolfgang

In 1954 the European Organization for Nuclear Research, CERN, was founded near Meyrin. In 2014 the organisation opened a collection of over 120,000 photos – an extensive but completely neglected archive with photographic proof of experiments and achievements of the institute and its scientists from 1960-1985. To reconstruct what was shown the public was included.

Wolfgang Ernst Pauli, founder and Nobel Prize winner, worked as a scientist for four years until his passing at the research institute. The use of photography as a means of documentation therefore began after his death. Pauli was famous for three things: his scientific achievements, especially in the field of Quantum Mechanics (Pauli Principle), his perfectionism and the so-called Pauli-Effect according to which Pauli's presence was responsible for the total defect of technical instruments as well as the failure of experiments. A phenomena that not only Pauli himself but the majority of his colleagues believed and which even led to him being banned for a time from labs and experiments. Carl Gustav Jung's concept of synchronicity finally gave an explanation but didn't change the events.

David Fathi's work *Wolfgang* (2015-2016) plays with the anecdotes which have been handed down on the myth of the Pauli Effect. Occurring in a scientific, factual setting the images chosen by Fathi whether manipulated or not, make one doubt one's own imagination. They show the human need for an incontestable explanation for everything and at the same time some things simply cannot be explained – also in the field of science.



Samuel Gratacap, Detention center of Zaouia, Libya, from the Series „Fifty-Fifty“, 2014, © Samuel Gratacap

Samuel Gratacap (*1982, F) **Fifty-Fifty**

Samuel Gratacap's long-term project is divided into three parts and investigates over a time span of seven years the living conditions of refugees all over the world. The French photographer begins his observations in 2007 in an administrative detention center for non-registered refugees in Marseille. In 2010 he travels to Lampedusa and meets people whose escape has stagnated there. The images of these years have the title *La Chance*. A grotesque description for a series of portraits and close-ups of left behind finds, which couldn't better depict the original hope and the often later feeling of being not welcome.

In 2012-2014 Gratacap visited the refugee camp Choucha in Tunisia for *Empire* several times. This was the place of refuge for thousands in the past decades. Meanwhile it has been given up but still functions as a home for numerous refugees. Here he contrasts the provisional refugee tents in black and white with portraits and snapshots of the residents in colour.

For *Fifty-Fifty* he takes a step back in the causal chain and shows the war events in Libya as one origin of the refugee misery. Libya as the most important transit country and its role in the European migration and asylum politics, are other aspects that Gratacap illustrates. In his opinion, the chances of survival for fleeing across the Mediterranean, are 50:50.



Sonja Hamad, Gulan, 19, Zerya, 18, und Zilan, 17 (v.l.n.r.), Sinjar, Iraqi Kurdistan, 2015, from the Series „> Jin – Jyan – Azadi < Women, Life, Freedom“, 2015, © Sonja Hamad

Sonja Hamad (*1986, GER/SYR)

»Jin – Jiyan – Azadi« Women, Life, Freedom

For her series „*Jin – Jyan – Azadi*“ *Women, Life, Freedom* the Damascus born photographer Sonja Hamad documented, since 2015, the female Kurdish freedom fighters of the guerrilla in North Iraq and the YPG People’s Protection Units who went to war against the IS. Her images focus on the struggle of women who fight against the suppression of their people in a patriarchal system dominated by sexism and feudalism.

The focus of her photographic work is a narrative-documentary view. Besides portraits there are landscapes and detail shots in the series. Hamad returned for these to her homeland Syria which she left at the age of three with her parents. Formed by a life in the diaspora, questions about her own identity have occupied her from her childhood and can be seen as a further motivation which inspired her beyond the theme of the series to undertake the dangerous journey into the war zone. The intensity of her work is mirrored in the analog colour photography taken with a medium format camera. They show the people behind the battles on the front line, the beauty of the landscape on the one hand and the dystopian cruelty of the scenes on the other and open up a moment of female gracefulness in the detail shots. In her photographs she creates a different picture of the places and people from that which the news coverage offers with their classical war photography. Her photographs do not deal with the depiction of sensation and misery, but much more give us a feeling for the moment between. Her portraits reveal her sensitivity in her encounter with the fighters.



Stephanie Kiwitt, from the Series *Máj/My*, 2018, © Stephanie Kiwitt und VG Bild-Kunst Bonn

Stephanie Kiwitt (*1972, GER)
Máj/My

The place as a social space is in the forefront of Stephanie Kiwitt's work. She is interested in places that describe the economic conditions of our world today – the city of Marseille at a time of massive construction, a fallow land in the north of Gent, discounter, fitness center, a recruitment building for port workers in Antwerp, a car park.

For the work *Máj/My* Stephanie Kiwitt photographed the city of Prague for two and a half years. The title is the name of the Prague department store, which from the 70s to the fall of the communist regime was called '*Máj*' – '*Mai*' and since 2009 is known as '*My*'. The choice of this new naming is due to the recognition effect since both words are pronounced the same. However, the semantic difference could not be greater. If one says the name today in Czech, a new change in meaning takes place: we.

Kiwitt takes the history of the name as the occasion to observe the daily life of the city where she lived herself in the early 90s. Her black and white portraits and still-lives are an attempt to reflect on the political changes in a country which are manifested in the public space and in places of consumption.



Markus Krottendorfer, from the Series Mountains of Kong, 2016, © Markus Krottendorfer

Markus Krottendorfer (*1976, A)
Mountains of Kong

Markus Krottendorfer's series *Mountains of Kong* confronts the observer with an illusion or rather the fact of an illusion. This takes place in his images on two levels. The first, which is not immediately obvious, is the content of the image itself. In 2016 the Austrian photographer travelled to Africa to photograph the Kong Mountains which were discovered between 1795-97 by Mungo Park. But this discovery is a pure fabrication. Park's mountains never existed. Their supposed existence is solely based on scientific argumentation. However, the existence of the Kong Mountains were confirmed for decades, thanks to further travel stories and gullible geographers, and was even included in African cartography. Krottendorfer's images show us a real mountain range without a doubt. They show the mountain landscape where one suspected the mountains to be. But they have their limits in illuminating a supposed truth. The second level is more evident. The photographer plays with manipulative image processing, in particular with the extremely intensive colour. This surreal intensity of the manipulation underlines on the one hand the visual myth and on the other is a stylistic device of the obvious. In a time of excessive media and flood of images, the truth of the images, especially in the documentary-journalistic area, is a definite necessity. Krottendorfer's magnificent landscape images show us that the individual is still challenged to question the depicted and its claim to truth.



Nicola Lo Calzo, Dessalines with Charlotin Marcadieu, „Movement for the Success of the Image of the Heroes of the Independence“ Croix-des-Bouquets – Ayiti – The Cham Project, 2012, © Nicola Lo Calzo – Dominique Fiat

Nicola Lo Calzo (*1979, F/IT)
Ayiti, The Cham Project

At the beginning of the 19th century the majority of the European nations began to abolish slave-trading. This process was followed in the course of the century by further Non-European Nations. The origin of this human rights success lies in the Haitian Revolution (1784-1804) which resulted in 1804 in the declaration of Independence of the former french colony Saint-Dominique by Jean-Jacques Dessalines and thus the founding of the first free Latin-American state. That century-long exploitation and abuse of millions of people should not fall into collective oblivion is shown by Nicola Lo Calzo in his longterm project CHAM which began in 2010. Worldwide he looked for the still existing remains of colonialism and documented the undeniable impact of slavery on life today. His series *AYITI* (2012-2013) – a part of the *CHAM* project – puts the focus on the Caribbean state. With his camera Lo Calzo captures the diversity of a national identity whose uniting element is the revolution and the freedom which was won. The images are impressions of pre-colonial but still lively rituals, portraits of descendants of the revolutionaries or relicts of them. Special attention is paid to the ‘Movement for the Success of the Image of the Independence Heroes’, whose supporters with public appearances, speeches and songs, keep the revolution and their key players island wide in mind and make them come alive again. Their intention is to induce courage in a time of social and political dissatisfaction and to strengthen the collective memory.



Paula Markert, „Anklagebank, Schwurgerichtssaal 101, Oberlandesgericht München“, from the Series „Eine Reise durch Deutschland. Die Mordserie des NSU“, 2018 © Paula Markert

Paula Markert (*1982, GER)
Eine Reise durch Deutschland. Die Mordserie des NSU

„A Journey through Germany. The NSU Serial Murders“ by Paula Markert is an intensive analysis and confrontation with the crimes of the extreme right organisation which was responsible for the murder of 10 persons, numerous attempted murders, bomb attacks and bank robberies between 2000-2007. For two and a half years (Autumn 2014-Spring 2017) the photographer tried to understand the failure and disinterest of a country and to document her findings. Questions of how in spite of the office for the protection of the constitution this murder series could take place, of the complicity of German authorities through ignorance, cover-ups or negligence were her reference points. With her photographs and selected text fragments, Markert investigates how the public outcry in 2011 and the promises – one remembers Angela Merkel’s words – transform into a vaporised nothing. Also when each photo appears like an objective, neutral observation and documentation, she appeals to the general responsibility, to the responsibility of a country in which the political climate is turning in the wrong direction.



Laurence Rasti, from the Series „There are no homosexuals in Iran “, 2017 © Laurence Rasti

Laurence Rasti (*1990, CH)
There are no homosexuals in Iran

Intimacy and openness – lost of identity and anonymity. The look of the portrayed is concealed, the back is turned to the observer. The confident look in the camera rather rare. In her portrait series the Swiss photographer experiments with the design options of anonymity in portraits and symbolizes in this way the precarious life situation of homosexual men and women in Iran. ‘In Iran, we do not have homosexuals like in your country.’ proclaimed Iran’s president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2007 in his speech at the Columbia University. Homosexuality is illegal in Iran and is punishable with the death penalty. But transsexuality has been tolerated since the mid-eighties. For those affected, there are two life-saving possibilities: immigration or operation. Both a form of lost identity. Meanwhile, the Turkish city Denizli has become the transit zone for homosexual refugees from Iran. Numerous stays in 2017 allowed Laurence Rasti to make contact to them. She committed herself to giving back the faceless a bit of their stolen identity. In spite of the homophobia in Turkey they hope for an improvement in their conditions and the chance to live out their sexual orientation.



Gilles Raynaldy, Madame Phanal's Year 10 french lesson, from the Series „Jean-Jaurès, inner-city school“, 2010 © Gilles Raynaldy

Gilles Raynaldy (*1968, F)
Jean-Jaurès

When one sees the photos by Gilles Raynaldy one has the impression that they are film stills from a youth movie for which a school campus was chosen as the location for the action. But far from any artificial or staged scenes, Raynaldy as a silent observer is able to capture authentic moments. His images depict a closeness and familiarity with the photographed persons, which allow the scenes to show such emotion that one feels as if one were a part of the situation. For three years (2009-2011) Raynaldy documented the daily life at the Jean-Jaurès School in Montreuil. The complete work is a visual yearbook, that more aptly describes what takes place than any pupils work on the ups and downs of life among youth and growing up as well as the influence of the school as an institution and the pedagogic experience. The publication which appeared in 2015 is in two parts. The first part comprises the numerous photos of everyday school life while he dedicates the second part to his cooperation with the students to wallpaper and decorate the walls of the school with a selection of his photographs. A collaborative process whose result demonstrates each day who should actually be in the focus.



Rebecca Sampson, from the Series „Apples for sale“, 2018 © Rebecca Sampson

Rebecca Sampson (*1984, GER)
Apples for Sale

With her multi-media work *‘Apples for Sale’* (2018) Rebecca Sampson investigates the living conditions of Indonesian maids in Hong Kong. The depiction of their degrading conditions is only a part of the wide-ranging work. The Berlin photographer creates a deep portrait of the social life of the migrant workers. For their product catalogue, an agency has the girls photographed in an apron printed with ‘Apples for Sale’, therefore the title. The maids would be deprived of every individuality, they would be degraded to house robots without identity, and only valued for appearance and personality. The realisation of their longing for autonomy, family or social contacts is only allowed on one day in the week; this is prescribed by law and falls on Sunday, the family day and the maids must leave the house. On this day they slip in a completely feminine environment into different social roles. A parallel world emerges which partly takes place on the streets of Hong Kong. Their social and cultural environment shifts more and more into the virtual world. There they can live out their individual personality without limits.



Yana Wernicke, Ohne Titel, from the Series „Skaarph“, 2015 © Yana Wernicke

Yana Wernicke (*1990, GER)
Skaarph

Yana Wernicke's photos show girls and young women from the west Indian city of Pune. The images were made in 2015. The confusing moment: the way in which the scarf is knotted and the veiling of almost the entire face is reminiscent of Niqabs, but this religious context and also the way in which the cloth is knotted contradicts the other clothing style of the wearers. Wernicke's portraits and snapshots document a new trend in the Indian city where self-protection came before the extreme air pollution. Meanwhile the *Skaarph* (स्कार्फ) has still the same function but for other motives: with the veiling of the face they protect themselves from unwanted looks and harassment. As a result, the girls describe a feeling of regained freedom. Although according to the constitution women in India are equal to men, they are (still) not yet. Paradoxically the most controversial piece of clothing allows this possibility of desirable self-determination.