

Biennale

Press Release

21 February 2017, Mannheim/Ludwigshafen/Heidelberg, Germany

Presentation of the programme of the first *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie 2017*

The first *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie*, which will be on show from 9 September 2017 in Mannheim, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg, takes its leave from photography as it has been known hitherto. Under the title *Farewell Photography*, a six-member curator team will shed light on radical ways of handling images in the digital age and present an alternative look at photography's history. The Biennale will be showing works by more than 60 international photographers and artists in seven chapters in seven museums of the region.

+++ In 2017 the internationally renowned *Fotofestival Mannheim-Ludwigshafen-Heidelberg* will be renamed as the *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie*. Alongside BASF as Premium Sponsor, as an additional principal patron of the 2017 edition the German Federal Cultural Foundation will be making a considerable contribution to establishing the new Biennale. +++

Duration: 09.09 – 05.11.2017, Opening: 08.09.2017

Today, in Mannheim, the curator team led by Florian Ebner and Christin Müller, Fabian Knierim, Boaz Levin, Kerstin Meincke and Kathrin Schöneegg, presents the concept of the first *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie*, which will take place in Mannheim, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg from 9 September until 5 November 2017. At seven participating institutions, young contemporary works that reflect our digital visual culture will be contrasted with historical photographic positions. More than sixty international artists will have works on show, some of which have been developed specifically for the Biennale. The urban area will provide the stage for artistic interventions and performative formats. A comprehensive website will make the debates and findings surrounding the Biennale publicly accessible.

Florian Ebner, curator: *"Farewell Photography understands itself as a stocktaking of current images, removed from any form of nostalgia but borne by a great fondness for photography. It is a kind of 'leave-taking', not without asking productive questions about yesterday and tomorrow. Our curator team sees the current upheaval in visual cultures as an opportunity to subject photography to a critical examination and to redefine it."*

Christin Müller, curator: *"The exhibition is dedicated to the medium's social and artistic usages in the age of 'networked images', in which algorithms and programs are organizing and influencing the manifestations, locations and dissemination of photography and in which the relationship between photographer and photographed, beholder and society is undergoing renegotiation. At the same time, we look back on a more than 175-year-old culture of the analogue, photographic image, which is currently inspiring artists in a highly diverse way."*

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Sabine Schirra, Vice-Chairwoman of the Board of the *Biennale*: *“Our intention with the Biennale is to generate enthusiasm, but also a critical view of photography among a broad public. The Biennale understands itself under the premises of openness, networking, internationality and quality. As organizers we aspire to become an international centre for contemporary photography and, at the same time, to be a long-term identity former for the Rhine-Neckar metropolitan region.”*

Applying their different perspectives, the six curators – in seven photographic fields – will question photography’s materiality and forms of use and, equally, its socio-political potential. To that end, contemporary positions will be mirrored in historical images and image collections and likewise in regional photography archives. Commissioned works for the Biennale will be assigned to artists who react to the local socio-political conditions and milieus. The exhibitions will feature encounters between historical glass plates and digital images, photo albums of migrant families and works by international participants, artistic positions and visual press material, installations in the museum space and interventions in the urban space. At the same time, new participation formats will play an important role – via exhibits that include public interventions, the involvement of local social groups in artistic production, or open-access educational and event formats.

Farewell Photography consists of seven exhibition chapters: At the **Wilhelm-Hack-Museum** in Ludwigshafen, the fracture points in the transition from analogue to digital photography will be up for discussion. In a second show at the same location, the focus lies on the performative potential of new images, away from the classic paper print. The exhibition at **Sammlung Prinzhorn** in Heidelberg revolves around the moment of getting photographed and the associated dialogue between photographer and picture protagonist. A small bundle of patient photographs from the Prinzhorn collection and psychology educational books from the first half of the 20th century form the exhibition’s basis. At the **Heidelberger Kunstverein**, the theme will be the connection between globality, economy and photography. The concepts work and migration determine what photographs are shown from private and public archives, alongside other positions by contemporary artists. At the **Kunstverein Ludwigshafen** there will be an analysis of the role of the photographic image in political processes. Photography’s social potential to initiate turmoil and revolt is opposed by the immobilization of trends by means of images.

What a photograph gives away regarding the attitude of the authors behind the camera is put up for discussion at **Zephyr** in Mannheim. Images with varying function of identical events – news images, police snapshots, private pictures – will be contrasted with one another. Private dealing with images is the theme at **Port25** in Mannheim. On account of its easy availability, photography has always been a popular medium of social exchange – the exhibition questions images’ dissemination paths today and what, if anything, is still being conveyed.

In addition, the photographic stock of **Kunsthalle Mannheim** is the source for a new work by **Arno Gisinger**. The glass plate archive comprising more than 7000 images – primarily art reproductions, exhibition documents and architecture photography from the museum’s founding in 1907 into the early 1960s – is the institution’s visual memory and was previously closed to visitors. It illustrates the museum’s exhibition policy, which has been characterized by political

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upheavals, as much as its extraordinary history, which Arno Gisinger will transfer into the public space and thus into a contemporary perceptual context.

Participants: Rosa Barba, Natalie Bookchin, Kilian Breier, Harun Farocki, Arno Gisinger, Simon Gush, Alfredo Jaar, Sven Johne, Katia Kameli, Eva und Franco Mattes, Arwed Messmer, Peter Miller, Naeem Mohaiemen, Pétrel I Roumagnac (duo), Willem de Rooij, Belit Sağ, Andrzej Steinbach und Wolfgang Tillmans u.a.

Participating institutions in 2017 are: Zephyr – Raum für Fotografie, Port25 – Raum für Gegenwartskunst, Kunsthalle Mannheim (Außenraum) (Mannheim), Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Kunstverein Ludwigshafen (Ludwigshafen); Sammlung Prinzhorn, Heidelberger Kunstverein (Heidelberg).

History: From its first edition in 2005, *Fotofestival Mannheim – Ludwigshafen – Heidelberg* established itself as one of Europe's most important curated photographic events of international standing. In future, the *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie* will continue to be distinguished by the concepts devised by biannually alternating guest curators, who will deal with repeatedly new aspects of contemporary photography in dialogue with the invited artists, the metropolitan region, the three organizing cities and the festival's local, national and international visitors. The Biennial enjoys the participation of the three cities' most important exhibiting institutions, the specific profile of each of them being included the exhibition concept. Most recently, the festival counted more than 35,000 visitors.

Cultural events organizers and patrons from the entire metropolitan region work together closely to realize the Biennale. The Biennale connects the three cities and their cultural institutions to one another in a cross-city dialogue and thus serves as a model for inter-city collaboration Germany-wide.

More information at www.biennalefotografie.de.

Current image material on the Biennale for download in the press area at www.biennalefotografie.de

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