

Biennale

Press release

October 28, 2019, Mannheim/Ludwigshafen/Heidelberg, Germany

Programme presentation for the *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie 2020*

The *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie*, in 2020 under the patronage of Monika Grütters, German Minister of State for Culture and the Media, will investigate from 29.2. to 26.4.2020 how photography became a symbol for the excesses of contemporary society under the title *The Lives and Loves of Images*. With his concept, David Company, the curator of the Biennale, concentrates his attention on the contradictory feelings which photography can evoke – from passionate affection to strong skepticism. In six exhibitions at six houses in Mannheim, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg, contemporary and historical works by around 70 international artists and photographers will be shown.

New format: In a series of talks featuring high-profile speakers in advance of the Biennale and during the festival itself, renowned photographic artists and scholars will discuss the relationship between photography and science.

+++++ The *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie 2020* is supported by the three cities of Mannheim, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg, with BASF SE as premium sponsor and many other supporters contributing to the strengthening of photography in the Rhine-Neckar region. +++++

Duration: February 29 – April 26, 2020

Opening: February 28, 2020, 7.00 p.m., Kunsthalle Mannheim

Today the English curator, artist and author David Company presents his concept for the second *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie*, which will take place from February 29 to April 26, 2020 in Mannheim, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg under the title *The Lives and Loves of Images*. The six participating institutions will host thematic exhibitions that explore the independent existence of photographic images. The shows will examine how artists position themselves against their role models and how iconic photographs are constantly redefined as cultural public property. The Biennale will include works by around 70 international photographers.

The Biennale will be accompanied by an extensive programme of events, which will include the dialogue series *Photography & Science* featuring high-profile speakers, the *Long Night of Photography* in cooperation with OFF//FOTO, curator's tours, artist talks, Campus Days for students, workshops, and other activities for visitors. The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue. As in 2017, admission prices are determined by the Pay What You Want principle (except for the exhibition at Kunsthalle Mannheim), with each visitor deciding on the amount that he or she wishes to pay.

Prof. Monika Grütters MdB, German Minister of State for Culture and the Media: "Given the overwhelming flood of images that confront us on a daily basis, photographic art holds a particular significance. It questions our image culture and opens our eyes with its very own, particularly nuanced view of the world. And that is precisely what the *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie* sets out to

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achieve. The Biennale offers contemporary photographic art an international platform and forum. Alongside the exhibitions, the varied accompanying programme will also ensure exciting discussions. I wish the Biennale many inquisitive, enthusiastic and critical visitors."

David Campany, Curator: *"Photography has come to symbolize the extremes of contemporary society. It is deeply personal, and yet thoroughly public. Freeing at times, yet also limiting. Expressive, yet culturally dominant. Pleasurable, but worrying. There is affection for photography, but we are, or ought to be, suspicious of its power and manipulations. If we are dependent upon the photographic image, as so many have claimed over the last century, this dependence gives us mixed feelings. The Lives and Loves of Images explores how these tensions shape our understanding and appreciation of photography."*

Dietrich Skibelski, Chairman of the Biennale: *"As an institution without its own home base, the Biennale sees its task as collaborating with its partners to ensure the constant revitalization of the discourse on photography in response to the medium's continually changing forms and functions. To this end, every two years it brings internationally renowned photographers, artists and curators together with its visitors. With its exhibitions and its practically as well as theoretically oriented educational offerings, the Biennale prompts reflection on photography as a defining medium of our time."*

David Campany focuses on contemporary fine-art photography and places it in a historical continuity. *The Lives and Loves of Images* consists of six thematic exhibitions: The exhibition **Re-considering Icons** at the Museum Weltkulturen der Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen in Mannheim, will showcase contemporary works that employ various strategies to offer the audience a second glance at photographs we all think we know. Some of the artistic projects go back to the place where these iconic images were taken, while others reconstruct them using new technologies such as virtual reality and 3D modeling. **When Images Collide** at the Wilhelm-Hack-Museum in Ludwigshafen uses the juxtaposition of two images to develop an entire cosmos of creative practices dedicated to the combination of images. These include complex analogue and digital collages, the use of stills in film and video, and digital rendering and installation. **Between Art and Commerce** at Port25 – Raum für Gegenwartskunst in Mannheim gathers works by various photographers who examine the complex relationship between commercial and artistic photography. They trace the hybrid pathways of the medium of photography somewhere between a utilitarian and an artistic medium. **Yesterday's News Today** at Heidelberger Kunstverein reveals the fate of news photography and its archives. It spotlights the work of picture editors and how they generate and change pictorial statements and mold information. The exhibition also illustrates how artists, collectors and historians interact with these photos. **All Art is Photography** at Kunstverein Ludwigshafen examines the way we often perceive artworks of different genres first through photography, how their cultural significance is manifested through this and what happens when artistic photography takes other art forms as its theme. What might a camera achieve in the painter's studio, when faced with a sculpture, or in an art museum full of people? The exhibition **Walker Evans Revisited** at Kunsthalle Mannheim is dedicated to Walker Evans (1903 – 1975). It highlights how the American photography legend inspired generations of photographers and artists around the world and how contemporary photographers react to Evans' work. As early as the mid-twentieth century, he was developing strategies to control the dissemination of his images, dedicating himself to a topic that remains highly relevant today.

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New format: dialogue series *Photography & Science*

In advance of and accompanying the Biennale 2020, a new series of discussions taking place in Heidelberg and featuring prominent speakers will explore the relationship between artistic photography and science. The various overlaps between the two areas will be examined in greater detail and controversially discussed at eight events with different focus areas. Anton Corbijn will meet Robin Curtis, Herlinde Koelbl will meet Bernhard Pörksen, and Timm Rautert will meet Horst Bredekamp, among others. The dialogue series *Photography & Science* is a cooperation between the Institut für Europäische Kunstgeschichte (IEK) at Heidelberg University, the Deutsch-Amerikanisches Institut Heidelberg (DAI) and the *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie*, and is supported by the Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung, the Friedrich Stiftung and the City of Heidelberg. All the dates can be found on the Biennale website.

Artists (selection): Claudia Angelmaier, David Claerbout, Cortis & Sonderegger, Walker Evans, George Georgiou, Sara Greenberger Rafferty, Sohrab Hura, Lisa Kereszi, Justine Kurland, Mark Lewis, Sebastian Riemer, Thomas Ruff, Anastasia Samoylova, Sheltens & Abbenes, Stephen Shore, Eva Stenram, John Stezaker, Batia Suter, Vanessa Winship, Stanley Wolukau-Wanambwa and many more.

Participating Institutions in 2020

Forum Internationale Photographie (FIP) & ZEPHYR – Raum für Fotografie in den Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen (Mannheim), Heidelberger Kunstverein, Kunsthalle Mannheim, Kunstverein Ludwigshafen, Port25 – Raum für Gegenwartskunst (Mannheim), Wilhelm-Hack-Museum (Ludwigshafen)

About the *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie*

The next *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie* will take place from February 29 to April 26, 2020. Since 2005, the Biennale has established itself as one of the most important curated photo events with international appeal in Germany. The Biennale is characterised by the conceptual work of the guest curators, who come on board for two years and who are constantly addressing new aspects of contemporary photography while initiating dialogue with the invited artists, the Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region, the three cities hosting the event and with local, national and international visitors. The most important exhibition houses of the three cities Mannheim, Heidelberg and Ludwigshafen are involved and their specific profiles are included in the exhibition's design. Cultural organisers and promoters from the entire Metropolitan Region work closely together to make the Biennale happen. The Biennale connects the three cities and their cultural institutions in an inter-city dialogue, a cooperation that has set an example nationwide. In its latest edition, the Biennale had around 41 000 visitors.

Further information and current image material for the Biennale can be downloaded from the press section at www.biennalefotografie.de

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