

**Biennale**

# *The Lives and Loves of Images*

**29/02–26/04/2020**

**Heidelberger Kunstverein**

## *Yesterday's News Today*

One of the primary tasks of the twenty-first century has been to make sense of the twentieth: to pick over its bones and discover small indications of what we have become. We sift that “pile of fragments of private images, against the creased background of massacres and coronations,” that the writer Italo Calvino concluded was “true, total photography”.

News photography has undergone profound transformations in the shift from analogue to digital, and from print to screen. Some old archives of old news photos survive, but over the last decade, hundreds of thousands, most often 8×10 inch black and white prints, have been dumped for sale online to raise money. Most sell for very little money, to whoever

might want them. Whatever their fate, this photographic material is finding itself in new contexts, to be re-thought by artists, acquired by collectors, examined by historians, and exhibited by curators.

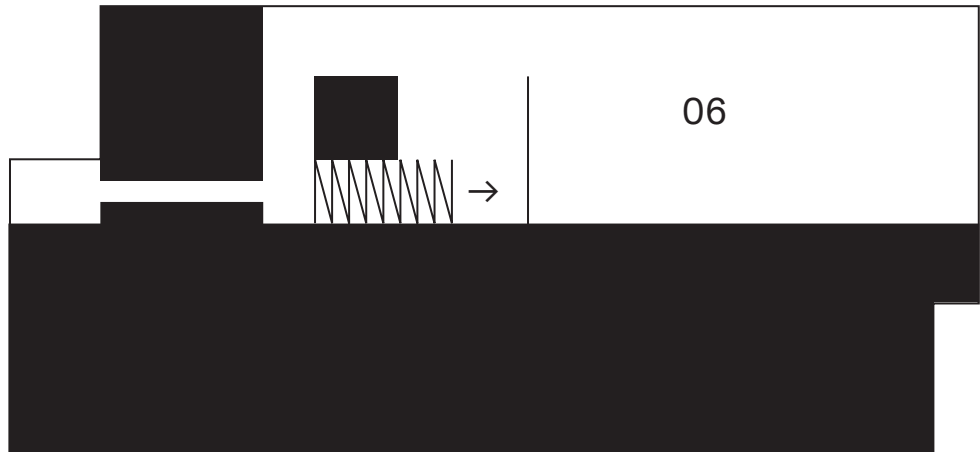
The current interest shown by artists in old news images is hybrid, somewhere between media archaeology, history and image making. The old photos are reworked but also re-presented so we can see them, or encounter them again, in their strange new settings. What results is a sort of multi-temporality, in which the image is seen for what it was, for what it now is for the artist and viewer, and for what it could become in the future.

Curated by David Company

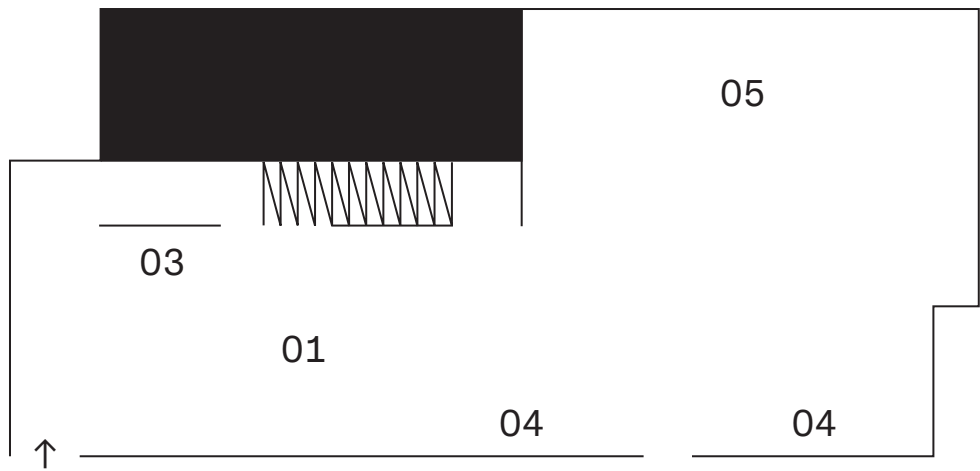
**für aktuelle  
Fotografie**

# Biennale

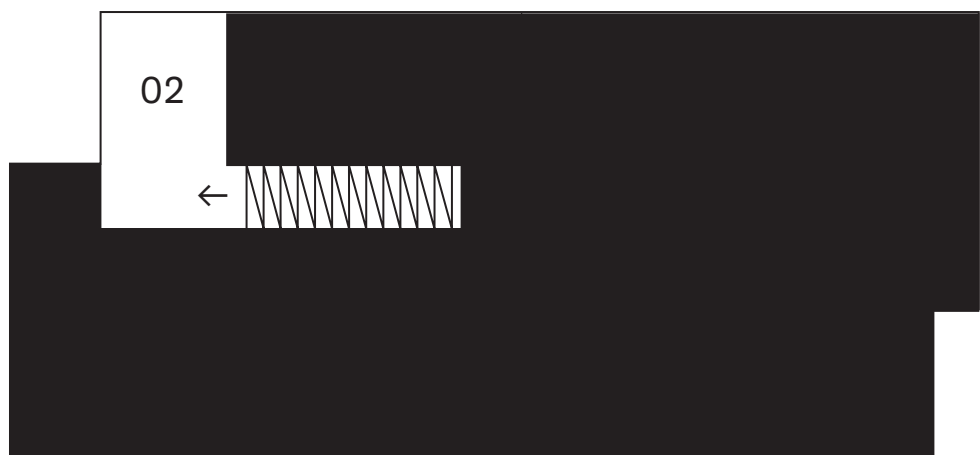
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Heidelberger Kunstverein

**für aktuelle  
Fotografie**

Archives of the newspapers  
RHEIN-NECKAR-ZEITUNG (Heidelberg),  
DIE RHEINPFALZ (Ludwigshafen),  
MANNHEIMER MORGEN (Mannheim)

Installation with press images from the 1950s–90s

On the occasion of the exhibition *Yesterday's News Today*, the Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie takes a look at press photo archives in the region: *Die Rheinpfalz*, *Mannheimer Morgen* and *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*.

Analog prints from the 1950s–1990s are shown, on the front and back of which you can discover the traces of editing, retouching, cutting, as well as comments from editors, art directors, journalists and photographers. The archives are arranged by keyword. Here we present a subjective 'A to Z' sample of the visual memory of the region. The archives are available for future use, as potentially influential raw material that continues to shape the perception of local and international events.

Photographers: Gerhard Ballarin / Heinz Bohnert / Friedel Fiedler / Franck / Hauck / Jesse / Gudrun Keese / Fred Koenekamp (ARD Filmredaktion) / Bernhard Kunz / Martina Lenz und Norbert Lenz / Walter Neusch / Pit Steiger / Ilse Steinhoff / Studenski / Thomas Tröster / Paul Van Schie / Zernechel

Agencies: ABB Henschel AG /  
amw – Süddeutsche Zeitung Photo / dpa /  
Fotoagentur Kunz / Fotoagentur POLY-PRESS

In recent years, many artists, curators and media historians have taken a new look at historical news photography—as relics of the last century. There is a particular interest in the editing process of analogue prints. As opposed to a digital file, the entire process is visible on the print, which allows the different steps to be understood. Within a few hours, analogue photos went through a large number of work steps: First they were taken by photographers and developed in darkrooms, then selected and repeatedly cropped by picture editors. Finally, retouchers and reprographers optimised the images, sometimes with brush and ink. All of these processes can be found on the back and front of the pictures. They include fleeting notes, abbreviations, publication dates, names of photographers and agencies, image rights or instructions for image processing. These traces document one thing above all, namely the tension between the subjectivity and objectivity character of photography. For it is generally expected that a press photograph is capable of providing an extract from reality. However, the backs and fronts of the prints also tell of the processes by which these realities of the news world can be edited, cut, retouched, softened or even sharpened, as it were.

The exhibition *Yesterday's News Today* aims to make the work of the press and media visible and to establish a link with local visual memory. In this context, analogue prints from the press image archives of the newspapers *Mannheimer Morgen*, *die Rheinpfalz* and *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung* from the 1950s to the 1990s are on display. The selection of the prints took place in the newspaper archives themselves, which are arranged according to keywords. This approach is taken up within the exhibition, as the prints are shown from A to Z with their respective keywords. Each print and each keyword is representative of all the countless other possible keywords and images that are stored in newspaper archives.

## Display table A

The keywords “foreigners, resettlers, emigrants” are usually found side by side in the archives (in German they all start with the letter “A”) and describe all directions of migration. It is a complex topic at all times, closely linked to the history and society of the region. Starting with emigrant families like the Presslers from the Palatinate region, whose descendant was later to become world famous as Elvis Presley. Or “resettlers” who came to the region as “republic refugees” or “ethnic German Soviet citizens”. This section illustrates what an important role migration experiences have always played in our societies and cultures.

## Display table C

With a continuity like no other and over the course of 30 years, Gerhard Ballarin documented all events in Heidelberg as a press photographer for the *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*. His archive covers a remarkable variety of topics, from global events such as the moon landing, to the funfair rides of the so-called “Mess” or personalities like Hans-Georg Gadamer. Apart from themes like these, his photographs also depict topics such as a camping site on the banks of the Neckar river or Christo's coverings of the German-American Institute in Heidelberg in 1969.

## Display table D

In drama theory the term “Peripeteia”, describes the sudden turning point of a story or fate. It is usually expected, that a press photograph captures precisely this brief but profoundly significant moment. The multi-award-winning photograph “Kurdish Demonstration”, by press photographer Gudrun Keese, captured a moment that was a decisive experience for the region: in March 1994, a demonstrator stole a gun from a policeman. A split second after the picture was taken, he fires a shot. This shot hit the policeman in the hollow of his knee. The demonstration itself was the protest that followed the self-immolation of two young Kurdish women. According to contemporary witnesses, Mannheim was in a state of emergency and the scene of several highly dramatic events at the time. This picture documents a moment, which was probably the most dramatic situation of the Kurdish demonstrations.

## Display table S

Another award-winning photograph is the so-called “Synchronsturz” by Bernhard Kunz, which became World Sports Picture of the Year in 1990. On the day of the race, according to Kunz, a drizzling rain had set in, which then became the fate of the two cyclists. Bernhard Kunz captured the moment when both of them lost control of their bikes at the same time.

Despite intensive investigations not all right holders could be identified. Entitled claims are settled within the framework of the usual agreements.

## Anonymous

01 Pat Sullivan, frustrated, waiting for gas (retouched news photograph for *The Baltimore Sun*, 15.6.1979)

Installation with anonymous press photographs

Courtesy MACK Books, London / Privatsammlung

A chance encounter with a photograph of a woman, who had slumped over a steering wheel in obvious despair, was the spark that ignited a project that explored images of

The work specifications are listed in reading direction (from left to right).

American gas stations. David Company—the curator of the 2020 Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie—found the snapshot in a second-hand shop: “I was impressed, the photo was retouched by hand. It’s a really beautiful, enigmatic shot—I thought there was a whole story in it.” It turns out that the woman (Pat Sullivan) is waiting in line for the pumps during the oil crisis in Baltimore. But the photo is also puzzling as it is marked with red lines. These reveal the photographs function—it is not an art print, but a press photograph used in a newspaper report and then placed in an archive. The lines indicate how it is to be cropped. The markings are part of the appeal of this photo—and the hundred or so others, which Company has collected and have now been edited into a book of 35 images entitled ‘Gasoline’. “They have their own aesthetic, these markings, although they are absolutely practical,” he says, pointing out that many of the photographs—covering 50 years from 1945 to 1995—have several markings that are used to illustrate several stories. With clippings, dates or photographers’ names on the back, these 10 x 8 inch glossy prints are rich in their own story. They not only show images of a past world, but are tangible artefacts of another disappearing world—analogue photography. “Every photograph is an archive in itself,” says Company. And when he started collecting, he realised that gas stations might be “the perfect subject”. The pictures tell a specific story of every dramatic, current event: oil crisis, a tornado, a car accident, floods. But they also take on the qualities of their historical moment: They tell us about America’s relationship to the car, to travel, to consumption, to the rest of the world.

#### Sebastian Riemer

From the series *Press Paintings*:

- 03 *Double Duck Pitcher (McNally)*, 2014  
Pigment print, 158 × 118,5 cm  
Courtesy Sammlung Philara, Düsseldorf
- 04 *Speed Skater (Leow)*, 2017  
Pigment print, 151 × 194 cm  
Courtesy Galerie DIX9, Paris
- Giselle (Mark Byron)*, 2015  
Pigment print, 78 × 67 cm  
Courtesy Galerie DIX9, Paris
- Sergeant (Gun)*, 2015  
Pigment print, 114 × 140 cm  
Courtesy SETAREH, Düsseldorf
- Athlete (Gerould)*, 2016  
Pigment print, 141 × 198 cm  
Courtesy SETAREH, Düsseldorf
- Miss (Josephine)*, 2016  
Pigment print, 92 × 58 cm  
Courtesy SETAREH, Düsseldorf
- Lord*, 2014  
Pigment print, 65,2 × 48 cm  
Courtesy SETAREH, Düsseldorf
- Coach (Wynn)*, 2017  
Pigment print, 78 × 104 cm  
Courtesy Galerie DIX9, Paris
- Elder (Jack)*, 2016  
Pigment print, 189 × 117 cm  
Courtesy SETAREH, Düsseldorf
- Ballerina (Alma)*, 2015

Pigment print, 164 × 123 cm  
Courtesy SETAREH, Düsseldorf

*Soprano (Taylor)*, 2016  
Pigment print, 120 × 95 cm  
Courtesy Galerie DIX9, Paris

*Hurdler (Raw Form)*, 2016  
Pigment print, 142 × 189 cm  
Courtesy SETAREH, Düsseldorf

*Bird (Cage)*, 2017  
Pigment print, 101 × 130 cm  
Courtesy Galerie DIX9, Paris

*Ship (Crew)*, 2014  
Pigment print, 50 × 60 cm  
Courtesy SETAREH, Düsseldorf

*Abandoned (Soccer)*, 2016  
Pigment print, 156 × 125 cm  
Courtesy SETAREH, Düsseldorf

*Hula (Natives)*, 2015  
Pigment print, 164 × 123 cm  
Courtesy Sammlung Philara, Düsseldorf

*Miss (Cosgrave)*, 2016  
Pigment print, 98 × 65 cm  
Courtesy SETAREH, Düsseldorf

Sebastian Riemer chooses his images very consciously. His research for a photograph can take several weeks and around a few hundred thousand mouse clicks—he buys or auctions the pictures on the Internet. Due to the ongoing digitalization, more and more newspaper archives are disappearing. Often they are sold at cheap prices on Internet platforms or via digital auction houses for reasons of space and cost. Selecting and analysing, as the central components of Riemer’s work, is followed by post-production. He enlarges the found images to a size he considers appropriate and decolours them: black-and-white pictures of black-and-white pictures. The enlarged presentation of the photographs allows the visitors to discover the contents of the pictures and especially the retouching—now made clearly visible again by Riemer. Sebastian Riemer is more interested in the surface condition of the old photographs, than in their motif. Through his efforts, his works reveal what has become invisible through the digital world today. This transformation of the original templates is both an artistic gesture and a homage to the source material. In the past, press photos were adapted according to the text. After all, retouching photographs did not begin with Adobe Photoshop. For decades, the digital and manual editing, “optimisation” and post-production of images, as is now accessible to just about everyone, was a task for highly specialised professionals. The editing of news and advertising photos for reproduction in print products was in the hands of the most experienced retouchers. Skilful application of opaque colours in various shades of grey allowed details to be highlighted, dust and other defects to be removed, and unwanted areas to be hidden. One does wonder why the photograph of the work *Bird (Cage)* was used at all and why the bird was not simply painted, as there is almost nothing left of the retouched part of the picture. It becomes clear that the phenomenon of “Fake News” is not one of recent years. Riemer’s work reminds us which expectations we (should) have of pictures and how much they shape our perception of the world. If one takes the title of this series (*Press Paintings*) literally (and, as seen, can do so),

one now moves from press painting to press photos, which were also taken from historical newspaper archives. (see Archives)

Directly behind you is the series *press++* by Thomas Ruff, who also works with found images purchased on the Internet. These form the starting point for both artists to reflect on the photographic image and its existence. (see 05)

### Thomas Ruff

05 From the series *press++*:

*press++28.37*, 2016  
C-print, 60 × 70 cm

*press++28.13*, 2016  
C-print, 60 × 70 cm

*press++28.19*, 2016  
C-print, 60 × 70 cm

*press++28.43*, 2016  
C-print, 60 × 70 cm

*press++28.09*, 2016  
C-print, 60 × 70 cm

*press++20.56*, 2016  
C-print, 70 × 60 cm

*press++21.12*, 2016  
C-print, 70 × 60 cm

*press++24.76*, 2016  
C-print, 70 × 60 cm

*press++25.82*, 2016  
C-print, 70 × 60 cm

*press++24.30*, 2016  
C-print, 70 × 60 cm

*press++01.32*, 2016  
C-print, 70 × 60 cm

*press++02.20*, 2015  
C-print, 70 × 60 cm

*press++24.11*, 2016  
C-print, 70 × 60 cm

*press++65.21*, 2016  
C-print, 60 × 70 cm

Thomas Ruff's technical-analytical examination of the medium photography ranges from large-format, detailed portraits to blow-ups of low-resolution image files from the Internet, from manipulations of images that were reflected back from the surface of Mars to well thought-out architectural photographs, to name but a few excerpts from his artistic activity, which has already lasted for four decades. He devotes himself both to the handcraft of strict analogue photography and to working with computer-generated image files.

These diverse, methodical approaches are united by his focus on image technology, protocols and genres. Although Thomas Ruff is one of the most famous German photo artists, he has not taken a picture for 14 years. Instead, his main aim is to save old photographs from being forgotten and to dedicate himself to photo archives. He is interested in how we view photography and how a photograph affects our imagination. When Ruff held photographs taken from the archives of various American newspapers for the first time, the backs with all the notes, dates, and stamps

were as interesting to him as the actual photographs themselves. He scanned both sides of the original documents and superimposed them, to also show the context that accompanied the first publication. By combining the images with the information they convey, the appearance of the *press++* series emphasises the materiality of the original print. At the same time, image modifications such as comments and retouching, soiling and cropping represent a genre transition—such as from scientific to press photography. These interferences change both the image itself and its meaning.

### Clare Strand

06 From the series *Snake*, 2017

7 Archival photographs with hand printed screen prints, text overlaid, 101,6 × 152,4 cm each

*Poem not by Clare Strand*, 2016  
Installation, 20 × 11 × 15 cm

Courtesy Parotta Contemporary Art, Cologne/Bonn

Most of Strand's projects emerge from material she has gathered over the years – snapshots, magazines, instructional books, news photos, and more. For this project, she has selected details from seven photographs that all depict women laughing or smiling while holding snakes. The choice of images is based on the motif alone; if a woman is depicted holding a snake, the image wanders into her collection—and has done so since she was 13 years old. The evaluation of the pictures on the basis of aesthetics plays no role in the selection. The work is composed of several parts in the exhibition space: photography, text and technology. This is because the seven large-format photographs are overlaid by bold poems in silkscreen print. The poems are part of the text as well as the technology, because they are created with the help of an online generator, with the word "snake" as a search word. Each image is made up of two components—photography and text—each the sum of two opposing media, both struggling to be understood and interpreted, with neither one winning or losing. The laughing women in the photographs have a firm grip on the agile creatures, conveying an expression of power, control and the possible establishment of balance, while the colourful silkscreen printed texts scream like the tropes of a protest banner. Strand herself says the following about the choice of motif:

"The symbol of the snake is also regularly quoted as a metaphor for opposing forces such as good and evil, cunning and wisdom, procreation and death. I am interested in these dialectical tensions and the idea that what repels can also attract; what hurts can also comfort. The snake is a means for me to speak of these polarities."

Also part of the installation is *Poem not by Clare Strand*—a printer that generates further poems in real time and projects them onto the exhibition wall. This creates new random arrangements of Strand's poems in the exhibition. The newly written texts are printed on snake ticker tape and can be torn off and taken home by visitors.

Clare Strand shows how text and image are interwoven. The press photo archives of newspapers can also be accessed by words, as the archives are sorted by keywords (see Archives).

As sombre-strange as *Snake* is, the work exemplifies Strand's ability to respond to the unconscious level of the most familiar and everyday images.