

Media release

Zurich, 14 November 2019

Kunsthaus Zürich presents 'The new Photography. Upheaval and new beginnings 1970–1990'.

From 15 November 2019 to 9 February 2020 the Kunsthaus Zürich focuses on an eventful period in the history of photography. Twenty positions from Switzerland and elsewhere reveal how photography moved from being a tool of depiction to a self-reflective artistic medium, as the old concept of craftsmanship came up against new artistic ideas.

Photography and its reception changed significantly in the 1970s and 1980s. The classical reportage photography of previous decades had run its course, and artists moved in to inspire the scene. A stylistic pluralism emerged; and as photography was disseminated by newly established publishers and galleries, it soon came to the attention of art museums. Curated by Joachim Sieber and including works from the photo collection of the Kunsthaus Zürich together with a number of items on loan, the exhibition showcases these visual, conceptual and structural innovations in photography.

NEW PATHS IN POSTMODERN DIVERSITY

Taking as its starting point the influences of conceptual art, minimalism and pop art of the 1960s in the works of John Hilliard, David Hockney, Stephen Shore and Dan Graham along with Urs Lüthi, Dieter Meier and Fischli/Weiss, the exhibition includes works by early Swiss practitioners of artistic photography such as Balthasar Burkhard, Hans Danuser, Felix Stephan Huber, Beat Streuli, Hannah Villiger, Bernard Voïta and Cécile Wick. Also represented are feminist and socially critical positions such as Alexis Hunter and Marilyn Minter; the Bohemian photographs of Walter Pfeiffer; body studies by Simone Kappeler; and interiors from the intimacy of Annelies Štrba to the deserted public spaces of Candida Höfer. Topics include 'From conceptual photography to media art', 'Photographic explorations of the self' and 'Spaces/non-spaces of society'. They reflect a trend that encompasses every level – from production, through dissemination, to reception by an audience that, thanks to advances in technology, was now increasingly able to take its own photographs or obtain (moving) images quickly and cheaply.

A CHANGE OF MODE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY: NEW LOCATIONS, NEW MEDIA

With the closure of the influential magazine 'Life' in the early 1970s, photography lost some of its status as a news medium and instead began carving out a position for itself in art. Photo books and exhibitions were rediscovered as primary channels for presenting photographic works. Photo galleries opened up, and a growing number of art museums incorporated photography into their programmes. Several internationally important photographic book publishers were set up in Switzerland, including Lars Müller (Baden), Edition Patrick Frey and Der Alltag (both in Zurich), which published the art magazine Parkett from 1984 onwards and later became part of the photography publisher Scalo. With their novel forms of publication, they ensured that contemporary Swiss photography gained international recognition.

PHOTOGRAPHY AT THE KUNSTHAUS

In the 1970s, the Kunsthaus also began collecting contemporary photography. Alongside its own acquisitions, it received crucial support from the Gruppe Junge Kunst, part of its patron association the Vereinigung Zürcher Kunstfreunde, which was established in 1968. Between 1975 and 1980, the group decided to purchase only the works of young British artists. Photographs by John Hilliard and Alexis Hunter were thus acquired for the collection, which now numbers all in all almost 1,300 works.

The Stiftung für die Photographie (now the Fotostiftung Schweiz), which was founded in 1971 and was housed at the Kunsthaus from 1976 to 2003, covered a wide range of documentary photography. The Kunsthaus's own collection committee therefore decided from the mid-1970s onwards to focus its new acquisitions on artistic photography, sometimes in conjunction with other image media, notably painting, graphic art, drawing, video and new media.

The fusion of art and photography reached its peak in the 1990s, as photography successfully embraced the classical genres of painting such as the still life and the history painting. The Kunsthaus's collection policy followed this trend, leading to the acquisition of large-format works by Thomas Struth and Jeff Wall as well as slide projections by Beat Streuli. The current exhibition delves into the origins of this development.

PUBLICATION

The accompanying publication from Scheidegger & Spiess (80 pages, about 50 illustrations) with texts by Joachim Sieber is available from the Kunsthaus shop for CHF 17.

Supported by Albers & Co AG

KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH

GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthhaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich. Tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 84, www.kunsthhaus.ch

Fri-Sun/Tue 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed, Thu 10 a.m.–8 p.m. For public holiday opening see www.kunsthhaus.ch.

CHF 16 / CHF 11 (concessions and groups). Combination ticket including the collection and exhibitions CHF 26 / CHF 19. Admission free to visitors under the age of 17.

Advance sales: Zurich Tourism, tourist information office in Zurich main railway station, tel. +41 44 215 40 00, info@zuerich.com, www.zuerich.com.

SBB RailAway combination ticket, with discount on admission when travelling by public transport. www.sbb.ch/kunsthhaus-zuerich.

MEDIA CONTACT

Visual materials are available at www.kunsthhaus.ch/en/medien-bereich/media-corner/.

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