

Press Release  
February 1, 2024

## Looking back in time – Age and ageing in photographic portraits

An exhibition of the Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur der Sparkasse KölnBonn

With works by Christian Borchert, John Coplans, Imogen Cunningham, Deanna Dikeman, Jess T. Dugan / Vanessa Fabbre, Albrecht Fuchs, Katja Kerstin Hock, Manfred Jade, Evi Lemberger / Maria Göckeritz, Andreas Mader, Helga Paris, Natalya Reznik, Martin Rosswog, August Sander, Cindy Sherman, Daniel Schumann, Wilhelm Schürmann and Larry Sultan

**Duration: March 2 - July 7, 2024**

**Press preview on Wednesday, February 28 at 11 a.m.** (Please register [online](#) for the press tour)

**Opening: Friday, March 1, 2024 at 7 pm** (limited number of participants, [free online admission ticket](#) required!)

The exhibition shows 18 positions and includes photographs from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day. Using the example of the portrait, photographers of different generations and origins approach the many facets of the phenomenon of "age and ageing" in serial projects.

Above all, life means development and thus implies change and ageing. What is perceived as progress or regression depends on individual and social values. The images that find expression in art and photography are correspondingly diverse. Photography is particularly suited to dealing with time-related aspects. It gives age and ageing a face and confronts us with many different questions: How is life experience reflected in the appearance, physiognomy and posture of older people? What personality, what characteristics do the people portrayed radiate? What social roles are conveyed in the image? Do the gestures change against the background of different times and places of origin? What is the attitude towards death?

In impressive portraits taken at the beginning of the 20th century, August Sander depicts elderly people from a rural class, reflecting a sense of status, life experience and the living conditions of a bygone era. Sander himself can be seen in the exhibition in an old-age portrait created in 1960 by the American artist Imogen Cunningham. In more recent exhibits, such as those by Martin Rosswog and Albrecht Fuchs, the moment of life experience in particular comes to the fore. Each of their works is a tribute to the people portrayed and what they have achieved.

A portrait by the artist Cindy Sherman shows how ambivalent our society's relationship to ageing can be. In her photograph of one of her roles, she slips into the skin of a lady from urban high society who carefully attempts to conceal signs of age through make-up, clothing style and attitude. In her portraits of older women, reminiscent of old master paintings, Natalya Reznik emphasizes their individual attractiveness. John Coplans deals with the subject in a much more ruthless and self-deprecating way. In large-format black and white photographs, he shows his aged, naked body in direct close-up, completely without embellishment.

External changes in people and places are particularly evident in long-term photographic projects, represented in the exhibition by works by Andreas Mader, Deanna Dikeman and Christian Borchert, among others. It is above all in the family or circle of friends, in relation to recurring people and situations, that changes, including the farewell to beloved moments and people, can be traced. The photographs by Larry Sultan, Wilhelm Schürmann and Helga Paris show just how different life circumstances can be in old age. While Larry Sultan takes a very personal look at his parents – and thus also at himself – and their economic possibilities and emotional sensitivities, Helga Paris documents the living conditions in an old people's home in East Berlin in the 1980s. During roughly the same period, Wilhelm Schürmann traced the living environment of a generation in Dortmund, against the backdrop of an environment shaped by the coal and steel industry. The strong influence of historical events on life stories is shown in the intensive film portrait that Evi Lemberger and Maria Göckeritz created of Irene Eber, who suffered deportation and expulsion by the National Socialists as a child.

Finally, the exhibition's series of works by Daniel Schumann, Katja Kerstin Hock and Manfred Jade sensitively evoke the themes of farewell, dying and death. There is no doubt that the passage of time is the unity that defines the past, present and future as a fundamental variable. Within this unity, photography offers measuring and stopping points that serve as orientation.

On show at the same time:

## **Jem Southam: The Pond at Upton Pyne**

An exhibition in cooperation with the artist

Jem Southam's series shows the cyclical transformation of a pond and its surroundings in Upton Pyne, Devon, England. The pond is not of natural origin, but dates back to a disused manganese mine from the 18th century, an area that has long been neglected.

For the narrative series, which was created between 1996 and 2002, Southam designed three parts: The first shows the pond at a time when a man was working to transform the small area into a romantic paradise for his family. After the man left the village, the area became overgrown. The second part is dedicated to the work of the next inhabitant, who later took care of the pond. He was guided by a different vision and transformed the site into a place of recreation and leisure, for example by erecting new huts, tables and swings. The short third part of Southam's study deals with the surrounding landscape.

Focusing on a "microcosm", Jem Southam's series of images is both an allegorical story about how our dreams influence our actions and a reflection on aspects of the historical and socio-cultural development of the post-industrial Western world.

**Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur**, Im Mediapark 7, 50670 Cologne, phone: +49 221 888 95 300, email: [photographie@sk-kultur.de](mailto:photographie@sk-kultur.de), [www.photographie-sk-kultur.de](http://www.photographie-sk-kultur.de)

Admission: €6.50 (reduced €4), free admission on the first Monday of the month!

Open on the first Thursday of the month until 9 p.m., free admission from 5 p.m.: special events take place.

Opening hours: daily except Wednesdays from 2 pm to 7 pm

Closed: March 29 (Good Friday), open on all other public holidays.

Public guided tours in German take place weekly on Sundays at 3 pm. Thematic focus on the first Sunday of each month, see homepage.

For press enquiries call +49 221 888 95 105, email: [pr@sk-kultur.de](mailto:pr@sk-kultur.de)

Press photos of the exhibition can be found here: [www.sk-kultur.de/presse/blick](http://www.sk-kultur.de/presse/blick)