



gute aussichten (new prospects)

Recent German photography 2013/2014

Exhibition

November 15th through December 13th 2013

Goethe-Institut Los Angeles, 5750 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 100, Los Angeles, CA 90036

Free Admission

The competition **gute aussichten: new german photography 2013/2014**, presents a unique and far-ranging overview of the works of photography students in Germany during the past 12 months. Please join the curators **Josefine Raab** and **Stefan Becht** at the Goethe-Institut for an opening reception.

Opening reception:

Friday, November 15 from 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

RSVP via 323.525.3388 or rsvp@losangeles.goethe.org

The exhibit can be viewed during the Goethe-Institut's business hours (M-Th 9-5 and F 9-3) and during events from November 18th through December 13th 2013.

gute aussichten 2013/2014—nine award winning photographers and a first look at their work: nothing is what it seems, and yet it is

An espresso machine drowning in coffee it just brewed. Landscapes that seem to disappear before our eyes. Human beings, scared by life on the fringes of society. Gray concrete images of monochrome simplicity, and exuberantly colorful collages of painterly beauty.

Now in its tenth year, "gute Aussichten 2013/14" presents a range of aesthetic concepts, media, and forms seldom found in recent German photography: a spectrum of surprisingly varied ideas, observations, and photographic strategies, formal and medial permutations that not only illustrate current trends, but also serve as a source of inspiration.

In spite of this variety, there is also a startling element that connects these works, a central theme that runs throughout: the refusal to fulfill expectations, to make good on promises, or to hold to conventions. That which is predicted fails to occur, that which is anticipated fails to materialize. Hopes are dashed. Physical limitations cease to hold sway. The boundaries between different media are crossed and customary ways of seeing are overturned. Nothing is as it seems—and yet it is. "For," as author Rolf Hochhuth writes in his book *A Love in Germany (Eine Liebe in Deutschland)*, "reality exists only in the present." Our present is one of untenable promises and unmet expectations. Continuously, incessantly, constantly. Yet when a younger generation of photographers throb this wound with their fingers, making it visible and tangible, they not only discover a connection: they force us to look, to ask, to think. They risk bringing concepts like "freedom", "values", and "truth" into the equation—values that, as we think, do us and our society damn good.

Award winners

Nadja Bournonville
Anna Domnick
Birte Kaufmann
Lioba Keuck
Alwin Lay
Marian Luft
Stephanie Steinkopf
Daniel Stubenvoll
Christina Werner

Selection committee

Josefine Raab
Dr. Wibke von Bonin
Dr. Verena Hein
Mario Lombardo
Luminita Sabau
Hans-Christian Schink
Ingo Taubhorn



Nadja Bournonville
A Conversion Act
2012

Nadja Bournonville's work takes as its starting point the symptom of hysteria. Derived from the ancient Greek *hystéra* (womb), hysteria was regarded as an exclusively feminine disorder until well into the 19th century, associated with an erratic (because sexually unsatisfied) uterus. Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) research into this then popular topic led to a new medical definition of hysteria, which he described as a conversion disorder (lat. *conversio*, turning, turn), that is, as the transference of a mental disorder onto the physical level. In her photographic work "A Conversion Act," Bournonville takes up the idea of a transformation of mental processes into physical ones in two complimentary series, each composed of eight motifs. For the piece entitled "Medical Machines," the artist fashions a series of surreal seeming tools out of everyday objects that resemble medical apparatuses of earlier times. The treatment methods of mentally ill patients, brutish by modern standards, are carried to an absurd extreme in small format photographs that the artist counter-poses with individual large format images of a scenographic quality. Within this imagistic repertoire, her forms of expression and iconography evoke symbolist, Dadaist and surrealist art. The viewer is displaced into a richly allusive imagistic space far removed from our tangible reality, a dream world charged with associations as magical as they are absurd.



Anna Domnick
Calm II
2013

In her ten-part series "Calm II," Anna Domnick grapples with the visualization of spiritual and material dissolution. The intensive engagement with landscape, which she brings into her artistic work as an autobiographical element, is transformed in "Calm II" into the extreme abstraction of concrete motifs. In five minimally varied landscape images, a radically deepset horizon opens up to the vaulted sky in the distance. The landscape is reduced to peaceful striations of color in the lower margins of the image, as topography assumes the form of layered pigmentations. These images are paired with figural studies of a female body—two nudes from behind arranged as a diptych, two images of skin and a contour disappearing into blackness. In the alternating series of images of landscape and body, Anna Domnick visualizes the reciprocal process in which spiritual and physical dissolution mutually determine on one another. While landscape is sublimated to a spiritual space, in the central image of the series the physical dissolves more and more into the blackness of the frame. Both landscape and human form solidify into a vision of the split between body and spirit.

Fachhochschule Bielefeld, Prof. Axel Grünewald, Prof. Dr. Anna Zika



Birte Kaufmann
The Travellers
2012

“Tinker” and “Gypsy Cob” are common names for horses of the Irish Cob breed, traditionally raised by Irish Travellers, who still rear them to this day. As recently as 40 years ago, these spotted horses still pulled the wagons of the gypsy clans across the country. According to Wikipedia, the Pavee, as the Travellers are officially known, are “an itinerant sociocultural group from Ireland.” They live among family clans, and speak their own language, deriving from Gaelic. Like all nomadic or seminomadic peoples, they are regarded with suspicion by current inhabitants and by the authorities. In German-speaking areas, as well, the word “Kesselflicker” (tinker) is a derogatory term for Travellers. Those who are settled avoid contact with itinerant people as much as possible—those who have no fixed residence and therefore stand outside society, are accused of all manner of criminal machinations. In earlier times, the Irish Travellers supported themselves through tinkering kettles and other domestic items in order to survive, sharpening knives, and shoeing horses. With the advance of time, these areas of employment have nevertheless virtually disappeared. Today, a large number of the Pavee in Ireland and England still cannot read or write, and aside from raising horses, rely on welfare for their survival. The Travellers belong to a closed society with its own rules and traditions. Birte Kaufmann was able to gain access to a few families, who were for their part extremely wary, and her photographs, which oscillate between documentation, narrative, and staging, afford an authentic look into an otherwise secret world.



Lioba Keuck
Couve e Coragem
2012

“Coal and Courage”—this phrase, which translated from Portuguese into German sounds like a socialist worker’s slogan, describes the reality of those who live at the margins of society often struggling for sheer survival. They are commonly emigrants from former Portuguese colonies (such as Angola, Mosambique, Brazil or Cape Verde), who live in dismally dilapidated settlements in the outskirts of Lisbon. To supplement their meager income, they have begun to cultivate the fallow lands around their stunted accommodations by growing vegetables. Provisional huts and tents, most built without official permits, surround small plots of land. In many places they are tolerated as long as no new inhabitants assert a claim on the land, or until the government arbitrarily summons excavators and without advance notice has everything razed in order to put a halt to the illegal occupation—at least symbolically. In making “Couve e Coragem,” Lioba Kueck researched the city’s slums, interviewing the residents to learn more about their stories. A combination of text, portraits, and artistic and documentary photographs provides a visual condensation of people seeking to extract the most positive perspective from their living conditions: working in and with the earth not only creates a sense of social togetherness and improves their meals, but also provides a feeling of purpose and validation—something that, faced with unemployment, or at best low-paying menial work, they seldom if ever experience.



Alwin Lay
Mod. CLASSIC
2010/2013

“Out of nothing comes nothing”—this could be Alwin Lay’s motto, or perhaps: “That which should happen does not always come to pass, but a great deal still all the same.” “mod. CLASSIC” is the name of a small type of espresso machine, first sold by the Italian company Gaggia at the end of the 1970s. Alwin Lay borrowed the title, as the espresso machine becomes a symbol of his work. Set within a transparent glass case, the “mod. CLASSIC” drowns in its own espresso. On top, a leftover black cube with a strong *crema*, and a booklet, a fake instruction manual for the Gaggie, which documents the “drowning” of the machine image by image. The original presentation of the machine, equally aesthetic and commercial, transcends its function through the production of coffee, and thereby also dissolves our image of it. Alwin Lay’s subject is the failure to fulfill expectations, the failure to make good on traditional patterns of operation and reflection. Through installations, sculpture, photography, and video, he continuously surprises the viewer in a thoughtful, humorous way that is nevertheless entirely appropriate to a “mod. CLASSIC.”

Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln, Johannes Wohnseifer, Mischa Kuball



Marian Luft
Back2Politics
2013

"If there's no revolution, then it's up to you to start one" ("Wenn keine Revolution herrscht, muss man sie eben herstellen") is the tag line of an article in *Die Zeit* on the newspaper series "Kursbuch" ("Course Book") by Hans Magnus Enzensberger. (Henning Marmulla: Enzensberger Kursbuch. Eine Zeitschrift um 68. Verlag Matthes und Seitz. 2011. Die Zeit Nr. 276 vom 26.11.2011). What reads as a reminiscence of Enzensberger's legendary speech on the occasion of the Paris uprisings of July 1968, could also hold for Marian Luft and his multi-part series "Back2Politics": just at a time when (in Germany at least) there is no revolution in sight, as an artist, one must—or can—always incite one. "The political as act of transcribing one condition into another"—the author's attempt at explanation is as vague as it is suggestive, and leaves us groping in the dark. If we look at the work, we are confronted by a multifaceted presentation of space made up of large format computer images. Like contemporary artistic and cultural productions, Marian Luft samples content and generates from it an entirely discrete aesthetic product. For the piece "Funtasies," for example, he uses a digital print on plexi-glass with programmed LED panels, on which he streams private images from tumblr. His "Tumblr Transparent" is composed of 310,000 individual images, a multicolored patchwork of snippets that say it all, or nothing. In the monumental print "The Aesthetic of the Political" (300x300 cm), the viewer is faced with an azure blue surface, at the center of which is an explosive, scattered plane of digital graffiti—a wild, incoherent assemblage of "political scribbles" (Marian Luft), whose lack of content can be read as an analogy for a dominant political *Un-Kultur*. The piece as a whole is accentuated by a shrill sound-collage, whose discordant polyphony serves as a musical counterpoint, exposing the hyper-realistic, hollowed-out glossy aesthetic of the surface image.



Stephanie Steinkopf
Manhattan – Straße der Jugend
2012

Two *Plattenbauten* in the middle of green space: what was once a desirable housing option in East Germany has become entirely out of fashion since the fall of the wall. Many places have reverted to bold urban restructuring plans for the notorious settlements—with some success, as for example in Schwerin. Often the housing blocks are simply torn down. “Manhattan,” the village residents in the middle of Brandenburg call the multilevel buildings that rise up abruptly from the idyllic landscape. “Straße der Jugend” (“Street of Youth”) is the name of the street that runs directly in front of the housing blocks. Twenty-three years after the *Wende*, one building stands completely empty; twelve to fourteen units are still occupied in the second. Those who were able have abandoned the dwelling. It took a long time before Stephanie Steinkopf was able to make contact with the residents there, and before they finally allowed her entrance into their everyday lives. Over four years, the photographer paid frequent visits to families living in the complex and gradually earned their trust. In her photographic essay, Steinkopf transports the viewer into the middle of a foreign life. Wedged in tight, run-down rooms with rickety furniture, between sofa cushions, stuffed animals, plastic Christmas trees, packaged salami and cans of beer: this is where these people eat and sleep, love and hate, argue and celebrate. *Der ganz normale Wahnsinn*—all the madness of everyday life. Not once does a glance out the window afford real air. Steinkopf’s images speak of unrealized hopes, agony, desolation, and welfare—conditions that not only apply to broad areas of East Germany, but also to many areas with rundown infrastructure—bringing the lackluster underside of Germany’s economic power into clearer focus.



Daniel Stubenvoll
Saubere Arbeit
2013

Daniel Stubenvoll is not afraid to ask the most fundamental questions: where does novelty come from, and how does it come about? In the basement of his school he finds the whisper of a possible answer: everything begins with a cornerstone—that is the foundation of every work, an idea which he sets into photography. Of this much Daniel Stubenvoll is certain: the work must be “clean,” like a building. Soliciting eleven of his fellow students from different artistic disciplines, he asks them to create a work about this cornerstone. From these works as well as his own cornerstone-photography, Stubenvoll curates a fictive exhibition and a real artist’s catalogue documenting the creation process, the cornerstone-pieces, the exhibition and the inspirations for his “Saubere Arbeit” (“Clean Work”). Citing the images of his fellow art students, he collects his images with foreign ones, and photographs them. Piece by piece, we become witnesses of a creation, which in the process of its becoming is compelled to confront the productive faltering of its own image—and the strengths of photography.

Kunsthochschule Kassel, Prof. Bernhard Prinz, Prof. Florian Slotawa



Christina Werner
PIPAL
2012/2013

"Germany and India 2011-2012: Infinite Possibilities": this is the name of a project initiated by the Goethe-Institut in New Delhi, in which Christina Werner was a participant. Among "infinite possibilities" the photographer sought out the "Sbarmati Riverfront Project" in Ahmedabab, an emerging metropolis in the state of Gujarat in Western India. The "Riverfront Project" is an infrastructure initiative in a region of economic expansion. It has as its goal the revitalization of the riverbank in order to make it more accessible to visitors. These are the structural parameters within which Werner developed the conceptual focus of her photographic work. Yet the visual strategies are pursued within a setting whose images are already largely cemented in our minds: India, a country of extreme social oppositions, of colors and aromas, sacred cows, and the impenetrable chaos of people, animals, rickshaws, and cars. The images of the old British colonial empire, of Bollywood films, and all the imaginable clichés the tourism industry uses to lure travelers to an exotic destination spanning tradition and modernity. "PIPAL" takes an entirely different approach: six so-called "Betonbilder" ("concrete images"), 12 snapshots, an herbarium case with leaves of the Bodhi (Pipal) tree, and an MDF panel form an ensemble of spaces bringing together different parts of the city side on both sides of the river. Christina Werner's installation becomes the Promenade it describes: the concrete images, the painted wood panels, later mounted on signs, offer as a commentary on the materials of modern architecture as on color-field painting. In the herbarium case lie the

leaves of the Bodhi tree that Werner collected on her walk along the Promenade, symbolizing the rapid growth of the city. The "snapshots" document the artist's impressions during her "promenade" along the river and the MDF panel plots her path within the topography of the site. At another level, the entire installation could be read as a metaphor for the cultural-historical development of India from colony to nation, thus closing the thematic circle. With a clear mooring in the conceptual, Werner's work is exemplary for how it manages to circumnavigate the cliffs of expected images, offering an entirely new way of seeing.

Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig, Prof. Tina Bara, Prof. Alba D'Urbano

In summary, "gute aussichten-junge deutsche fotografie 2013/2014" presents 107 pieces, 2 catalogues, 2 artist's books, 2 journals, 2 videos, 1 lightbox, 1 glass case, 1 poster, 1 sound installation, 1 herbarium, and 1 MDF plate.

Josefine Raab & Stefan Becht
14.10.2013