

Structures of Identity – Photography from The Walther Collection
29 June – 29 August 2018

In the exhibition *Structures of Identity*, Foam presents a selection of photographic works from The Walther Collection. *Structures of Identity* examines how photographers have used portraiture to affirm or challenge social stereotypes constructed around notions of race, gender, class, and nationality. Iconic works by photographers including August Sander, Richard Avedon and J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere are combined with the work of contemporary photographers such as Yto Barrada, Samuel Fosso, Zanele Muholi, and Guy Tillim. Works of vernacular photography, from a range of cultures and historical periods, are also on view.

Photographic portraits are more than mementoes of friends and family. They are markers of social identity. Reflecting on the ways that portrait photography has been deployed, *Structures of Identity* visualises the political and cultural factors that shape individual and collective subjectivities, with a particular focus on the relation between self-representation and social identity.

Since the earliest photographic technologies in the 1840s, individual portraits have been situated within vernacular archives denoting social hierarchies, from the family album to the police line-up. Standardised daguerreotype portraits, occupational and performative tintypes, *cartes de visite* depicting entertainers or ethnographic types, and criminal mugshots were all efforts to catalogue and monitor social normativity within emerging industrial economies and regimes. Many modernist photographic investigations into social representation and individual identity have employed the structuring devices of typology, taxonomy and seriality. In his seminal project *Antlitz der Zeit*, or *The Face of Our Time* (1929), August Sander organised his subjects into social groups, genders and generations, highlighting both the diversity of German nationalism and the individuality of each sitter. Echoing this structural approach, Richard Avedon's *The Family* (1976) and Accra Shepp's *Occupying Wall Street* (2011–12) create tightly organised series of individual portraits that in very different ways highlight the demonstrations and manipulations of political power within communal identity.

Structures of Identity deploys an approach that emphasizes the different ways that subjectivity and social identity are shaped and regarded within the history of the photographic medium, and illustrates the constant efforts of The Walther Collection to discuss and consider the history of photography beyond conventional temporal, cultural, and geographic boundaries.

The exhibition will open at Foam on Thursday 28 June 2018, with remarks by collector Artur Walther.

The Walther Collection is an art foundation dedicated to the critical understanding of historical and contemporary photography and related media. Through a program of original research, in-depth collecting, scholarly publications, and extensive exhibitions, The Walther Collection aims to highlight the social uses of photography and to expand the history of the medium. At its three-building campus in Neu-Ulm, Germany, its Project Space in New York City, and with traveling installations worldwide, The Walther Collection presents thematic and monographic exhibitions drawn from its expansive holdings of modern and contemporary photography and media art from Africa, China, Japan, and Europe, nineteenth-century European and African photography, and vernacular lens-based imagery from across the globe. The collection's exhibition program is complemented by public lectures and screenings, international scholarly symposia, and a critically acclaimed series of catalogues and monographs co-published by Steidl.

The exhibition is a collaboration between The Walther Collection, Neu-Ulm / New York and Foam.

Structures of Identity – Photography from The Walther Collection can be seen from 29 June to 29 August 2018 at Foam. Open daily 10am - 6pm, Thu/Fri 10am - 9pm.

Note to editors: For information and visual material please check www.foam.org/press or contact the Press Office of Foam on +31 (0)20 5516500 / pressooffice@foam.org.

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