

PRESS RELEASE

NEW WAYS OF SEEING: THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE 1920S AND '30S

30 JUNE TO 24 OCTOBER 2021

Exhibition Hall of the Department of Prints and Drawings

Press preview: 29 June 2021, 11:00 am

Frankfurt am Main, 8 September 2020. German photography from the 1920s and '30s oscillates between innovation and continuity. Not unaffected by the incisive social upheavals after the end of the First World War, unusual perspectives, different styles and contrasts became the means of expressing the changed living situations and political landscape. From 30 June to 24 October 2021, the Städel Museum is mounting an exhibition on the trends and movements in modern photography. It presents a selection of about 120 pioneering photographs from the Städel's own collection of photography, which comprises more than 5,000 images, and loans of works by prominent representatives such as Alfred Ehrhardt, Hans Finsler, Lotte Jacobi, Felix H. Man, Albert Renger-Patzsch, Erich Salomon, August Sander, Umbo, Paul Wolff or Yva as well as a number of lesser known photographers, such as Carl Albiker, Karl Theodor Gremmler and Paul W. John.

Between 1918 and 1939, photography influenced the art world and everyday life like in no other period. In seven thematic chapters, essential aspects of the artistic engagement with photography and its use in various contexts of use will be presented in the entire spectrum of their motifs. Historical magazines, books and posters complement the photographic works and exemplify their use in different media. The 1920s offered photographers numerous new areas of activity, from the illustration of magazines and books to advertising design. Yet this was not the only way of using photography that paved the way for its strong presence in public space. As a seemingly authentic reflection of reality, political movements also recognised it as a means of acquiring and controlling the masses. The new ways of seeing with the camera that developed in the Weimar Republic were seamlessly taken over after 1933. Unlike the vilification of the avant-garde in the visual arts, there were no artistic restrictions in photography – modern imagery had already firmly established itself in

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visual memory and was used in the National Socialist state for propagandistic purposes.

Curator: Kristina Lemke (Research Assistant for Photography, Collection of Modern Art, Städel Museum)

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Symposium: A scholarly symposium is taking place at the Städel Museum on 17/18 September 2020. It is dedicated to the late art historian, journalist and collector Wilfried Wiegand, who provided important momentum to the collection of photography at the Städel Museum. The results of the symposium will be incorporated directly into the exhibition. The symposium is being supported by the FAZIT-STIFTUNG.