

Biennale

Press release

21 February 2022, Mannheim/Ludwigshafen/Heidelberg, Germany

Photography in the central stations of Mannheim and Heidelberg.
The *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie* is collaborating with Deutsche Bahn for the first time.

Until 22 June 2022, photographs by three selected Biennale artists will be installed on a large scale in the central stations of Mannheim and Heidelberg. The two stations will be temporarily transformed into galleries. In Mannheim, excerpts from the series *Tools for Conviviality* by Anna Ehrenstein will be presented, in Heidelberg images from the series *Secret Sarayaku* by Misha Vallejo Prut and the project *Footprints in the Valley* by Eline Benjaminsen will be exhibited. The works share a critical view of the relationship between people, the environment, technology and the use of resources and their global consequences. The collaboration initiates the *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie*, which will take place in the three cities of Mannheim, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg from 19 March 2022.

Sabine Schirra, Chairwoman of the Biennale:

"This wonderful collaboration at the central stations in Mannheim and Heidelberg enables many people to have an unexpected encounter with artistic photography. The images of the Biennale artists enter everyday life at the highly frequented railway stations, shake people up, arouse curiosity and, in the best case, make them think. At the same time, they arouse interest in the Biennale in March. It has always been a concern of the Biennale to have an effect outside the exhibition houses in the cities, and this collaboration succeeds in an extraordinary way. Our thanks go to the artists and Deutsche Bahn for their openness to realise this project."

Andrea Kadenbach, Station Manageress for Mannheim and Heidelberg:

"Mannheim and Heidelberg are now art railway stations. If you want to experience art, you will not only find it in a museum or gallery, but also at the station. Stations connect people and places. Our guests should like to stay there and feel comfortable, be inspired and use their waiting time for an entertaining visit to an exhibition. I look forward to many more joint projects in our stations together with the *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie*."

The series *Tools for Conviviality*, which will be shown at Mannheim Central Station, is a multimedia project by the photographer and media artist Anna Ehrenstein in collaboration with the cultural workers Saliou Ba, Donkafele, Nyamwathi Gichau, Lydia Likibi and Awa Seck. In her work, Anna Ehrenstein questions the neutrality of digital technologies and the European perspective on ways of life in the West African region. With lightness and humour, she looks at the supposed freedom promised by smartphones and social media and addresses the socio-cultural consequences of digitalisation in a global context. *Tools for Conviviality* will be presented at the Biennale in the exhibition *Collective Minds* in Port25 – Raum für Gegenwartskunst in Mannheim, which deals with the internet as a medium for finding identity and new ways of life.

The photo series *Secret Sarayaku*, installed in Heidelberg Central Station, shows the daily life of the people of an indigenous community in Ecuador. Since 2015, photographer Misha Vallejo Prut has been documenting the Kichwa people of Sarayaku, who live in the Amazon rainforest. For decades, the people of Sarayaku have been resisting the extraction of oil in their tribal area, which is accompanied by environmental destruction and land degradation. Traditional

für aktuelle Fotografie

Biennale

knowledge is combined with cyber activism, and the village uses social media to make its struggle for the preservation of its habitat visible worldwide. Works from the *Secret Sarayaku* photo series can be seen from March in the Biennale exhibition *Contested Landscapes* at the Kunsthalle Mannheim, which is dedicated to the ecological challenges the world is facing today.

The photographer Eline Benjaminsen is the author of the second work on show in Heidelberg. In her project *Footprints in the Valley*, she examines the mechanisms and interrelationships of global CO₂ emissions trading. Starting with a certificate for the planting of a tree that she had received for the compensation payment of a flight, she asked herself who plants these trees, on whose land and with what justification. Her research led Benjaminsen to Kenya's Embobut Forest, where the indigenous Sengwer people who reside there have lived for centuries. Today, the region is the hidden scene of a conflict between local and global interests in the context of worldwide CO₂ emissions trading. Areas such as the Embobut Forest are being protected and used as CO₂ offset areas. The indigenous Sengwer population is being evicted, sometimes violently, and their human and land rights are being massively violated. On display at Heidelberg Central Station are 3D visualisations that exemplify how much CO₂ a single tree can bind. These 3D models were created with the help of an image measurement method called photogrammetry. In this way, the "value" of a tree can be determined. The series *Footprints in the Valley* will be on display during the Biennale in the exhibition *Changing Ecosystems* at the Heidelberger Kunstverein, which addresses the human-caused decline of natural ecosystems.

At Mannheim Central Station, the large-format photographs will be presented above the main entrance and in various shop windows in the station building. An explanatory station in the basement will provide passers-by with further information about Anna Ehrenstein's work from March onwards. At Heidelberg Central Station, the eight large-format works (each 4x3 metres) will be installed on the cross platform leading from the tracks to the entrance hall.

About the *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie* 2022

Under the title *From Where I Stand*, the third *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie* in Mannheim, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg (Germany) will focus on photographic positions between art, journalism and activism from 19 March to 22 May 2022. The artists selected by Iris Sikking, curator of the Biennale 2022, have in common that they address the relationship between man, nature and technology that is out of balance and explicitly take a stand on the resulting global crises. Based on personal experiences and using a wide variety of media and materials, they encourage us to reflect on the question of what a future worth living could look like. The Biennale comprises six exhibitions in six venues in Mannheim, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg with works by around 40 international artists, collectives and photographers.

Since 2005, the *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie* takes place every two years. For each edition, an internationally renowned guest curator is invited to develop six thematic exhibitions on a total of around 4,500 square meters in the most important exhibition houses throughout the three cities.

für aktuelle Fotografie

Biennale

+++++ The *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie* 2022 is supported by the cities of Mannheim, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg, with BASF SE as premium sponsor and many other supporters.
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Participating institutions

Heidelberger Kunstverein, Kunsthalle Mannheim, Kunstverein Ludwigshafen, Port25 – Raum für Gegenwartskunst (Mannheim), Wilhelm-Hack-Museum (Ludwigshafen), ZEPHYR – Raum für Fotografie in den Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen (Mannheim)

Further information and current image material for the Biennale can be downloaded from the press section at www.biennalefotografie.de

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