

**white and black**  
**photographs by otto steinert and timm rautert**

**23 May - 28 June 2014**  
**Opening 22 May 2014, 7 pm**

We are pleased to present, for the very first time, works by one of the most influential photographers of the twentieth century, **Otto Steinert** (\*1915 in Saarbrücken – †1978 in Essen), alongside works of his most eminent student, **Timm Rautert** (\*1941 in Tüchel).

Both photographers stand for remarkable and complex oeuvres, both were active as professors of photography, and both understand photography as a fully autonomous art – which they developed and continue to develop as such.

Steinert, a fully graduated medical doctor, was an autodidact as a photographer, indulging in photography since his early youth. In 1948, he received the opportunity to set up a photography class at the Staatliche Saarländische Schule für Kunst und Handwerk.

He there curated the exhibition trilogy *Subjektive Fotografie*, which founded his international reputation also as a curator. Later, in 1959, he was called to the Folkwangschule für Gestaltung in Essen, where Timm Rautert was his student in the 1960s.

The name Otto Steinert was omnipresent in every photo-pedagogical context in post-war Germany, which also attracted many international students.

With the term *Subjektive Fotografie*, Steinert defines photography as a wholly independent art – an autonomous mode of artistic expression. He is not seeking a representation of reality, of “objectivity”, but artistic composition instead, the idea and goal of which is subordinate to all photographic means.

In particular, these include the experimental possibilities of influencing the image in the dark room. Taken to the extreme: “Photography only arises in the dark room”.

Steinert addressed various subjects. At the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s, he took many photographs in Paris: cityscapes merge with experimental portraits and abstracted, strictly formal compositions. Inspired by the paintings of the Informel, his luminograms are particularly striking, in which the photographer holds his camera in the light of the street lanterns or automobiles for an extended exposure time, creating abstract compositions akin to brushstrokes.

Rautert after his studies initially devoted himself to photojournalism, working for magazines such as ZEIT, Merian and GEO, amongst others. Developing his artistic oeuvre at the same time, however, Rautert produces a highly multifaceted work. From 1993 to 2008, Rautert teaches as professor of photography at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in Leipzig.

Like Steinert, Rautert sets up a formal relationship to many subjects. Rautert, however, relates questions of pictorial composition to mankind and aspects of being human. Thus, his photographs from the late 1960s – depicting impressive architecture and urban details from New York and Japan – are always determined by the relationship between architecture and mankind. Questions of the individuality and uniformity of people clearly emerge – and, thus, questions of social roles within (future) society.

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This is best seen in Timm Rautert's series *The Amish*, which he produced in 1974 during a longer stay with the Amish community in Pennsylvania, USA. Confronted with the Amish ban on images – which a sign declaring “no photographing” hung on a tree of the village square vividly reminds – these photographs reflect a central aspect of photography: namely, the distance created by the camera.

The viewer clearly senses the spatial distance that Rautert respectfully chooses in the act of creating images – a distance that often exposes the ambivalence of photography. Heads are cast downwards, an arm is stretched out protectively waving the photographer away, or children curious about the camera are shown. Beyond their documentary quality and their psychological depth, therefore, many of the compositions also concern the question of expanding the limits of the representable.

The exhibition solely presents vintage prints, apart from a few exceptions!

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue.

## **Works in public collections (selection)**

### *Otto Steinert*

Museum Folkwang, Essen; Saarlandmuseum, Saarbrücken; Städel Museum Frankfurt/Main; Fotostiftung Schweiz, Winterthur; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA; The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, USA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.

### *Timm Rautert*

Art Collection Deutsche Börse AG, Frankfurt/Main; The Federal Collection of Contemporary Art, Berlin; Städel Museum, Frankfurt/Main; Museum Folkwang, Essen; Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig; Kunstmuseum Bonn; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt/Main; Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin; Dresden State Art Collections; The Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, USA; The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, USA; The Art Institute of Chicago, USA; The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, USA; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA.