

Press release

Museum Folkwang

Activist Photographs and Videos. Museum Folkwang shows Rafał Milach's *The Archive of Public Protests*

Essen, September 2, 2023 - From September 22, 2023 to January 1, 2024, the Museum Folkwang will show photographs and videos by Polish photographer Rafał Milach and *The Archive of Public Protests* in the basement. The archive was acquired for the Museum Folkwang collection with funds from the Press House NRZ Foundation. The photographs, videos and publications address political and social problems in Poland from 2015 to the present. The exhibition juxtaposes the activist archive of the Magnum photographer with press images from the Girardet photo archive.

Rafał Milach (b. 1978) is the initiator and co-founder of the 2019 collective *The Archive of Public Protests*, or *A-P-P* for short. The collective was founded as a reaction to the restrictions on the freedom of expression and the rule of law in Poland by the national conservative national conservative party PiS. The 18 photographers, activists and theoreticians who are currently involved theorists are recording the protests, which have since intensified, and are making their photographs and their photographs and texts for free use, in order to counteract the reporting of government-related media with their own images and their own images and narratives. In addition to restrictions on the freedom of the press, further topics include the ban on abortions, refugee and climate policy, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Rafał Milach rejects the claim of journalistic independence for his photographic works independence and instead becomes a solidary part of the protests. He shows pictures of crowds and the sometimes harsh rejection by state authorities. In his photographs, Milach often focuses on the faces of individual participants who have themselves become icons of the protest movements in Poland. The newspapers published by the collective also expand the activist potential by using the published images and messages in photographs of upcoming protests and mobilizing for further demonstrations.

On September 21, 2023 - the day of the exhibition opening - fifteen photographs will be wallpapered onto the exhibition walls as large-scale posters, thus transferring the aesthetics of public space into the museum. The immersive installation with photographs, videos, and typographic slogans will make the activist power of the protests tangible for the public.

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The exhibition juxtaposes the new acquisition of ***the Archive of Public Protests*** with selected press prints from the Girardet Photo Archive. The collection from the former Essen publishing house comprises around 100,000 photographs and has been part of the Photographic Collection at the Museum Folkwang since 1989 as a permanent loan from the Ruhr University Bochum. Using the example of protest photographs, especially from the 1950s, the distribution channels of the press prints are traced on the basis of the marked backs and the differences in content and structure of the activist form of protest and Girardet's publishing structures are put into relation.

Information

RAFAŁ MILACH

The Archive of Public Protests

22 September 2023 – 1 January 2024

Press conference: 21 September 2023, 11 a.m.

Curators: Thomas Seelig, Christopher Lützen

Admission: free

Opening: 21. September 2023, 7 p.m.

Press image



Rafał Milach (*1978)

The Archive of Public Protests:

Erworben mit Mitteln der Stiftung Presse-Haus NRZ 2023

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