Press release

Museum Folkwang

Grow It, Show It! – Major photography exhibition at Museum Folkwang highlights the cultural significance of hair and hairstyles

Essen, Germany, September 2024 – From 13 September 2024 to 12 January 2025, Museum Folkwang is presenting the exhibition *Grow It, Show It! A Look at Hair from Diane Arbus to TikTok*. The show highlights the role and meaning of hair and hairstyles in society, politics and everyday life. Ranging from iconic works such as Herlinde Koelbl's portraits of Angela Merkel to J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere's pioneering documentation of Nigerian hairstyles, the extensive exhibition provides an overview of the subject, showing that hair is far more than just a fashion accessory.

From Afro, locs, braids, beehive or taper – hair is an integral part of our everyday culture and offers unlimited design possibilities. How we choose to show or hide, grow or shave our head, facial and body hair is an expression of our personality, but also of our affiliation to social, political, religious or cultural communities. In the everyday tension between intimacy and public representation, we use our hair to show our individuality, conformity, rebelliousness or solidarity.

Photography, videos and film clips – an interweaving of media from historical works to current social media content
The thematic exhibition *Grow It, Show It!* approaches the multilayered significance of hair across a wide range of historical and contemporary photographs on around 1,400 square metres. In relation to the history of visual cultures, the exhibition not only looks at the subject of hair in the photographic discourse within the context of the visual arts. Fashion, magazine culture, social media, photo books, films, videos, performances and music clips also show the range of the extended photographic medium, on the one hand, and the thematic field of hair, on the other hand. The exhibition project presents a diverse selection of hair images that deliberately avoid fixed categorisations and instead offer associative links between the objects and materials. The show addresses the complex structure of hair – also by means of the open exhibition architecture, interweaving thematic and formal strands for the viewer as they explore and wander through the exhibition. This is complemented by quotes from literature, politics, science and pop culture, which open up new links between the works.

In this way, *Grow It, Show It!* tells a multitude of hair-centric stories through the combination of different times, contexts and media – stories that are constantly interwoven anew, both in the spatial and figurative sense.

Museum Folkwang

Artists and artworks

From photographers such as **Helmut Newton**, **Chaumont-Zaerpour** or **Suffo Moncloa,** who stage hairstyles not just as fashion accessories but as a central design element, to artists such as **Hoda Afshar**, **Thandiwe Muriu** or Maria Tomanova, who depict hair as a means of resistance and emancipation – the exhibition shows that images of hair and hairstyles are not only the subject of the cosmetics industry, but also of queer-feminist and postcolonial discourses. At the same time, the comprehensive themed exhibition explores how images of hair have consolidated and defined trends over time – and the central role played by the history of photography and current social media formats such as tutorials and ASMR videos.

Firmly anchored in the photographic canon is the large-scale series of works **by J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere**, who systematically documented the sculptural forms of Nigerian women's hairstyles in over a thousand photographs from the 1960s onwards. To this day, his work continues to influence a young generation of artists, as can be seen in the NFTs of the **Yatreda Art Collective**. They combine the new, such as blockchain technology, with the old by preserving historical narratives and cultural traditions and paying homage to the richness of Ethiopian culture through the art of hair with their 360-degree portraits.

The photographic works by **Samuel Fosso**, **Yinka Shonibare CBE RA**, **Herlinde Koelbl**, **August Sander** and rarely shown collections by **David Hill** and **Robert Adamson**, dating from around 1845, focus on social status and representation. They explore the question of the power-political and hierarchising dimensions of hair in social portraits. **Heather Dewey-Hagborg**, **Annegret Soltau** and **Sheung Yiu** explore hair as a material and biologically and energetically charged information carrier in their works. The artists **Bubu Ogisi**, **Rotimi Fani-Kayode**, **Laura Aguilar** and **Tunga, in turn,** explore the symbolism of hair in spirituality, ritual and performance in their works.

The fact that hair can transport and transform gender roles becomes clear in the queer interpretation of iconic photographs by **Diane Arbus**, **Ana Mendieta** and **Sabelo Mlangeni**. **Jürgen Baldiga's** work documents the drag community and the fight against AIDS in Berlin in the 1980s with relish and empathy. **Juan Pablo Echeverri's** staged self-portraits can be seen as a poster campaign in the city's public spaces. Editor and art director **Luis Juárez** has developed his own spatial translation in the exhibition from the queer photo magazine BALAM based in Buenos Aires.

Museum Folkwang

GROW IT, SHOW IT!
A Look at Hair from Diane Arbus to TikTok
13 September 2024 to 12 January 2025
Admission: € 10, € 6 (concessions)

Suffo Moncloa
Gucci/The Face Issue 9, 2021
Inkjet print, 118 × 86 cm
© Suffo Studio

Featuring works by:

Hoda Afshar, Laura Aguilar, Diane Arbus, Ellen Auerbach, AWA: la revue de la femme noire, BALAM, Jürgen Baldiga, Barber Turko, Carina Brandes, BRAVO, Nakeya Brown, Tessica Brown, Julia Margaret Cameron, Jim Carrey, Chaumont–Zaerpour, Heather Dewey-Hagborg, Rineke Dijkstra, Juan Pablo Echeverri, Anna Ehrenstein, Lotte Errell, Jason Evans, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Samuel Fosso, Pippa Garner, André Gelpke, Weronika Gęsicka, Camilo Godoy, Nan Goldin, Ulrich Görlich, Henriette Grindat, Carola von Groddeck, F. C. Gundlach, Johann Hinrich W. Hamann, Mona Hatoum, Florence Henri, Florian Hetz, David O. Hill & Robert Adamson, Thomas Hoepker, Ewald Hoinkis, Peter Hujar, Graciela Iturbide, Lebohang Kganye, Jens Klein, Peter Knapp, Herlinde Koelbl, Paul Kooiker, Anouk Kruithof, Andreas Langfeld, Alwin Lay, Zoe Leonard, Madame d'Ora, Mahmoud Manaa, Ana Mendieta, Sabelo Mlangeni, Suffo Moncloa, Marge Monko, Thandiwe Muriu, Nontsikelelo Mutiti, Emmanuel Ndefo, Helmut Newton, Satomi Nihongi, Nicholas Nixon, Fred Odede, Bubu Ogisi, Mobolaji Ogunrosoye, J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere, Ulrike Ottinger, Helga Paris, Doris Quarella, Rebecca Racine Ramershoven, Alfred A. Rau, Eugene Richards, ringl + pit, Roxana Rios, Torbjørn Rødland, Thomas Ruff, RuPaul, August Sander, Viviane Sassen, Max Scheler, Yinka Shonibare CBE RA, Lorna Simpson, Slavs and Tatars, Annegret Soltau, John Stezaker, Tabboo!, Hank Willis Thomas, Wolfgang Tillmans, Marie Tomanova, Tunga, Danielle Udogaranya (Ebonix), Dorothea von der Osten, William Wegman, Tom Wood, Yatreda, Leyla Yenirce, Sheung Yiu

Accompanying programme and publication:

A publication on the exhibition *Grow It, Show It!* will be launched by DISTANZ Verlag (€ 40, ISBN 978-3-95476-690-1) comprising a comprehensive series of images and interdisciplinary contributions by Shahram Khosravi, Annekathrin Kohout, Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju, Adebayo Quadry-Adekambi, Bernd Stiegler and Lori L. Tharps, among others. It will also be accompanied by an extensive programme of events and educational programme, including a digital symposium, artist talks, performances, workshops, film screenings and hair-related activities.