

## Press release

# Museum Folkwang

## **On the occasion of Robert Frank's 100th birthday: With *Be Happy*, Museum Folkwang dedicates its own presentation to the exceptional photographer**

**Essen, 9.8.2024 – Robert Frank would have turned 100 years old in 2024. To mark this birthday, Museum Folkwang is showing 34 photographs and selected documents on the history of the collection and exhibitions in the presentation *Be Happy* from 23 August 2024 to 5 January 2025. Robert Frank has been represented at Museum Folkwang with his works and numerous exhibitions since the 1980s. In the series *Histories of a Collection IV (Sammlungsgeschichten IV)* the internationally renowned photographer and important representative of American avant-garde film is being honoured once more at Museum Folkwang.**

Robert Frank (1924 - 2019) was born in Zurich to Jewish-Swiss parents. After training as a photographer in Michael Wolgensinger's Zurich studio and producing his first works, he emigrated to the USA in 1947. During the first few years, he travelled back and forth between the continents. From 1950 he lived permanently in New York and from 1970 he alternated between the metropolis and the remote town of Mabou (Nova Scotia) in Canada. His photo series *From the Bus* was also taken in New York in 1958. This series of photographs, shot from a moving bus, plays a central role in his oeuvre and marks the transition to moving images. Frank himself describes the series as a journey "thru the city". This aspect of "thru", being in between something, is reflected in various areas of his life. He alternates between photography and film as well as a life between city and country. In 2010, the series *From the Bus* was acquired for the Museum Folkwang's Department of Photography.

Robert Frank was closely bound to Museum Folkwang throughout his life: The photographer and Ute Eskildsen, Head of the Department of Photography from 1979 to 2012, enjoyed a continuous exchange and a resulting friendship. Between 1987 and 2008, three major exhibitions of Robert Frank's work were shown in Essen as part of this close partnership. In 1989, the experimental film *Hunter* was shot, in which the New York-based artist captures his perspective on the Ruhr region. The last Robert Frank exhibition *Books and Films, 1947-2014* took place at Museum Folkwang in 2015. Four years later, Frank died at the age of 94. Nine years after his last exhibition in Essen, parts of his life's work are presented again with the collection presentation *Be Happy*. On display are photographs from the Department of Photography, letters and documents relating to Frank's exhibition history at Museum Folkwang as well as his first video film *Home Improvements* (1985). With works from key series such as *The Americans* (1958), the complete series *From the Bus* (1958) and other, partly very personal,

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photographs, montages and collages, the exhibition space focuses on Frank's complex and multifaceted oeuvre.

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication *Histories of a Collection IV* which explores the decades-long relationship between Robert Frank and Museum Folkwang. The publication series *Histories of a Collection (Sammlungsgeschichten)*, which has been in existence since 2019, explores the collection and history of Museum Folkwang. In this way, the individual collection histories of Museum Folkwang are revealed chapter by chapter.

## Information

### ROBERT FRANK

#### Be Happy

23 August 2024 – 5 January 2025

## Publication

Robert Frank. *Histories of a Collection IV*

ISBN: 978-3-9826137-2-7 (German edition), ISBN: 978-3-9826137-3-4 (English edition), Price: 5€

### Sat, 23 August 2024, 7 p.m.

Talk

Ute Eskildsen and Thomas Seelig in conversation on Robert Frank

As part of the summer festival. Admission free.

## Press image



### Robert Frank

*Be Happy*, 1981

Silver gelatine print, 23 x 29 cm

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