

Press release

Museum Folkwang

Photography in Essen: The Michael Schmidt archive transfers to the Department of Photography of the Museum Folkwang. The Essen Center for Photography expands its collaboration and founds an association.

Essen, 27.2.2024 – The Museum Folkwang, the Folkwang University of the Arts, the Krupp Historical Archive and the Ruhr Museum are intensifying and institutionalising their collaboration in order to strengthen Essen as an international location for photography. This will also be made possible by the support of the City of Essen, which will provide special funding for the realisation of the plans and projects over the next two years. The transfer of the Michael Schmidt Archive to the Museum Folkwang in Essen by the foundation of the same name marks the beginning.

Archive Michael Schmidt moves to Essen

The archive of the renowned German photographer Michael Schmidt (1945-2014) is being transferred to the Museum Folkwang on permanent loan. The holdings of the "Stiftung für Fotografie und Medienkunst mit Archiv Michael Schmidt", which was established during the photographer's lifetime, will thus significantly expand the Essen museum's photography collection. Michael Schmidt was associated with the Museum Folkwang and the Essen-based photographic institutions throughout his life through exhibition and collection activities, scholarship programs and teaching. The archive not only includes an extensive compilation of five central groups of works by the photographer from all creative periods from the beginnings to the last 126-part work *Lebensmittel* (2006-10), but also all negatives, 2,000 prints with the character of an artwork and over 20,000 contact sheet, working and test prints. Dummies for book projects, correspondence, personal documents and Michael Schmidt's private library, which consists of around 1,000 monographs, 300 catalogues and 400 magazines, are also part of the collection. This extensive collection will form the starting point for further research and presentation of the photographer's work in an international context at Museum Folkwang. The portfolio will be transferred from Berlin to Essen in fall 2024. Two new positions in the field of science and photo restoration will look after the Michael Schmidt archive at the Museum Folkwang.

Foundation of the association "Center for Photography Essen"

Back in spring 2019, the four institutions based in Essen - Folkwang University of the Arts, Krupp Historical Archive, Museum Folkwang and Ruhr Museum Foundation - joined forces as a network to form the "Essen Center for Photography". In future, the joint activities of the center will be coordinated by a registered non-profit association based in the SANAA building at the Zollverein UNESCO World Heritage Site. The association was founded on January 31, 2024, and its board

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members are Prof. Dr. Steffen Siegel (Chairman, Folkwang University of the Arts), Manuela Fellner-Feldhaus (Krupp Historical Archive), Stefanie Grebe (Ruhr Museum) and Thomas Seelig (Museum Folkwang).

The central task of the center is to promote cooperation between the four partner institutions in the scientific, archival, conservational and curatorial fields with a special focus on the history and present of photography in Essen and the region, as well as networking with national and international photographic institutions. The center will work across institutions to open up and research Michael Schmidt's rich and still current oeuvre as well as other photographic estates and archives, present them to the public and communicate them to a wide audience. To mark the takeover of the Michael Schmidt Archive, the Center for Photography Essen is preparing an international symposium on the institutional handling of photographic bequests and estates for February 2025. Further symposia are being planned for the following years.

Teaching and research

As an important photography teacher, Michael Schmidt influenced a generation of photographers - in the meantime also from Essen - with his unique approach to photography between documentation and artistic appropriation. In future, Schmidt's work will form a thematic focus of its own in the courses offered at the Folkwang University of the Arts. Together with the Museum Folkwang, research projects at PhD level will also be initiated to promote a deeper understanding of Schmidt's work and to contextualize his work within the wider context of media and art history.

Press image



Marga Kingler

Michael Schmidt in der Ausstellung *Waffenruhe*, 1988
im Museum Folkwang
KB-Negativ aus der Sammlung Stiftung Ruhr Museum
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