

Press material

Museum Folkwang

RAFAŁ MILACH

The Archive of Public Protests

22 September 2023 – 1 January 2024



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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

© Rafał Milach / Archive of Public Protests

Biography

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Rafał Milach, born in Gliwice in 1978, is a photographer, publicist and activist living in Warsaw. He studied photography at the Krzysztof Kieślowski Film School in Katowice, where he now teaches as a lecturer. Since 2023, he has been a full member of *Magnum Photos*. He is interested in socio-political problems in Poland as well as forms of visual protest, which he pursues with his camera and as an activist. Milach has been a founding member of the internationally active documentary photographer collective *Sputnik Photos* since 2006, as well as founder and initiator of The Archive Public Protests (A-P-P), which records protests against right-wing conservatism in Poland and supports them in solidarity. Rafał Milach makes his photographs and messages visible on the A-P-P website and magazines. He also shows his work in solo, group and relevant thematic exhibitions worldwide. Originally trained as a graphic designer, some of his visually complex and analytically precise publications have won numerous awards. His artistic works are part of important art collections in Poland and are increasingly finding their way into international collections.

Selected solo exhibitions:

2022 *Strike*, Fonderia 20.9 Gallery, Verona
2021 *Strike*, Jednostka Gallery, Warschau
2020 *Common Ground*, Polnisches Institut, Düsseldorf

Selected group exhibitions:

2023 *Crossing Lines. Politics of Images*, Photo Arsenal, Foto Wien Festival
2022 *Ukraine. Images of War*, Photo Elysee Museum, Lausanne

Publications and awards:

2022 *Strajk*, Author Book Award, Les Rencontres Photographiques d'Arles, Arles
2018 *I am warning you*, The Polish Photobook of the Year, Łódź
2014 *The Winners*, GOST, London
2012 *7 Rooms*, The best photography book, POYi, Missouri
2008 World Press Photo Award, Amsterdam

Collections:

MoMA Warschau
MUFO, Krakow
Brandts Museum for Kunst & Visuel Kultur, Odense

Websites:

archiwumprotestow.pl ([The Archive of Public Protests](#))
rafalmilach.com

Facts & Figures

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RAFAŁ MILACH

The Archive of Public Protests

22 September 2023 – 1 January 2024

Curators

Thomas Seelig, Museum Folkwang, Essen
Christopher Lützen, Museum Folkwang, Essen
Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung

Exhibition space

277,16 m²
3 rooms

Exhibits

13 photographs and 4 slogans as large-scale posters
3 video stations
Approx. 300 photographs as digital data on screen
Photographs from Girardet-Photo-Archive
Strike Newspaper
Strajk Publication
Protest flags

Publication

Strike Newspaper (Strike Newspaper #9), 2023

Opening hours

Tue to Sun 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thu & Fri 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., closed on Mondays

Public holidays during the exhibition period

Open on these public holidays: German Unity Day (3 October), All Saints' Day (1 November), Boxing Day (26 December), New Year's Day (1 January).
Closed: Christmas Eve (24 December), Christmas Day (25 December), New Year's Eve (31 December)

Free admission

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Artist talk, events

Sa, 14.10., 3 a.m.: Karolina Gembara – *The Archive as Protests* (in English)

Sa, 18.11., 3 a.m.: Annette Vowinckel – *The Rearrangement of Images. Press photography in NRW in the 1950s*

Fr, 08.12.2023, 5 a.m.: Exhibition tour with Rafał Milach *The Archive of Public Protests*
In cooperation with DGPh

Visitor services / Booking of guided tours

info@museum-folkwang.essen.de, +49 (0)201 88 45 444

Directions

Transport connections from Essen main station: tram and underground lines 101, 106, 107, 108 and U11 in the direction of Bredeney or Messe Gruga to the Rüttenscheider Stern (the way to the Museum Folkwang is signposted, approx. 7 minutes' walk).

On foot from Essen Hauptbahnhof (main station): 15 minutes' walk from the south exit of Essen Hbf. Follow the signs and the blue glowing glass stones in the floor.

By car: Navigation info: Museumsplatz 1, 45128 Essen

Press images

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The imagery may only be used in the context of reporting on the presentation **Rafał Milach. Archive of Public Protest** (22. September 2023 – 1. Januar 2024) at Museum Folkwang. No work may be cut nor altered in any way. Images on the Internet may not exceed a resolution of 72 dpi with a maximum size of approx. 20x20 cm. The usage for social media must be requested independently in advance. We kindly ask to send us a copy.



Rafał Milach (*1978)

The Archive of Public Protests:
"Abortion Means Life" Protest against Total Abortion Ban.
Warsaw, 01.12.2021

© Rafał Milach / Archive of Public Protests



Rafał Milach (*1978)

The Archive of Public Protests:
Protest against Constitutional Court's Declaration Criminalising Abortion in case of Fatally Damaged Foetus. Warsaw, 22.10.2020

© Rafał Milach / Archive of Public Protests



Rafał Milach (*1978)

The Archive of Public Protests:
Protest of Belarusian Diaspora in Poland on the Anniversary of Presidential Elections that Started a Belarusian Revolution. Warsaw, 08.08.2021

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Rafał Milach (*1978)

The Archive of Public Protests:

"365 Days of Heroism, 365 Days of Support" Protest on the First Anniversary of the Full-Scale Russian Invasion of Ukraine. Warsaw, 24.02.2023

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Rafał Milach (*1978)

The Archive of Public Protests:

For Your Freedom and Ours. Antifascist Street Party on the Occasion of Independence Day. Warsaw, 11.11.2021

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