

Thomas Kern
je te regarde et tu dis

Enquête photographique fribourgeoise

11.12.2020 - 21.02.2021

Fri Art is hosting an exhibition by Thomas Kern, winner of the 12th edition of the *Enquête photographique fribourgeoise* photo prize awarded by the Culture Department of the State of Fribourg. Born in 1965, the Aargauer photographer chose to take his camera out and go in search of the inhabitants of the canton. Taken with an analogue camera, this enterprise bore fruit in the form of sixty black and white portraits. Forty are on show in the exhibition. The serenity that emanates from his pictures invites us to reflect on a certain ethics of the way we look, the body and the face.

The photographer employs a person-to-person approach, according to an experiential principle, listening to what's going on around him, heading off in one direction and then another, sometimes taking a false turning. Everyone who has been photographed lives in the canton but what's going on in these portraits goes much further than this common denominator. The photographer's subjects assert natural poses within their environment but this quest for authenticity is paradoxical: an unattainable horizon, or perhaps an unattainability in terms of images themselves. They often have a steady look in their eyes, a particular attention given to the denouement of the situation staged. The eyes looking off into the distance testify all the same to a certain introversion. More than simply a quantifiable character, what is transmitted by the image perceived is rather a form of intensity.

The protocol and conditions imposed by the photographer on himself to create the images are minimal but they do allow chance and intuition their place. In the multiplicity of choices that instants in time offer, his approach brings together his decision-making process with that which transpires spontaneously. He thus honours the experiential dimension of photography that consists in remaining in this shared world. While an image is always alone, isolated, it is nevertheless in a relationship to what surrounds it, to those who make it what it is. It exists simultaneously in the abstract time of the document and in a present time of those it mobilises, who contemplate it, enter into discussion in its presence.

In parallel with this process, repeated in different ways each time, the artist has created a series of ink drawings, as if to take a step back and allow a calmness, the imagination, an abstract dimension to comment on his project. Set back in a corner of the space, you can put your eye up to a hole at the top of a cone of wood. The image revealed is a scan of an old photo found in the attic at Fri Art. The photographer has chosen just a single example from a cardboard box full of souvenir vignettes: one with the particularity of presenting a double exposure, a bit like the two sides, the front and the back of the assembled image.

The exhibition contains extracts from a poem by Myriam Wahli, which is available in the exhibition catalogue. The video in the basement brings together all the photos taken by the photographer exactly as they were developed on contact sheets in chronological order.

Thomas Kern was born in Switzerland in 1965. Since 1989, after his photography training in Zurich, he has been on the road as a photojournalist. In 1990, he co-founded the Swiss photography agency Lokal Photos. A central theme of his work over many years has been the impact of war and conflict on the everyday lives of those affected, for example in Northern Ireland, Kurdistan, the former Yugoslavia and Haiti. From 1998 to 2006 he lived as a freelance photographer in San Francisco.

Thomas Kern is a two-time winner of the World Press Awards and has received several federal grants. His work is represented in numerous collections and has been exhibited at the Stephan Witschi Gallery (Zurich), the Rathaus Gallery (Aarau Art Commission), the Fotostiftung Schweiz (Winterthur), the Fotomuseum (Winterthur), and the Rencontres de Photographie d'Arles in France, among others.

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List of works

From left to right

Room 1

Victor Cavazzuti, Courtepin, septembre 2019
Klara Raemy, Charmey, mai 2020
Morgan Lucca, Fribourg, juillet 2020
Heidi Meier, St. Ursen, Juli 2020
Rodrigue Rubangisa, Fribourg, mai 2020
Beat Schmutz, Düringen, März 2020
Kaziwa Raim, Givisiez, juillet 2020
Jean-François Haas, Courtaman, juillet 2019
Caroline Saavedra, Fribourg, juillet 2020
Latifa Gherabi, Tentlingen, Juli 2020
Tomas Wüthrich, Liebistorf, November 2019
George Flood-Hunt, Dompierre, mars 2020
Charles Ridoré, Villars-sur-Glâne, juillet 2020
Antoinette Vonnez, Estavayer-le-Lac, août 2019
Daniel Witoszek, Bussy, juillet 2019
Nina Mohr, Rechthalten, Mai 2020

Room 2

Valérie Baeriswyl, Saint-Aubin, mai 2020
Marc Pauchard, Fribourg, juillet 2020
Immaculée Mosoba, Fribourg, juillet 2020
Erich Offner, Alp Kaiseregg, September 2019
Georgette Perrin-Hänggeli, Semsales, février 2020
Attila Coursin, Fribourg, juillet 2020
Audrey Meylan, Vuissens, mai 2020
Christophe Feyer, Fribourg, juillet 2020
Une pleureuse, Romont, avril 2018
Eveline Currat und Christiane Köstinger, Düringen, Juli 2020
Berhanu Girma, Fribourg, mars 2020
Sans titre, 2020, archival ink jet, innova natural cotton fibre, indian ink, 108 x 76,4 cm
Venelina Harizanova (2ème depuis la droite), Fribourg, septembre 2019
Ariel Rohrer, Fribourg, mai 2020

Floor installation

Labourer les champs, 2020, Paper on aluminium, c. 180 x 140 cm

Wall installation

Quelqu'un d'autre, 2020, Zograscope, Video, 26,5 x 38 x 76,4 cm

Room 3

Fayiza Akanda Cissé, Fribourg, mars 2020
Hubert Peyer, Semsales, février 2020
Sans titre 03, 2020, Indian ink on paper, 65 x 50,2 cm
Jann Krättli, Rechthalten, Mai 2020
Doris Aeberhard, Murten, November 2019
Michel Chardonnens, Fribourg, mars 2020
June Schädelin, Liebistorf, Oktober 2019
Matthieu Corpataux, Fribourg, juin 2020
Sylvain Bouillard, Düringen, Januar 2020
Sans titre 04, 2020, Indian ink on paper, 65 x 50,2 cm
Manfred Peissard, St. Silvester, Juli 2020

Portaits 30 x 30 cm

Archival ink jet, innova natural cotton fibre, 325g
Edition of 5

Portaits 50 x 50 cm

Archival ink jet, innova natural cotton fibre, 325g
Edition of 5

Portaits 100 x 100 cm

Archival ink jet, innova natural cotton fibre, 325g
Edition of 3

The exhibition Thomas Kern, *je te regarde et tu dis* is organised together with the Amt für Kultur, Staat Freiburg.



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