

Photo/Politics/Austria

mumok Museum moderner Kunst
Stiftung Ludwig Wien
Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Wien

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Exhibition dates
July 12 to February 3, 2018

Press conference
Wednesday July 11, 2018, 10 am

Opening
Wednesday, July 11 2018, 7 pm

The exhibition *Photo/Politics/Austria* undertakes a photographic time journey through Austrian history, from 1918 through to the present. The project, evolved in cooperation with the Photoinstitut Bonartes, displays around 100 works from the mumok photographic collection supplemented by loans from select national and international institutions. Seen through the lenses of such photographers as Friedl Dicker, Seiichi Furuya, Ernst Haas or Dora Kallmus, a collage-like image emerges from 100 years of Austrian contemporary history in the form of a manifold panorama of the country in changing times.

German journalist, sociologist, film theorist and philosopher of history Siegfried Kracauer, who had been forced to immigrate to the United States prior to the beginning of the Second World War, asked how history is at all describable and saw decisive parallels between historiography and photography. In his last, incomplete work *History – The Last Things Before the Last* (2009, Frankfurt am Main), Kracauer set out to critically examine the reflections he had made in his penetrating analytical work in film and photography.

Kracauer compared the reality of film (photo) camera with historical reality, and concluded that many phenomena were barely perceived when not captured by the *camera*: as with the concept of reality, he saw photography as “part formed, part amorphous”, while in his comparative study of media he sought to counter the realistic aspect by way of a formative characteristic. Neither of the disciplines are capable of attaining the state of perfection, but rather reflect the present only as a section. In both he saw the merging of the spontaneous and the receptive, and in this interplay hoped for the emergence of a way of seeing which was neither ideologically coloured nor purely subjective in nature.

Austrian history from 1918 to 2018 has been marked by an interplay of events: beginning with end of the monarchy, the two world wars, the Holocaust and its devastating consequences, the post-war period was similarly defined by crises and upheavals, which demanded political conviction from the artists. No photography has, per se, a political dimension, whereby its scope of influence is bestowed upon it through text and context. However, once anchored in consciousness, it then begins to emanate iconically on our conception of past events. The works of Heimrad Bäcker – who’s photographic estate is owned by the mumok –, Herbert Bayer, Günter Brus, Friedl Dicker, Seiichi Furuya, Ernst Haas, Dora Kallmus or Gerhard Rühm are exemplary of this process. As Kracauer discovered, it is matter of capturing the lifeworld as an agglomerate of particular events, developments and situations. By means of its photographic exhibits, *Photo/Politics/Austria* disposes over the potential to depict Austrian history from a novel perspective.

Curated by Monika Faber and Susanne Neuburger

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