

# BG

Press Kit  
Berlin, 28.11.19

Fritz Eschen, Mädchen und Junge vor einer Liftdrahsäule. © SLUB Dresden / Deutsche Fotothek / Fritz Eschen. Scan: Anja Elisabeth Witte



# Fritz Eschen

**Thomas Friedrich**  
**Research Grant in Photography**  
**23.10.19 – 24.2.20**

**BERLINISCHE  
GALERIE  
MUSEUM OF  
MODERN ART**

# BG

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Fritz Eschen, Max Liebermann (in seinem Atelier am Pariser Platz), um 1930.  
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## Fritz Eschen

### Portraits of a Picture Journalist

23.10.19 – 24.2.20

The Berlinische Galerie has been hosting the Thomas Friedrich Research Grant in Photography since January 2014. Initiated and funded by the designer, editor, collector and historian of photography Manfred Heiting (The Heiting Library Trust), it enables a young researcher to spend a year working with a particular set of holdings in the Photography Collection. The findings are published in a Research Report. In 2018 bursary-holder Maximilian Westphal investigated Fritz Eschen (1900–1964). Eschen’s work, largely unknown today, is on show until 24 February 2020 in its own room in the permanent exhibition.

Maximilian Westphal founded his research on 721 photographs and the copious correspondence with Fritz Eschen kept in the archives of the Berlinische Galerie. Photography researchers have so far valued Fritz Eschen primarily for his portraits of public celebrities and his moving pictures of Berlin in the immediate post-war period.

Fritz Eschen’s career took off in the early 1930s on a promising note. However, when the Nazis took power in 1933 it was abruptly terminated because of his Jewish origins. The only thing that saved him from deportation was his marriage to Gertrude, who was not Jewish. Although he had few opportunities to work under the Nazis and suffered discrimination and oppression, many of his pictures continued to appear in various publications.

When the Nazi regime was toppled in May 1945, Fritz Eschen immediately resumed his photography in Berlin. Not only was he a sought-after journalist and portraitist, he also enjoyed great success with numerous books of photography, primarily about Berlin. In both types of publication he was at pains to integrate photographs from his early years. It is now evident from the research findings that right up until his death Eschen’s pictures were valued regardless of the political system of the time and did well in the market, although to varying degrees. These continuities, at first glance contradictory, were the springboard for the research. Closely intertwined with this are the other themes of the report “Portraits of a Picture Journalist”: Fritz Eschen’s visual idiom, his choice of subjects and his multi-faceted personality.

#### Thomas Friedrich Research Grant: Jury and Benefactors

The Berlinische Galerie boasts one of Germany’s leading photography collections with about 80,000 works. It reflects Berlin’s contribution to the evolution



of photography from the middle of the 19th century until the present. Major themes are portrait and urban photography, novel trends in photographic technique during modernism and new departures in auteur photography since the 1970s. It still includes one of the highest-quality collections on the history of photography in the GDR and outstanding works from the contemporary photography scene.

The Research Grant with an annual purse of €15,000 was created with the support of Manfred Heiting, the designer, editor, collector and photography historian of international repute, who collaborates closely with the museum in its implementation. It is named after the Berlin-based curator, publisher, essayist and historian of photography Thomas Friedrich (1948–2011). His passion for photography and his research instincts set a fine example and also a challenge to investigate as yet unresearched holdings in the Berlinische Galerie.

The content and themes for research are drawn up by an expert jury composed of:

Janos Frecot (ex-Curator of the Photography Collection at the Berlinische Galerie), Ulrich Domröse (present Curator of the Photography Collection at the Berlinische Galerie), Dr Ingrid Wagner (Senate Department for Culture and Europe) and Manfred Heiting as an informal member.

### **Publication of Research Findings**

The Research Reports written by holders of Thomas Friedrich Research Grants are published in the museum's own series "Forschungsberichte". The November 2019 issue is called "Fritz Eschen: Portraits of a Photojournalist" (published by the Berlinische Galerie, author: Maximilian Westphal, 72 pages, 69 illustrations, price: € 24.50).

### **Exhibition Catalogue**

Berlinische Galerie, 72 pages, 69 images, 24,50 Euro, german/english  
ISBN: 978-3-940208-61-3

### **Press Images**

[berlinischegalerie.de/en/press-release/thomas-friedrich-research-grant](http://berlinischegalerie.de/en/press-release/thomas-friedrich-research-grant)

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## Biography

### Fritz Eschen

#### 19.1.1900

Born in Berlin. Son of Leopold Eschen, a Jewish draper and reserve army officer, and his wife Therese

#### 1928

Eschen began working as a photo-journalist.

#### 1930

First publications of his pictures in the press

#### 1933

Second marriage to Gertrude "Lipsy" Thumm

#### 4.10.1933

The Nazis enacted their "Editors Law", which restricted Eschen's work as a photographer.

#### 1934

Listed by the Chamber of Trades as the "owner of a photography business". Eschen continued to work with different publishers, e.g. for Associated Press, Linden-Verlag and Deutsche Reichsbahn

#### 1938

Application to emigrate to the United States (rejected in 1939)

#### Around 1938

Began teaching at the Jewish College in Potsdam. Later lectured for the Jewish Community in Berlin until 30 April 1941

#### 1941

Eschen's first wife Rose and their son Peter were deported to the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau and murdered by the Nazis.

#### 1941-1945

A "privileged mixed marriage", as the Nazis called it, shielded Eschen from deportation, but he had to perform forced labour in Berlin.

#### 1943

Interned during the final round-up of Jews working in Berlin factories. After protests on Rosenstrasse, where his wife Lipsy took part, Eschen was released.

#### 1944

Eschen's son Thomas died when a doctor refused treatment on anti-Semitic grounds.

#### 1945

After the war Eschen soon resumed freelancing as a photo-journalist for numerous newspapers and magazines

#### 1954

Picture editor at Die Neue Zeitung. Numerous other book publications

#### 1964

Fritz Eschen died in Melk on the Danube on 19 September 1964 while travelling for a book project.

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## Exhibition

### text

Since January 2014 the Berlinische Galerie has hosted the Thomas Friedrich Research Grant in Photography. Initiated by the designer, editor, collector and historian of photography Manfred Heiting, it enables scholars to spend a year working on a set of holdings in the Photographic Collection. In 2018 the research report was devoted to the photographer Fritz Eschen (1900–1964).

In the early 1930s Fritz Eschen had made a name for himself in Berlin as a press photographer. After the National Socialists came into power in 1933, however, he was increasingly exposed to repression, humiliation and danger on account of his Jewish origins, and from 1941 he was conscripted as a forced labourer. His marriage to Gertrude, who was not Jewish, was the only thing that saved him from deportation.

Despite the growing restrictions, he was able at first to carry on working as a photographer. Some of his pictures were even published during the Nazi period. Eschen's photography met with recognition during his lifetime – regardless of changing political circumstances in Germany. The exhibition illustrates the continuity in his visual idiom with its sober objectivity, experienced composition and occasional delight in experiment. Only the snapshot character of some images taken in the immediate post-war years stands out.

The research report "Fritz Eschen: Portraits of a Photojournalist" considers not only the photographs, but also the multi-faceted personality and turbulent life of the photographer.



## **Exhibition catalogue**

### **Portraits of a Picture Journalist**

Published on the occasion  
of the Thomas Friedrich Research Grant  
in Photography

#### **Editor**

Berlinische Galerie

#### **Publisher**

The Heiting Library Trust

#### **Author**

Maximilian Westphal

#### **Format**

23,3 x 27,6 cm

#### **Pages**

72 pages

#### **Illustrations**

69 illustrations

#### **Languages**

German and English

#### **ISBN**

978-3-940208-61-3

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24,50 €

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## Press Images

Fritz Eschen



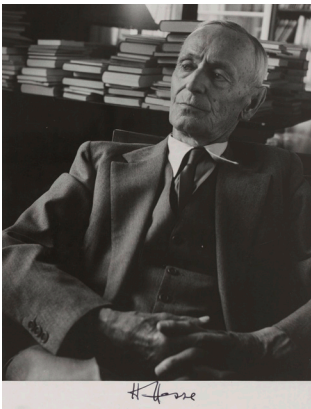
Fritz Eschen  
Berlin, Gedenkbibliothek, 20.04.1957  
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Repro: Anja Elisabeth Witte



Fritz Eschen  
Das Gesicht der Fliegerin, Ely Beinhorn, um 1930  
© Berlinische Galerie  
Scan: Anja Elisabeth Witte



Fritz Eschen  
Selbstporträt mit Rolleiflex, um 1960  
© Berlinische Galerie  
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Fritz Eschen  
Hermann Hesse, 23.06.1955  
© Berlinische Galerie  
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Fritz Eschen  
Mädchen und Junge vor einer Litfaßsäule  
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Fritz Eschen  
Max Liebermann (in seinem Atelier am Pariser Platz), um 1930  
© Berlinische Galerie  
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Fritz Eschen  
Sonnenstrahlen im Hauptbahnhof Frankfurt a.M., vor 1945  
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Admission  
12 €, reduced 9 €

Opening hours  
Wed–Mon 10 am–6 pm  
Tue closed