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Press Kit
Berlin, 11.10.23



Falk Haberkorn, Schonung #2, 2003/04 © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2023

Greenery

Plants in contemporary photography

12.10.23–22.1.24

BERLINISCHE
GALERIE
MUSEUM OF
MODERN ART



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Greenery Plants in contemporary photography

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Lofty firs, dense mangroves, bizarre pistils – the shapes created by the plant world are prodigious. Embedded within their own complex, highly sensitive ecosystems, plants intertwine with human culture in many different ways.

Contemplating them can soothe the nerves, offer food for thought and trigger powerful emotions such as fear or anxiety. Plants have found favour as material for photographic techniques and experiments since the early 19th century.

The exhibition “Greenery. Plants in contemporary photography” takes up this multifaceted theme. It features 68 present-day works, most of them from the museum’s Photography Collection, which examine the often ambivalent relationship between humans and plants through the eye of the camera.

Six artistic perspectives

Falk Haberkorn (*1974 East Berlin) plays with the contradictions between a romantic reverence for forests and the environmental impacts and commercial interests that threaten them. The artist describes his technique as a “visual interrogation” of things purportedly plain to see”. His enigmatic work “Clearing” triggers emotions and arouses memories of fairy tales and legend in Western cultures.

Mimi Cherono Ng’ok (*1983 Nairobi, Kenya) imbues her images of plants, printed like clip-pings on rice paper, with personal emotions. With her strong awareness of the mutability of our surroundings she also travels to tropical climate zones. She takes photographs in the Dominican Republic, on the margins of urban settlements and in the gardens and parks of São Paolo and Nairobi.

Susanne Kriemann (*1972 Erlangen) has a keen sense of life’s fragility on our globalised planet. For her series “Mngrv polymersday” (2020) she took photographs among the Indonesian mangroves on Pulau Bintan, where ocean pollution has led to waste from human civilisation becoming entangled with the fragile ecosystem. The involuntary amalgamation of flora and synthetic junk such as fishing nets and plastic bags is depicted by this artist as a unity.

Andrzej Steinbach (*1983 Czarnkow, Poland) created his twenty-part series “Ashtray and Yoga Mat” (2023) at the invitation of the Berlinische Galerie. The artist consulted 132 historical photographs of plants, fungi and minerals in the Folkwang-Auriga-Archive (1928–1932), choosing those that he found most interesting as pictures. He then matched his selection to photographs of consumer

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goods and everyday objects. Nature and culture are no longer antithetical but connected. He invites the viewer to consider the interplay between things made by human hand and things that grow naturally.

“Sculpture, object or living plant?” asks Stefanie Seufert (*1969 Göttingen), whittling the ever-green tree down to pure form with her photography. The conifer, captured in front gardens and parks, is the motif for her series “01-1 – 1-10” (2006–10), which pursues ambivalence and comparison. Can her series be read as reflecting documentary typologies and does a single image signify anything more than itself? Stefanie Seufert explores the properties of photography, beginning where pictures defy genre classification.

Ingar Krauss (*1965 East Berlin) takes his photographs in the Black Forest, in Brandenburg and in Norway. In his seemingly harmonious compositions he tracks down tensions between human interventions in the forest and indomitable nature. Stacked logs, branches propped against trees, scattered deadwood and heaps of twigs are the result of both profit-oriented and sustainable forestry management. These multiple human orderings characterise the woodlands of Europe.

The exhibition encourages visitors to respond to their own emotions, to sharpen their environmental awareness and to perceive the harmony between nature and culture.

Artists:

Mimi Cherono Ng'ok (*1983 Nairobi, Kenya)
Falk Haberkorn (*1974 East Berlin)
Ingar Krauss (*1965 East Berlin)
Susanne Kriemann (*1972 Erlangen)
Stefanie Seufert (*1969 Göttingen)
Folkwang-Auriga Verlag featured by Andrzej Steinbach (*1983 Czarnków, Poland)

Press Berlinische Galerie

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Press images

berlinischegalerie.de/en/press-release/greenery

Online tickets

bg.berlin/en/tickets

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#berlinischegalerie

Berlinische Galerie
Berlin's Museum of Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture
Alte Jakobstraße 124–128
10969 Berlin
berlinischegalerie.de

Admission 15 €, concessions 9 €
Every Thu 5 – 8 pm reduced admission

Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun 10 am – 6 pm
Thu 10 am – 8 pm
Tue closed

Artists

Mimi Cheron Ng'ok

*1983 in Nairobi, Kenia

Falk Haberkorn

*1974 in East Berlin, lives and works in Leipzig

Education:

- 1993–94
Russian and Bohemian Studies at Humboldt University, Berlin
- 2003–2006
master class with Prof. Timm Rautert, Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst, Leipzig

Solo exhibitions (selected):

- 2014 Flüchtig hingemachte Männer, KLEMM'S, Berlin

Group exhibitions (selected):

- 2021
The Future of Cities. Not for Granted, Halle 14, Leipzig
- 2020
Preis der Zukunft / Pochen Biennale, Wirkbau Chemnitz
Ihr. SENTIMENTALITÄTEN IN DEUTSCHLAND, Kunstraum Potsdam, Potsdam

Collections (selected):

- Berlinische Galerie
- Zabłudowicz Collection, London, GB

Ingar Krauss

*1965 in East Berlin, lives and works in Berlin and the Oderbruch

Solo exhibitions (selected):

- 2022
Ingar Krauss. Der harte Kern der Schönheit, Galerie Springer, Berlin
- 2020 Ingar Krauss, Bjorn & Gundorph Gallery, Aarhus, Sweden
- 2019 Naturen, Galerie Camera Obscura, Paris, France

Group exhibitions (selected):

- 2022
Dorfleben – Fotografien seit den 1970 er Jahren bis heute, BLMK, Dieselkraftwerk Cottbus
- I Put a Spell on You. Fotoarbeiten und Skulptur, Goldwerk Galerie, Rostock
- 2021
BLÜHSTREIFEN zwischen Traum & Zaun – Gärten im Fokus der Kunst, Kunsthalle Erfurt
- 2019
Sleep with the Fishes, Robert Mann Gallery, New York, USA
- 2018
Ins Offene – Fotokunst im Osten Deutschlands seit 1990, Kunstmuseum Moritzburg, Halle

Collections (selected):

- Biblioteca Panizzi, Reggio Emilia, Italy
- Bowdoin Museum of Art, Brunswick, USA
- Hasselbladfoundation, Göteborg, Sweden
- Kunstmuseum Dieselkraftwerk Cottbus
- Kunstsammlung der Ostsächsischen Sparkasse, Dresden
- Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA

· Stiftung Schloss Neuhausen, Neuhausen

· Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck, Austria

Susanne Kriemann

*1972 in Erlangen, lives and works in Berlin

Education:

- 1997
Studied under Joseph Kosuth and Joan Jona at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Stuttgart
- 2000
“Programme de recherche” at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, Paris, France
- Rijksakademie, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Teaching:

- 2012–2017
Advisor Van Eyck Academie Maastricht, Netherlands
- 2017–2023
Professor of Art Photography, Staatlich Hochschule für Gestaltung, Karlsruhe

Solo exhibitions (selected):

- 2021
Forest, Frst, t like teamwork, Salonul de proiecte, Bucharest, Romania
- 2020
Fotografien Neu Ordnen: Gestrüpp, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg
- 2018
Canopy, canopy, CCA Wattis, San Francisco, USA

Group exhibitions (selected):

- 2024
The Lives of Documents - Photography as Project, CCA Montreal, Canada
- Image Ecology, C/O Berlin Foundation
- 2022
Mining Photography, MK&G, Hamburg
- Takeover, Gropius Bau, Berlin
- 2021
Beuys Open Source, Belmacz Gallery, London, GB
- 2020
The Prenumbral Age, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland

Collections (selected):

- Berlinische Galerie
- Belvedere Museum, Vienna, Austria
- Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg

Stefanie Seufert

*1969 in Göttingen, lives and works in Berlin

Education:

- 1998–2001
studied photography at Lette Verein, Berlin
- 2001–2003
guest photography student at University of the Arts, Berlin

Solo exhibitions (selected):

- 2023
Lecture in the Artist Series, Penumbra, USA
- 2022
Stefanie Seufert: Sliced Time, Laura Mars Gallery, Berlin

Group exhibitions (selected):

- 2023
EXPOSURE, Camera Austria International, Graz, Austria
- SchlagLicht, Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank, Berlin
- Luise Marchand / Stefanie Seufert, Laura Mars Gallery, Berlin
- Touch. Politiken der Berührung, Amtsalon, European Month of Photography, Berlin
- Direct Contact: Cameraless Photography Now, Eskenazi Museum of Art, Bloomington, USA
- 2022
Vogelschau und Froschperspektive. Fotografie für Kinder, Fotografische Sammlung der Kunstbibliothek/Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
- 2019
Bauhaus und die Fotografie. Zum Neuen Sehen in der Gegenwartskunst, NRW-Forum Düsseldorf, Kunstbibliothek/Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kunsthalle Darmstadt

Collections (selected):

- Berlinische Galerie
- DZ Bank Kunstsammlung, Frankfurt
- Kunstbibliothek/Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
- n.b.k. Berlin

Andrzej Steinbach

*1983 in Czarnków, Poland, lives and works in Berlin

Education:

- 2017
Masterclass with Prof. Heidi Specker, Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig

Solo exhibitions (selected):

- 2023
Sender Empfänger, Galerie Conradi, Hamburg
- 2022
Verschont mein Haus, zündet andere an, Kunsthalle Osnabrück
- 2022
Modelle und Verfahren, Kunstverein in Hamburg
- 2019
Last Train to Cool, KV — Verein für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig e.V.
- 2018
Antarktika. Eine Ausstellung über Entfremdung, Kunsthalle Wien, Austria

Group exhibitions (selected):

- 2023
Planet Earth: 21st Century, Folkwang Museum, Essen
- SchlagLicht, Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank, Berlin
- Ocular Witness - Schweinebewusstsein, Sprengel Museum, Hannover
- Bodies of Identities, Casino Luxembourg, Luxembourg
- 2021
The Louis Roederer Discovery Award, Les Rencontres de la Photographie d'Arles, Arles, France



· 2018

Being: New Photography 2018,
MoMA - Museum of Modern Art,
New York, USA

Collections (selected):

- Berlinische Galerie
- Folkwang Museum, Essen
- Fotomuseum Winterthur,
Switzerland
- MoMA - Museum of Modern Art,
New York, USA
- Sprengel Museum, Hannover

Exhibition texts

About the exhibition

Plant life interweaves with human culture in many different ways, not least as a subject for scientific research, literary contemplation and artistic depiction. Since the early 19th century, algae, leaves and shrubs have found favour as material for photographic techniques and experiments. Besides, photosynthesising plants and photography have something in common: they owe their existence to light.

This exhibition addresses the multifaceted relationship between humans and plants. Here the species – whether fir, mangrove or rhubarb – is not merely a motif but the springboard and framework for a creative process.

Photographers and artists focus on human interventions in the vegetation system or observe the flora of the global South. Their works can trigger emotions or invite reflection on the interplay between things made by human hand and things that grow organically.

All living creatures are connected in a planetary energy loop whose equilibrium and viability are acutely threatened in times of climate crisis and biodiversity loss. The exhibition encourages visitors to respond to their own emotions, to sharpen their environmental awareness and to perceive the harmony between nature and culture.

Mimi Cheron Ng'ok

Traveling in the tropics with a strong awareness of the mutability around us, Mimi Cheron Ng'ok has an all-encompassing relationship with plant life. Photographing in the Dominican Republic, on the margins of urban settlements and in the gardens and parks of São Paulo and Nairobi, the images of vegetation, presented here like clippings, are snapshots of her personal emotions. Plants generate familiarity and offer solace. 18 different motifs, including palm leaves and banana trees, recur in the grid-like arrangement. The larger-than-life montage feels almost overpowering.

Folkwang-Auriga publishing house

Between 1924 and 1932 the writer and philosopher Ernst Fuhrmann (1886–1956) commissioned over 4,000 images of plants for his steadily growing archive from photographers such as Lotte Jacobi and Fred Koch. He wanted these macrophotographs, by shifting scale and often focusing on detail, to free our gaze for “the essence”, as he noted in 1930 in his book “Die Pflanze als Lebewesen“. Fuhrmann published and exhibited his visual research, encouraging people to see plants as complete living beings in their own right. Financial woes caused the publishing house hosting the picture archive to keep changing its name and company status. For simplicity we refer to it here as Folkwang-Auriga publishing house.

Falk Haberkorn

A narrow path opens up between bare coniferous trunks on pale forest earth before vanishing into the darkness. In “Schonung“ (“Clearing”) Falk Haberkorn investigates the ambiguous theme of the forest. As a photographic motif it often symbolises unspoilt nature. Haberkorn, however, plays with the contradiction between romantic reverence and the threat posed to forests by both environmental impacts and commercial interests. The enigmatic quality of the image triggers emotions and evokes memories of fairy tales and Western myths. The artist describes his technique as a “visual interrogation” of “things purportedly plain to see”

Ingar Krauss

Stacked logs, branches propped against trees, scatterings of deadwood and heaps of twigs are traces of forestry management, both profit-oriented and sustainable. Europe's woodlands reflect human ordering in all its diversity. In the Black Forest, Brandenburg and Norway, Ingar Krauss tracks down tensions between sculptural wooden forms and rampant growth. His harmonious compositions, aided by central perspective and a consistent depth of field, pick out the incongruities between human intervention and indomitable nature.

Susanne Kriemann

Susanne Kriemann took the photographs for “Mngrv polymersday” (2020) in the Indonesian mangrove forests on Pulau Bintan. Pollution from the ocean has caused waste from civilisation to become entangled in this fragile ecosystem. Each work is in two parts distinguished by the camera perspective and by imprints of plastic waste collected locally. The artist

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transfers these structures directly by printing them straight onto photographic paper using bunker fuel discharged into the ocean from industrial fishing combined with colour pigment. The involuntary amalgamation of synthetic junk and plant life is depicted as a unity.

This work is the result of close exchange with the tourism and research centre at Desa Wisata Pengu-dang on Pulau Bintan, Indonesia.

Stefanie Seufert

Stately treetops in deep green: Stefanie Seufert photographs evergreen confers in parks and front garden against a grey background. It is an ideal motif for her series “01-1 – 1-10”, which pursues multiple meanings and comparisons. Without any spatial or narrative reference points, the tree is reduced by central perspective and close cropping to a form. Seemingly neutralised, it can now be perceived as a functional object, as a sculpture, as a portrait or as “plant life”. Might the series also be read as reflecting documentary typologies and does a single image signal anything more than itself? Stefanie Seufert explores the properties of photography, beginning where pictures defy categorisation.

Andrzej Steinbach

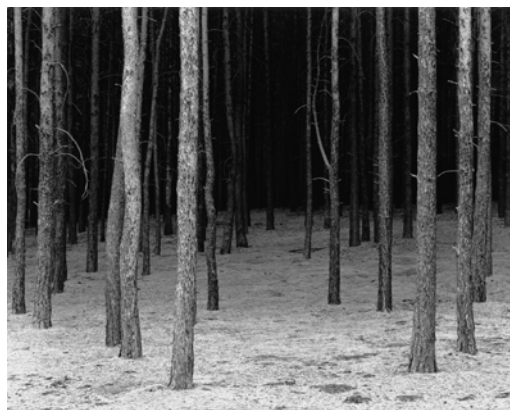
Andrzej Steinbach created his series “Ashtray and Yoga Mat” (2023) at the invitation of the Berlinische Galerie. He consulted 132 historical photographs of plants, fungi and minerals in the picture archive of Folkwang-Auriga publishing house (1928–1932) and chose the ones that interested him from a pictorial angle. The artist then matched his selection with twenty photographs of consumer goods and everyday objects. Nature and culture are no longer anti-thetical but connected. We are invited to consider the interplay between things made by human hand and things that have grown naturally. Steinbach has produced a sculptural display to show the historical macrophotographs and his own works.

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Press Images

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Falk Haberkorn, *Schonung #2*, 2003/2004
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2023



Stefanie Seufert, *1 - 07*, 2008
© Stefanie Seufert



Ingar Krauss, *Ohne Titel*, aus der Serie: *HOLZ*, Schwarzwald 2018
© Ingar Krauss



Susanne Kriemann, *Mngrv polymersday (oliveyellowrib_RAL1020)*, 2020
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2023



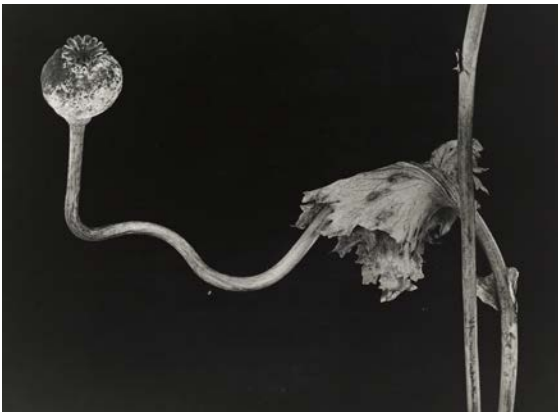
Mimi Cherono Ng'ok, *Untitled*, 2020
© Mimi Cherono Ng'ok



Andrzej Steinbach, Ohne Titel, aus der Serie: Aschenbecher und Yogamatte, 2023
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2023



Folkwang-Auriga Verlag, Unbekannte*r Fotograf*in, Compositae 16.
Calendula officinalis, Ringelblume, um 1930
© Rechtsnachfolge unbekannt, Repro: Anja Elisabeth Witte



Folkwang-Auriga Verlag, Unbekannte*r Fotograf*in, Papaveraceae. Papaver somniferum,
Gartenmohn, Samenkapsel, um 1930
© Rechtsnachfolge unbekannt, Repro: Anja Elisabeth Witte



Folkwang-Auriga Verlag, Fred Koch, Solanaceae. Atropa belladonna,
Tollkirsche, Stengelverzweigung, undatiert
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Admission 15 €, concessions 9 €
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Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun 10 am – 6 pm
Thu 10 am – 8 pm
Tue closed
Admission for groups and schools:
Wed–Fri from 9 am
(Online registration essential)

Plants and minerals in photographs from the Folkwang-Auriga publishing house

“It is an actual fact: if you think the world is boring, just look at it magnified 1:10. You will discover an entirely new environment (...) – in this dimension everything is simply indecent, pictures are shown that the police would forbid on the spot – it is a huge surprise to stumble so casually across a new world that is alive and not stuffed.”
Ernst Fuhrmann, *Die ganz andre Welt 1:10, 1930*

Between 1924 and 1935 the writer and philosopher Ernst Fuhrmann (1886–1956) oversaw the collection of a sizeable photographic archive that could be used in publications and exhibitions to reveal a hitherto hidden repertoire of forms from the organic world. “No doubt fragrance and colour are the beautiful thing about plants,” he commented, “but it is the structure that is quintessential, interesting and biologically significant, and photography both separates the beauty of the form from the colour and fragrance and allows the viewer to focus on the essence of the plant.”

Among the photographers who collaborated with this venture and with his publishing houses, which bore various names due to several bankruptcies, were Albert Renger-Patzsch (1897–1966), Fred Koch (1904–1947), Lotte Jacobi (1896–1990) and Else Thalemann (1901–1984), who approached these plant forms in the style of New Objectivity. Unlike Ernst Haeckel and Karl Blossfeldt, who in the spirit of art nouveau had taken great pains to tease out the ornamental value of plants and plant parts, Fuhrmann and his team were keen to present the plant as an independent, authentic living creature. He was especially intrigued by the similarities between plants, humans and animals. Thousands of single shots, most of them taken between 1928 and 1930 by the young Fred Koch, were designed to render visible “the function of the organs, the members, the skin and the glands,” as the writer Franz Jung, a friend of Fuhrmann’s, recalled.

These photographs have always held out a great fascination for their viewers. Alfred Döblin, the Berlin-based author who wrote the novel “Berlin Alexanderplatz”, was not alone back then in raving about Ernst Fuhrmann’s book of photographs “Die Pflanze als Lebewesen” [The Plant as a Living Creature]:

“What is one to do? One cannot eat animals and it turns out that plants are living beings too. I am scared now to bite into a cabbage leaf. Fuhrmann says in his overview: ‘Only a superficial gaze suggests that the plant is passive, that it is swayed like a dead object by the wind and the rain and at best puts up silent resistance to the forces of nature.’ (...) Analogistics are his method. He applies them with rigour and instinct. There is talk of the plant’s mouth and stomach. Fuhrmann would have it that the plant possesses every conceivable organ.”

Although the photographs taken under Ernst Fuhrmann as “art director” also appeared in exhibitions from 1930, Fuhrmann and the photographers who worked with him did not see their pictures primarily as artworks but as documenting the secret life of plants and exposing it with the aid of a camera lens, enlargement, managed lighting and excellent pictorial composition: “This world does not open up at the first moment,” concluded a reviewer when the photographs went on show at the Frankfurt Kunstverein in 1930: “But for anyone able to see forms, it does not take long – against the opaque black background they will spot the multiplicity of shapes, figures, linear and bodily form-energies (...) and an appropriate boundary of scale is always upheld, so that the microcosm of the plant is never pulled distortively asunder into a pseudomacrocosm. Neither more nor less is achieved than conveying what is natural.”

In 1930 Fuhrmann began to request photographs of minerals as well as plants. In his view, they were natural forms that grew at an extremely slow pace and “graveyards” of life, and as such they belonged equally to the abundant formal repertoire of the organic world. He could discern germination points and traces of growth just as well in crystals and rock formations.

A century or so after they were produced, the photographs collected by Folkwang-Auriga publishing house have lost nothing of their specific appeal and their mysterious aura.