

Exhibition: *In the Now: Gender and Nation in Europe, Selections from the Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl Photography Collection*

On View: November 14, 2021–February 13, 2022

Location: Resnick Pavilion



(Image captions on page 4)

(Los Angeles—September 30, 2021) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art presents *In the Now: Gender and Nation in Europe, Selections from the Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl Photography Collection*, featuring photo-based artwork made after the year 2000 by nearly 40 women artists born or working in Europe. The exhibition explores the ways in which artists and societal forces are challenging traditional descriptive categories of gender, nation, and photography. *In the Now* highlights a selection of works from the collection of Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl, which were recently donated to LACMA and the Brooklyn Museum. The joint acquisition includes significant works by Yto Barrada, Uta Barth, Natalie Czech, Josephine Pryde, and Shirana Shahbazi and new works will be added to the collection over the next decade.

“We are grateful to Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl for his generous gift of important works by women photographers working in the new millennium and for his commitment to the scholarship of this field,” says LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director Michael Govan. “The collection bolsters LACMA’s prominent holdings of contemporary photography, which includes self-portraits from the Audrey and Sydney Irmas Collection as well as the Robert Mapplethorpe Archive. We are excited to join forces with the Brooklyn Museum, a leader in the study of feminist art.”

“The Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl photography collection serves as a time capsule of the first two decades of the 21st century and initiates an exciting partnership with the Brooklyn Museum,” say Salvesen and Schillo. “The joint acquisition with the Brooklyn Museum provides an opportunity to collaborate on building the next decade of acquisitions. We look forward to seeing how artists capture the 2020s.”

In the Now is co-organized by Britt Salvesen, Curator and Head of the Wallis Annenberg Photography Department and the Prints and Drawings Department at

LACMA; Eve Schillo, Assistant Curator, Wallis Annenberg Photography Department at LACMA; and Drew Sawyer, Phillip Leonian and Edith Rosenbaum Leonian Curator of Photography at the Brooklyn Museum. Following the presentation at LACMA, the exhibition will travel to the Brooklyn Museum in 2023. The Annenberg Foundation has made a generous grant to support LACMA's presentation of the exhibition.

About the Exhibition

In the Now is organized in three thematic sections: gender, nation, and photography, and seeks to question and broaden traditional notions of what constitutes womanhood, Europe, and the medium of photography. Many artists in the exhibition contend with representations of the body but have individual perspectives on such issues as beauty, femininity, objectification, and what it means to be an artist who identifies as a woman in the 21st century. Likewise, these artists, while born or based in Europe, may or may not position their practice geographically or in accordance with nationalistic assumptions around identity. Some are grappling with the legacy of Soviet rule, while others have emigrated from elsewhere in the world. Finally, wide-ranging material and conceptual approaches by these artists testify to the expediting force of technology, which has made photography subject to greater circulation, alteration, and abstraction. The exhibition seeks to question and broaden what constitutes each of these categories.

Exhibition Highlights

In her series *Photo-Souvenirs*, Carolle Bénitah (Morocco, b. 1965, active France) investigates time, memory, and identity by reinterpreting photographs from her family's archive. Born in Morocco, Bénitah moved to Paris as an adolescent to study fashion. From this perspective of distance, she rediscovered her family's albums and began to contemplate their portrayal of past identities, including her own. First, she selected, scanned, and created new prints of the original photographs. Then, honing her talent at needlework, she embroidered patterns onto them with bright red thread. ***Le déguisement (The Disguise)*** (2013) was taken on the occasion of a primary school celebration of Purim, the Jewish holiday for which it is customary to wear costumes. Bénitah echoed the tradition by stitching veils over each child's face and allowing loose ends to pool at the bottom of the frame.

Marlene Haring (Austria, b. 1978, active England) takes up hair as a charged, gendered symbol, a powerful, physical marker of femininity and desirability. From Aphrodite to "the bombshell," long, fine, blonde tresses are key attributes of the most recognizable archetypes of Western art history and popular visual culture, belying the vast diversity of hair color and types in the worldwide populace. In her work ***Because Every Hair is Different*** (2015), Haring pushes this association to an absurd extreme, transforming herself into more of a surrealistic creature than an icon of feminine beauty. Haring's gesture, at once performance, installation, and photography, complicates the link between hair and beauty: potentially, hair is also burdensome and grotesque, demanding endless investment of time and money.

Iris Hutegger (Austria, b. 1964, active Switzerland) has described her stitched photographs as “real images of fiction.” They begin in the landscape, specifically the mountainous region of Switzerland where the artist lives. While hiking, she takes color photographs which she then prints in black and white, assigning them numbers rather than location identifications. This first series of steps removes them from the specificity of their locale, rendering them almost abstract. Adding in color by way of her sewing machine, Hutegger creates a new realm, blooming with foliage unlike what could appear in reality. As seen in *LSNr. 1408 420* (2014) and *LSNr. 1408 421* (2014), emotional dimension of the stitching is two-fold: it adds imagined color and life, and shifts our sense of scale from a vast mountainous expanse to a minutely patterned surface. When depicting landscapes, Hutegger is careful to note her point of reference is not nature, but a mental space.

Eva Kotátková’s (Czechoslovakia [now Czech Republic], b. 1982, active Czechoslovakia) three vignettes titled *Parallel Images [kotat_15_32_320]*, *Parallel Images [kotat_15_32_321]*, *Parallel Images [kotat_15_32_36]* (2015) feature two figures in silhouette wielding various devices that suggest forms of control. Having grown up during the Soviet regime’s power over the former Czechoslovakia, Kotátková creates collages, performances, and site-specific installations that explore the individual’s relationship to social structures and institutions such as hospitals and schools. Drawing on the aesthetics of Czech surrealism and absurdist literature from the 20th century, she often sources her pictorial and textual information from books on psychology, medicine, and social science, and finds narrative inspiration in the archives of local institutions, like the Bohnice Psychiatric Hospital outside of her native Prague.

In *Untitled, September 2006* (2006) by Hannah Starkey (Northern Ireland, b. 1971, active England), a pregnant woman stands waist-deep in water, her body silhouetted against a large expanse of windows. The cinematic scene is at once tranquil and full of suspense. Since moving to London in the mid 1990s from her native Belfast in Northern Ireland, Starkey has been making singular, large-scale photographs of women in public spaces like this one. The photographer typically hires actors or models to pose for her, adding props and scouting architectural settings with symbolic resonances that question the documentary nature of photography and its representation of gender. Starkey often leaves her photographs untitled with the addition of the month and year in which the image was completed. While the choice to provide a date gives additional context and suggests a potential clue, the meaning of the image remains open to interpretation.

About the Acquisition

Today, LACMA and Brooklyn Museum announced the joint acquisition of more than 200 photographic works by women artists from the collection of Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl, a Houston-based art collector and philanthropist. Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl’s generous gift will be supplemented over the next 10 years by annual acquisitions that

aim to augment and diversify LACMA and Brooklyn Museum's permanent holdings. Further, Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl's gift supports curatorial research and scholarship over the next decade. The joint acquisition of the Haukohl Collection marks LACMA's first long-term partnership with the Brooklyn Museum.

Credit

This exhibition was co-organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Brooklyn Museum.

Generous support is provided by The Annenberg Foundation.

All exhibitions at LACMA are underwritten by the LACMA Exhibition Fund. Major annual support is provided by Meredith and David Kaplan, with generous annual funding from Kevin J. Chen, Louise and Brad Edgerton, Edgerton Foundation, Emily and Teddy Greenspan, Marilyn B. and Calvin B. Gross, Mary and Daniel James, Kelsey Lee Offield, Lenore and Richard Wayne, and Marietta Wu and Thomas Yamamoto.

About LACMA

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of more than 147,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90036. lacma.org

Image captions: Ulla Jokisalo, *Wasteland*, 2015, © Ulla Jokisalo, digital image courtesy of the artist; Sarah Pickering, *Landmine*, 2005, © Sarah Pickering, digital image courtesy of the artist; Iris Hutegger, *LS-Nr. 1408 – 420*, 2014, © Iris Hutegger, photo courtesy of the artist

Press Contact

press@lacma.org | 323 857-6522

Connect with LACMA



@lacma