

Press Release

The Brooklyn Museum Presents *In the Now: Gender and Nation in Europe, Selections from the Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl Photography Collection*

On view in the Center for Feminist Art, the exhibition includes forty-seven women artists, including Yto Barrada, Bettina von Zwehl, Sarah Pickering, and Vanessa Beecroft, and examines gender, nationhood, and the male-centric development of photography as a medium.

On view March 8–July 7, 2024



In the Now: Gender and Nation in Europe, Selections from the Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl Photography Collection unites forty-seven emerging and established women artists who are expanding and challenging notions of gender, nationhood, and the practice of photography itself. Drawn from a recent gift of the Haukohl Photography Collection to the Brooklyn Museum and Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the exhibition highlights photo-based artwork made since 2000 by women artists born or working from more than sixteen European countries. Building on the first iteration of the exhibition, on view at LACMA in 2021, the Brooklyn Museum presentation features fifteen new artists from the Haukohl collection and illuminates the collection's feminist underpinnings. The works on view investigate issues of migration, the legacies of nationalism in Europe, and

Brooklyn Museum

the male gaze as patriarchal power structures continue to shape life and politics in Europe. By pushing the boundaries of photographic methods and techniques, the artists also resist the male-centric focus of the history of photography.

Organized into three thematic sections, the exhibition is located in the Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, which is centered around Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1974–79). Chicago's landmark installation presents a now-canonical critique of male-centric Western history, to which the diverse array of photographers of *In the Now* provide a twenty-first-century rejoinder. While Chicago reimagines Western civilization through the lives and achievements of women, artists like Carolle Bénitah, Anna Rackard, and Aida Silvestri use the camera to focus on personal and political stories of family, labor, and migration. Others, including Alexandra Croitoru, Eva Kořátková, and Melanie Manchot, capture the social and patriarchal pressures women face.

"We are grateful to Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl, whose generosity has made this exhibition possible. The show inspires new narratives about the Brooklyn Museum's photographic collection by prioritizing important contributions by women photographers. This directly supports the Museum's mission to provide expansive encounters with art, inspire courageous conversations, and celebrate our communities," says Carmen Hermo, Associate Curator, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum.

The *Gender* section contends with representations of women's bodies, as artists react to the personal and political realms of oppressive beauty standards, religion and law, and the history of art. Bettina von Zwehl situates the photographic portrait within the long multimedia history of portraiture with her 2016 series *The Sessions*. The series comprises fifty silhouette profiles of the same six-year-old girl, their edges torn and distorted to allude to the multiple facets of one individual. In *Nu descendant un escalier* (2020), Elina Brotherus asserts her role as an artist in front of and behind the camera. By restaging Marcel Duchamp's 1911–12 *Nude Descending a Staircase* paintings using herself as the model, Brotherus reflects critically on the female nude, the male gaze, and gender norms in art.

In the *Nation* section, the artists unpack the social and generational fallout of European colonialism and nationalism. For *Papiers Pliés* (2007), Yto Barrada collected and folded recycled paper wrappings used by snack-food vendors in her native Tangier, Morocco. The printed French words on the wrappers indicate the sheets' original function as forms from a textile factory, alluding to the legacy of France's colonization of Morocco (1912–56) and the economic industries that propelled it. Sarah Pickering's *Landmine* (2005) and *Artillery* (2005) depict the English countryside violently disrupted by mines, artillery, and other weapons. Upon closer inspection, they are revealed to be small-scale simulated explosions, reminding viewers of the relative peace "at home" in England while British troops supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Artists in the *Photography* section grapple with a changing medium that has historically been hostile and exclusionary to women. Some engage early photographic methods in new ways or adapt found photography. Others reject the boundaries of the medium by incorporating painting, performance, film, and textiles, the last imbuing their work with the gendered politics of art forms historically categorized as "women's work." In *La cartina indiscreta* (Indiscreet Map; 2022), Carmen Calvo assembles found images around the body and face of a nude woman as she stands behind a translucent curtain, evoking Surrealist artists to comment on the woman's pronounced visibility and simultaneous entrapment. Silvia Rosi's *Self-Portrait as My Father* (2019) chronicles her family's migration from Togo to Italy. Dressed as her father in a suit and tie, the artist marks her father's change in status by surrounding herself with tomatoes, the crop her father picked

as a migrant field worker in Italy. By holding the shutter release in the photo, Rosi signals her own identity as the photographer and steward of her family history.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue of the collection titled *The Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl Collection of European Women Photographers, 2000–2020*. Published by Steidl and edited by Manfred Heiting, the catalogue includes an essay by Rebecca Mark, Director of the Institute for Women’s Leadership and a Professor in the Department of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Rutgers University.

In the Now: Gender and Nation in Europe, Selections from the Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl Photography Collection is organized by the Brooklyn Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The exhibition is curated by Drew Sawyer, former Phillip and Edith Leonian Curator of Photography, Brooklyn Museum; Britt Savelsen, Curator and Head, Wallis Annenberg Photography Department and Prints and Drawings Department; and Eve Schillo, Associate Curator, Wallis Annenberg Photography Department, Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The Brooklyn Museum presentation is organized by Carmen Hermo, Associate Curator, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, with Imani Williford, Curatorial Assistant, Photography, Fashion, and Material Culture, Brooklyn Museum.

About the Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl Photography Collection

In 2021, the Brooklyn Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) announced the joint acquisition of two hundred contemporary photographs by women artists from seventeen countries in Western and Eastern Europe. The generous gift comes from Houston-based collector Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl, whose expansive collection has been built over the course of twenty years and showcases an impressive range of styles and approaches to photography from that period. This is the Brooklyn Museum’s largest joint acquisition as well as the largest gift of contemporary photography ever received by the Museum, and it bolsters its long-standing commitment to collecting works by women artists.

IMAGE: Ulla Jokisalo (born Kannus, Finland, 1955). *Wasteland*, from the series *Collection of Headless Women*, 2015. Inkjet print, pins, 23 5/8 x 16 in. (60 x40.6 cm). The Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl Photography Collection at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Brooklyn Museum, TL2020.6.77. © Ulla Jokisalo, courtesy Persons Projects (Photo: courtesy of the artist)