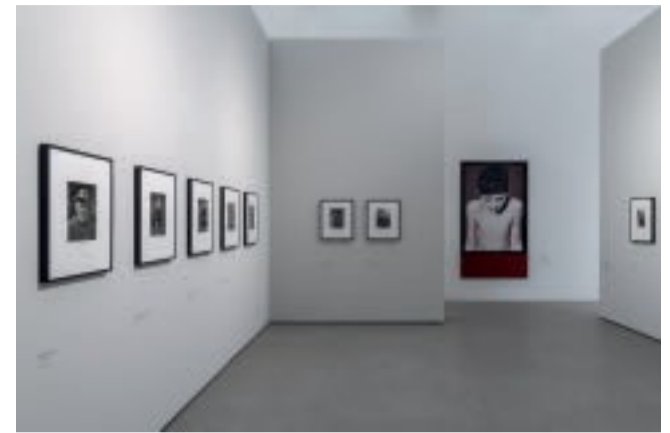




Left: Pinakothek der Moderne. Photo: Haydar Koyupinar, Bavarian State Painting Collections
Below: Studio exhibition GEGENÜBER in the Pinakothek der Moderne with works by August Sander, Mary-Jo Lafontaine and others. Photo: Margarita Platis, Bavarian State Painting Collections



"A canon will develop - I'm convinced of that."

Questions for Franziska Kunze, Head of Photography and Media Art at the Pinakothek der Moderne

Since August 2020, Franziska Kunze has been Head of Photography and Media Art at the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich. She succeeded Inka Graeve Ingelmann (†), who, in her newly created position, gave a significant boost to the status of photography within the Bavarian State Painting Collections from 2002.

Franziska Kunze, born in 1984 in Rostock, studied art history and communication science in Greifswald and Berlin and then completed her doctorate at the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen. In 2017 she received the scholarship "Museum Curators of Photography" by the Krupp Foundation. The interview took place in February 2021 via Zoom.



Franziska Kunze, Photo: Meike Reiners

Anna Gripp/Photonews: Franziska Kunze, how did you come to focus on the medium of photography in your studies?

Franziska Kunze: The bachelor's program in Greifswald was classical, a lot of medieval and renaissance, which I liked because of my soft spot for church layouts. They did not really have anything for photography. But during an internship at the Hamburger Kunsthalle, I came across the yearbook there and an article by Bettina Uppenkamp. It was about Cindy Sherman, visual regimes, political and socio-cultural dimensions of photography.

I was hooked, and so I wrote my bachelor's thesis on various forms of photographic self-staging. During my master's studies in art and visual history at Humboldt University, there were some good seminars on photography, and I also took advantage of the courses offered by the Free University of Berlin. However, a seminar at the Berlinische Galerie had a strong influence on me. I became aware of the great photographic estates. I was particularly taken with Marta Astfalck-Vietz's, and I researched her in my master's thesis.

"The Stuff the Pictures are Made of. On the Materiality in Front of, in, and Behind the Camera of Marta Astfalck-Vietz" is the title of your 2011 master's thesis. How did it continue?

I received a scholarship and later became a research associate in the cluster of excellence "Image Knowledge Design" as well as an associate member of the research group "The Technical Image" at the HU Berlin. The research for my doctoral thesis was a key reason for my assignment to an interdisciplinary project at the cluster, which primarily deals with questions of perceptual and visual design.

Can you explain in a few words

what your doctoral thesis "Opaque Photographs. Making photographic materiality visible as an artistic strategy" is about?

Mentally, I come from transparency, that is, the opposite of opacity. Photography, documentary photography, is historically usually regarded as a 'window on the world'. The materiality of the medium is thereby literally lost from view - because one is, as it were, looking through it. A picture by Marta Astfalck-Vietz was key in opening me to a different perception. At first, I didn't understand what I was seeing because the picture was bordering on opaque.

It showed a few streaks from watering and other 'disturbances' created while it was developed. That's how I began to deal with the materiality of photography. I became aware of how multilayered analog photography in particular is. There is usually a negative, there is a positive, and an incredible amount happens in between. I'm interested in the images that reveal exactly that.

Starting in early summer 2017, you spent two years as a fellow in the Krupp Foundation's "Museum Curators for Photography" program. The program seems to be an important step in the career of aspiring curators. What was your experience like?

The great advantage of this program, frankly a curse and a blessing at the same time, is the quick changeover. You have six months at each station. That's long enough to get

Luigi Ghirri and at the Fotomuseum Winterthur the anniversary exhibition "25 Years! Making history(s) together". As you can see, this included very different works from the most diverse times. A great cross-section.

In addition to these German-language institutions, the scholarship allows for an additional six months abroad. Where did you go?



Francis Alÿs, Re-enactments, 2000, in collaboration with Rafael Ortega, 2-channel video installation, color, sound, duration 5:23 min., acquired from PIN, Bavarian State Painting Collections, Munich © Francis Alÿs

You received your doctorate at the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen under Prof. Steffen Siegel, but you didn't study there, did you?

No. Steffen Siegel has been the director of the master's program in Photographic Studies and Research there since 2015. Also in 2015, I spent a few months with Elizabeth Edwards and Kelley Wilder at the Photographic History Research Center at Montfort University in Leicester, researching my dissertation and leading a seminar. Kelley Wilder advised me to approach Steffen Siegel for the initial supervision of my thesis, which I did when I returned. Both eventually supervised my dissertation.

in-depth insight into very different institutions. Within two years, we fellows can get to know four different collections, different funding systems and also very different approaches to curating. Half a year is enough not only to catch on, but also to work on a project. I was even lucky enough to be able to complete large exhibitions in addition to my own small projects.

What were the exhibitions you were able to work on?

At the Munich Stadtmuseum it was the exhibition on Adolphe Braun, at the Museum Folkwang in Essen

The Victoria & Albert Museum in London. The new Photography Centre had just opened there, after the collection of the Royal Photographic Society had been taken over. At the V&A, I was also intensively involved in acquisition processes. I still benefit from that knowledge.

Inka Greave Ingelmann was a very renowned curator. What was it like for you as a young art historian to follow in these big footsteps?

Bernhard Maaz, General Director of the Bavarian State Painting Collections, came to my new office in my first week and told me that I was not filling any shoes, but that I had to fill my own.

I don't think there's a nicer way to be welcomed! However, I was and am of course very aware that this position at this renowned institution already has a very important history. Almost twenty years ago, it was a significant statement by the Bavarian State Painting Collections to create a position of conservator for photography and media art, and I am delighted to now be able to take responsibility for, shape, and continue this area, which was built up with the foresight of Inka Graeve Ingelmann.

The Pinakothek der Moderne has top-class photography holdings such as the Siemens Photo Collection and the Wilde Foundation. I tried to find out about other photography collections on the website, but I was not successful.

The website is currently being updated. In the long term, it is planned to make detailed information about the individual collection areas accessible.

The Bavarian State Painting Collections have various photographic holdings, which are assigned to different people depending on the phase in which they were created. I am currently in the process of acquiring an exact overview - also outside my area of responsibility. In addition to the aforementioned Ann and Jürgen Wilde Foundation, which is overseen by Simone Förster and focuses on the 1920s/30s, there is also the Dietmar Siebert Collection at the Neue Pinakothek, which belongs to my colleague Herbert Rott, since it concerns the second half of the 19th century. The Brandhorst Museum is also continuously expanding its holdings. In other words, photography is becoming more and more prominent here. The focus of my collection dates back to 1990, with a few welcome exceptions dating back to the 1910s. The Siemens photo collection formed the foundation of this area in 2003. In 2004, the photo collection of Allianz Private Health Insurance was added. However, photography had already been collected since the 1990s, so that the holdings have grown steadily over the period of now more than 30 years through donations and purchases made by PIN.

PIN?

PIN. Friends of the Pinakothek der Moderne. As in most museums, major acquisitions are realized through the circle of friends.

Do you get information for potential purchases in galleries, at fairs? Can you also acquire work at auctions?

Auction purchases through focus on the immediate present not as likely, but conceivable. But yes, I am looking - with the collection in mind - at what the galleries have to offer. There are many ideas here to latch onto.

Which are?

Major areas for us are the conceptual and the social docu-

mentary photography, with a focus on portraiture. There are always options available to expand in this area because portraits never lose appeal - anywhere in the world. But I don't just look at the galleries, I also look directly at the artists, and here I'm also talking about those who are not yet represented by a gallery.

That is, you could imagine buying a work that was created in 2020?

Last year, the Circle of Friends already approved one of my proposals: a series by Astrid Jahnsen, an artist from Lima, Peru. I had met her in 2018 as a guest expert at a portfolio viewing during PHotoEspaña in Madrid. She was the last one at my table and my highlight of the day. I was extremely taken with her work series "On Your Knees" because it is so multi-layered. Astrid Jahnsen works with found footage, in this case with a volume of handcrafted erotic booklets from the 1950s, with glued-in images she photographed as close-ups. She focuses on touches and gazes and develops a new narrative with her camera view.

She also exposes passages of text from the booklets, hence the title of the series. The out-of-focus moments of the close-ups resonate with a strong media reflection, and she also intelligently expands the feminist discourse. I am very pleased that our circle of friends supports the acquisition of a previously fairly unknown work. (Fig. and see also page 14, 15)

I assume that the exhibitions until the beginning of 2021 do not yet bear your mark...

That's right. I implemented already existing concepts here.

...can you report on future projects?

We are a collection house. Accordingly, both smaller and larger exhibition topics are generated from the collection. Photography is firmly anchored in the permanent exhibition area with changing exhibits, which I think is great. On March 16, a collection presentation on Nicholas Nixon opens - hopefully. We are the only

museum in Germany to show his complete series of "Brown Sisters," acquired thanks to the generous support of the Alexander Tutsek Foundation. The foundation continues to support us, so that we can now also show for the first time the work created in 2020 of the series begun in 1975. The new work is already very iconic for the pandemic year 2020. (Fig. above) Otherwise, I would like to first focus on media artworks, which are mostly multichannel and clearly consider space. Here I start with the "Re-enact-ments" by Francis Alÿs, in another room we will show "Mathilde Mathilde..." by Mathilde ter Heijne. For 2022, for example, Hito Steyerl is planned with "Is the Museum a Battlefield? In view of the current circumstances, however, we must of course remain flexible.

I'm sure you've been following the discussions and plans for the Federal German Photo Institute. As head of photography and media art, what are your expectations and hope for such an institution?

This is a mammoth project, there's no other way to put it. I think Essen is a very good place for research and networking.

I believe that the recommendations of the expert commission can certainly be followed here. In my view, the new center should form a hub where experience, knowledge and expertise in every respect come together. A center where people can also turn with questions. I would expect this from a German photo center as a service, also for the many that may not have the necessary resources to tie the know-how to their own institutions. I'm thinking here of restoration and conservation issues, but also of the challenge of storing digital data in the long term. Here, many museums are still faced with a big question mark as to how to store data sustainably and securely. Advice on legal issues would certainly also be helpful for many. Ideally, such knowledge would come together centrally at the institute and be passed on again. The networking aspect seems very important to me.

Which topics in photography are particularly interesting for you at the moment, maybe also those that are not part of any specific exhibition projects?

Apart from the fact that I find it exciting at the moment to research the past of our collection with gloves,

I am interested in what will happen in the field of digitalization in the next few years: Artificial intelligence, virtual reality are increasingly becoming a focal point and address, by artistic means, socially quite relevant topics. The participatory element is also playing an increasing role. I find it very exciting that Asia is emerging as a place of art production. But I am also interested in the activities in Africa and the African Diaspora. I am curious to see how a canon will develop from the artists' efforts in the coming years. I am convinced that a canon will develop.

A global canon?

Exactly. Among other things, also through the Internet as a source and place of art production and distribution. I think it's remarkable how artists deal with topics such as race, gender, identity, and highlight both contemporary topics and those that evolved from history and ask their viewers to take a look. This is an incredibly important moment that we are currently observing and experiencing.

But for a museum, these digital worlds are difficult to convey.

I don't think so. In 2016, Inka Graeve Ingelmann had the three-part exhibition series "Fotografie Heute" (Photography Today) - we are currently showing the third series of RESISTANT FACES - initiated, which is dedicated to artistic photography in the digital age, with in part very current, young and multimedia works. The Bavarian State Painting Collections are absolutely open to showing the latest developments in art, for example in the field of virtual reality and artificial intelligence and making them tangible - off- and online. We just have to make sure we have the appropriate technical equipment.



Nicholas Nixon: The Brown Sisters, Brookline, Massachusetts, 2020, silver gelatin print, 18.1 x 24.1 cm, acquired with funds from the Alexander Tutsek-Stiftung, Bavarian State Painting Collections. Munich © Nicholas Nixon, courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco



Astrid Jahnsen, from the series: On Your Knees, 2017, inkjet print on paper, acquired from PIN. Freunde der Pinakothek der Moderne for the Moderne Kunst Collection, Bavarian State Painting Collections, Munich. © Astrid Jahnsen

see also page 14/15



© For all fig.: Astrid Jahnsen, from the series: On Your Knees, 2017, inkjet print on paper



Astrid Jahnsen
On Your Knees

"Looking at a photo, looking at it again, looking at it in a different way, refocusing it, re-framing the image, revising its discourse, understanding it, taking it out of context... All of this is an exercise that I repeat a thousand times over. I think about time, about space; I imagine the moment and I continue looking, patiently. I look at encyclopedias, newspapers, magazines, albums, taking photos of all the photos; I analyze, look over the photographs, retracing them from the image to my eyes, imagining that the camera is a twenty-centimeter tunnel through time.

In 2017, Astrid Jahnsen (*1972) acquires a set of homemade erotic booklets in her hometown of Lima. They date from the 1950/60s. The explicit texts are neatly typed, written in Spanish, only one in French. The erotic-pornographic pictures come from different times and sources and were attached to the booklet pages with glue. There are 82 of these notebooks in total.

In her photographic-artistic practice, Jahnsen often appropriates historical imagery produced by photographers and, with her own camera, thwarts the male gaze that too often marginalizes or objectifies women in the picture. With her camera and a macro lens, she approaches the images, focusing on glances and touches as well as individual words. With the help of the exaggerated close-up view, the immediate context of image and text is lost from focus, blurred and evaporated. The viewers of the paintings follow the artist's concentrated viewpoint, which allows no distractions and develops a new narrative.

"They say that history is written by the victors. I begin to narrate it, to comment on it, to refute it. History is not just the history of man, and the truth has no victors. History from the viewpoint that was kept silent, the other gaze upon the world: that is the history of which I wish to speak."*

Franziska Kunze

*The quotes are taken from Astrid Jahnsen's website: www.astridjahnsen.com

