

PRESS RELEASE

First IPRN exhibition at the Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany

Changing Faces: WORK

Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany

February 25 – April 23, 2006



Image by Heidrun Monsma, Wuppertal, Germany.

The exhibition “Changing Faces: WORK” presents seven positions of contemporary photography on the theme of work, taken in various European countries, within the framework of the International Photography Research Network (IPRN). Through its “Changing Faces” programme, which is part of the European Union programme “Culture 2000”, the IPRN contracts projects with photographers which they carry out during a residence of some weeks in a host country.

This network was initiated by the University of Sunderland (Great Britain) in 2004.

Apart from the Museum Folkwang, Arts Council England, Dom Fotografie in Liptovský Mikuláš (Slovakia), Paradox and the University of Leiden (Netherlands) and the University of Jyväskylä (Finland) are participating in the programme.

The aim of “Changing Faces” is to encourage photographic works which are dedicated to social change and multiculturalism in an expanding Europe. In the period 2004 – 2007 exchanges between 16 different countries, with altogether 18 photographers, are scheduled. The central theme of all the photo projects is WORK, a subject which has often been taken up throughout the history of photography; a reason therefore to examine its current relevance. Subject to fundamental

transformation due to structural change and globalisation, work is a theme which touches equally all the countries participating in the exchange of photographers. During each of the three years of the “Changing Faces” programme, the results will be presented in a publication and exhibition. There will also be an annual symposium where the various aspects of the theme of work will be discussed

The Museum Folkwang is now showing the projects carried out in 2005 by the seven photographers who were selected for the first year of the “Changing Faces” programme by a jury in their respective host countries. With quite different photographic starting points, they sounded out the wide spectrum of what work can mean today. Thus, for example, the Dutch photographer Rob Hornstra put together a critical portrait of the Icelandic society during his stay at the National Museum of Iceland in Reykjavík, a society confronted by the increasing industrialisation of the once traditional fishing trade. In particular he focuses on the situation of youths in his photographs on the “Roots of the Rúntur”.

The Finnish photographer Renja Leino, who was the guest of the J.E. Purkyne University in Ústí nad Labem in the Czech Republic, observed the behaviour of children and young adults in front of their computers – a medium which is fundamentally restructuring the world of work – for her series “Absent Minds”.

Thomas Neumann, a photographer from Düsseldorf, concentrated on the professional goals and wishes for the future of students in the new EU country of Lithuania. During his time at the Contemporary Art Information Centre in Vilnius he spoke with young Lithuanians. Excerpts from these conversations, juxtaposed with reproductions from advertising as expressions of collective desires, were used as part of his installation “The Lithuanian Rocket”.

The project sent the Icelandic photographer Orri to Dom Fotografie in Slovakia. In “Without Work” he developed metaphors for the situation of a country which in his view is still trying to define its position in Europe.

The short breaks from daily routine by members of the British working class in Newcastle upon Tyne were traced by the pair of Czech photographers, Stepanka Stein and Salim Issa, who were hosted by the Locus+ agency, for their series “Ordinary Living”.

Lastly, in his project “Still Identity”, the Lithuanian photographer Arturas Valiauga compares the life of Lithuanians in Holland with that of the Dutch in Lithuania; that is the life of people living in these countries because of work. As the guest of the

University of Leiden and Paradox he produced a visual study which makes clear that in the end the differences cancel each other out.

These six projects were supplemented by Clare Strand's "The Betterment Room – Devices for Measuring Achievement". These photographs on the subject of deindustrialisation were made in 2004 during the artists stay as guest of the Museum Folkwang in the pilot phase of "Changing Faces".

The exhibition will travel to other European venues after closing in Essen.

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