<LËTZEBUERG
CITY MUSEUM>

EXPOSITION TEMPORAIRE
„LEIT AN DER STAD.
LUXEMBOURG STREET PHOTOGRAPHY, 1950-2017“

EXHIBITION TEXTS

(Level 4, Entry)

Photographs are considered a mirror of society, providing an intimate insight into the world. The photographer acts as a storyteller, capable not only of capturing the significance of an event within seconds, but also of giving it a unique aesthetic expression. For the first time, the Lëtzebuerg City Museum is hosting a classical photography exhibition showcasing Luxembourg's street photography from its first days of blossom in the 1950s to the present day. Through the lens of the photographers' cameras, the city's inhabitants are revealed like protagonists on a stage. They are both actors and witnesses of social change. We wish to invite visitors, alongside the "people of the city", to embark on a visual tour spanning more than six decades of street photography in Luxembourg and to discover special moments in everyday life. The tour is designed around various themes, all of which were of key significance to photographers throughout the decades and which continue to shape urban life to this day.

(Level 4, Room 40)

THE FLÂNEUR

"The photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitring, stalking, cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes." (Susan Sontag)

The flâneur is a literary figure who roams the streets of the large cities. He drifts through the crowds, in many different directions, without pause. He observes urban life, merging with the masses. The origin of the 20th-century flâneur can be traced back to the work of German philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892–1940). Since then, the so-called flâneur has emerged time and again, in particular in street photography, where he appears both in front of and behind the camera. He wanders, observes and records the street life of the cities. In her 1977 essay *On photography*, photography theorist Susan Sontag (1933–2004) points out that the modern convenient camera has become the tool of the 20th-century flâneur who roams the urban landscape, as a voyeur and a preserver of everyday life.

(Level 4, Room 41)

STREET PHOTOGRAPHY

The art of street photography can be traced back to approximately 1890 and focuses on capturing the candid "decisive moment" through a lens. Generally speaking, it involves photographs taken in a public place – in streets or squares, in cafés or shops – capturing individuals or groups going about their everyday lives. Those photographed are not seen as private individuals but rather as anonymous figures in a general human situation. Street photography is all about the moment, but it is also an essay-type sequence, respectively a social environment study. Much like a snapshot, the photographer captures a moment with his camera, a moment that will not occur as such again, an atmosphere that cannot be recreated. In addition to this, the essence of space and time must also be captured. The works lay claim to authenticity and at times display a documentary character, paired with the "signature" of the photographer in question. The golden age of street photography occurred during the 1930s with the emergence of the faster and more compact 35mm cameras (such as the renowned Leica), the burgeoning print press and the heightened interest in aspects of everyday life. Medium-format cameras were also popular, such as the "twin-lens" Rolleiflex, which still sells for a princely sum today. The photographs are primarily black and white, featuring strong contrasts and shot on grainy film. The classic viewing (and shooting) angle is preferably chest or abdomen height.

Tony Krier sen. (1906–1994)

A book printer by trade and qualified physical education teacher, in his spare time Tony Krier senior devoted himself to photography. As early as 1939, the ambitious hobby photographer released his first illustrated book on the centenary celebrations of Luxembourg's independence. Upon his first images being published in the press, Krier gave up his job as a physical education teacher in 1942 to work as a freelance photojournalist. During the mid 1960s, he founded his own press agency and published photographs both at home and abroad. His clients included *Tageblatt*, *Revue* and *Journal*, as well as *Associated Press*, *Paris Match* and *Le Soir*. Krier senior achieved the rise to successful illustrated book publisher. He also documented contemporary events in approximately 30 films. Not much is known about his activity as a filmmaker, however. Since 1993, Krier senior's collection of 400,000 negatives has been housed at Luxembourg City's Photographic Library. His films are archived at the city's Cinémathèque.

Théo Mey (1912–1964)

An encounter with portrait photographer Willy Fey ignited a lifelong passion for photography in Théo Mey. He learned the craft of photography from Fey and carried out assignments for the latter's studio. This led him to work for the German press agency *Moselland* in 1941. In 1950 Mey founded his own press photo agency, which over the years became a popular port of call for freelance journalists, publishers, sportsmen and artists. In contrast to most of his colleagues, he did not rely on a Rolleiflex during the 1950s and 1960s, but instead worked with the more flexible Leica system. He endeavoured to challenge the prevalent medium format and instead optimise his shooting and processing technique in the smaller format. 35mm photography required a shooting technique that was significantly more precise and full-frame than the classic 6x6 or 6x9 formats. Mey died in a car accident in 1964. His extensive image archive has been preserved for posterity at Luxembourg City's Photographic Library, which now houses more than 400,000 of his photographs from his creative period of 1950 to 1964. They document the everyday, political and social life of both the city and country of Luxembourg.

Paul (Pol) Aschman (1921–1990)

As an eight-year-old, Pol Aschman received a camera from his father, which marked the start of a lifelong passion. Aschman's school career was interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War and German occupation. In 1943 Aschman was forcibly recruited and sent to the Soviet front, where he sustained severe injuries in combat. After a short-lived return to Luxembourg in 1945, he attended a photography school in Switzerland. In 1949 he started working as a photojournalist for Luxembourg magazine *Revue*. He left the magazine in 1967 as its chief editor. Until his retirement in 1984 he worked for *Luxemburger Wort*, where he created more than 2000 photography reports on various subjects – black and white photographs, accompanied by a small text in his typical narrative, almost anecdotal, style. His photography was influenced by French contemporaries such as Robert Doisneau and Willy Ronis. Since 1997, the substantial photographic legacy of Pol Aschman and his father Camille, comprising more than 500,000 negatives and spanning the period of 1935 to 1988, has been in the possession of Luxembourg City's Photographic Library.

Batty Fischer (1877–1958)

Jean-Baptiste (known as Batty) Fischer was born on Rue du Marché-aux-Herbes, where his parents ran an elegant shop opposite the grand-ducal palace selling fashion and fur goods. After leaving school, Fischer studied dentistry in Paris and as a twenty-year-old set up his own practice in Luxembourg City. Nevertheless, he saw his occupation as a dentist purely as a way to earn a living. His true passion, ever since his youth, was photography. The lifelong bachelor regularly roamed the streets of the capital in search of a good subject and became a chronicler of Luxembourg's "Belle Époque". Fischer could often be found at the Café du Commerce on Place d'Armes, a favourite haunt of mainly Francophile liberals. Like no other of his contemporaries, he embodied the sophisticated "flâneur", as encountered during the period prior to the First World War, particularly in Paris and Berlin. The self-taught photographer regularly sold his images to the municipal administration of Luxembourg City. He developed and built his own telephoto lenses. Fischer continued to pursue his favourite pastime even as an eighty-year-old: after his death, half an exposed film was found in his camera. He left approximately 10,000 images to Luxembourg City's Photographic Library.

Édouard Kutter (*1934)

Édouard Kutter junior comes from one of Luxembourg's oldest family of photographers. During the 1950s, he studied among others with renowned post-war photographer Otto Steinert in Saarbrücken. He quickly made a name for himself as a portrait photographer. He was also interested in photography beyond its commercial purpose, in photography as an art form. Apart from their significance as documentary eyewitnesses, Kutter's photographs are particularly notable for their artistic flair. His black and white compositions testify to everyday moments, captured masterfully in light-dark contrasts and featuring atmospheric lighting. He was appointed court photographer in 1966. Later he closed his photography shop in favour of his own art gallery. In 1986 he donated more than 2000 of his father's photographs that were taken from 1896 to 1960 to Luxembourg City's Photographic Library. Three years later he transferred more than 200,000 of his own negatives to the ownership of the Photographic Library. They are an impressive document of Luxembourg's history of photography and a testimony of the capital's urban development.

Marcel Schroeder (1919–1999)

Already as a school boy, Marcel Schroeder harboured twin passions, which he remained true to for the rest of his life: national history and photography. Since he could not afford to study, he accepted an office job at ARBED in 1938. The self-taught Schroeder devoted his entire life to studying history and acquired a vast amount of knowledge. In his spare time, he visited historic sites, browsed libraries and captured anything of interest in photographic documents. Even once he became known for his extensive private archive, Schroeder still saw himself first and foremost as an amateur photographer, whose images merely illustrated the works of others. Schroeder's photographs have featured in numerous publications, in almost all national newspapers and magazines as well as in school books, monographs, art books, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and *National Geographic Magazine*. They helped shape the image of Luxembourg abroad and are of a high documentary value. During his lifetime, Schroeder gave 28,000 negatives and 25,000 colour slides to Luxembourg City's Photographic Library.

(Level 4, Room 42)

FESTIVALS AND TRADITIONS

(Level 4, Room 43)

LEISURE

(Level 4, Room 44)

Christof Weber (*1961), *Devant la gare de Luxembourg*, 2001 / 2017

(Level 4, Room 45)

WORK

(Level 4, Room 46)

BUSINESS

(Level 4, Room 47)

MOBILITY

(Level 4, Room 48)

THE FLÂNEUR 2.0

The subject of the city dweller roaming the streets to this day remains a popular theme in street photography. And nevertheless, the dynamics and composition of the photographs have in some instances changed dramatically. Some photographers are deliberately turning their backs on the traditional professional cameras – both analogue and digital – and are instead embracing new media and techniques, such as mobile phone photography and its many photography apps. Their works become a visual testimony of contemporary Luxembourg society, illustrating a multinational population and reflecting the pace and "turbulence" that drive today's international and bustling Luxembourg while recording the architectonic progress of the urban landscape. Much like the contemporary city itself, within it the figure of the flâneur also embodies an air of dynamism.

François Besch (*1963), *Street phoneography*

"When I was still shooting exclusively analogue, until approximately the late nineties, I also really enjoyed using instant cameras. This type of shooting presents the photographer with the challenge of selecting the correct view before pressing the shutter release button. "Normal" analogue photography still allows photographers to change the captured view while developing the negative. Instant cameras

do not have this option. I started using my iPhone for photography when the Hipstamatic app was launched in 2010. It reminded me strongly of the Polaroid process: here too the chosen view could not be changed retrospectively. This app differs from others in that the chosen filters must be selected prior to taking the photograph and the images cannot be subsequently processed. I continue to enjoy using this app with my iPhone camera, both when capturing colourful landscapes and in black and white portrait or street photography."

Marc Wilwert (*1976), *Streetfashion*

"A city is much more than just a mere collection of buildings. With its complex infrastructure, it's rather like an octopus, whose tentacles are the countless streets and little hidden passageways. A city vibrates with life, like a gigantic anthill. Similarly, the urban landscape includes the human element, made up of all the various individuals, thereby endowing the city with a soul. The *Streetfashion* series belongs in the street photography tradition, while still paying homage to individuals, people and characters. This series of photographs, combining a documentary approach with a visual style inspired by fashion photography, aims to highlight the clothes worn by passers-by making their way through the Place d'Armes. Thanks to these fly-on-the-wall photographic portraits, these strangers escape from their anonymity. The procedure is simple and precise: the studio, with its facilities and lighting rigs, is taken from an indoor to an outdoor setting to come face-to-face with these people. The photographer becomes a host, inviting the passers-by crossing the Place d'Armes to pose for his lens. He would seem to be making spontaneous appointments with all these individuals so different one from another. People who live in the area, workers, foreigners, tourists and people just passing through: in the end, they all give the city a face."