

düsseldorf photo+

Jana Johanna Haeckel appointed as Artistic Director of 4th *düsseldorf photo+* for 2027

February 16 – March 29, 2027

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Jana Johanna Haeckel is to take on the role of artistic director of the 4th edition of Düsseldorf's Photography Biennale, *düsseldorf photo+*, for 2027. She will thus also serve as curator of the Biennale's main exhibition, which will be held for the first time at Kunstpalast am Ehrenhof, Düsseldorf. For over 14 years, Jana Johanna Haeckel, who holds a PhD in art history, has curated international art exhibitions, focusing on the medium of photography, for institutions in Prague, Turin, Brussels, Berlin, Munich and Valencia amongst other places. Her curatorial work incisively reflects with conceptual clarity and visual power on the social relevance of photography.

The theme chosen by Jana Johanna Haeckel for the upcoming edition of the Biennale revolves around the human body as an object of photographic power, situated at the intersection of control and emancipation. Under the working title, "Disobedient Bodies/Ungehorsame Körper", Haeckel's aim is to bring into conjunction the work of contemporary artists with that of earlier photographers. This link to the historical context of photography adds a new and powerful dimension to *düsseldorf photo+*'s programme.

"I am very much looking forward to writing a new chapter for the festival in my role as artistic director and to curating 'düsseldorf photo+' as the 4th edition of the Biennale. My aim is to create a focal point for Düsseldorf's exceptionally influential photographic scene, highlighting the city's importance in the history of photography, as well as the diversity of its institutions, galleries and fringe venues. This diversity mirrors the complexity of the medium of photography as a whole. It is particularly important to me to address the historical responsibility accorded to the medium in a present marked by crises. Photography, more than almost any other medium, is bound to the notion of reality. It, therefore, has the potential to make social conditions visible, to interrogate varying perspectives and to open up new forms of dialogue. In a present where digital images are increasingly encoding and organising notions of identity and physicality by means of algorithms, I am inspired by sensual artistic ideas that provide the human body the necessary space to resist, and by concepts that suggest collaborative forms of imagery and community."

Statement by Jana Johanna Haeckel

Jana Johanna Haeckel was selected as artistic director by a specialist jury convened for the first time as part of a new concept for *düsseldorf photo+* Biennale. The jury consisted of Anne-Marie Beckmann (Director of the Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation, Frankfurt am Main), Linda Conze (Head of the Photography and Time-Based Media Collections at the Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf) and Rupert Pfab (historian of photography and gallery owner, Düsseldorf).

"What we found persuasive about Jana Johanna Haeckel's concept was its broad temporal scope, linking historical approaches to photography to the present day, thereby offering audiences an in-depth insight into this socially relevant topic. We see great potential in the visual accessibility of the approaches proposed in her concept, which will appeal not only to specialists, but also to visitors of all generations."

Statement by the Jury on its decision

Opening mid-February 2027, with main exhibition held at the Kunstpalast for the first time

The Biennale's main exhibition, to be held at the Kunstpalast, will serve both as the opening event and the focal point of the festival, both in terms of content and geographically. Starting there, the public will be invited to visit many other exhibitions, lectures, talks and events being hosted under the Biennale umbrella. What makes the Düsseldorf festival unique is that it includes specially curated exhibitions and a broad selection of projects initiated in Düsseldorf, the City of Photography. It provides a focus for a wide number of participants—ranging from public and private institutions, museums, universities and galleries to fringe exhibition spaces.

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History of the Biennale

The three previous editions of the Biennale in 2020, 2022 and 2024 were each organised by different teams, with Rupert Pfab and Pola Sieverding serving as artistic directors throughout, providing consistency and allowing this wide-ranging project to become established in the city. From the 4th Biennale, 2027 onwards, a jury of specialists will appoint new artistic directors each edition. As a result of restructuring, the Biennale was postponed from 2026 to 2027. From then on, it will resume its biennial cycle.

Artistic Directors of the *düsseldorf photo+* Biennale

2020 — Christine Erhardt, Rupert Pfab, Thomas W. Rieger, Carl Friedrich Schröer, Pola Sieverding

2022 — Rupert Pfab, Thomas W. Rieger, Pola Sieverding

2024 — Pola Sieverding, Rupert Pfab

2027 — Jana Johanna Haeckel

Profile: Jana Johanna Haeckel

Jana Johanna Haeckel (b. 1981) is an independent curator, living in Brussels. She teaches the history and theory of photography and exhibitions at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, KASK & Conservatorium, in Ghent. Haeckel was previously director of Photoforum Pasquart (Switzerland), amongst other posts, working for the Goethe-Institut in Brussels and the Boros Collection in Berlin. Haeckel obtained her PhD in art history from the Université catholique de Louvain in Belgium. She completed her studies in art history, comparative literature and Romance studies at Humboldt University in Berlin, the Free University of Berlin and the University of Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV).

As part of her curatorial and academic work, Jana Johanna Haeckel explores issues of image and body politics in contemporary art, as well as ethical issues in the field of photography. She has curated numerous international exhibitions and authored several publications, including *Photography Today. Resistant Faces* (Pinakothek der Moderne, 2020) and *Everything Passes Except the Past* (Sternberg Press, 2021). Her most recent projects include *Love, Maybe—Intimität und Begehren in der zeitgenössischen Kunst*, an expanded exhibition of the collection of the Alexander Tutsek Stiftung, Munich and associated publication (DISTANZ-Verlag, 2025).



Jana Johanna Haeckel, photo: Jan. A. Staiger © Jan A. Staiger

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