

Press Release

August Sander: New Women, New Men, and New Identities

13 February – 12 April 2020

Public opening: Saturday 15 February, 3 – 7 pm

Hauser & Wirth Los Angeles

Book & Printed Matter Lab



Los Angeles... Beginning 13 February, Hauser & Wirth will partner with the Los Angeles Philharmonic to present 'August Sander: New Women, New Men, and New Identities,' an exhibition that brings together pathbreaking portraits by renowned German photographer August Sander (1876 – 1964) with original examples of the first gay and lesbian journals ever published. This presentation marks the first solo exhibition in Los Angeles in over a decade devoted to Sander's pioneering work.

'New Women, New Men, and New Identities' is curated by Stephanie Barron, senior curator and head of modern art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), and independent curator Nana Bahlmann. The exhibition is a project of 'Weimar Variations,' a collection of public events related to the LA Phil's month-long, citywide festival 'Weimar Republic: Germany 1918 – 1933,' a wide-ranging and dramatic array of programs led by Conductor Laureate Esa-Pekka Salonen and exploring the musical culture of the politically-charged Weimar era (1918 – 1933) in Germany.

The Weimar Republic began as a bold German political experiment at the end of the First World War and lasted until the rise of Nazism. The era was marked by incredible intellectual productivity, with German artists pioneering new forms in the fields of literature, art, architecture, music, dance, drama, and film. At its height, the Weimar period gave rise to a period of new social tolerance, with avant-garde ideas and lifestyles that challenged the constraints of tradition. Tracking the period's journalistic, scientific, and activist atmosphere, 'New Women, New Men, and New Identities' offers stunning imagery of its vibrant feminist and queer movements. The exhibition showcases two dozen of Sander's most iconic portraits of artists, bohemians, and intellectuals of the 1920s in particular, photographs bearing testimony to the social shifts taking place in an era of unprecedented democratic freedom.

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Sander's photographs are shown alongside groundbreaking gay and lesbian magazines (the first ever published), pamphlets, scientific studies, books, and other documents that provide unique insight into the trailblazing activities of the publishers, activists, and researchers who worked to further advance social change.

'August Sander: New Women, New Men, and New Identities' will be on view at Hauser & Wirth Los Angeles through 12 April 2020.

The exhibition will be presented in the gallery's Book & Printed Matter Lab, a space devoted to explorations of the critical place that books and printed matter occupy in the practice of artists. Building upon Hauser & Wirth's curatorial and publishing activities, the Lab hosts thematic installations, displays, and public programs that invite reflection, creative thinking, and further conversation about the world of printed matter and its connection to artists' ideas and objectives.

About August Sander

August Sander was born in Herdorf, a small rural village east of Cologne, in 1876. He was one of nine children of a peasant and miner family. Sander is now viewed as a forefather of conceptual art and a pioneering documentarian of human diversity. In his project entitled 'Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts (People of the 20th Century)', a project that spanned four decades of his life, Sander strove to systematically document contemporary German society.

This encyclopedic magnum opus constitutes one of the most monumental endeavors in photographic history. Sander's considered oeuvre, which includes landscape, portrait, architecture and commercial photography, has served as a wellspring of inspiration for modern and contemporary photographers, from Walker Evans and Diane Arbus, to Tina Barney, Rineke Dijkstra, and Bernd and Hilla Becher, and has exerted a profound influence upon new generations of visual artists across mediums.

Sander began his career around the turn of the century with prize-winning historicist photography in Linz, Austria. Some of Sander's first exhibitions and museum acquisitions date back to this time. In Cologne in the early 1920s, Sander established a photographic portrait studio. During this formative time, he regularly met with the group of the (Cologne Progressives), including the influential artists Franz W. Seiwert, Jankel Adler and Heinrich Hoerle. Stimulated by these exchanges, he formalized the concept for 'People of the 20th Century', a project whose traces date back to 1910 and which was first introduced in an exhibition in the Kölnische Kunstverein in 1927. The show was positively received by the press, with one reviewer deeming Sander a 'Balzac of the lens.' His matter-of-fact, technically exact approach, enhanced by his adoption of a straightforward perspective and use of natural light, became Sander's modus operandi as he put his apparatus to work atomizing and cataloging society – 'to tell the truth about his times and his fellow citizens.'

This exhibition led to the publishing of his first book, 'Antlitz der Zeit (Face of Our Time)' in 1929. In 1936, the printing blocks were destroyed and unsold copies of the book were impounded, likely due to the publication's representation of a heterogeneous German society. It is generally understood that the Nazi Party frowned upon such societal representations.

Regardless of the political situation in Germany in 1933-1945, Sander continued to operate his Cologne photo studio, portraying intellectuals, Jews, National Socialists, as well as regular people he saw on the street. He selected many of these commercial portraits for his artistic-intellectual work 'Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts', where their images became a political statement. Between 1933 and 1935, Sander published books exploring regions of Germany, and from 1942 he began to relocate the most important parts of his negative archive to Kuchhausen, a small village in the Westerwald, where he continued his photographic profession as well as his project work. Although his studio in Cologne was destroyed in a 1944 bombing raid, Sander continued to work on 'People of the 20th Century' throughout the rest of his life.

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In 1951, German collector and photo-entrepreneur L. Fritz Gruber dedicated an extensive exhibition to Sander at the Photokina in Cologne and introduced him to Edward Steichen. In 1953, Steichen selected a number of his works to be included in his exhibition, 'The Family of Man,' at MoMA in New York. Sander has since been honored with major solo exhibitions and inclusion in important group shows and public collections throughout the world. He remains a constant and steadfast influence on new generations of artists to this day.

About Weimar Republic: Germany 1918-1933 and Weimar Variations

Curated by Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Weimar Republic: German 1918-1933 explores the musical culture of Germany's politically charged Weimar era and its contemporary resonances. Salonen and the LA Phil's concerts are given context by Weimar Variations, a varied collection of public programs, including commissioned installations, performances, films, exhibitions, and a cabaret, curated by LACMA Senior Curator and department head of modern art Stephanie Barron and independent curator Nana Bahlmann. Learn more at laphil.com/weimar.

About the Los Angeles Philharmonic

The Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, under the vibrant leadership of Music & Artistic Director Gustavo Dudamel, presents an inspiring array of live performances – orchestral, pop, rock, country, jazz, blues, Latin, world music, opera, chamber, Baroque, organ and celebrity recitals, theatrical performances, explorations of film music, dance, comedy, groundbreaking multimedia productions, and an unmatched commitment to commissioning and performing music from the composers of today - at three of LA's iconic venues, Walt Disney Concert Hall (laphil.com), the Hollywood Bowl (hollywoodbowl.com) and The Ford. The LA Phil's season at Walt Disney Concert Hall extends from September to June, and at the Hollywood Bowl and The Ford throughout the summer. With the preeminent Los Angeles Philharmonic at the foundation of its offerings, the LA Phil aims to enrich and transform lives through music, with a robust mix of artistic, learning, and community programs.

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Gallery hours:
Tuesday – Sunday
11 am – 6 pm

www.hauserwirth.com
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Caption and Courtesy Credits:

August Sander
Sekretärin beim Westdeutschen
Rundfunk in Köln (Secretary at West
German Radio in Cologne)
1931
Gelatin silver print
22.6 x 14.8 cm / 8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in
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SK Stiftung Kultur – August Sander
Archive, Cologne / ARS, New York,
2020
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