JÖRG SASSE **2 JUN – 29 AUG 2026**
Red Doors

Opening: Tuesday, June 2, 2026, 6 p.m.
Vienna 1, Domgasse 6

"What I'm interested in is the point when you think you've recognized something that in the next moment slips away again.")Jörg Sasse)

Where does this staircase lead? Does the threshold actually bring us to the next room, or only the idea of another room? What is hidden behind this thing that could be a curtain, a surface that opens and encloses at the same time? Transitory situations not only mark boundaries; they also create intermediate states. They describe a before and after, a here and there, a moment of transit in which certainties become unstable. At the same time, they are places of visibility, culmination points where something appears, comes to the fore, or can be perceived in the first place. It is precisely these intermediate stages that question the conditions of seeing per se.

Many of Jörg Sasse's subjects seem clearly identifiable at first glance and look as if they come from a mundane pictorial world. This apparent reliability is closely connected with the medium of photography: Photographic pictures suggest a faithful representation of reality to this day, as if they were able to create an objective relationship to the world. It is this expectation that is subtly undermined in Sasse's works. The seemingly photographic images question what can actually be seen as well as what wants to be seen. They refer to our habits of seeing, culturally acquired pictorial patterns, and the assumption that images must have a clear reference to reality.

In a similar way, the title of the exhibition may generate expectations that aren't fulfilled. We might look for a kind of red door, a concrete passage, yet we find only gaps, shifts, and intimations. Images create spaces of assumption. They play with the difference between the visible and the nameable: What do photographic images represent? Do they create a reliable connection with our reality? And can words, in turn, describe what we presumably see? Or do language and images each create their own realities that never completely coincide?

The unusual perspectives and the precise cropping of the photographs prevents viewers from immediately identifying what situations they depict. Everyday objects appear to be detached from their usual circumstances and hence lose their clear function. These works demand a slower and more careful way of seeing. Only when we behold them with concentration will the analogies, formal correspondences, and visual relations be revealed. At the same time, the pictures elude a clear attribution in terms of language. Levels of meaning remain open, shift, or break down into different interpretations.

Sasse's pictorial spaces explore the power of the visual. His compositions consisting of pictorial blocks create a formally reduced, almost perfect reality that nonetheless always entails small elements that confound us. These breaks in particular destabilize our perception, allowing the constant reflection on visual structures to become palpable, perhaps tying this into current debates. Many artists have only recently begun to address issues relating to artificial intelligence, while the key questions in Sasse's art seem as if he had already anticipated the current situation. The represented objects appear both familiar and strange, near and inaccessible. This impression is additionally reinforced by compositional rigor, abstracted surfaces, and hypnotic colors, letting the photographs oscillate between documentation and construction, between photography and painting.

On a meta level, it's about how our shared culture is changing through the developing use and acceptance of the technology around us, which seems to have increasingly greater influence on our seeing and understanding. Our gaze is not directed; it is opened up. Beholders are guided toward a process of a "seeing seeing" — an open state in which meaning is not defined, but instead only forms when we begin to look at the pictures. Herein lies the special quality of these images. In place of providing answers, they create spaces to perceive, doubt, and imagine.
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Jörg Sasse was born 1962 in Bad Salzuflen. He studied from 1982 to 1987 at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art, where he became a master student of Bernd Becher's in 1987 and taught from 1988 to 1989. He then realized several projects and gave talks at various higher education institutions. Between 2003 and 2007, he was a professor of documentary photography at the University of Duisburg-Essen / Folkwang University of the Arts. In 2005, he was nominated for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize. From 2010 to 2011, he was a visiting professor at the Institute for Visual Art and Art Studies at the University of Hildesheim.

His works have been published and exhibited in many international venues, including the following: Musée de Grenoble; Kunsthalle Zürich; ZMK Karlsruhe; Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris; Kunsthalle Hamburg; Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt/Main; Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf; Kunstmuseum Bonn; Portikus, Frankfurt/Main; Kunsthalle Gießen; Kunsthalle Bielefeld; and House of Arts, Budweis.

Museum Collections (selection): Belvedere, Vienna; Fotomuseum Winterthur; Kunstmuseum Bonn; Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz; mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna; Musée de Grenoble; Museum Folkwang, Essen; Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Salomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City.

Felix Hoffmann is an image and cultural scholar and the Artistic Director of the Center for Photography and Lens-Based Media FOTOARSENAL WIEN as well as the Director of FOTO WIEN. From 2005 to 2022, he served as the Chief Curator of the exhibition space C/O Berlin, where he was responsible for exhibitions, programs, and strategy. He curated numerous international exhibitions, including Nan Goldin (2009), Robert Mapplethorpe, Peter Lindbergh (2011), Gordon Parks (2014), Ren Hang and Elfie Semotan (2018), and William Eggleston (2023).