

ARSENAL WIEN

FOTO

FOTO ARSENAL WIEN
MQ, Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Wien

Aug 31, 2023

Press Information

Gundula Schulze Eldowy: Shadow Winds | Mari Katayama: Mine and Yours

FOTO ARSENAL WIEN will open on August 31, 2023, with two challenging exhibitions that test the limits of taboos.

Following the tenth edition of FOTO WIEN, which was organized by FOTO ARSENAL WIEN for the first time, the new center of photography and lens-based media will launch its fall exhibitions with shows featuring two artists in first-time large solo presentations in Austria.

Gundula Schulze Eldowy, one of the major proponents of German documentary photography, is the focus of the first solo show in an Austrian institution to feature her work, encompassing around 120 photographs. A parallel show presents a selection of complex works by the acclaimed Japanese multimedia artist Mari Katayama.

Both artists challenge perception, norms, and conventions in their blunt investigations of situations, producing contrasting images that are full of vexation, provocation, and poetry.

Veronica Kaup-Hasler, City Councillor for Culture and Science of the City of Vienna, comments on the program with conviction: "Every glance at newspapers, magazines and social media shows anew how essential it is to deal with photography, the medium that decisively determines our perception and is therefore the most formative of our time. The FOTO ARSENAL VIENNA is the place in the city where these discourses are conducted and depicted, which is once again underlined by the new exhibitions of Mari Katayama on body politics and normative body images as well as those of Gundula Schulze Eldowy, whose documentary photographs show people on the fringes of society."

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Gundula Schulze Eldowy: Shadow Winds; Berlin and the East, 1979–1990

Between the late 1970s and the collapse of the German Democratic Republic, Gundula Schulze Eldowy (b. 1954) analyzed the state of her country in disconcerting images: a gaunt sheep in a slaughterhouse, ballerinas in a dance school, workers in large industrial plants, a blood-covered delivery room. Working without an official commission, the young woman pushed the limits of taboos. Like a lost archaeological site, Berlin and the eastern half of Germany sometimes appear in surprisingly enchanting light. Schulze Eldowy's reportage documents the demise of an unknown world that was sealed off from the Western world. Her urban forays allow us to enter the inner, foreign world of an artist who always focused on people on the fringes of society: decline, solitude, poverty, absurdities, and testimonies of everyday life in East Germany. Schulze Eldowy produces images that counter the official, idealized view of the GDR; they often become metaphors that go far beyond the condition of the country with a focus on the alienation of humanity in modern civilization.

Created predominantly in East Berlin, and later in Dresden and Leipzig, Schulze Eldowy's pictures are critical of civilization and frequently test the limits of what is tolerable. Although they tell of affection, the images do not shy away from the truth.

FOTO ARSENAL WIEN presents two major series by the artist for the first time in Austria. *Der große und der kleine Schritt* (The Big and the Little Step) consists of photographs that Schulze Eldowy took in industrial plants, ballet schools, delivery rooms, slaughterhouses, and in the streets of East German cities between 1982 and 1990 as one of the first photographers in the GDR to use color film—and the only woman. *Tamerlan*, a series of portraits taken in the early 1980s, documents the final years leading up to the death of a woman she befriended.

Gundula Schulze Eldowy's photographs are part of international collections such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Recent exhibitions include *Halt die Ohren steif!!: Robert Frank und Gundula Schulze Eldowy in New York* (Keep a Stiff Upper Lip: Robert Frank and Gundula Schulze Eldowy in New York) at Kunsthalle Erfurt and Photobastei, Zürich (2018/2019); *Corps impatientes* (Impatient bodies) at Rencontres de la Photographie, Arles (2019). She has been awarded prizes including the 12th Prize for Overseas Photographers Award, Higashikawa Photo Festival (1996). In addition to her photographs and filmic works, she writes short stories, poetry, essays, sound collages, and songs. Schulze Eldowy lives in Berlin and Peru.

The exhibition in Vienna includes around 120 works and one video piece.

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Mari Katayama: Mine and Yours

The staged self-portraits by Japanese artist Mari Katayama (b. 1987) only ostensibly contrast with Schulze Eldowy's uninhibited reportage on a disintegrating country.

At the core of Katayama's practice is the everyday experience of living within her own body, which she uses as a living sculpture, mannequin, and a lens through which to reflect society. In her elaborate self-portraits, she places herself among an array of painstakingly constructed hand-sewn objects such as a life-sized doll. The combination of Katayama's objects and photography challenges viewers to question the body and its complex relationship with the surrounding environment and society.

After the amputation of her lower legs due to tibial hemimelia at the age of nine, Katayama hid her physical impairment so that she could live like "everyone else." It was only at the age of sixteen that she consciously started to create and see herself as an artist. Since then, Katayama has used her body, which keeps changing its shape, size, and roles in society, as a creative agent to approach, reflect, and connect to society as well as explore her own curiosity about our common obsession and desire for (artificially created) beauty. Although Katayama's work takes personal matters as its starting point, these personal matters are not her themes. The essence of the questions and perspectives that emerge from her works and her activities are always directed toward society.

Katayama's activity gradually expanded from self-portraits to photographing other people's bodies and inviting the help of others. This shift made Katayama find both the difficulty and power of "living together," while also realizing that she cannot say she owns her body, whose vitality is only made possible by numerous people and support mechanisms, including prosthetists who know her body better than she does, social support from the disability welfare system, and her family and friends. Katayama's work engages viewers in fundamental questions about the body, and the complex issues around bodies such as biased gazes, social labels, and what is considered correct or incorrect. Just as Katayama feels while making objects stitch by stitch with a needle and thread, experiencing her work could allow us to confirm our shapes and roles in society, as if reflecting into a mirror.

Mari Katayama lives in Gunma, Japan. Her works are in the collections of international museums, including Tate Modern in London. Following major presentations at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris in 2021 and the fifty-eighth Venice Biennale, the exhibition in Vienna includes around thirty photographs and installations.

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Basic information about the exhibitions

Gundula Schulze Eldowy: Shadow Winds; Berlin and the East, 1979–1990

Mari Katayama: Mine and Yours

September 1–November 19, 2023, daily except Monday, 11 a.m.–7 p.m.

MQ Freiraum and MQ Salon, MuseumsQuartier Wien

The exhibitions are curated by Felix Hoffmann (artistic director of FOTO ARSENAL WIEN).

Tickets available at the ticket counter and at the MQ Shop: 10 euros (regular), 5 euros (reduced)

Opening: August 31, 2023, 7 p.m., with Veronica Kaup-Hasler, City Councilor of Cultural Affairs and Science in Vienna

Side events

(Participation with exhibition ticket, without registration, no additional costs for guided tour/talk)

Sep 1, 2023, 7:30 p.m., MQ Salon:

Artist Talk Gundula Schulze Eldowy

Sep 1, 2023, 6 p.m., MQ Salon:

Guided Tour Mari Katayama

Sep 3, 2023, 12 a.m., MQ Salon:

Guided Tour Gundula Schulze Eldowy

Sep 3, 2023, 1 p.m., MQ Salon:

Guided Tour Mari Katayama

More information on the artists

gundula-schulze-eldowy.com

marikatayama.com

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About FOTO ARSENAL WIEN

FOTO ARSENAL WIEN is the new center of photography and lens-based media in Vienna, Austria. Initiated by the city of Vienna in autumn 2022, the institution presents contemporary photography in all forms and uses. The temporary venue at the MuseumsQuartier Wien will be replaced by an exhibition space of its own at the Arsenal in late 2024. FOTO ARSENAL is also the platform that organizes FOTO WIEN, Austria's largest biennial festival of photography, which is held within the framework of the European Month of Photography (EMOP). Felix Hoffmann is the artistic director of FOTO ARSENAL WIEN and FOTO WIEN.

Image material is available for downloading on fotoarsenalwien.at and on request to presse@fotoarsenalwien.at.



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