

## PREFACE

The history of photography in its full breadth and diversity is a vast field, one that the Kunstbibliothek and its Collection of Photography at the Museum für Fotografie in Berlin helps cultivate through exhibitions, research projects, and symposia. Here, the history of art photography is not the only area of focus. Just looking at the manifold ways in which photography is used reveals what a singular medium it is, one that has changed human communication and ways of perceiving the world like no other. By going to our exhibitions at the Museum für Fotografie, visitors can embark on a journey of discovery: How are microscopes used to take photographs? How were people in India photographed in the nineteenth century? How did photographers create an image of modern-day Brazil? How do photographs shape our image of the German Revolution of 1918–1919 in Berlin?

Equally important is the innovative work done in the core areas of the history of photography. Mounting the exhibition *Artist Complex. Photographic Portraits from Baselitz to Warhol. Platen Collection* in the summer of 2018, we were able to present an outstanding collection of artist portraits. Viewers of an artist portrait expect to learn something about the creative process, perhaps even about the motivations and essential character of the artist. In our approach to the exhibition at the Museum für Fotografie and to the accompanying book publication, we started from the basic thesis that a photographic portrait can only ever be an interpretation of what the photographer has seen, perhaps even felt, and that it can only develop its efficacy from the creative power of the people in front of and behind the camera. In producing such an image, the photographer and the artist enter a creative dialogue: This appears to be one of the main reasons why so many books and exhibitions have been dedicated to this subject and related collections have been amassed. The works shown at our museum were collected by Angelika Platen, herself a noted portraitist of artists, who, with the eye of both a passionate photographer and a devoted collector, developed a multifaceted kaleidoscope of the genre, reassuring herself of the foundations of her own work.

The concept of the artist is often linked to genius, originality and imaginativeness. Central literary and philosophical works invoke an analogy between the artist's creative process and divine creation, proclaiming the artist a godlike creator.

Here, it may be observed that these notions are often built around the idea of the male, virile artist. Our exhibition encompassed the idea of the artist in all its many facets, an idea that has become articulated throughout centuries of intellectual history, taking distinct shape in the twentieth century in the photographic image.

It goes without saying that an exhibition and a catalogue do not come close to exhausting this topic area. A two-day conference opened up numerous new perspectives. We would like to thank Jadwiga Kamola, formerly assistant in training at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, for her clear-sighted concept for, and attentive organization of, the symposium *Artist Complex. Images of Artists in Photography*, held in October 2018, which led to the contributions that have been gathered in this book. The symposium, like the exhibition, was made possible by the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, with the generous support of the Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe, the main sponsor of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Our sincere thanks also go to Bettina Gockel for accepting these contributions for publication in the distinguished series *Studies in Theory and History of Photography*.

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