

FINDINGS. TORBEN ESKEROD

Mysterious portraits, the value of memory and looking beyond the surface: 22 bodies of work from 30 years provide a broad inventory of the important Danish photographer Torben Eskerod at the Fotografie Forum Frankfurt.

Frankfurt am Main, 28.01.2022 – The Danish photographer and artist **Torben Eskerod** (*1960) is internationally known for his various portraits of different existences – such as hypnotists, deaconesses, healers or friends between 40 and 50 – and his portrait-like photographs of death masks or wooden model heads. In addition, his professional practice includes intriguing contemplative images of architecture and landscapes, photographs of art and artifacts as well as works made in collaboration with anthropologists, architectural historians and museum curators.

With 140 pictures from 22 different work series, the exhibition **FINDINGS. TORBEN ESKEROD** at the **Fotografie Forum Frankfurt (FFF)** presents a mid-career survey of his impressively large spectrum. At the same time, the show identifies the photographer's distinctive vision that manifests itself in his artistic as well as in his scientific-documentary work and unifies his oeuvre as a whole.

Thematically, **Torben Eskerod's** works move in a field of tension between preserving and letting go, between memory and transience. For 30 years, says **Alison Nordström**, curator of the exhibition, the photo artist has been exploring "the surfaces of the world" with the camera to find out what lies beneath them and "to emphasize the power of what cannot be fully seen, known or represented".

Eloquent examples of this are Eskerod's portrait series, which form the centrepiece of the FFF exhibition. Already in his first series *Prayer* (1991), Eskerod introduced his principle of the direct counterpart: four elderly deaconesses, whose faces show the traces of time, seem in harmony with the Bible verse that each of the sisters received as a daily prayer for their ordination; these verses are also on view. In his large-format portraits of hypnotists, healers or young Danish women, the photo artist also explores the power of gazes and the energy mystery.

Closed eyes, as in the fascinating *Life and Death Masks* (2001) defy the effort of an imprint of a face to capture a piece of a personality: even if the significance of these Danish celebrities, including the chemist Nils Bohr and the author Karen Blixen, seems over-present and within reach through the exact photographic reproduction of every skin pore, scar or line and the quadrupled life size, their human presence remain unfathomably closed and enraptured.

Questioning memory also determines Eskerod's large-format photographs of gravestone portraits in the series *Campo Verano* (2001-2008) or in the objects in *Flowers* (2017). Like the memories they represent the objects decay over time. Even the artist's camera, which preserves the decay for a moment, cannot stop it – it is "a meditation on photography", says Alison Nordström about these works.

At times, chance helps Eskerod's photographic variations on transience. For example, in *Damaged Portraits* (2011), the photographer re-photographed prints from a finished series that had decomposed and gone mouldy after water damage. The series *Marselis* (2003) shows trees

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in the fog in the Marselisborg forest, photographed with a film that had long since expired and, precisely because of the material damage, appears as if it has been transfigured in colour.

In his commissioned works, also shown at the FFF, the artist is interested in what lies beneath the visible surface. In the series Can Lis (2010), for example, Eskerod, who is one of Europe's preeminent architectural photographers, photographed the house of the Danish architect Jørn Utzon on Mallorca with abstracted planes within lightfilled spaces. He himself describes the series as "a conversation with a house, trying to understand the architect's intention".

Torben Eskerod studied at Aalborg University (1980-86), Aarhus School of Architecture and Fatamorgana School of Photography, Copenhagen (1988-91). His work has been exhibited in international museums and galleries, including the National Portrait Gallery, London; the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh and the Museum of National History, Denmark. Eskerod has received several awards and grants. His work can be found in numerous private and public collections, such as the National Museum of Photography, Denmark, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the DZ Bank Collection, Frankfurt. The artist lives and works in Copenhagen.

The exhibition was curated by **Alison Nordström** (US), independent scholar and photography curator, for the Fotografie Forum Frankfurt (FFF). With this show the FFF premieres a comprehensive survey of one of Denmark's most important contemporary photo-artists in Germany. The FFF presents **FINDINGS. TORBEN ESKEROD** from **29. January – 06. March 2022** as a relaunch: it was already part of the FFF programme in 2020/2021, but due to the pandemic it could only be open for a few days.

A magazine has been published to accompany the exhibition. For selected works special information by the curator is available via audio guide. Online tours, a gallery talk with Torben Eskerod, Alison Nordström and Celina Lunsford as well as audiovisuals on the FFF website www.fff Frankfurt.org and the FFF YouTube channel provide a digital foretaste.

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Fotografie Forum Frankfurt is supported by Förderkreis Fotografie Forum Frankfurt e.V., Stadt Frankfurt am Main, FUJIFILM Electronic Imaging Europe and Hauck, Aufhäuser, Lampe

