

# **MICHAEL KERSTGENS OUT OF CONTROL**

Exhibition duration: **8 March 2025 – 11 May 2025**

Opening: **Friday, 7 March 2025, 7.00 pm**

Press Tour: **Friday, 7 March 2025, 12.00 noon**

Exhibition venue: **Fotografie Forum Frankfurt**

*Frankfurt am Main, 7 March 2025 – Euphoria on the dance floor, turmoil in the factories, ever-changing landscapes – from 8 March to 11 May 2025, the Fotografie Forum Frankfurt (FFF) will present the first comprehensive exhibition of the work of the German documentary photographer Michael Kerstgens (b. 1960) in **Michael Kerstgens. Out of Control**. The exhibition provides a deep insight into his work spanning more than forty years, featuring long-term socio-political photographic essays in black-and-white and colour from Germany, Russia. With great sensitivity, Kerstgens documents the transformation of living environments and sheds light on the connections between culture, people and the economy.*

*Born in Wales and raised in Mülheim an der Ruhr, Michael Kerstgens studied Communication Design and Photography at the Folkwang University of the Arts (GHS) in Essen. He returned to Great Britain as a student in 1984–85 to document the miners' strikes. 'What interested me then was not the political significance but rather the social dimension of the strike and the lives of the families involved.'*

*Back in Germany, Kerstgens delved into the steelworkers' strike in Duisburg-Rheinhausen in the late 1980s and later sought the impact of German colonialism connected to the steel industry on a journey to the Tanzanian port of Kigoma.*

*»1986 – Back to the Present« shows how the photographer uses colour to document aspects of German lifestyle, emphasizing the seductions of the consumer society of the 1980s, themes that continue in his recent photographs of landscapes. In contrast are the black-and-white series ZwischenZeiten showing the Thuringian town of Mühlhausen before German reunification and The Final Winter which explores daily life in Moscow during the final winter of the former USSR. Also on view is Kerstgens's intensive photographs from Kurdistan made in 1991, after Saddam Hussein's expulsion of the Kurdish population from Iraq.*

*The broad spectrum of Michael Kerstgens's work also includes impressive portraits from the music and art scenes. Among the personalities portrayed by him are Helge Schneider, Joachim Król, Udo Kier and Christoph Schlingensief.*

*Numerous monographs on Michael Kerstgens have been published, including »Neues Leben. Russen – Juden – Deutsche« (2012, Kehrer Verlag), »The Enemy Within – The Miners' Strike 1984/1985« (2024, Dewi Lewis Publishing), »The Final Winter« (2018,*

# MICHAEL KERSTGENS OUT OF CONTROL

Peperoni Books) and »1986: Zurück in die Gegenwart – Back to the Present« (2021, Hartmann Books). He has received many awards for his photographic work, including the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences Science Award in the category 'Outreach' (2018) and the Imke Folkerts Prize for Fine Arts, East Frisia (2004).

As a freelance photographer, he worked internationally for editorial offices and companies before turning to teaching. After his first teaching positions in East Frisia and Dessau, he has been Professor for Photography at the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences from 2007 to 2025.

Curated by Celina Lunsford in collaboration with Michael Kerstgens, the exhibition **Michael Kerstgens. Out of Control** presents more than 100 photographs from four decades of work, which convey Michael Kerstgens's insight into themes of radical change and relevance, bringing sensitivity to the times we live.

The exhibition will be complemented by projections, numerous publications by the photographer and various programming events.

### ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME

FRI, 7 March, 7.00 pm **OPENING** »MICHAEL KERSTGENS. OUT OF CONTROL« at the **FFF**, Braubachstrasse 30-32, 60311 Frankfurt am Main

SAT, 8 March, 3.00 pm **GALLERY TALK** with **MICHAEL KERSTGENS** and **CELINA LUNSFORD** (FFF)

FRI, 4 April, 6.00 pm **DIALOGUE** »GB 84« with **JOACHIM KRÓL** and **MICHAEL KERSTGENS**. The actor Joachim Król will read from David Peace's novel, and Michael Kerstgens will present his photographs of the British miners' strike of 1984–85.

WED, 23 April, 6.00 pm **LECTURE** »PHOTOGRAPHY OF PARTICIPATION« with **MICHAEL KERSTGENS**

TUE, 25 March, 22 April, 6 May, 3.00 pm **CURATOR'S TOURS** with **CELINA LUNSFORD** or **ANDREA HORVAY** (FFF)

**PUBLIC GUIDED TOURS** every Wednesday, 5.00 pm

**OPENING HOURS** Tue–Sun 11.00 am – 6.00 pm, Mon closed

**ADMISSION** regular 7 Euro, reduced 4 Euro

## PRESS INFORMATION



# MICHAEL KERSTGENS OUT OF CONTROL

### **MORE EVENTS** at the **FFF ACADEMY**

SAT, 12 April, 2.00–5.30 pm **CITY WALK WORKSHOP** EYES ON FRANKFURT –  
SEARCHING FOR TRACES with MARKUS SEIBEL

SAT, 12 April, 2 August, 11 October, 10.00 am–5.00 pm **MASTERCLASS** UN VOYAGE  
PHOTOGRAPHIQUE// A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY with FERHAT BOUDA

THUR–SUN, 12–15 June, 11.00 am–5.00 pm **MASTERCLASS** THE PERSONAL PORTRAIT  
with ELINOR CARUCCI

For **PRESS IMAGES** please write to [presse@fffrankfurt.org](mailto:presse@fffrankfurt.org)

The exhibition is supported by



h\_da  
hochschule  
darmstadt



### **FOTOGRAFIE FORUM FRANKFURT**

The Fotografie Forum Frankfurt (FFF) is one of the leading centres of photography in Europe. As an exhibition space, institution and event forum, the FFF deals with all aspects of photography. Since its founding in 1984 it has presented about 270 exhibitions with historic and contemporary artists. Additionally, the programme of the FFF ACADEMY comprises regular workshops, talks and discussions with internationally renowned photographers, artists and experts. Further information available at [www.fffrankfurt.org](http://www.fffrankfurt.org).

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

FUJIFILM

STADT  FRANKFURT AM MAIN

 HAUCK  
AUFHÄUSER  
LAMPE

PRESS CONTACT Anne Schütz & Carola Schaffrath (Filmpresse Meuser)  
E-MAIL [presse@fffrankfurt.org](mailto:presse@fffrankfurt.org) [www.fffrankfurt.org](http://www.fffrankfurt.org) TELEPHONE +49 (0) 69 29 17 26  
SPONSOR Förderkreis Fotografie Forum Frankfurt am Main e.V. Braubachstrasse 30-32, 60311 Frankfurt am Main  
TELEPHONE +49 (0) 69 29 17 26 Telefax +49 (0) 69 28 639 E-Mail [contact@fffrankfurt.org](mailto:contact@fffrankfurt.org) [www.fffrankfurt.org](http://www.fffrankfurt.org)

# **MICHAEL KERSTGENS OUT OF CONTROL**

## **THE MINERS' STRIKE, 1984/1985**

*The miners' strike of 1984/85 remains the last major industrial dispute in the UK. It marked the end of the era of industrial culture and the beginning of financial culture – not only in Britain. When the strike was at its height in 1984, Kerstgens, as a young student, decided to photograph the strike. Born in Wales in 1960, he had good contacts in the local mining industry, but the strike was brutal and had divided British society. Distrust of the 'German' was high and Michael Kerstgens photographed the periphery in Wales, but not the striking workers.*

*The tide turned when he decided to travel to the centre of the action in Yorkshire and met activists Marsha and Stuart 'Spud' Marshall. Spud trusted the young photographer and invited him to stay with his family. This opened the door to the strike and its impact beyond the demonstrations. Kerstgens photographed meetings behind closed doors, women who had not been politically active before but now stood by their husbands and helped organise the protest. He photographed families and their children at home or at the occasional party, collecting low-grade coal to heat their homes, organising spontaneous demonstrations, confrontations with the police.*

*(Michael Kerstgens)*

## **1986 – BACK TO THE PRESENT**

*In 1986, the decade was halfway over. In April, the reactor in Chernobyl melted down, the Cold War was coming to an end, Helmut Kohl was chancellor, AIDS was just being perceived as a pandemic threat in Germany, and the affluent society of the Federal Republic of Germany was beginning to view consumption as a leisure activity. That year, Michael Kerstgens received a scholarship with the assignment to look at the subject of leisure. He used it to observe West Germans engaging in their favourite leisure activities, including sports, fitness, soccer, partying, outdoor swimming, tennis, playing golf, driving Golfs (and Opels), and shopping. In his essay from the book "1986" Klaus Honnef describes the 1980s as the favourite decade of the West Germans. Compared to their compatriots in the German Democratic Republic, they were doing extremely well. The sweeping changes at the end of the decade were inconceivable – the here and now was more important and more entertaining. For those who lived through the '80s in the FRG, the pictures of Michael Kerstgens are a (terribly-beautiful) trip down memory lane, for all others a visual tutorial.*

*(Excerpt from the press release about the book "Michael Kerstgens: 1986 – Back to the Present", 2021, Hartmann Books)*

# **MICHAEL KERSTGENS OUT OF CONTROL**

## **STEELWORKER'S STRIKE RHEINHAUSEN, 1987/88**

*On November 26, 1987, it was announced that Krupp-Stahl AG was planning to close the Duisburg-Rheinhausen steelworks. A six-month labor dispute began with numerous actions to preserve the steel and ironworks founded in 1897. Michael Kerstgens, who had photographed the British miners' strike a few years earlier, was also a close observer of the strike, with great empathy for those affected. His pictures show the strong cohesion of the various protagonists and the solidarity of different social groups. As well as the fight for jobs, it was also about the humane management of impending structural change and the future of an entire region. Like the British strike, the strike in the Ruhr area had far-reaching political significance.*

*(Andrea Horvay)*

## **TANGANYIKA, 1996**

*In still a fragile time after the devastating Rwandan genocides of the early 1990s, Michael Kerstgens made photographs in Burundi and of the different lives around the port of Kigoma, Tanzania located on Lake Tanganyika: fishermen, the harbour scene, migrant workers waiting to move on. These photographs also show the remnants of German colonial occupation in the region. Kerstgens was keen on photographing the "MV Liemba", formerly "Graf Goetzen" a transporter ship made for troops in Africa during World War I. Constructed in 1913 at the Meyer Shipyard in Papenburg, Germany, it was then taken apart and transported from Dar es Salaam to Kigoma in 5.000 crates by road carrier and per train on rail tracks made by Krupp. Once put together at Lake Tanganyika, it had to be sunk, to hide it from the Belgian and British troops, which had advanced into the German Colony at Kigoma. It survived the war and had long been used by the local inhabitants until 2018. This boat was the subject of the movie classic "The African Queen" (1951).*

*(Celina Lunsford)*

# **MICHAEL KERSTGENS OUT OF CONTROL**

## **MÜHLHAUSEN, 1990**

*It was more by chance that I went to Mühlhausen in Thuringia in mid-February 1990. I photographed the old, decaying town of Mühlhausen for the magazine "Stern," the town where the 16th-century theologian and reformer Thomas Müntzer rose up against feudalism and fought on the side of the peasants, and where he was also beheaded and impaled in 1525. In 1990 the desperation of the inhabitants was obvious: the craving for – as well as the reservations about Western consumer society. The people met me with great openness. I could talk to anyone, and people approached me as I wandered through the city with my camera. Most of the conversations revolved around the West, everyone wanted the Deutsche Mark immediately and German unity quickly. In this historical phase – the time between the times – I observed the city for almost three weeks and tried to get (my) image of it.*

*(Excerpt from: "Michael Kerstgens. Zwischenzeiten", Lehmann Verlag, 2019)*

## **THE FINAL WINTER, 1990**

*Moscow in winter 1990/91, 73 years after the revolution. The supply has collapsed. Barter economy replaces state monopolism. Everyone mistrusts everyone, one is the other's wolf. Parents send their children to Moscow to steal food. They are picked up by the militia and sent to re-education camps. Mothers of dead conscripts demonstrate against the harassment of superiors and the poor supplies and equipment in the Red Army. A state and its institutions disintegrate. Mikhail Gorbachev loses control of the state. It was the last winter of the USSR.*

*(Michael Kerstgens)*

## **KURDISTAN, 1991**

*After fleeing the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and his terror against the Kurds, several hundred thousand of people struggled to survive in a region where it is almost impossible to transport aid. They fled over the snow-covered passes of the 2,400-meter-high mountains across the Iraqi-Turkish border. Above the Turkish village of Işıkveren, a humanitarian catastrophe occurred. The Turkish military prevented the refugees from descending into the warmer valleys. Only after worldwide political pressure were the refugees from Iraq allowed to enter Turkey.*

*(Michael Kerstgens)*

# **MICHAEL KERSTGENS OUT OF CONTROL**

## **FELDVERSUCHE, 2001–2009**

*“... in the summer of 2001, Michael Kerstgens moved with his family from Mülheim an der Ruhr to Westermoordorf in East Frisia. Kerstgens captures his images in a cultural landscape shaped by the harsh climate of the North Sea, a landscape that would not exist without its complex systems of ditches, canals, dykes, groynes and brushwood heaps. [...] Again and again Kerstgens is drawn to the periphery between the open space of the Wadden Sea and the infrastructure of coastal protection and tourism that borders directly on it [...] His pictures tell how this piece of land feels, how its spaces unfold and how its people live with it. They let you feel the climate, sense the structures, experience the community, and discover curiosities and abysses in the seemingly banal.”*

*(Excerpt from: “Offener Feldversuch” by Nils Ohlsen in the book “Michael Kerstgens. Ostfriesland”, 2006)*

## **NORDERNEY 2013 – ONGOING**

*The island of Norderney has reached the limits of its capacity. Property prices are higher than on Sylt. The resentment of the local population is growing. Added to this is the threat of climate change, which presents the East Frisian Islands and the political leaders at local, state and federal level with a huge eternal task to preserve all the East Frisian Islands.*

*(Michael Kerstgens)*

# **MICHAEL KERSTGENS OUT OF CONTROL**

**Michael Kerstgens** (\*1960 in Wales) was raised in Mülheim an der Ruhr and studied photography at the Folkwang University of the Arts (GHS) in Essen. He was first internationally recognised for his series about the British miners' strike of 1984/85 and then began his professional career.

Kerstgens worked as a photographer throughout Europe, South America and Africa specialising in cultural and political themes for editorials and corporate contracts. He was the photographer for the high-wire artist Philippe Petit for many years. Kerstgens began teaching in East Frisia and Dessau, and was the Professor for Photography at the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences from 2007 to March 2025.

Michael Kerstgens has published nine monographs with various publishers, including "The Enemy Within" (2024, Dewi Lewis Publishing) and "Cole not Dole" (2013, Peperoni Books) about the Miners' Strike 1984/1985, "Neues Leben. Russen – Juden – Deutsche" (2012, Kehrer Verlag), "Hartes Leben auf der Höh' " (2015, Athesia Verlag, Bozen), "AufRuhrGebiet – Uproar Area" (2016 Peperoni Books), "The Final Winter – Der letzte Winter der UdSSR " (2018, Peperoni Books) and "1986: Zurück in die Gegenwart – Back to the Present" (2021, Hartmann Books).

Some of his awards include the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences Science Award in the category "Outreach" (2018), The Ruhr Prize for Art and Science of the City of Mülheim an der Ruhr (2014) and the Imke Folkerts Prize for Fine Arts, East Frisia (2004). The exhibition MICHAEL KERSTGENS. OUT OF CONTROL is the first overview of his work.



# **MICHAEL KERSTGENS OUT OF CONTROL**

Exhibition duration: **March 8, 2025 – May 11, 2025**

Opening: **Friday, March 7, 2025, 7 pm**

Press tour: **Friday, March 7, 2024, 12 noon**

Exhibition venue: **Fotografie Forum Frankfurt**



**New Year's Eve, Mühlheim/Ruhr, Deutschland, 1983/84**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Backyards, Llanelli, South Wales, 1984**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Marsha on the phone with actress Vanessa Redgrave,  
Rimington Road, Wombell, South Yorkshire, 1985**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Philipshalle Düsseldorf, 1986**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Roller-Disco, Oberhausen, 1986**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Minigolf, Essen, 1986**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025

**Please respect the copyright:**

All press image material is to be used solely for editorial coverage of the exhibition **Michael Kerstgens. Out of Control** at the Fotografie Forum Frankfurt. Please always mention the credit and copyright. Important note: **5 photos per medium can be used free of charge**. Please send us two copies of your article to the address below. Press image download: [www.fffrankfurt.com/presse](http://www.fffrankfurt.com/presse)

PRESS CONTACT Anne Schütz & Carola Schaffrath (Filmpresse Meuser)  
E-MAIL [presse@fffrankfurt.org](mailto:presse@fffrankfurt.org) [www.fffrankfurt.org](http://www.fffrankfurt.org) TELEPHONE +49 (0) 69 29 17 26  
SPONSOR Förderkreis Fotografie Forum Frankfurt am Main e.V. Braubachstrasse 30-32, 60311 Frankfurt am Main  
TELEPHONE +49 (0) 69 29 17 26 TELEFAX +49 (0) 69 28 639 E-Mail [contact@fffrankfurt.org](mailto:contact@fffrankfurt.org) [www.fffrankfurt.org](http://www.fffrankfurt.org)

# **MICHAEL KERSTGENS OUT OF CONTROL**

Exhibition duration: **March 8, 2025 – May 11, 2025**

Opening: **Friday, March 7, 2025, 7 pm**

Press tour: **Friday, March 7, 2024, 12 noon**

Exhibition venue: **Fotografie Forum Frankfurt**



**Burgstraße, Mühlhausen, Thüringen, DDR, 1990**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Jakobiviertel, Marienkirche, Mühlhausen, Thüringen, DDR, 1990**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Zöllnergasse, Mühlhausen, Thüringen, DDR, 1990**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Moskau, 1990**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Kurdisches Flüchtlingslager, Işıkveren, Türkei, 1991**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Kigoma, Tanzania, 1996**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Lake Tanganyika, Kigoma, Tanzania, 1996**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025

**Please respect the copyright:**

All press image material is to be used solely for editorial coverage of the exhibition **Michael Kerstgens. Out of Control** at the Fotografie Forum Frankfurt. Please always mention the credit and copyright. Important note: **5 photos per medium can be used free of charge**. Please send us two copies of your article to the address below. Press image download: [www.fffrankfurt.com/presse](http://www.fffrankfurt.com/presse)

PRESS CONTACT Anne Schütz & Carola Schaffrath (Filmpresse Meuser)  
E-MAIL [presse@fffrankfurt.org](mailto:presse@fffrankfurt.org) [www.fffrankfurt.org](http://www.fffrankfurt.org) TELEPHONE +49 (0) 69 29 17 26  
SPONSOR Förderkreis Fotografie Forum Frankfurt am Main e.V. Braubachstrasse 30-32, 60311 Frankfurt am Main  
TELEPHONE +49 (0) 69 29 17 26 TELEFAX +49 (0) 69 28 639 E-Mail [contact@fffrankfurt.org](mailto:contact@fffrankfurt.org) [www.fffrankfurt.org](http://www.fffrankfurt.org)

# **MICHAEL KERSTGENS OUT OF CONTROL**

Exhibition duration: **March 8, 2025 – May 11, 2025**

Opening: **Friday, March 7, 2025, 7 pm**

Press tour: **Friday, March 7, 2024, 12 noon**

Exhibition venue: **Fotografie Forum Frankfurt**



**Norderney, 2019**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Ski-Halle, Bottrop, 2024**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Aus dem Projekt / from the project »Taxi«, 1983**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Joachim Król**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025



**Michael Kerstgens**

© Michael Kerstgens 2025

**Please respect the copyright:**

All press image material is to be used solely for editorial coverage of the exhibition **Michael Kerstgens. Out of Control** at the Fotografie Forum Frankfurt. Please always mention the credit and copyright. Important note: **5 photos per medium can be used free of charge**. Please send us two copies of your article to the address below. Press image download: [www.fff Frankfurt.com/presse](http://www.fff Frankfurt.com/presse)

PRESS CONTACT Anne Schütz & Carola Schaffrath (Filmpresse Meuser)  
E-MAIL [presse@fff Frankfurt.org](mailto:presse@fff Frankfurt.org) [www.fff Frankfurt.org](http://www.fff Frankfurt.org) TELEPHONE +49 (0) 69 29 17 26  
SPONSOR Förderkreis Fotografie Forum Frankfurt am Main e.V. Braubachstrasse 30-32, 60311 Frankfurt am Main  
TELEPHONE +49 (0) 69 29 17 26 TELEFAX +49 (0) 69 28 639 E-Mail [contact@fff Frankfurt.org](mailto:contact@fff Frankfurt.org) [www.fff Frankfurt.org](http://www.fff Frankfurt.org)