

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

The year 2016 will most likely be the year a global commission of scientists officially names our current epoch the *Anthropocene*: “the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment.”

Besides having become the dominant geological force on earth, humanity has once again also entered a time of fear and populism, perhaps as a reaction to an era of unprecedented and multilayered acceleration, destabilization, and migration. These trends are due both to technological advances in communication and transport infrastructures and to the rise of globalized regimes of deregulated capitalism, which allows for the free movement of information, of services, and of goods—but only to a certain extent of human beings.

The consequences of the environmental crises caused by a manmade climate, and those of the humanitarian crises caused by the structural contradictions of our current economic and political system, are intertwined in complex and precarious ways. We have reached a tipping point, and it remains unclear whether our existing institutions and systems of knowledge and communication are still sufficient to address these crises in a way that serves a globalized and universal common good.

This, then, is the larger context and focus of the 14th edition of Krakow Photomonth. Under the theme *Crisis? What Crisis?!* the festival will focus on the rethinking, reimagining, and remaking of photographic media and cultures within current artistic practices, as well as their institutional platforms of (re)presentation. As images play a large role in this wider context, the festival’s theme can also be read as a pragmatic attempt to move beyond both real and perceived crises of photography, based as they are on theoretical impasses and techno-deterministic biases, such as those present in current discussions regarding the death of photography as a medium and the proposition of a “post-photographic” condition.

One of the festival’s basic assumptions is that, while the medium still formally known as photography has changed and evolved constantly since its invention, the past thirty to forty years—from the onset of digitalization to the algorithmic turn and computational photography—have introduced processes that can be best described as the “unbecoming” of photography and the “becoming” of *the photographic*.

Another assumption is that, since their inception, photographic practices have not only established new forms of artistic expression, but also—for better and for worse—served

as important tools of scientific, commercial, political, and social movements and projects.

Thus, by looking at pressing matters of global, societal, and political concern, the exhibitions presented during Krakow Photomonth all, in their own way, both engage with the world and reflect upon and attempt to (re)activate the photographic apparatus. They provide windows of opportunity to reflect on emerging photographic states of reaggregation and reassembly, and on sociopolitical processes and relationalities that might soon be, or already are, emerging from our current era. Other exhibitions will present visual inquiries and poetic explorations regarding individual identities and their relation to the physical body or to value systems.

One focus here is on the role of emerging distributed and networked image ecologies and their hyperconnected and accelerated patterns of mutation and migration. A further focus will be on emerging forms of photographic storytelling that hybridize documentary and fictional strategies of narration; in particular, a group exhibition looks at presentational modes of narration using physical or virtual space, or hybrids thereof. A final focus will be on the changing conceptions of the expert and the layperson by presenting collective forms of work with the photographic.

One of the goals of this edition of Krakow Photomonth is to enable visitors to engage critically and actively, not only with the artworks in the gallery and public spaces of the festival but also beyond that immediate context—that is, with the wider complexities of our planetary image ecology, such as the deployment of visual propaganda on commercial, political, religious, and personal levels, that confronts us all in our current era.

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