

The Bielefeld graphic artist and photographer, Carl Strüwe (1898–1988) counts as one of the pioneers of artistic micro photography. With his complex of works, »Formen des Mikrokosmos« (Forms of the Microcosm, 1926– 1959), he participated over time in the photographic styles of the New Sobriety and the New Vision, the New Landscape movement in the USA, as well as the European subjectivists and the experimental photography of the 1950' s.

The exhibition at the Bielefelder Kunstverein intends to be retrospective and »anticipation« at the same time. It does not organise its pictures in any art-historical order. Much rather, it takes examples of the artist Strüwe's work and brings him into a dialogue with the contemporary photographers, Liz Deschenes (*1966, lives and works in New York), Jan Paul Evers (*1982, lives and works in Cologne) and Jochen Lempert (*1958, lives and works in Hamburg). The exhibition takes up the question of the artistic relevance and actuality of his approach in his photographic work as reflected in contemporary art. It further intends to take Strüwe's work as a starting point for sketching out central developments and characteristics of artistic photography in the 20th and 21st centuries.

From today's perspective, the »Formen des Mikrokosmos« offer an excellent paradigm for the shifting between »artistic« and »scientific« photography, which already began in the 19th century, but also for the development of producing art via photography at the beginning of the 20th century. Beyond that, they also reflect fundamental questions of how we deal with the history of photography, as well as the visualisation of knowledge, of the relationship between documentation, abstraction and staging, together with the technical conditions of the medium, not least the role of people in all this.

With Liz Deschenes, Jan Paul Evers and Jochen Lempert, we have invited three artists who repeatedly engage with the history of photography and with the medium as such in their work. The exhibition's display extends across two floors of the Kunstverein and presents the Strüwe's micro photographs in variously conceived showcases and in interaction with the respective other works. Where Liz Deschenes interacts with Strüwe through existing works, Jan Paul Evers and Jochen Lempert have also integrated new photographs, which were produced specially for this exhibition. In this way, the visitors can experience dialogic impulses and can view Strüwe's work embedded in the context of three different sorts of work.

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