INTO THE UNSEEN
THE WALTHER COLLECTION
OCTOBER 24, 2025 – APRIL 26, 2026
HALL FOR CONTEMPORARY ART/DEICHTORHALLEN HAMBURG



Santu Mofokeng, *Eyes-wide-shut, Motouleng Cave, Clarens*, from the series *Chasing Shadows*, 2004 © Santu Mofokeng Foundation. Courtesy Lunetta Bartz, MAKER, Johannesburg.

THE WALTHER COLLECTION is considered one of the world's most renowned collections of global photography. This exhibition marks the final major presentation of the collection in Europe before 6,500 works are gifted to THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART in New York. INTO THE UNSEEN challenges visitors to look beyond the visible and make the unseen – the mystical, the repressed, or the elusive – perceptible by activating photography's audible, tactile, and emotional registers. This multi-sensory exhibition thus engages critiques of the dominance of vision by charting a more expansive understanding of photography and embracing a new poetics of the unseen.

INTO THE UNSEEN features works by, among others, Cang Xin, Em'kal Eyongakpa, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Santu Mofokeng, Eadweard Muybridge, Jo Ractliffe, RongRong, Berni Searle, and Yang Fudong, as well as a new sound work by photographer Felipe Romero Beltrán and a new photo installation by artist Ana María Gómez López.

The curatorial concept of the exhibition asks what photography can be beyond detached viewing. Rather than a neutral technology of representation, photography is presented as a medium that generates both connection and resistance. In this way, it eschews any notion of vision as a privileged sensory register and presenting it instead as inseparably linked to a *multi*-sensory engagement with the world around us.

Unlike a traditional white cube gallery, the exhibition design leads visitors into dark rooms where images float organically and walls release a distinctive scent. Small architectural structures crafted from local

DEICHTORSTRASSE 1–2
20095 HAMBURG
TELEFON +49(0)40/32103-0
WWW.DEICHTORHALLEN.DE

PRESSESTELLE
TELEFON +49(0)40/32103-250
TELEFON +49(0)40/32103-262
PRESSE@DEICHTORHALLEN.DE

Douglas fir create intimate spaces for viewing vernacular photographs, scientific studies, and family albums. The wood has been treated using traditional Japanese *Yakisugi* techniques, which give it a deep black, shimmering surface with a pronounced sculptural grain. The choice of wall colors, textiles, and colored-infused ceilings challenges the fiction of detached looking by creating sense of embeddedness in the artwork. In this way, the exhibition itself takes a multisensory approach to the installation of artworks — a curatorial intervention that intensifies the experience of engaging art by activating the full range of our senses.

FREQUENCIES OF DARKNESS

The exhibition's first gallery shifts from an emphasis on exposure and visibility to a focus on darkness, spirituality, and shadow. **Santu Mofokeng**'s *Chasing Shadows* (1996–2014) highlights the "otherworldliness" of images that obscure the boundary between documentation and imagination, while **Jo Ractliffe** attends to the tension between presence and absence in her *Diana Archive* (2004), a body of work photographed with toy cameras that harnesses snapshot aesthetics to capture seemingly random everyday scenes in a timeless lyrical texture.

HOLDING EVERYDAY LIFE

The second exhibition theme, "Holding Everyday Life," centers the photo album as both a private tactile memory object and an embodied practice of collection, arrangement, and display. It highlights the album's institutional and archival function as well, in particular, the notorious "crime scene albums" of Parisian criminologist **Alphonse Bertillon**. In contrast, **Santu Mofokeng**'s *The Black Photo Album/Look at Me: 1890–1950* (1997) uses the photo album — displayed using a Kodak slide carousel of studio portraits of Black middle-class families in South Africa — to pose radically different questions and reveal suppressed subaltern narratives.

LISTENING TO THE LAND

Through performance, touch, sound, and photography, the works in the third chapter of the exhibit, "Listening to the Land," create an intimate connection to landscape and the stories inscribed and encoded in it. Featuring ghostlike figures and saturated surfaces, **Em'kal Eyongakpa**'s *Ketoya Speaks* (2016) takes us to southwest Cameroon, a center of resistance during German colonial rule in the early twentieth century, while artist and documentarian **David Goldblatt** transforms surfaces into a comprehensive portrait of South African society.

TRACING SEDIMENTS

The fourth chapter is dedicated to loss, recovery, and the afterlives of images. At its core is the *Lost & Found Project* (2011), initiated by **Munemasa Takahashi** following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami on Japan's east coast. In the wake of this disaster, the Memory Salvage Initiative collected, digitized, and restored damaged family photographs and returned them to their owners. Takahashi used images too badly damaged to be identified or returned to create a collective visual archive, 1,600 of which are presented for the first time in a haunting formation of images floating in the space.

TASTE, TOUCH, FEEL

The fifth chapter foregrounds sensory experience as an embodied means of accessing the world. In *Communications Series No. 2* (1996–2006), **Cang Xin** (a member of legendary Beijing East Village Collective) focuses on how taste connects us to the outside world, while Colombian artist **Ana María Gómez López** uses performance to subject her body to a radical physical experiment in *Inoculate (B semperflorens)* (2023–). Similarly, **Song Dong** and **RongRong** all test the limits of sensory perception in

DEICHTORSTRASSE 1–2
20095 HAMBURG
TELEFON +49(0)40/32103-0
WWW.DEICHTORHALLEN.DE

PRESSESTELLE
TELEFON +49(0)40/32103-250
TELEFON +49(0)40/32103-262
PRESSE@DEICHTORHALLEN.DE

works that explore the unseen in the human body using the camera as a portal for their journeys and reflections. And a newly commissioned sonic installation by Colombian photographer **Felipe Romero Beltrán**, *A Body That Speaks As a Bird* (2025), sounds of the loss of indigenous languages and local dialects by interspersing them with natural sounds that also disappeared as rural populations fled armed conflict and land expropriation.

SENSING TIME

The final chapter of the exhibition features **Yang Fudong**'s six-channel video work, *East of Que Village* (2007), which views the world from the perspective of abandoned dogs roaming deserted villages. Long shots create an intense silence interrupted only by the sound of wind, barking dogs, or barely audible conversations. In doing so, the work confronts us with a dystopian relationship to time through the perspective of species struggling to reckon with the aftermath human dislocation.

THE WALTHER COLLECTION

The Walther Collection was founded by Artur Walther who built the collection largely in collaboration with renowned curator Okwui Enwezor. In 2010, Walther opened a dedicated museum campus in Neu-Ulm and in 2011 the Project Space in the West Chelsea Arts Building in New York City. The Walther Collection has been devoted to the critical understanding of historical and contemporary photography, drawing from its expansive holdings of photography and media art from Africa, China, Japan, Europe, and America, as well as vernacular imagery from across the globe. In May 2025, the Collection announced a major promised gift to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. INTO THE UNSEEN is the final major presentation of the collection in Europe.

The exhibition, curated by Nadine Isabelle Henrich, art historian and curator of the House of Photography, and Prof. Tina M. Campt, historian and Roger S. Berlind Professor of Humanities at Princeton University, was developed in close dialogue with Artur Walther.

We thank The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York for its collaboration.

DEICHTORSTRASSE 1–2
20095 HAMBURG
TELEFON +49(0)40/32103-0
WWW.DEICHTORHALLEN.DE

PRESSESTELLE
TELEFON +49(0)40/32103-250
TELEFON +49(0)40/32103-262
PRESSE@DEICHTORHALLEN.DE

INTO THE UNSEEN
THE WALTHER COLLECTION
OCTOBER 24, 2025 – APRIL 26, 2026
HALL FOR CONTEMPORARY ART/DEICHTORHALLEN HAMBURG

CURATORS
Nadine Isabelle Henrich, Curator of the House of Photography, and Prof. Tina M. Campt, Historian and Roger S. Berlind Professor of Humanities at Princeton University

PRESS TOUR
Thursday, October 23, 2025, at 12:30 pm in the Hall for Contemporary Art with Nadine Isabelle Henrich, Tina M. Campt, and Artur Walther. Please register interview requests in advance.

EXHIBITION OPENING
Thursday, October 23, 2025, at 7 pm in the Hall for Contemporary Art, together with the exhibition HUGUETTE CALAND: A LIFE IN A FEW LINES.

PUBLICATION
A comprehensive publication will be produced for the exhibition in collaboration with The Walther Collection, with texts by, among others: Tina M. Campt, Nadine Isabelle Henrich, Felipe Romero Beltrán, Ana María Gómez López, Shawn Michelle Smith. Expected publication date: December 2025.

OPENING HOURS
Tuesday – Sunday, 11 am – 6 pm. Every first Thursday of the month 11 am – 9 pm, with free admission from 6 – 9 pm.

ADDRESS
Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Deichtorstrasse 1–2, 20095 Hamburg, tel. 040-321030,
besucherbuero@deichtorhallen.de

PRESS MATERIAL
Press images and texts are available for download at www.deichtorhallen.de/presse.
For interview and press inquiries, please contact: Astrid Umbreit, +49 40 32103 250, or Caroline Huzel, +49 40 32103 262, presse@deichtorhallen.de

WWW.DEICHTORHALLEN.DE

IN COLLABORATION WITH

THE
WALTHER COLLECTION

PARTNER DER DEICHTORHALLEN

Hapag-Lloyd Stiftung WHITE WALL KUNSTMEILE HAMBURG

DEICHTORSTRASSE 1–2
20095 HAMBURG
TELEFON +49(0)40/32103-0
WWW.DEICHTORHALLEN.DE

PRESSESTELLE
TELEFON +49(0)40/32103-250
TELEFON +49(0)40/32103-262
PRESSE@DEICHTORHALLEN.DE