

The
Photographers'
Gallery

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Press Release

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Mediterranean: A Season of Exhibitions on Views of the Mediterranean

Between August and November The Photographers' Gallery will present a season of exhibitions exploring the abiding cultural relevance of the Mediterranean. It is the meeting place of continents of Europe, Africa and Asia, with the sea allowing movement of people and ideas to take place. From Algiers to Athens, Barcelona to Beirut, Tangiers to Tel Aviv, this season will open up a conversation between contemporary and historical photography discussing the evolving definition of this contested area.

Mediterranean: Between Reality and Utopia

Sponsored by Deutsche Börse Group

13 August – 3 October 2004

No. 5 & 8 Great Newport Street

Admission Free

The Mediterranean season begins with a group exhibition which investigates the Mediterranean as a place that sits somewhere between a geographical location and an imagined site and includes work by both international emerging and established photographers.

Since the beginning of photography the Mediterranean has been a location travelled to and depicted by countless photographers. The sea, where the continents of Africa, Europe and Asia meet, acts as both a bridge and a divider between nations, creating a site on to which hopes and desires are projected. The entire region has a rich and layered history that informs the practice of the photographers selected for this exhibition. Initiating a conversation around the identity of the Mediterranean as a site of culture, desire, migration and conflict. *Mediterranean: Between Reality and Utopia* presents work by international contemporary photographers, many of which will be shown for the first time in the UK alongside rarely seen historical photographers, including **Edouard-Denis Baldus** (1815-1882, France) and **August Sander** (1876-1964, Germany).

Depictions of the Mediterranean permeate history of art and literature, attracted by the quality of light in the region as well as by its rich history. The Campagna Romana in Italy, for example, became defined as the 'home of the gods' and inspired painters such as Piranesi, Poussin and Corot. In this exhibition this famous countryside is depicted by **Joel Sternfeld** (b 1944, USA) who reveals the ancient Roman sites in their modern, everyday context – a place to graze sheep, or as a tourist destination or as a place of relaxation. **Bleda y Rosa** (b1970 & 1968, Spain) explore sites that have been central to struggles of power within the Mediterranean, such as Kerkouare in Tunisia and Knossos on Crete. **Julie Ganzin** (1963, France) returns to the same locations depicted by early photographers to reveal how these locations are still used as generic landscapes where people often spend their leisure time.

Movement of people is also investigated. **Eric Fischl** (b 1948, USA) uses the camera to portray the popularity of San Tropez, showing people escaping to the sunny beach culture of this infamous area. **Jacques-Henri Lartigue's** (1894-1986, France) also produces images of the Riviera but depicts the beach culture of 1950s. Both photographers illustrate the coast of Southern France during their own regular holiday trips – Fischl in the 1980s,

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and Lartigue throughout his life. **Youssef Safieddine's** (b 1925, Lebanon) photographs portray him with his wife travelling throughout the Mediterranean, the images reveal not only the passage of time in relation to the travelling couple and but also the change in style of photography.

The physical landscape of the Mediterranean moves from the sea to plains and mountains, the island of Sicily is viewed as a microcosm for the ranges in topology and **Martin Cole** (b 1964, UK) explores this in his series of work *The Wine Dark Sea*. Landscape is created firstly by geographical history, and secondly by human history which in turn leaves its marks on the landscape reflecting wider social and political issues. **Vesna Pavlovic's** (b 1970, Serbia & Montenegro) work also depicts people at leisure. Using three found images by an unknown photographer and taken on the beach in 1931 at Selsnic in former Yugoslavia, Pavlovic's images are displayed beside enlarged details of the originals. These images depict a population full of haunting optimism for the future, recovering from one war with innocence and hope for the future, often with very little idea of what was ahead. **Guy Raz** (b 1964, Israel) photographs deserted beaches in Tel Aviv and Gaza, showing the only border of the state that is not at the disposition of negotiations and wars: the sea. These images depict an area that simultaneously opens up a perspective of desire and hope.

The exhibition is curated by Lisa Le Feuvre.

List of participating photographers:

Edouard-Denis Baldus (1815-1882, France), Gabriele Basilico (b. 1944, Italy), BledayRosa (b. 1970 & 1968, Spain), Christophe Bourguedieu (b. 1961, Morocco), Martin Cole (b. 1964, UK), Dimitris Constantin (worked 1860s, Greece), Louis De Clerq (1836 – 1901, France), Ad van Denderen (b. 1943, The Netherlands) Eric Fischl (b. 1948, USA), Günther Forg (b. 1952, Germany), Julie Ganzin (b. 1963, France), Eric Kessels (The Netherlands), Jacques-Henri Lartigue (1894 – 1986, France), Rosell Meseguer (b. 1976, Spain), Vesna Pavlovic (B. 1970, Serbia & Montenegro), Marc Räder (b. 1966, Germany), Guy Raz (b. 1964, Israel), Xavier Ribas (b. 1964, Spain), Youssef Safieddine (b. 1925, Turkey), Efrat Shvliy (b. 1955, Israel), Joel Sternfeld (b 1944, USA), Enrico Verzaschi (Italy), Secil Yersel (b. 1973, Turkey), Anonymous photographers

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Following this exhibition, The Photographers' Gallery will present, for the first time, two solo exhibitions of work by the international photographers **Hashem El Madani and Pierre Bourdieu (14 October – 28 November)**. Featuring work from the Lebanon and Algeria, these two exhibitions continue the investigation of the Mediterranean through an interrogation of people and their occupation of a location that sits in a centre of political change.

Hashem El Madani (b. 1930, Saida, Southern Lebanon) has been taking pictures of his home town for the last fifty years. These striking images subtly alludes to the changing political climate and offer a unique insight into the political and societal shifts that have taken place during the Middle East Crisis.

The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930 – 2002, France) took up a post as lecturer in the University of Algiers in 1958 - a time of civil war, when the clash between the Algerian people and French colonialism was at its peak. During this time (1958 – 1961) Bourdieu completed a fieldwork study of photographs and subsequently entrusted them to Camera Austria. This exhibition will offer unique insight into a culture that was on the brink of independence releasing itself from an age-old colonial structure. This will be the first UK presentation of these images.