

PRESS RELEASE

18 August 2020

NEW TIMES?

Warsaw 1939 | Ukraine 1941/42 | Berlin 1945

75 YEARS AFTER THE END OF THE WAR

The Freundeskreis Willy-Brandt-Haus will be presenting the exhibition **NEUE ZEIT? 75 years after the end of the war**, from 12 September 2020 to 25 October 2020 in the Willy-Brandt-Haus, Wilhelmstrasse 140, 10963 Berlin.



The exhibition **NEUE ZEIT?** brings together three photo archives: photographs by an unknown German soldier of the invasion of Warsaw in autumn 1939, those by the Bauhaus-related photographer Dieter Keller on the Ukrainian front in 1941/42, and images from the Russian war photographer Valery Faminsky of the liberation of Berlin and the first days of peace in the city in May 1945.

Gisela Kayser (Manager and Artistic Director of the Freundeskreis Willy-Brandt-Haus) is responsible for the overall concept of the exhibitions in the Willy-Brandt-Haus. The exhibition **NEUE ZEIT?** is curated by **Ana Druga** and **Thomas Gust** (Buchkunst Berlin agency and publishing house).

Prof. Dr. Peter Steinbach (historian and political scientist) initiated the exhibition **NEUE ZEIT?**, and provided the photographs from the "Warsaw 1939" archive. Dieter Keller's photographs have been loaned and compiled for the exhibition by **Dr. Norbert Moos** (Director of the Forum für Fotografie Cologne). **Arthur Bondar** (photojournalist and discoverer of Valery Faminsky's archive) made it possible for Faminsky to return to Berlin through his photographs. Our special thanks go to **Uwe Neumärker** (Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe) for his support, and the opportunity to cooperate with the Permanent Conference of National Socialist Memorial Sites in the Berlin Area.

Guided tours

To complement the exhibition, free guided tours will be led by photography lecturer and publisher Thomas Gust on Sunday, 20 September, 27 September, and 11 October 2020 at 4 pm, and on 25 October 2020 at 4 pm and 6 pm. Due to the current public health situation, tours will take place with a limited number of visitors. Please register at mail@freundeskreis-wbh.de.

Workshops

Over the duration of the exhibition, there will be free online workshops. Please contact mail@freundeskreis-wbh.de for registration and further information.

NEUE ZEIT? – 75 years after the end of the war

Duration	12 September–25 October 2020
Press tour	9 September, 10 am to 1 pm, and by appointment
Opening Hours	Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–8 pm Admission free, identification required
Address	WILLY-BRANDT-HAUS Stresemannstr. 28, 10963 Berlin
Information	Access only with a reserved time slot ticket, book online at: www.fkwbh.eventbrite.com Mouth and nose coverings are required. Please keep your physical distance from other visitors, and observe proper hygiene rules.

Prof. Dr. Peter Steinbach

NEW TIMES?

Why do people choose to go to war? Do they follow promises, do they believe in the lies of the powerful, or do they subscribe to ideologies or fantasies? Is there any chance that civilization will thrive while confronting horror, misery, and death?

Several years ago, the photographs of the Russian war photographer Valery Faminsky, who documented the war after 1943, were discovered and presented to the German public. Faminsky reached Berlin with the Red Army in 1945. He had an eye for suffering, both for the soldiers and the citizens of Berlin. His work captures a new beginning in Berlin, as part of the continuation of a bigger story.

But which story? Let us compare and contrast Faminsky's images with photographs of an unknown German photographer, a soldier in the German Wehrmacht forces that occupied Warsaw in the autumn of 1939. Comparing the two series provides insights into the beginning and the end of the war. The camera further shows what the inhabitants of Warsaw and Berlin have experienced.

And the time in between? Dieter Keller was a photographer with close connections to the New Objectivity and Bauhaus movements. His photographs from 1941/42 document the war in Ukraine, the destruction of rural and urban livelihoods, and the suffering of humans and animals. Keller looks at people who only know what lies behind them, unsure of what to expect. But the photographer knows this, as he records death, and contrasts the suffering with a sense of order, all captured in his photographs of buildings, plants, and animals.

And today? The photographs from these different archives clearly exemplify the civil rupture that war always entails: in 1939, 1941/42, 1945, and beyond. Those affected are human beings. Misery is felt individually, and requires an empathic eye even if the footage captured seeks to be documentary. War photographers have often glorified military operations and victories, and propagated ideologies and conflict. Great, touching war photography intensifies and reorientates the human perspective. It shows that people – as Theodor Fontane (himself a war correspondent) once assumed – might not be able to learn empathy. However, Fontane knew that people were always prone to unlearning empathy. The ability to suffer can sharpen human perception.

Against this backdrop, the simultaneous exhibition of photographs from Warsaw in autumn 1939, Ukraine in 1941/42, and Berlin in May 1945 is an attempt to make an appeal for civility by confronting the viewer with the horrors of oppression, occupation, and war, as well as the misery and suffering of the population and soldiers involved. The phrase "Never again!" as we know it, lacks merit because the great number of armed conflicts initiated across the globe since 1945 tell a different story. Whether Warsaw, Kiev, Berlin, Hiroshima, Hué, or Aleppo, the impact of the images is always the same. We are still in the middle of it all.

The presentation of these photographs in the Willy-Brandt-Haus gallery focuses on the period between 1939 and 1945, creating a dynamic spanning the beginning and end of the war that thwarts the illusions of "zero hour" and doom. Photographs are important for posterity, and not just only to develop and preserve a documentarily dense and reliable idea of an authentic past. Awareness of the past is arguably the decisive precondition for a civilized political coexistence.

The end of the war of race and ideologies that began in 1939 was already sketched out at its beginning. Six entire years were shaped by destruction and human extermination, which continue to have an impact on our perception. These images move us away from the original promise of "new times" through war. The real-life consequences can be seen, then and now.

Wars are not just a matter of the past: they're happening right now.

Thomas Gust

BERLIN MAY 1945 – VALERY FAMINSKY

The Russian war photographer Valery Faminsky's (1914–1993) archive of photographs of the liberation of Berlin and the ensuing first days of peace, discovered in Moscow after decades of being hidden away in obscurity, are artistically astonishing and historically invaluable documents.

Faminsky arrives with the first Red Army soldiers to reach the embattled city in April 1945. His actual task is to document for the Red Army medical administration the support and logistics operations assisting wounded soldiers. With these authorizations he freely roams around the city. Driven by his photojournalistic and artistic interests, he defies the official ban on photographing the civilians, misery, and destruction he sees.

Faminsky's photographs capture the devastated city, exhausted citizens, and everyday activities of the Soviet troops without pathos or propaganda, but through a deeply humanistic lens. He conveys a profound longing for peace, with his interest focused on the individual fates of people on both sides of the front. They include foreign labourers on their way home, German refugees, and civilians searching for relatives, food, and water. This is life amidst the ruins, defined by extreme conditions. The interactions depicted in these images are between human individuals, not between winners and the conquered.

On 24 May 1945 Faminsky returns to Moscow with his photographs, which he never publishes. After his death, his grandchildren discover them in his estate and puts the archive, which contains almost 500 negatives, up for sale on the internet. The Moscow-based Ukrainian photojournalist Arthur Bondar discovers and purchases the archive in 2017, and presents the images to a Russian audience for the first time.

PHOTOBOOK **BERLIN MAY 1945 – VALERY FAMINSKY**

Editor **Thomas Gust, Ana Druga, Arthur Bondar, Joseph Dilworth**

Publishing House **Buchkunst Berlin** | www.buchkunst-berlin.de

Award **German Photobook Prize 2019/20** Silver / shortlist

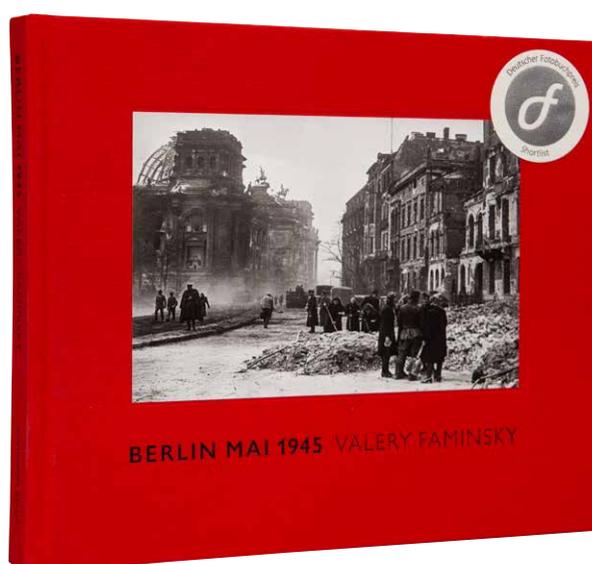


PHOTO SELECTION

Berlin May 1945 – Valery Faminsky



01



02



03



04



05



06

Photos © Valery Faminsky / Arthur Bondar's Private Collection

01 Suburbs of Berlin, May 1945 | 02 Unloading a wounded soldier at the field hospital in Ritterstrasse. Berlin, April 30, 1945 | 03 Reading of the surrender in the streets of Berlin on May 8, 1945. | 04 Distribution of leaflets with the text of the capitulation in the streets of Berlin on May 8, 1945. | 05 Falckensteinstrasse, corner of Schlesische Strasse, Berlin, May 1945 | 06 Evacuation of the wounded. Berlin, April/May 1945 |

First page Cleaning the streets between the Reichstag and the Brandenburg Gate by the inhabitants of Berlin. Berlin, May 1945

Dr. Norbert Moos

DIETER KELLER - UKRAINE 1941/42

Dieter Keller (1909–1985), born as the son of the successful owner of Franckh-Kosmos-Publishers, was close friends with artists from the New Objectivity and the German Bauhaus movements. Over the years, he cultivated relationships with Willi Baumeister, Alexej von Jawlensky, and Ida Kerkovius. His close friendship with Oskar Schlemmer is documented in more than 90 letters. These contacts shaped his artistic vision and significantly influenced his photographic compositions.

In 1941/42, Keller served as a German soldier in Ukraine and Belarus. Despite a strict military ban on photographing civilians and war victims, he managed to secretly shoot several rolls of film during this period which he eventually smuggled to Germany. Keller used a so-called Fedka camera, a Soviet Leica counterfeit. After the war, he developed the 35 mm rolls at his home in Stuttgart-Vaihingen, enlarging 201 prints as unique pieces. The negatives, produced on a nitrocellulose base, were destroyed by spontaneous combustion in 1958.

From early on, Keller used serial and informal photography to create filmlike image sequences that encourage a subjective experience of reality. The photographic translation of Keller's images of cruelty and near-apocalyptic destruction into abstract and formal visual constructions doesn't follow documentary photography's typical emotional flattening and dullness, but rather intensifies subjective involvement. Even by today's standards, Keller's photography adheres to a modern-looking visual aesthetic, which on one hand proves the visual influence of his artistic friendships, but also clearly demonstrates that the photographer uses aesthetic perception as a key to his own reality processing and mental coping. As such, his disturbing photographs are embedded in an art history discourse with the European graphic tradition of representing the cruelty of war, as depicted in the horrifying scenarios by Hieronymus Bosch, Francisco de Goya, or Otto Dix.

PHOTOBOOK **DIETER KELLER - THE EYE OF WAR Ukraine 1941/42**

Editor **Dr. Norbert Moos** | Publishing House **Buchkunst Berlin** | www.buchkunst-berlin.de

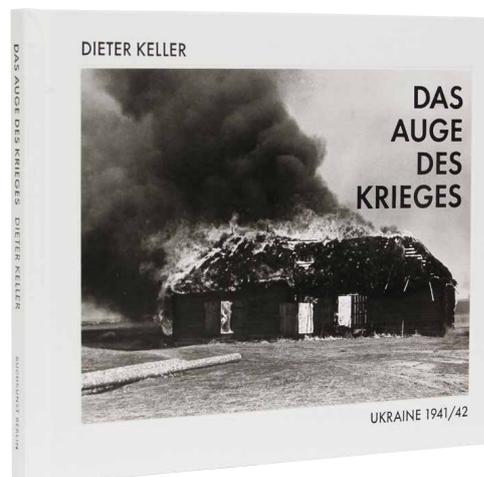


PHOTO SELECTION
Dieter Keller – Ukraine 1941/42



Thomas Gust

WARSAW, AUTUMN 1939

Unknown photographer

This archive, retrieved by the Passau-based photographer Michael Geins from a Lower Bavarian attic in 1993, documents the German occupation of Warsaw during the autumn of 1939. The photographer, whose identity remains unknown, was almost certainly a member of the German Wehrmacht who seemingly moved about freely in the city. The photographer's images were taken in several neighbourhoods, including the Jewish quarter. In addition to war damage and city panoramas, they show the changes to citizens' lives in the occupied city that surrendered on 28 September 1939. The photographer documented the entire scale of the destruction of Warsaw after three weeks of heavy bombing and an encirclement battle. Twelve percent of all buildings were destroyed and almost 26,000 civilians died. People were buried in the streets, and in green spaces if they still existed. We look into exhausted faces, distorted by hunger and the uncertainty of what may happen. But few faces appear anxious.

The Warsaw Ghetto, built in August 1940, was the largest of its type found on the way to the Treblinka extermination camp. Prior to the Second World War, Warsaw had the largest Jewish community in Europe, and the second-largest in the world after New York with 337,000 inhabitants. The Jewish population in all of Poland was 3.5 million, shortly before the beginning of the war. After five years of German occupation, a mere 300,000 were left, with none in Warsaw. In the autumn of 1939 the Jewish population of Warsaw had no idea that all this would occur, and were yet to wear the yellow Star of David. We, the future generations, know of their ultimate fate.

The perpetrator's "blind eye," in the words of Esther Dischereit, and their photographs are confronted with our historically conscious eye viewing and interpreting these images in a new way. With the knowledge of time, these photographs assume their true value as important historical documents.

The bombings and the occupation lay in the past for the people we see in the images. Everyday life during the occupation is taking shape. None of the survivors can anticipate what the city and its population may still have to go through: what will be these new times?

PHOTOBOOK **Es war einmal. Warschau im Herbst 1939**

Editors **Stefan Rammer, Prof. Dr. Peter Steinbach** | Publishing House **NEUE PRESSE VERLAG**

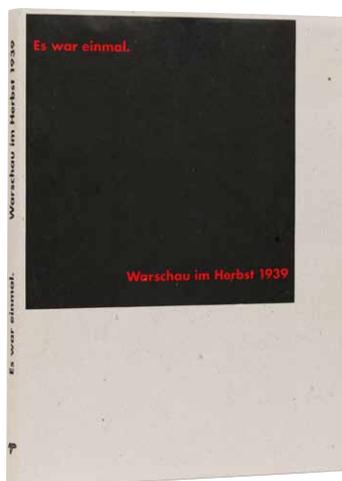
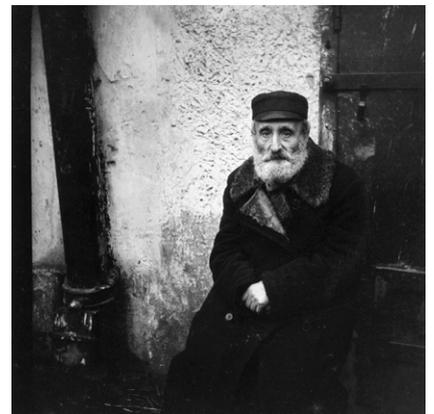


PHOTO SELECTION

The unknown archive – Warsaw 1939



Photos: © NEUE PRESSE VERLAG

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