

Press information

Museum Folkwang

The internationally renowned photographer Timm Rautert donates his complete oeuvre to Museum Folkwang

Essen, 7 November 2025 – Museum Folkwang has received the estate of internationally renowned photographer Timm Rautert. It comprises almost the entire oeuvre of the artist, who was born in West Prussia (now Tuchola, Poland), and is one of the most multifaceted photographic lifeworks in Germany.

Timm Rautert (born 1941) is considered a formative figure in German photography – as a student of Otto Steinert, as a photographer, journalist and professor of photography. His work combines documentary precision with conceptual depth and ranges from early experimental approaches to contemporary reflections on the medium itself. Works by Timm Rautert are represented in international public and private collections.

With the Timm Rautert Archive, the Museum Folkwang is continuing its long history of acquiring important photographic estates and bequests, following last year's permanent loan of the Michael Schmidt Archive, thus underlining its commitment to preserving and showcasing photographic heritage. The estates of Lotte Errell, Germaine Krull, Helmar Lerski, Fee Schlapper, Walter Peterhans and Otto Steinert as well as the latter's study collection and the Girardet Archive are among the other large and renowned holdings in the collection.

Timm Rautert: 'For me, it is only logical that, after studying at the Folkwang School of Design, my work should find its place in the Museum Folkwang. A place where photography has been collected and reflected upon for decades.'

Peter Gorschlüter, Director of Museum Folkwang: 'We are delighted to add Timm Rautert's archive to our collection. His impressive photographic work and teaching have had a lasting impact on German photography. With this bequest, we can not only preserve and scientifically catalogue his entire oeuvre, but also highlight his significant role for generations of photographers in the context of our collection.'

The Timm Rautert archive contains around 9,000 prints, mostly in series and extensive portfolios, well over 50,000 slides, and room and video installations from the 1960s to the present day. In addition, the artist's archive includes all negatives, including 6,500 contact sheets, collected publications, books, correspondence, working materials, exhibition documentation, and other historical documents. The preliminary bequest was transferred to the museum in 2025, where it will be made available for further research into the artist's work.

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The preserved collection represents Timm Rautert's complex life's work in its entirety: from his studies with Otto Steinert and early trips to Japan and New York, to his collaboration with journalists such as Michael Holzach (*Die Hutterer*, 1978) for ZEITmagazin, which was one of his most important clients in the 1970s, to elaborate book projects with Otl Aicher (*Das Berliner Philharmonische Orchester*, 1987) and numerous artist portraits (including Pina Bausch, Franz Erhard Walther, Walter de Maria, Andy Warhol and Gerhard Richter). Also included in the donation are his long-standing explorations of modern working environments (*Gehäuse des Unsichtbaren*, 1992) and art discourse (*ARTWORK*, since 2000). A love of experimentation, conceptual rigour and a playful spirit characterise his work, from his early *Bildanalytische Photographie* (Image Analytical Photography) series (1968–1974) to more recent works such as *L'Ultimo Programma* (2015).

The bequest enables the Museum Folkwang to tell the story of photography in Germany between continuity and change in an even more diverse way: whether through Rautert's decisive emancipation from Otto Steinert, his stylistic diversity or his constant urge to rethink the medium between critical documentation and fiction, commissioned and independent work.

Rautert's teaching activities at the Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig from 1993 to 2008 were also of great significance: many of his former students – including Jana Müller, Adrian Sauer, Riccarda Roggan, Tobias Zielony and Johanna Diehl – are now professors who are shaping the German photography landscape. Other former students such as Viktoria Binschok, Sven Johné, Falk Haberkorn and Harry Hachmeister are also prominently represented in the Museum Folkwang's photographic collection.

The bequest complements existing works in the Museum Folkwang's photographic collection, including *Deutsche in Uniform* (*Germans in Uniform*, 1974, colour and black and white), *Josef Sudek, Prag 1967* (*Prague 1967*, 1967) and the double projection on *Gehäuse des Unsichtbaren* (*Housing the Invisible*), newly produced in 2021, which will be shown in the collection presentation next year. In 2021, the Museum Folkwang dedicated a comprehensive retrospective exhibition to the photographer with *Timm Rautert and the Lives of Photography*.

The acquisition of the Timm Rautert archive was made possible by the Folkwang Museum Association, which took over the estate and subsequently transferred it to the joint ownership of the City of Essen and the Museum Association at the Folkwang Collection.

The Essen Centre for Photography is organising an international symposium entitled **What Will Photography Be? An Invitation to Speculate** at the beginning of February 2026. The Timm Rautert Archive will be presented as part of the symposium (3 to 5 February 2026). Further

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information can be found at this link: [February 2026 – What Will Photography Be? | Essen Center for Photography](#)

Press images



Portrait Timm Rautert
Photo: © Miguel Lorenzo, 2023



Timm Rautert
Sonny Capone's Snub-Nosed Revolver
From the series *The Estate of Al Capone*, 2022
Mixed Media, oil on canvas, inkjet print
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