



PRESS RELEASE

05 April 2017

Mythos Tour de France (Myth Tour de France) International exhibition project at the NRW-Forum Düsseldorf

The powerful imagery of the Tour de France: On the occasion of the Grand Départ in Düsseldorf, from the 19 May 2017, the NRW-Forum will be presenting an international group exhibition - *Mythos Tour de France* [Myth Tour de France] - which will feature, among others, legendary photographers such as Andreas Gursky and Robert Capa, the Düsseldorf-based artist Reinhard Mucha and the cult band Kraftwerk.

The Tour de France, with its breathtaking landscapes, highly-charged places, cyclists stylised as heroes and its ardent fans is permeated with mystique, legends and icons and has always attracted the world's best photographers. In the summer of 2017, the NRW-Forum Düsseldorf will provide a double arena for a sporting spectacle and a major media event. Not only will the route for the Grand Départ go directly past the Ehrenhof but the Tour will also be coming into the exhibition space.

An international group exhibition will showcase the powerful imagery of the most important bicycle race in the world. It will feature portraits of cyclists, film documentaries, installations, landscape shots and mood images. The exhibition will span more than 80 years of Tour history with over 120 works by 20 international artists. It will shine a light on the tumultuous history of the Tour de France, show its splendour and its more shady aspects and demonstrate how sporting events and image events are interdependent.

There will be works by Otto Berchem, Robert Capa, Laurent Cipriani, Andreas Gursky, Harry Gruyaert, Martin Höfer, Philipp Hympehdahl, Richard Kalvar, Timm Kölln, Kraftwerk, Guy Le Querrec, Louis Malle, Nicola Mesken, Reinhard Mucha, Pascal Rivet, Kai Schäfer, Paul Smith, Olaf Unverzart, Stephan Vanfleteren and John Vink.



The cyclists, the trails, the landscapes, the fans, the major events and the little stories away from the official happenings - this exhibition will interweave different narrative threads and artistic perspectives and explore the following question: how did the Tour create its mystique?

The Tour de France was set up in 1903 by *L'Auto*, a sports newspaper and, right from the start, it was a media event and closely connected to journalism. The photographers who vied for the best images also included the big names from the Magnum photographic co-operative. Today, the photographs taken by **Robert Capa**, **Harry Gruyaert**, **Richard Kalvar**, **Guy Le Querrec** and **John Vink** are a unique testimony of the history of bicycle racing and photography. The exhibition will present the most spectacular Magnum images that show the heroes, the bicycles and the trails from the 1940s to the 1980s. These constitute not only an impressive historic documentation of the Tour de France but, in fact, they also played a part in the creation of the modern mystique.

The French filmmaker **Louis Malle**, in his excellent documentary film *Vive Le Tour*, also captured the counter-images of the mystique. Injured and exhausted cyclists, rowdy fans and the incipient stages of the doping scandals. The 19-minute film is a complex mood image of the Tour de France from 1962 that records the terrifying and euphoric moments and testifies to this filmmaker's and athlete's great love for the Tour de France.

Belgium, as one of the greatest bicycle racing nations, has produced some of the most famous cyclists in the world, such as Eddy Merckx, a five-time Tour winner who, today, is regarded as the greatest cyclist in the history of bicycle racing. The Belgian photographer **Stephan Vanfleteren**, in his "Flandrien" series, will be presenting an image of Eddy Merckx as well as seven other portraits of the greatest Belgian bicycle racing heroes. <http://stephanvanfleteren.com>

Timm Kölln's project *The Peloton* shows famous cyclists seconds after the finish line. His portraits are an intimate look at fascinating athletes, at the beauty of the competition but also at the chasms in a system that has become more and more discredited. The *Peloton Legs* series shows the cyclists' pride and capital, namely, their legs, which are larger than life and, like pillars, appear to be supporting the room. <http://www.timmkoelln.com/>



The German photographer and artist **Olaf Unverzart** dedicated his *Land* series to the race's silent key protagonists, namely, the streets. As an ardent racing cyclist, he himself travelled the length of all the routes that he photographed. The exhibition will showcase the landscape of the various legendary stages of the Tour that, devoid of people, makes reference to a spectacle that is upcoming or has just rolled past. <http://unverzart.de/>

Andreas Gursky's *Tour de France I*, from 2007, shows the spectacle of the Tour from a distant and raised viewpoint and as a complex body winding its way upwards along a serpentine road in the mountains. The cyclists, the fans and the media are tiny protagonists before an awe-inspiring natural setting. In addition to *Tour de France I*, a work that is 2x3 metres in size, the small-format work titled *Tour de France II* will also be exhibited. <http://www.andreasgursky.com>

Düsseldorf-based artist **Reinhard Mucha** has not only taken part in the Biennale and Documenta but is also regarded as one of the most important artists of his generation. Moreover, he is an ardent cyclist and has dedicated some of his objects and installations to bicycle racing and the Tour de France. [http://www.spruethmagers.com/artists/reinhard mucha](http://www.spruethmagers.com/artists/reinhard_mucha)

The Düsseldorf-based artist **Philipp Hympehdahl** accompanied the Tour de France of 2014 and 2015 with a 6x17 panoramic roll film camera with which it was only possible to take four photographs per film. Using a camera that is actually not suitable for sports photography and especially not for bicycle racing photography he created relaxed images that tell the stories of what happens on the sidelines of the Tour and away from all the noise. <http://www.edition-hympehdahl.de/>

The French photographer **Laurent Cipriani** recorded his *Along the Road* series (2013-2015) from the perspective of the cyclists. Perched on the back of a motorcycle, for the Associated Press, he rode along the race course just a few minutes ahead of the cyclists and recorded the moment of anticipation for the upcoming race. His images make the waiting spectators on the sidelines of the Tour the real event and, beyond their connection to bicycle racing, they are an unconventional portrait of France. <http://www.laurentcipriani.com/>

For her long-term project "Allez le Tour" **Nicola Mesken** has been photographing fans on the fringes of the route for twelve years now. Using an analogue compact camera and black-and-white film she documents life on the fringes of the route



and shows the fans' quiet moments - sitting on their folding chairs, preparing breakfast, or playing Scrabble to make the waiting time pass more quickly.

<http://nicola-mesken.com/>

Probably the most famous mistake committed by a fan became the subject of **Otto Berchem's** work "Eric the photographer's 00:10:48 seconds of fame". The installation, consisting of text, photography and video, is based on a true story that took place at the Tour de France in 1999, where the cyclist Giuseppe Guerini was knocked to the ground just a few metres from the finish line by a fan who was trying to take a photograph. Despite the accident, Guerini went on to win that stage of the race and the incident got worldwide media coverage.

<http://www.ottoberchem.com/>

For his series *Les Silhouettes* (1993-94), the French artist **Pascal Rivet** transformed ten famous bicycle racing heroes into wooden face cut out boards, like the ones frequently seen at fun fairs, a type of picture wall that makes it possible for everyone to slip into the role of their sporting idols.

<http://ddab.org/fr/oeuvres/Rivet/>

Besides the dazzling heroes, the topic of doping has likewise always been a part of the mystique of the Tour de France. For the exhibition at the NRW-Forum, **Martin Höfer** has created a work titled *The surplus self of mine promotes my triumph (own blood doping)*. This installation consists of photography and banked blood and, on the basis of the "investment of the surplus self" category, draws an analogy between sport and art as contemporary power operations.

A testimony of how the mystique makes use of all sectors and has also obtained access to pop culture is the *Tour de France* album, released in 2003, by the Düsseldorf-based band **Kraftwerk**, which itself is legendary and well-known for its performances that are accompanied by large 3D video installations. As this is a multi-media room installation the large-format animations and the *Tour de France* album will also form part of the exhibition. <http://www.kraftwerk.com/>

For his *Worldrecords* photo series **Kai Schäfer** photographed the best albums in music history on legendary record players and will be presenting a work that was specially signed by Kraftwerk member Ralf Hütter and dedicated to the cult band's latest studio album. <http://www.worldrecords.me>



It is not only the cyclist himself but also his apparel that is part of the mythical system of the Tour de France. The colour of the jersey is an elementary part of the suspense curve and everyone knows what it means when somebody is wearing the yellow jersey. In the exhibition we will be showcasing 13 original Tour jerseys from British fashion designer **Paul Smith**. These have been worn during the race and, in some cases, have been signed and constitute a sort of sacred sweat cloth of bicycle racing. <https://www.paulsmith.com/uk/>

The extent to which bicycle racing also typifies a certain lifestyle will be elucidated by the British brand **Rapha** that has succeeded in making functional sports clothing look elegant. On the upper floor of the NRW-Forum, Rapha will set up a pop-up shop, for a month, where visitors will be able to find their own Tour de France style. Furthermore, the Brits will provide an exciting agenda of events and excursions. <http://www.rapha.cc>

Workshop Pimp Your Bike

To accompany the exhibition, starting on 21 May, every Sunday we will be offering a workshop for all those cyclists who would like to tune up their bikes and enjoy some creative tinkering. Visitors will be able to bring along their own bicycles and embellish them using a variety of materials, such as fluorescent paints, stickers, luminous tapes, LEDs as well as self-made sound effects. All info and registrations at <http://www.nrw-forum.de/vermittlung>



Mythos Tour de France [Tour de France Mystique]

Duration: 19 May - 30 July, 2017

Opening: 18 May 2017, 7 pm

Press meeting: 18 May 2017, 11 am

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