



PRESS RELEASE

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Erik Kessels & Friends

Erik Kessels ranks among the most important creative professionals in the world. He co-founded the international agency KesselsKramer in Amsterdam and is not only a rock star among advertisers, but also an artist, curator, publicist and a passionate collector of photographs. The *Erik Kessels & Friends* exhibition, at the NRW-Forum Düsseldorf, will be the first comprehensive Germany-wide retrospective of this Dutch artist and advertiser who has a preference for the imperfect and the incomplete. From 12 August to 5 November 2017, the retrospective will showcase the most important works of the past 20 years. Aside from that, he has invited along five friends, the artists Paul Kooiker, Joan Fontcuberta, Peter Piller, Joachim Schmid and Ruth van Beek, who will be intervening in the survey exhibition with their own works.

Advertising is all about the perfect picture. For Erik Kessels perfect pictures are boring. As both an artist and an advertiser, Kessels is interested in flawed, accidental and dissonant photographs, those that are overexposed and blurred, the ones where a finger is obscuring the lens and where there are those unfortunate poses and moments of weakness. This is because these images are human. He collects all types of photographs that he finds in his own and other people's albums as well as on the Internet. Family albums, which today are almost automatically infused with something melancholic, are his material just as much as the digital images that flood the Net *en masse* and bear witness to curious, personal as well as cultural obsessions. He does not alter or manipulate the images but, instead, he collects, sorts and recontextualises the found items and tells humorous stories of families and strangers, coincidences and destinies, of art and commerce, of remembering and forgetting, of succeeding and failing. His works constitute a narrative photography fair and they leave room for the unfinished, for coincidences, failures and for the imperfect as well as, at times, even some very personal insights into his own family portraits.

Every single day, the world is subjected to an avalanche of new photos. For the work *24hrs In Photos*, Erik Kessels chose a single day and printed out the images for that date. The result was a mountain of photos that will reach up to the ceiling of the exhibition room. Kessels has not added any new images to this because there was already enough of everything that he needed. *The Album*



Beauty series is a celebration of the photo album, a vanishing item that once had a place in every home and which, these days, is surrounded by an aura of melancholy and transience. In the age of digital images, the series invites us to think about a time when photos were still rare and precious and also about what happens to them when they 'age' rather than just disappear into the ether of the flood of images.

Unfinished Father (2015) is one of Erik Kessels' most personal projects. It revolves around a project that was left unfinished by his father who, before he suffered a stroke, had restored four Fiat 500 cars. A fifth car remained half-finished and this formed the basis of the exhibition and book project that poignantly alludes to the fact that most things in life do not have a happy end but rather end abruptly and, often, are left unfinished. The series was shortlisted for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize 2016.

The *Useful Photography* (2002) series recontextualises photographs from catalogues, instruction manuals, brochures and textbooks. These are anonymous images that we are confronted with daily, without even being aware of it. When they are placed into a new context they display unsuspected intricacies and awaken new interest.

People who accidentally get into our photographs, those who appear in the background or at the edges, are the main theme of the *Strangers in My Photoalbum* (2007) series. Erik Kessels found these images in his private photo albums, he singled out and enlarged the 'strangers' and, in this way, gave them a new importance. Although they are anonymous they become part of your own life. Their lives are visible but without them revealing themselves. *In Almost Every Picture* (2002) is a series that puts a special emphasis on the little flaws that creep into nearly all photographs, such as a finger that obscures the lens. The series is a collection of moving and humorous photographs that constitute intimate and curious moments of anonymous photographic keepsakes. The observer becomes a voyeuristic eyewitness who reconstructs an unknown life on the basis of small details.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an artistic marketing campaign, which Erik Kessels will create himself, and will thus bring a part of his work into the public space. 'The Many Lives of Erik Kessels', a publication to accompany this exhibition, will be published by Aperture at the end of April 2017.



Biography

Erik Kessels, born in 1966, lives and works in Amsterdam. He has been the Creative Director for the agency KesselsKramer in Amsterdam, London and Los Angeles since 1996 and he works for national and international clients. He has published a series of book projects, such as *Missing Links* (1999), *The Instant Men* (2000), *in almost every picture* (2001-2013) and *Wonder* (2006). Since 2000, he has been an editor of the alternative photography magazine *Useful Photography*. For the DVD art project *Loud & Clear* he worked together with artists such as Marlene Dumas and Candice Breitz. He writes for international magazines and has lectured at the *D&AD President's Lecture* as well as at several international design conferences, including, in Singapore, Goa, New York, Toronto and Bangkok. He has taught at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy and at the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture. He has curated exhibitions such as *The European Championship of Graphic Design*, *Graphic Detour*, *Loving Your Pictures*, *Use me Abuse me*, *24HRS in Photos* and *Album Beauty* and co-curated the exhibition *From Here on* together with Martin Parr, Joachim Schmid, Clement Cheroux and Joan Fontuberta. In 2010, he was awarded the Amsterdam Prize of the Arts and, in 2012, he was voted the most influential creative professional in the Netherlands. In 2013, he was represented with exhibitions at the Victoria&Albert Museum in London, at the International photography festival in Arles and at Museum Pier 24 in San Francisco. In 2016, he was nominated for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize. He has already been showcased at the NRW-Forum Düsseldorf, in 2015, with his work "My Feet" at the international group exhibition *Ego Update. The future of the digital identity*.

<http://www.kesselskramer.com/> <http://www.kesselskramerpublishing.com/>



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NRW-Forum Düsseldorf

Duration: 12.08.17 until 5.11.17

Opening: 11.8.17, 7 pm

Press preview: 11.8, 11 am

Images: www.nrw-forum.de/erik-kessels

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