

Information

Photo Oxford is a celebration of photography through exhibitions and related activities taking place at various collaborative venues in Oxford during the month of September.

For this edition, the curators Tim Clark and Greg Hobson engage in a series of explorations into the complex and often contradictory relationship between photography's capacity to both conceal and reveal. The photographic medium is the perfect vehicle for an enquiry of this kind given its unique link to notions of perception and reality, truth and knowledge as well as photographers' frequent use of the camera to lay bare what would otherwise remain unnoticed.

Emphasis has been placed on works that bring to light stories, signs and memories that may remain hidden or obscured, such as *Russian Criminal Tattoos: A Lexicon of Crime*, Sergei Vasiliev's and Arkady Bronnikov's records of the shadowy underworld of Russian prisoners' tattoos. Photographed between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s, these images were used by Soviet police to further understand the language of tattoos and to act as an aid in the identification and apprehension of criminals in the field.

In *Taking Off, Henry, My Neighbor*, the Dutch artist Mariken Wessels speaks of a failed marriage, sexual frustration and voyeurism on the part of an individual who photographed his spouse and muse in various states of undress. He amassed a collection of more than 5,500 photographs, which he carefully catalogued, labelled, notated and cross-indexed, resetting the boundaries of the personal and private.

Edgar Martins' *Siloquies and Soliloquies on Death, Life and Other Interludes* offers a poignant study that

proposes to scrutinise, expose and hold in tension many of the contradictions and problems inherent in the depiction of death, as well as of language and semiotics. The artist deploys both documentary photography approaches and fiction and in turn, his series of photographs and text becomes a process of unveiling, rather than straightforward, factual accounts.

In his newly-commissioned body of work specifically for Oxford University Press and The Bodleian Libraries, Martin Parr documents the behind-the-scenes student antics and rituals, ceremonies, and age-old traditions that still hold significance today, as well as more routine activity such as sporting events, clubs, societies and tutorials, that for many outside these elite establishments, will remain a secret. Parr casts a wry eye over the events, illuminating an everyday and extraordinary world of wealth and privilege without resorting to political statement or critique.

Each series presented in Photo Oxford to one extent or another is revelatory, though at the same time, through their partial and newly negotiated narratives, are complicit in the creation of new secrets and histories.

Symposium

The exhibition programme will be accompanied by a series of talks and events, including an afternoon symposium with presentations by the curators and many of the artists exhibiting. This will take place in the Lecture Theatre at the Weston Library, Bodleian Libraries on the afternoon of Thursday 7 September. Booking essential. For full details see photooxford.org



Mariken Wessels
*Taking Off, Henry,
My Neighbor*, 2015



Martin Parr, *The Ruskin School of Art Tutorial*, 2016.
From the series, Oxford. © Martin Parr/Magnum
Photos



Edgar Martins, *When a honeybee stings a person, it leaves a scent mark on its victim that smells like bananas. When one beekeeper had bananas for breakfast and then tried to stock his beehive, the insects poured out and stung him to death*, 2016



Mariken Wessels
*Taking Off, Henry,
My Neighbor*, 2015



Russian Criminal Tattoo Archive
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