

PRESS RELEASE

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Timm Rautert Receives the 2026 Cultural Award of the German Society for Photography

DGPh's highest distinction honors a lifetime of work combining documentary precision and conceptual depth

Photographer, artist and university professor Timm Rautert has been awarded the 2026 Cultural Award of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Photographie (DGPh), the German Society for Photography. The DGPh's highest distinction recognizes a lifetime of work that combines documentary precision with conceptual depth, as well as a personality who has had a decisive influence on German photography over several decades – through his photographic oeuvre, his work as a journalist, and his teaching as a professor of photography.

From Photojournalism to Conceptual Photography

Born in 1941, Timm Rautert studied with Otto Steinert – the founder of “Subjective Photography” – at the Folkwang School of Design in Essen from 1966 to 1971. His subsequent career took him through almost every field of photography.

While still a student, Rautert began experimenting with the conditions and possibilities of the photographic medium. The results of these experiments were brought together under the term *Bildanalytische Photographie* [Analytical Photography] (1968–1974). Trips to New York (1969) and Japan (1970) marked the beginning of an intensive engagement with documentary and journalistic photography.

Convinced that photography could help improve the world, he addressed social issues on commission for major magazines and newspapers – above all for *ZEITmagazin*, where he worked closely with journalist Michael Holzach between 1974 and 1983, as well as for *Geo* and *Merian*. For Rautert, photography became an instrument of social analysis, as impressively demonstrated by his photographic projects on people affected by thalidomide (1969) and homeless shelters (1975).

Alongside these socially critical photo essays, Rautert continued to develop long-term projects addressing the structures of modern working life, cultural identity and social role models. These include the series *Deutsche in Uniform* [Germans in Uniform] (1974), *The Amish* (1974), *Gehäuse des Unsichtbaren* [Enclosures of the Invisible] (until 1992) and *Eigenes Leben* [One's Own Life] (1992–1994).

Rautert's engagement with the visual arts is also reflected in a large number of artist portraits. His portraits of the photographer Josef Sudek were made during a trip to Prague in 1967,

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Ruediger Glatz (Vorsitzender)
Michael Kaune (stellvertretender Vorsitzender)
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followed in 1970 by the now-famous portraits of Andy Warhol in New York. He subsequently portrayed, among others, Joseph Beuys, Gilbert & George, Walter de Maria, Blinky Palermo, Gerhard Richter, Ed Ruscha and James Turrell.

Book Publications

In addition to exhibitions, a substantial part of Rautert's oeuvre has reached the public through more than 50 books. From his collaboration with Franz Erhard Walther and his work in photojournalism to publications accompanying exhibitions by the "Rautert Class" and corporate publications, the printed image has played a particularly important role in his work.

Most recently, major bodies of work have been published by Steidl, including *Bildanalytische Photographie 1968–1974* (2020), *otl aicher / rotis* (2021), *Anfang* [Beginning] (2019), and the catalogue accompanying the retrospective at Museum Folkwang, *Timm Rautert und die Leben der Fotografie* [Timm Rautert and the Lives of Photography] (2021).

An Influential Career as a Teacher

From 1993 to 2008, Timm Rautert was Professor of Photography at the Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig (Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig). His students included Viktoria Binschok, Johanna Diehl, Bernhard Fuchs, Falk Haberkorn, Sven Johnne, Jana Müller, Ricarda Roggan, Adrian Sauer, Sebastian Stumpf and Tobias Zielony, among others. They have since gone on to shape photography and its perception in their own right.

In 2008, Rautert became the first photographer ever to receive the Lovis Corinth Prize for his lifetime achievement.

Transfer to the Museum Folkwang

In 2025, Rautert transferred his complete oeuvre to the Photographic Collection of Museum Folkwang in Essen as an advance estate donation. The archive comprises around 9,000 prints, more than 50,000 slides, all negatives including 6,500 contact sheets, as well as spatial and video installations dating from the 1960s to the present day. It also includes collected publications, books, correspondence, working materials and exhibition documentation.

In addition to works held in international collections such as those of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Timm Rautert Archive now serves as a central resource for photographic research.

The presentation of the Cultural Award, including the gold-mounted lens designed by Ewald Mataré, will take place on 24 October 2026 as part of the DGPh Photography Awards at the Museum of Applied Arts Cologne (MAKK). On the same day, the 2026 Dr. Erich Salomon Award, the DGPh Manfred Heiting Medal of Curatorial Excellence in Photography and the Otto Steinert Prize – DGPh Photography Promotion Award will also be presented.

Press images are available for [download here](#) and can also be requested from the DGPh office. The images are cleared for royalty-free publication in editorial contexts relating to the 2026 Cultural Award. Please reproduce the specified photo credit in full.

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More than a month before Timm Rautert is awarded the Cultural Prize, his long-standing gallerist, Sandro Parrotta, will open the exhibition "Früher oder später" ("Sooner or Later") at Galerie Parrotta Burg Lede Bonn on 12 September 2026, on the occasion of the artist's 85th birthday. This highly personal exhibition brings together early and more recent photographic works, spanning the breadth of an oeuvre that, here too, moves at the intersection of documentary photography, conceptual art, and image analysis.

Since 1959, the **Cultural Award** has been presented by the DGPh to living individuals in recognition of outstanding achievements in the field of photography. Previous recipients of the DGPh Cultural Award include Ann and Jürgen Wilde (2025), Gerhard Steidl (2024), Ute Mahler and Werner Mahler (2023), Hans-Michael Koetzle, Ute Eskildsen, Helga Paris, Sarah Moon, Gottfried Jäger, Klaus Honnef, Stephen Shore, Wolfgang Tillmans, Wim Wenders, F.C. Gundlach, Daido Moriyama, Irving Penn, William Klein, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Man Ray.

WhiteWall is a partner of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Photographie e. V. and supports the 2026 Cultural Award as a sponsor. The internationally operating provider of high-end photographic printing and production, based in Frechen, Germany, is also the exclusive Printing Partner of the Cultural Award.

About the DGPh

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Photographie (DGPh), the German Society for Photography, is a registered association with around 1,200 members throughout Germany and is based in Cologne. The DGPh is committed to promoting photography as a cultural asset and thereby strengthening its social and cultural significance.

Its activities focus on communicating photographic issues to both professional audiences and society at large, as well as on reflecting on current developments such as digitization, artificial intelligence and new image media. Its work encompasses the diverse applications of photography in art, science, education, publishing, business and politics.

As a central institution for communicating groundbreaking achievements in photography, the DGPh presents several prestigious awards each year, including the Cultural Award, the Dr. Erich Salomon Award and the DGPh Manfred Heiting Medal of Curatorial Excellence in Photography.

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