



INFORMATION

Essen, 22.01.2026

What Will Photography Be? An Invitation to Speculate

3rd Essen Symposium for Photography

04—05 February 2026

**Folkwang University of the Arts, SANAA building, auditorium
Gelsenkirchener Str. 209, 45309 Essen**

The 3rd Essen Symposium for Photography aims at addressing interest in the medium's prospective forms and uses. It is looking for speculations that critically engage with recent developments in the open and much-diversified field of visual media and try to position photography's future role within such a realm.

How will photographic media participate in the dynamics of current technological advancements? How can photography impact and promote such developments with respect to social, artistic, scientific, and everyday practices? We are interested in ideas about photography's future roles in social, artistic, scientific, and everyday realms. What will we mean when we say »photography«? Will we discuss specific techniques, aesthetics, or practices bound to visual images? Keeping the lessons taught by »operational images« in mind, will we leave the idea of the visual behind us? In short, what will be our point of reference when we address something as »photography«?

PARTICIPATION

The symposium is fully booked.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

On behalf of the Essen Center for Photography, the 3rd Essen Symposium for Photography organizers are:

Franziska Barth, Ruhr University Bochum

Vera Knippschild, Folkwang University of the Arts

Mona Leinung, KWI / Folkwang University of the Arts

Markus Rautzenberg, Folkwang University of the Arts

Jakob Schnetz, KWI / Folkwang University of the Arts

Anja Schürmann, KWI

Steffen Siegel, Folkwang University of the Arts

Francisco Vogel, Folkwang University of the Arts

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ORGANIZATION & SUPPORT

The symposium is hosted by the Essen Center for Photography and supported by the city of Essen.

FURTHER INFORMATION

[The symposium on the KWI website](#)

[Website of the symposium](#)

We would appreciate the circulation of this information.

About the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities Essen (KWI):

Part of the University Alliance Ruhr, KWI is an interdisciplinary research centre for the humanities and cultural sciences, in the tradition of international Institutes for Advanced Study. Current research fields at KWI are: aesthetic practices, constellations of historical impact, dialogues between the cultural and social sciences, science studies, and visual literacy. Within the Ruhr area, KWI is a place to share the results of ambitious humanities research with interested parties from the region, and to convene discussions on the politics of scholarship.

www.kulturwissenschaften.de

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