

← **Sibylle Bergemann**
Alexanderplatz, Berlin, 1967
Today, Kicken is housed in a surviving Wilhelminian building on the Kaiserdamm boulevard in West Berlin. In that unusually intact historic Berlin venue, 50 Years / 50 Photographs also traces the destruction, reconstruction and division of the city, including this striking shot by Sibylle Bergemann, born in Berlin in 1941 and a leading documenter of everyday life in East Germany.



→ **Helga Paris**
Selbstportraits, 1981-1989
50 Years / 50 Photographs opens with three works from Helga Paris's 80s self-portraiture series. A fitting start for an exhibition reflecting on the passage of time, Paris's shifting outfits, hairstyles and expressions evoke not only the vicissitudes of personal biography, but also the final years of the German Democratic Republic – the subject of much of her work.







Co-founded before photography was taken seriously as art, the Kicken Gallery in Berlin is marking its half-century by celebrating the history of its collection – and the medium itself

Alive and Kicken

Words: Eliza Apperly

When Annette Kicken's late husband, Rudolf, founded a photo gallery in Aachen, Germany, in 1974, appreciation of photography as an art form was rare. Major German photographic museums, such as Museum Ludwig in Cologne or C/O Berlin, were years away from opening. In the UK, the National Portrait Gallery had only just appointed its first curator of photography. In the US, the Metropolitan Museum of Art would not establish a department of photographs until 1992. The number of galleries and collectors devoted to the medium was so small that they referred to themselves as an international "photo family".

"It was a very, very small scene," says Kicken, who joined the gallery in 1999. "There were few institutional exhibitions. There was no market. Artists were forgotten, and their work was often just thrown away."

Kicken Gallery, which moved from Aachen to Cologne in 1979, and later to Berlin in 1999, set out to promote and preserve photography, from the invention of the medium through to contemporary practice. Quick to participate in international fairs such as Art Basel and proactive in its co-operation with museums, the gallery helped to re-establish pioneers of the genre and build recognition for the photography of surrealism, Czech modernism and the Bauhaus, as well as American new colour photography and artistic documentary movements in both East and West Germany.

The recently opened 50 Years / 50 Photographs at Kicken Berlin reflects on the legacy of the gallery, as well as



← **Jaromír Funke**
Z Cyklu Cas Trvá, from Time Lasts, 1937
Kicken Gallery introduced several protagonists of Czech avant-garde photography to the international art market, including František Drtikol, Jaroslav Rössler and Jaromír Funke. Sourcing impulses from cubism, new objectivity, abstraction and surrealism, Funke was pioneering in his experimentation with mirroring, flattening and reflections. Many of his works are now held in major museum collections.



← **Lisette Model**
Bois de Boulogne, 1938
When Kicken first opened, many early photographers were still alive, providing an opportunity to foster relationships with pioneers of the genre. Austrian-American Lisette Model turned to photography in the mid-1930s and built a captivating portfolio of candid, unedited street shots. From 1951, she taught photography at the New School in New York, where her roster of students included Diane Arbus.



→ **Wilhelm Schürmann**
Ireland, 1973
As a photographer, collector and co-founder of Kicken, Schürmann offered an "inside and outside" view on the gallery's history, says Annette Kicken. "It's very personal, very selective, very special." Schürmann's own work is represented in two photographs, including this portrait from Dublin.

the gradual acceptance of photography as a means of artistic expression. The exhibition is curated by Wilhelm Schürmann, a photographer, collector and co-founder of the gallery with Rudolf Kicken.

You feel Schürmann's photographic eye throughout the exhibition. Motifs, themes and forms repeat and recall each other across the gallery. There are flashes of fireworks against a black sky in Arno Fischer's East Berlin, New Year's Eve, 1989/90, and then the syncopation of windows against a white facade in Henri Cartier-Bresson's Madrid, Spain (1933). There's the curved umbrella handle of Lisette Model's reader in Bois de Boulogne (1938) and then, two frames later, the curved walking stick of Helmut Newton's Jenny Kapitän (1977).

Industrial development and women's independence are recurring subjects. So, too, are the lines, blocks and barricades of the city and the fragile bodies that move, or yearn to move, around them. Above all, there is the cross-field of gazes - from a suspicious glower in Schürmann's own Dublin (1973) to a sideways glance in William Klein's New York (1954) or the downcast eyes in Ed van der Elsken's Self-Portrait With Ata Kandó (1952). In an exhibition about how photography is shown, and how it has been seen, here are subjects confronting with a stare, shielding eyes from view, and inviting us to look closer.

"Our hope is that other galleries take on the photographic position more and more," Kicken says. "Maybe then the need for specialist galleries like ours recedes, but then our mission will be accomplished."

50 Years / 50 Photographs is at Kicken Gallery, Berlin, to 20 December.



← **Ed van der Elsken**
Amsterdam, Nieuwmarkt, 1956
Over its 50-year history, Kicken Gallery has gained the rights to some major estates, including those of Umbo, Erwin Blumenfeld and the Dutch photographer Ed van der Elsken. This picture by Van der Elksen of twin sisters in Amsterdam is one of several in the exhibition that capture pairs of women, whether co-workers, friends, siblings or a mother and daughter.

ESTATE OF SIBYLLE BERGEMANN; HELGA PARIS; MILOSLAVA RUPEŠOVÁ; ESTATE OF LISETTE MODEL; WILHELM SCHÜRMANN; NEDERLANDS FOTOMUSEUM/ED VAN DER ELSKEN