

## Sensitive Sitters, Dialogical Portraits.

A four-day workshop into collaborative possibilities of portraying the *Other* with Mafalda Rakoš

28.03. – 31.03.2023  
Werkstatthaus Stuttgart



## What is it about?

Picking up a camera to picture *someone else* inherently becomes an exercise of power, an act of representation. Think of colonial photography, voyeuristic photojournalism or the repetition of visual stereotypes. We are all biased, and much has been written on what to *avoid* when photographing Others. But does that really mean one can only turn the camera towards oneself, and not towards the outside anymore?

This workshop is a heartfelt invitation to engage in a conversation about photography and portraiture over the course of four days. Mafalda Rakoš, who has worked closely with persons who are mentally burdened for ten years, shares her approach towards long-term, multi-layered photographic projects that result in books, exhibitions, and commissioned portraits.

The notion of dialogue hereby will be a guiding principle. Participants will reflect from which position they would like to be speaking: is it *with*, *for*, or *about* the subject(s) they have chosen?

Through a mix of theoretical input, portfolio reviews, group discussions and practical exercises, we aim to deepen our sensitivity of how to work on eye level with our sitters whilst not sacrificing the photographic or artistic vision that made us pick up the camera in the first place.

## For Whom?

Photographic practitioners, artists and students of all levels and ages with a special interest in portraiture, and working with sensitive subjects (possible themes of work could be: mental health, social inequality, psychology, working with communities, working interdisciplinary). Commissioned practices / photographers working regularly on portrait, reportage or documentary assignments are also most welcome.

## Learning Goals

- Reflect on photographic portraiture and the implication of power (im-)balances
- Reflect on working with mentally fragile or structurally marginalized persons; what to be especially aware of in terms of the process of the portrait, and what follows after?
- Reflect on the complete procedure of working with others: First contact, Preparation, Shoot, Follow-Up, Authorization, ...
- Explore portraiture „toolbox“: Date, Time, Story, Light, Setting, Storytelling...
- Receive feedback on already existing body of work with special focus on human interactions
- Explore additional layers of photography work: Audio, Video, Text, Drawing, Performance, Installation, ...
- Deepen understanding of one's interest in working with people, and how to, practically, bring that forward in the future
- Become a more precise and responsible portraitist

Mafalda Rakoš (b. 1994) lives and works between Vienna and Amsterdam. Alongside her studies at the Academy of Fine Arts, she holds a degree in Cultural and Social Anthropology. She later studied at the Royal Academy of Arts, The Hague (KABK). Rakoš has exhibited in various museums in the Netherlands, Greece, Croatia and Austria respectively, whilst her images have featured in publications like *Die Zeit*, *Me Magazine du Monde*, *Volkskrant Magazine* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazine*.

Being close to others and discovering new things was what initially brought Rakoš to photography, though picking up a camera to represent something always poses an ethical dilemma. Triggered by this conflict, she develops collaborative and polyphonic approaches to create long-term documentary work, with a strong emphasis on dialogue and mutual decision-making.

[www.mafaldarakos.com](http://www.mafaldarakos.com)

### **How to apply:**

Please send via email:

A portfolio of works from within the past 5 years or up to 25 single images from a previous body of work in PDF format.

A short motivational letter no longer than an A4 page.

We are not asking for a CV.

Files exceeding 25MB please include a Wettransfer link in your email.

Email should be sent to [fotografie@werkstatthaus.net](mailto:fotografie@werkstatthaus.net) and received before 28 of February 24:00.

### **Timeline**

Open call opens 31 of January.

Open call closes 28 of February.

The received portfolios will be reviewed 1 - 2 of March

Responses can be expected shortly after the 2 of March

The workshop will take place at Werkstatthaus Stuttgart in the Photography Department from 28 of March till 31 of March. In the evening of the 31st the exhibition showcasing the results of the workshop will take place in the project room of Werkstatthaus lasting till 28th of April.

### **Where**

Werkstatthaus  
Gerokstraße 7  
70188 Stuttgart  
Germany

## **Costs / what is included**

The cost of the full workshop is 300 Euros.

The cost of the workshop includes:

4 days of workshop from the 28th of March to the 31st of March

Access to the photographic equipment in Werkstattthaus including, photo studio, scanner, darkroom and A3 inkjet printer.

1 hot meal will be served each day, any allergies and food preference will be accounted for.

## **Information about travel and accommodation**

Participants coming from abroad or not living in Stuttgart will have to provide accommodation and travel for themselves.

We are currently working on securing offers for the participants to receive a discount on accommodation in Stuttgart.

## Preliminary Program

### **28.03. DAY 1, Introduction day**

Mafalda will share her practice and introduce the notion of a dialogical working method. Participants will make short presentations of their work to the group and asked beforehand to reflect on how you work with other persons, is it with, for or about your protagonists? What would you like to focus on in this workshop and what is a good portrait for you?

End of the day dinner will be served. And the homework for day 2 will be given.

### **29.03. DAY 2, Deepening Phase 1**

The day starts off with a group discussion of homework from the day before. Thinking theoretically about solutions, exchanging experiences and knowledge. What are you seeking when making a portrait of a person? How is your process surrounding portrait making?

Collective Brainstorming and further theoretical input on: the Dialogical Portraiture Toolbox. Which tools can we think of when going to the field? Preparation for the practical part of the workshop also starts on day 2. The group will be divided into pairs and each photographer will make two portraits of the other person: One without a dialogical approach and one with said approach to the portrait. Each pair is asked to document their thoughts on the process and what is the difference?

### **30.03. DAY 3, Deepening Phase 2**

The day starts off with an open space in which participants can finalize their respective portraits. Simultaneously, there will be individual feedback sessions on previous work with Mafalda. After lunch the groups will present their work in progress, as well as reflections on the process. Then there will be time to finalize the projects including short texts from each participant and make them ready for day 4.

### **31.03. DAY 4, Presentation**

We set up the exhibition for the evening. Finalize and print the photos, frame them, think about how to show the texts in cooperation with the portraits. After the finished setup, there will be a final group discussion and dinner before the exhibition opens.

### **FAQ**

Application: Portfolio and Motivational letter

Who: All photographers/artists/practitioners/students of all ages can apply for the open call, no age limit.

Where: Werkstattthaus Stuttgart

When: March 28 to March 31

Cost: 300 Euros

Language: English / German

For any further questions please send an email to: [fotografie@werkstattthaus.net](mailto:fotografie@werkstattthaus.net)