

Munich, January 30th, 2008

Enclosed, please find for reviewing purposes the latest book – *Familienleben* (*Family Life*) by Düsseldorf-based photographer Thomas Struth, published to coincide with an exhibition at *SK Stiftung Kultur* in Cologne showing through April 20.

Thomas Struth

Familienleben

With an essay by Eric Konigsberg
and texts by Gabriele Conrath-Scholl and Thomas Struth
92 pages, 28 duotone and color plates
€ 49.80 SFr 84.00

The family is a given that affects every person in some way or other. Experiences with your own family or one close to you, ideals, issues of relationship, upbringing and exploring your own identity repeatedly give us cause to address what are complex yet everyday phenomena.

Thomas Struth's interest in family portraits was triggered by a psychoanalyst friend, who as a means of finding out more about their biographical backgrounds asked his patients to bring photographs of their family from their childhood. The position of family members to one another, the closeness or distance to the partner, to father and mother, brother or sister reveals much more than is immediately apparent.

Struth found this insight and the thought of what options photography offers in this context so fascinating that he began a series of family portraits in 1985, which today alongside other topics, forms a central component of his oeuvre.

Initially, the families portrayed came from Struth's close family circle or are friends and acquaintances; he later extended the scope to countries outside Europe and other social classes. His only condition is that there is a connection between him and the families in question – Struth never photographs people to whom no such connection exists.

Generally speaking the artist first organizes several sessions with the portrait subjects to get a sense of the families, the individual members and their relationship to one another. The chosen backdrop is always in the family's domestic environment, and Thomas Struth lets his models decide on the setting so as to produce as authentic a portrayal as possible.

The fascinating thing about Struth's family portraits is their undeniably representative character. Even in what are seemingly the most casual groupings the need to present yourself as an individual within a hierarchical order remains – and the strength of this need varies from culture to culture.

In terms of art history Thomas Struth's family portraits stand in the tradition of his great models from painting, from Goya to Velazquez.

Our book features 28 family portraits, which range from simple duos to complex extended families.

American author Eric Konigsberg has written a highly personal contribution to the work. In "Blood Relation" he intriguingly outlines the various fates that affect, weigh on, unite and, in the best case, act as moral glue to hold a family together. He presents the family as a unit, which not only offers protection and friendship but also danger and hostility and covers examples from a Mafia gang to the holy family.

Finally, I would like to point out that in addition to the exhibition in the SK Stiftung in Cologne a further Thomas Struth exhibition is showing in the Naples MADRE (January 14 to April 24, 2008). and at Gallery Paul Andriess in Amsterdam until February 16.

Thank you for presenting *Thomas Struth: Familienleben* to your audience. For review purposes, the use of three photographs from a set selection is free of charge. For downloading images please have a look www.schirmer-mosel.com under the section PRESS RELEASES.

If you have any more questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you in advance for sending a timely copy of your review.

Sincerely

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