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PRESS RELEASE

Museum für Fotografie

Jebensstr. 2, 10623 Berlin

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**SEEN BY #12: When you're on the net, are you lost? Or found?
And the rest of us—lost or found—are we on it, or in it?**

26 April – 2 June 2019

A special exhibition of the Kunstbibliothek – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,
in cooperation with the Universität der Künste Berlin

Opening: Thursday, 25 April 2019, 7 pm

Seen By #12 is part of the exhibition series *Seen By* – a joint project presented at the Museum für Fotografie and organized by the Kunstbibliothek of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and the Universität der Künste Berlin. Its aim is to rethink curatorial and artistic strategies for working with contemporary photography.

In Allan Sekula's 1999 work "Dear Bill Gates," the artist documents having swam within spitting distance of the private lake-side house of Bill Gates, the Microsoft founder and owner of the Corbis photo agency at the time. In the open letter, written on a typewriter, Sekula comments on Gates' 30-million-dollar purchase of a painting by Winslow Homer, depicting two doomed fishermen lost at sea ("Lost on the Grand Banks", 1885). The painting, although hung in the private residence of the billionaire, could not be found anywhere on the net. Sekula here undoes Bill Gates' status as a pioneer of the paradigm of the global archivist, and shows that Gates in fact sought to control the streams of images through their digital reproduction. Contrary to the promise of it's being "the archive of everything for everybody," Gates forced the traffic in images to wear a licensing corset, and so ultimately declared it as private property.

Taking Sekula's letter as a point of departure, the exhibition "When you're on the Net, are you lost? Or found? And the rest of us—lost or found—are we on it, or in it?" explores the ambivalent dynamics that underlie the post-photographic reservoir of images; and, in particular, the palpable shift from a storage-oriented to transmission-oriented culture. This digital archive offers the possibility of continuous additive inclusion of appropriated and discarded image material, and the potential to engender alternative distribution cycles, to elude orders of commercial or institutional servitude. At the same time this reservoir, in the act of preserving and exposing, also has the capacity to keep out of sight, and to cast the undesirable into oblivion.

The artists' works in this exhibition explore the constitutive structure of meaning, as well as the instrumentality and performativity of the *exhibited* image, which, born from discourse and ideology, exists between subjectivity and objectivity. In many of the works, it is less the pictorial sign than the act of looking that moves into the foreground. The works refute the notion of being able to represent or to preserve reality as an image, and

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question the perceptible, the thinkable, and the feasible. Thus the act of interpreting of images requires, in the words of Ariella Azoulay, “multiple collaborations, whereby each of one’s images may one day emerge—usually by or through the gaze of others—as the missing image.”

With works by Erfan Aboutalebi, Pegah Keshmirshekan, Maximilian Klawitter, Daria Kozlova, Timon & Melchior Grau, Vanda Skacalova. The exhibition is curated by Elisa R. Linn.

Staff and students of the Universität der Künste Berlin receive free admission to the exhibition.

The exhibition is supported by Museum&Location.

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