THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALLERY

PRESS RELEASE

# HOW TO WIN AT PHOTOGRAPHY – IMAGE-MAKING AS PLAY
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*Follow the rule of thirds, catch the decisive moment,*
*Master the shutter speed, play against the camera,*
*Collect likes and followers, challenge everything,*
*Fight the apparatus, win the game – How to Win at Photography manifesto*

***How to Win at Photography – Image-Making as Play*** is a new multimedia exhibition exploring the relationships between photography, image-making and play. It invites audiences to focus on the playful aspects of visual culture, and creates unexpected connections between the history of photography and the practices of image-making within computer games and wider digital screen culture.

Featuring over 30 international artists and a rich assemblage of multimedia artworks and vernacular images representing a variety of positions across contemporary and twentieth century photography, ***How to Win at Photography*** questions the very meaning and function of photography today.

Artists include Chinese contemporary artist, documentarian and activist **Ai Weiwei**; Polish multimedia artist **Aneta Grzeszykowska**; post-conceptual technology-based American artist **Cory Arcangel**; French surrealist photographer, sculptor and writer **Claude Cahun**; feminist artist, **Cindy Sherman**; German filmmaker, video artist, theorist and writer ***Harun Farocki***; legendary American artist **Ed Ruscha**; Taiwanese visual artist **John Yuyi** and American photographer, painter and conceptual artist **Sherrie Levine**.

Photography is inherently playful, but the play is not free. There are rules that the photographer must master, skills to conquer, expectations to fulfil. The very circulation of images is now a trackable, surveilled, quantifiable process like everything else on the internet. Photographs receive a 'score' in the form of likes and reposts. They are instantly monetised, becoming part of a larger economic competition for attention in which gamified elements and score systems are increasingly influential. At the same time, photography is a fundamental part of today's video game culture. Not only does it drive forward the photorealistic development of digital imaging; it offers 'open worlds', vast environments that can be explored and documented by virtual photographers.

Taking over all of the Gallery's main exhibition spaces ***How to Win at Photography*** is arranged in five thematic sections or chapters: Game Travel, Game Play, Replay, Camera Play and Role Play. Designed to be experienced in any order the chapters explore connections and rule-sets between image-making, identity, politics, technology and entertainment.

On the 5th floor, *Game Travel*, delves into how screenshotting has become commonplace within contemporary video game culture. 'Players' explore online environments like tourists, mapping them out and collecting souvenirs of their journeys with virtual cameras. Often disregarding the game's intended goals, they choose instead to visually document what they encounter. Artists and photographers focus their attention on the

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specific properties of the digital image, modify the original code or create new tools to deconstruct these spaces and their photorealism. In some cases, their activity is a form of resistance, a refusal to accept the rules. In others, it highlights the conditions that make the construction of these environments possible in the first place.

Also presented on Floor 5 is *Gameplay*, which looks at the competitive, 'win'-orientated nature of game, and by association, photography culture. *Gameplay* highlights the production and circulation of images as increasingly shaped by game mechanics with the building-blocks and rules of gaming defined by metrics and point systems. Quantifiable values such as views, likes, shares, followers, reposts and so on, have actively promoted the gamification of visual culture; the application of game-design elements and principles in non-game contexts have today become normalised score systems for images. Data extracted from the images we share online, are harvested both by corporations and governments for opaque purposes. With an aura of objectivity, the so-called attention economy is legitimised, clearly demarcating 'winners' from 'losers' and spawning a new aesthetic that has become standard for a generation of online influencers. In this context, content producers can either conform to the status quo by creating 'successful' images or they can try to subvert the prevailing logics to challenge, reject or sabotage gamified labour.

Floor 4 encompasses the chapter, *Replay*, which examines how artists change the original meanings of images by re-photographing, re-enacting or re-contextualising them. These replicas play with notions of memory, history, authorship and truth, exposing them as constructions and bringing to light underlying power structures. As games become more 'realistic' and reality takes an increasingly gamified turn, the very concepts of original and copy are blurred: mage play becomes a tactic used to challenge truth and fiction, reality and representation. By appropriating and re-contextualising images, artists and photographers question the dominant authorities by generating counter-narratives that can shape reality.

Additionally, Floor 4 offers a video installation work from film-maker and video artist Harun Farouki, as a point of enquiry that sits somewhere between all the chapters and provides a central space for pause and reflection. Farocki is known for his investigation into the nature and effects of image-making technologies and towards the end of his life, specifically turned his attention to the digital image, best exemplified by video games. The four-part cycle *Parallel I-IV* (2012–2014) focuses on the development, aesthetics and inherent rules of computer-animated worlds. Situating video games within a broader tradition – the history of representation – the film-maker illustrates the rise of the computational over the photographic. At once analytical and poetic, these 'video essays' deconstruct the notions of truth and fantasy.

The 2nd Floor presentations offer a more traditionally photographic departure point for exploration. *Camera Play* looks at the apparatus behind photography and questions the use of the camera as a photographer's tool. Since its inception, artists have challenged both the rules and the ways in which the camera 'sees' the world. By playing with prescribed, or preconceived notions – sometimes against its prescribed functions – photographers bring to light the ideologies informing the production, circulation and consumption of images. By deliberately misusing, modifying, challenging and reinventing the camera, new ways of seeing emerge. Meanwhile in virtual reality, computer games are equipped with powerful photo modes that combine a simulated camera with versatile editing software, encouraging players to share images on social media.

*Role Play* looks at the myriad ways that artists have used image-making to challenge and play with identity. From photographic portraits to selfies, from video game avatars to cinema stars, role-playing has been one of the few constants in the ever-changing history of representation. In the final chapter, Role Play – Playing with Identity, the exhibition concludes with how construction and reconstruction of identity has become a full-time job on social media. Our pictorial alter-egos embody the idea of success, beauty and wealth. Far from being neutral or objective, visual culture actively constructs the subject, either legitimising or delegitimising certain roles, standards and categories. Artists and photographers have always challenged normative notions of sex, gender, ethnicity and class.

*How to Win at Photography – Image-Making as Play* is an open invitation to rethink photography through the act of playing with - and breaking – the rules of the game and to consider who is playing who. It challenges visitors to consider such questions as: Are we playing with the camera or is the camera playing us? What is our role within the system of photography? Are we mere pawns in a larger social and cultural network? What can a playful photographer realistically achieve? And, ultimately who can 'win' this game?

The exhibition is curated by Marco De Mutiis and Matteo Bittanti in collaboration with The Photographers' Gallery's Anna Dannemann,and is produced in collaboration with Fotomuseum Winterthur in Switzerland.

***-ENDS-***

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**Notes for Editors**

**THE ARTISTS:**

**Cory Arcangel**
Super Landscape 1 (2005) comprises Cory Arcangel's (b. 1978) works Super Mario Clouds and F1 Racer Mod. By manipulating the hardware and software on the cartridges of iconic console games, the US American artist removes all characters, obstacles, sounds, playable elements and game mechanics, leaving only the landscape animations running on the screen. Through an artistic form of 'modding' – the practice of hacking software to change its appearance and performance – Arcangel deconstructs the game and turns the act of play into one of contemplation. Freed from the game's purpose of navigating Mario through his quest or winning the race, Super Landscape 1 is simultaneously a refusal to play the game, an act of reappropriation of the game object as a creative tool, and a study of the elements – the clouds and roads – that make up the landscapes of computer games.

**Aram Bartholl**
The installation de_dust (2004) is part of a bigger project by German artist Aram Bartholl (b. 1972) in which he attempts to rebuild the entire bomb defusal map 'Dust' from the computer game Counter Strike. Initially released in 1999 as a modification ('mod') of another first-person shooter game, Counter Strike quickly spread to become a global sensation. Its community not only joined from all over the world, flooding internet cafes and meeting on-screen through the online multiplayer game, but was also active in designing textures and customising game maps. By materialising the game's iconic crates – rendered in life size in the physical space – the artist blurs the boundaries between the game space and the world outside the screen to remind us of the social spaces we can actively shape as a community. Through the original pixelated graphics that appear obvious as we approach the installation, de_dust simultaneously comments on the aesthetics of 1990s virtual environments and the increasingly indivisible relationship between the virtual and physical spaces of socialisation
and exchange.

**Justin Berry**
US American artist Justin Berry (b. 1980) creates hyper- realistic images of the virtual landscapes found in popular video games such as Call of Duty: Black Ops and Medal of Honor. Berry's focus, however, is not on the games' narrative, rules or mechanics. Rather, he is fascinated by the environments that he encounters. These two artworks, selected from his 2018 project Road Trips, are mementos of a journey that took place on-screen. Mojo Coyo depicts a two-lane road that makes a sharp turn near the ocean. We see a flock of birds, a small settlement, some crops and a cross. Monte Puncu shows a country road passing through hilly forests. They are named after real and fictional locations in a simulacrum of Bolivia that happens to be the setting for an episode of Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon, which Berry played extensively. That experience felt real.
And, to the artist, that's all that matters.

**Alan Butler**
The Irish artist Alan Butler (b. 1981) abandons the player's goal of winning and transgresses the path designed by the game developers in order to shift his attention to flowers and extracting texture files of trees and plants from the game software. Photorealistic leaves and pixelated cacti become part of a botanical archive documenting the specimens of virtual flora that inhabit game landscapes populated by millions of players. Reminiscent of the 1843 Cyanotypes of British Algae by the botanist and photographer Anne Atkins, Virtual Botany Cyanotypes (2016–) documents our contemporary screen landscapes and the ambiguous relationship between nature and its simulation. Through Butler's quasi scientific investigation, the work also shows the evolution of computer graphics over the last decades and the attempt by the game industry to achieve seamless photorealism and the simulation of reality in its every detail.

**Gloria López Cleries & Sive Hamilton Helle**
Accorded a first-person perspective in The Unreal (2019–), we are navigated through a romanticised game landscape that stretches out endlessly before our eyes. This digital creation by Gloria López Cleries (b. 1988) and Sive Hamilton Helle (b. 1989) is a 'techno-utopian dream' uncoupled from space and time. Here, individual freedom – free from exploitation and colonial power structures – has infinite scope to unfold, as the quiet off-screen voice indicates. But at this point, the utopian character of The Unreal takes on a dystopian quality: we find ourselves in the middle of a mining landscape. This forces us to confront the fact that we are bleeding the material world dry to foster advances in technology, while alerting us to the concomitant narrative of progress put out by the Big Tech companies that ends up colonising our mental world. In this way, the Spanish and Norwegian artists make it clear that The Unreal is in no way free of power structures, which manifest themselves in a new dimension as contemporary forms of technocolonialism.

**Joan Pamboukes**
Joan Pamboukes (b. 1977) operates artistically at the point where games and photography intersect. Her pictures, which bring to mind coloured skies and abstract cloud formations, are landscape images derived from video games that she photographs off the screen with her camera. The series Videogame Color Fields (2006–) takes as its starting point games like Grand Theft Auto, Kill Zone and Metal Gear, which are characterised by gameplay that glorifies violence and is often misogynistic. The sense of calm and harmony that the US artist's photographs radiate contrasts with the brutal context from which they are drawn. By opting out of the actual game and focusing instead on the aesthetic quality of the settings for the individual scenes, Pamboukes ultimately makes a conscious stand against the replication of violence and misogyny.

**Tabor Robak**
Working with software-based tools traditionally employed in the production of video games, special effects and motion graphics, Tabor Robak (b. 1986) creates imagined worlds that address our increasingly overflowing digital realities. In his work Rocks (2011), the US American artist singles out 198 stones, painstakingly created using the cutting-edge computer graphics of that time. Rendered in 3D, the rocks appear simultaneously imaginary and realistic, abstract and naturalistic – creating an ambiguous space in which nature, the photographic documentation of the phenomenal world and its artificial simulation in virtual game environments coexist in a state of tension. Robak's collection of impossible minerals goes beyond the conceit of lifelike simulation, offering a new kind of artificial nature that appears familiar yet can only exist in digital worlds.

**Constant Dullaart**
In his 2014 online performance High Retention, Slow Delivery, the Dutch artist Constant Dullaart (b. 1979) purchased 2.5 million fake Instagram followers, which he distributed among selected artists, curators and figures in the art world until they all reached 100'000 followers. Attempting to reset the social value that is generated on the platform using metrics that quantify attention, Dullaart's assembled 'army' shows how these artificial systems of value can be subverted, reclaimed and manipulated – a prescient warning of the role that similar orchestrations would play in affecting public opinion in the 2016 US elections and the Brexit referendum. The work also reveals the hidden workforce tied to the system of validation on social media platforms, in which click factories – low-paid

workers hired solely to click on advertising links – and automated bots add millions of likes to any image or social media account they are ordered to.

**Yuyi John**
In the age of social media, the value of an image is determined by the number of likes and shares it gets: they transform the fleeting attention that the images are given into measurable and quantifiable units. Yuyi John (b. 1991) gives visual expression to this trend by affixing relevant icons to her skin as temporary tattoos. The fact that attention has become the main form of currency is also illustrated by the artist's cooperation with prestige brands, whose logos she tattoos onto her skin before posting her self-portraits on Instagram as promotion. In this way, the Taiwanese artist shows how the body has become the vehicle of media attention on social networks. At the same time, she also demonstrates how our bodies are occupied by these very platforms. They have an influence on how we present and perceive ourselves – and determine the value that we give to ourselves.

**Emma Agnes Sheffer**
It is not only games that are governed by certain rules: photography is also subject to them. This is particularly evident on the social network Instagram, as illustrated by Emma Agnes Sheffer (b. 1991) on her profile @insta_repeat. Each of her posts is a collage of virtually identical motifs that the US American artist found on the profiles of different influencers. Sheffer uses this juxtaposition to show how users with large numbers of followers define how a 'successful' image should look like: the more likes, clicks and shares a picture gets, the more influence it has on visual idioms. This pictorial language is imitated by other users around the world and thus becomes an unwritten aesthetic rule, which ends up in a process of standardisation. In playing the 'attention' game, it is not originality that counts so much as how well it can be staked out and marketed.

**Coralie Vogelaar**
Algorithms can analyse human emotions by subdividing faces into 'action units'. These units are assigned, in differing combinations, to six basic emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear and disgust. If the corners of the mouth are pulled up, for example, and the eyes are narrowed, this is read as happiness. Random String of Emotions (2018) by Coralie Vogelaar (b. 1981) takes this procedure into the realms of the absurd. For her video work, the Dutch artist had an algorithm combine these action units at random. She then asked an actress to imitate the movements, getting her to contract her muscles without attempting to express a specific emotion. Meanwhile, software analysis was performed on her face and a corresponding emotion assigned. Vogelaar's approach exposes the perils of machine learning and examines the extent to which the complexity of human feelings and behavioural forms can be meaningfully grasped by computer systems.

**Jon Haddock**
US American artist Jon Haddock (b. 1960) reinterprets both historical and fictional events in the style of a video game. In this selection from his series Isometric Screenshots (2000), the artist depicts scenes from popular movies such as Mary Poppins and Twelve Angry Men and a variety of crime scenes and murder settings, such as the 1999 massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Although the iconography may be ludic, the effects on the viewer are far from ludicrous: the conflation is both jarring and illuminating, suggesting that the power of media – video games included – consists in turning lived reality into something that has been called a 'media event' (Daniel Boorstin), a 'spectacle' (Guy Debord) and a 'simulacrum' (Jean Baudrillard).

**Roc Herms**
Can you subvert a joke? Spanish artist Roc Herms (b. 1978) appropriates and hijacks Ai Weiwei's Study of Perspective – itself a perhaps irreverent take on the process of image-making – within the virtual world of San Andreas, the exaggerated, grotesque replica of California created by the developers of the massively popular Grand Theft Auto V. Using a first-person view and the in-game camera, the artist photographs his raised middle finger against a variety of backgrounds including government buildings, car parks, billboards, and even factories. Herms's artistic gesture prompts the questions: Did he do it for the lulz? If so, who is laughing now?

**Sherrie Levine**

Names like Edward Weston, Walker Evans and Alexander Rodchenko are all part of the male canon that continues to shape art history and the history of photography to this day. Sherrie Levine (b. 1947) deconstructs this tradition by appropri- ating the works of celebrated male artists. After Alexander Rodchenko (1985), for example, consists of images by the eponymous Russian artist that Levine photographed, claiming authorship for the pictures by passing them off as her own. The US artist's strategy of appropriation can be read as a feminist critique of the art historical canon, which for a long time only ascribed creativity and originality to the idealised male artistic genius and acknowledged women merely in the role of objects or muses. This value system within art is also questioned in as much as it has imposed categories of 'original' and 'copy' on photography, an idea that is at variance with the technical reproducibility of the image.

**Lorna Ruth Galloway**
Through a laborious process of appropriation and recon- figuration, US American artist Lorna Ruth Galloway (b. 1984) creates artworks situated between the analogue and the digital, between lived life and simulation. After taking screenshots of filling stations located in the world of Grand Theft Auto V, she downloads them and uses a photo-editing software to create halftone separations for screen-printing. The resulting images are then turned into charcoal silk screens. By alluding to the tradition of photographic reproduction in printmaking and Ed Ruscha's seminal photobook Twentysix Gasoline Stations (1963) – not to mention the polluting effects of both carbon (charcoal) and fossil fuels (gasoline) – Galloway reminds us that, to paraphrase McLuhan, 'the mediums are the message'.

**Ed Ruscha**
For the series Twentysix Gasoline Stations, which appeared in a book of the same title published in the early 1960s, Ed Ruscha (b. 1937) photographed various filling stations across the USA along Route 66. In the black-and-white photographs, we are presented with a matter-of-fact chronicle of deserted landscapes. These generate a desolate atmosphere while also conveying a sense of repetition: the twenty-six filling stations were all photographed from a similar point of view. The fact that the pictures have been used by other artists or even adapted as backdrops in video games is indicative of the iconic status that Ruscha's images have attained over the years. While the US American photographer's work in the 1960s tackled the homogeneity of people's everyday experience, the adaptation and recontextualisation of the images brings up new questions.

**Ai Weiwei**
In the series Study of Perspective, Ai Weiwei (b. 1957) shows his middle finger to historical buildings, familiar landmarks and public spaces that were long ago turned into symbols of power. They are an expression of political and economic circumstance and of the cultural and artistic practices that have an ongoing influence on how history is written. His middle finger can thus be seen in front of the federal parliament building in Bern, the Trump Tower in New York, the Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Forbidden City in Beijing. In this sense, the Chinese artist and activist's Study of Perspective (1995–2011) is not an aesthetic exercise but rather a political study of symbols of power. The perspective is always the same: as in first-person-shooter video games, it enables the viewer to identify with the action, turning them into an accomplice. At the same time, Weiwei's anti-authoritarian gesture is also reinforced by the scale of the motifs that clash and collide with one another.

**Harun Farocki**
In his relentless inquiry into the nature and effects of image-making technologies, the late Harun Farocki (1944–2014) turned his attention to the digital image, best exemplified by video games. The four-part cycle Parallel (2012–2014) focuses on the development, aesthetics and inherent rules of computer-animated worlds. Situating video games within a broader tradition – the history of representation – the German film-maker illustrates the rise of the computational over the photographic. At once analytical and poetic, these video essays sui generis deconstruct the notions of verisimilitude and fantasy, highlighting the artificial nature of 'realistic' simulations and simultaneously bringing to the fore the embedded ideologies of an allegedly 'neutral' technology.

**Dorothée Elisa Baumann**

For Dorothée Elisa Baumann (b. 1972), the camera is not a neutral object: as soon as it is around, the encounter between people and their gazes can no longer take place on a level playing field. The Swiss photographer goes one step further here by likening the camera to a weapon that visualises hierarchies between subject and object. The power structures that go together with this are reinforced by technological advances: the faster or more easily a picture can be taken, the less need there is to deal with the reality of life on the other side of the lens. In her video work Take a Better Picture (2018), Baumann enacts this with a hammer, which she uses to hit the shutter release of a camera. This represents an appeal for photography to play by new rules that will break up the hierarchy between the photographing subject and the photographed object and enable empathic collaboration to take place on equal terms.

**Dries Depoorter & Max Pinckers**
Trophy Camera v0.9 (2017) is a camera powered by artificial intelligence and programmed to only take 'winning photos'. Trained with machine learning algorithms and a data set of images that were awarded the World Press Photo of the Year from 1955 to present, the camera's software compares the live image with the archive from which it has 'learned' to define a winning picture. If the match is 90% or above, the image is saved on the dedicated website trophy. camera; anything less is instantly deleted. The work by Belgian photographer Max Pinckers (b. 1988) and artist Dries Depoorter (b. 1991) envisions a world in which photographic 'success' has been automated and outsourced to machines. Yet it also raises the question of whether a certain 'automation' of visual tropes is not already embedded in our current photojournalistic practices and ways of looking at the world that rely on the relentless use of exploitative images – the innocent child, the mourning woman – thereby translating complex themes of conflict and violence into simplistic and catchy symbols.

**Christopher Graves**
Combining a DIY, punk attitude with a playful approach to photography, US American photographer Christopher Graves (b. 1981) used ingenious hardware and software modifications to improve the original Game Boy Camera from 1998, an official add-on for Nintendo's popular handheld console. A lo-fi image-making machine or rather a 'poor image- making machine', given that the 'photographs' are displayed in 2-bit resolution (128 × 112 pixels) in four shades of grey – the original camera was expanded with a lens adapter attached to a Game Boy Advance, featuring a Pentax 110 lens mount, a wooden grip, a 1455 mAh lithium-ion rechargeable battery via USB-C and a dedicated shutter button. Graves's impossible project is an anachronistic device that looks both vintage and futuristic.

**John Hilliard**
In the 1960s and 1970s, photography was increasingly viewed as the product of an automated process. This is evident in the work of John Hilliard (b. 1945). For his series Camera Recording Its Own Condition (1971), the English artist set up his 35mm camera in front of a mirror and shot the same image seventy times, changing the aperture and exposure time for each photo. Although the photographer's hand can be seen in some frames, Hilliard's involvement seems to be restricted to operating the shutter release. The focus here is on automatism rather than authorship, as is made clear by the grid-like configuration of the images. We may play with the camera all we like, exhausting the limits of what it can do, but with Hilliard there is no getting around the question as to whether photography can ever do anything except record its own condition.

**Steven Pippin**
In the early 1990s, English artist Steven Pippin (b. 1960) repurposed the facilities of an on-board toilet over the course of an hour to produce and develop a series of photographs on a train journey from London to Brighton. During this time, he used the semicircular toilet bowl as a simple pinhole camera, which lead to perspectival distortions in the images. The developing and fixing of the negatives was also far from perfect – stains, splashes and other intentional flaws in the images render the original motive of the bathroom only vaguely intelligible. Pippin places focus on the machine-based photographic process and the performative nature of his experimental image-making methods. His video documentation is crucial to understanding the work and enables the viewer to make sense of the absurd and playful way in which his almost abstract photographs are created.

**Ria Patricia Röder**
Ria Patricia Röder (b. 1983) creates her motifs by capturing images not with a camera but with a scanner. In addition to found objects, the German artist also scans fragments of images that she has already scanned and printed as well as shapes cut out from paper and other materials. Accordingly, the motifs she selects crop up more than once in different variations: Röder sees them as 'declinations' of the real object. Nor does she make use of digital editing or image renderings in her carefully composed Scanograms (2015–2020). The narrative quality is created entirely through the analogue arrangement and the dynamic relationship of razor-sharp and blurred elements, which are attributable to the shallow depth of field in the scanning process. Röder's 'scanograms' constitute an experiment with a medium that has certain similarities with the conventional photo camera – namely, the presence of a lens and the process of exposure – yet also enables other forms of imaging.

**Akihiko Taniguchi**
In his playable 3D environments, Japanese artist Akihiko Taniguchi (b. 1983) experiments with translating photo- graphic processes into digital spaces. Employing game mechanics and CGI aesthetics, the artist explores the possibilities of rethinking the act of taking pictures within the logics of computer games. Through a game-like interaction, the viewer not only experiences photographic capture as a form of play but is further confronted with many issues that lie at the heart of transforming the image in its computational and networked forms. From virtual self(ies) to image search engine filters, from green screens to multiplied screenshots flying through surreal spaces, the work immerses the player within the machinic processes that regulate contemporary image-making and the way they affect the relationship between the photographer and the apparatus.

**Claude Cahun**
Within only a moment, we determine the identity of other people for ourselves. With her performative self-portraits, the French photographer Claude Cahun (1894–1954) undermines this social gaze by deliberately blurring the binary boundaries between the sexes. Consequently, the depicted personae, into whose shoes she briefly slips, cannot be clearly read as female or male.
Whether with the help of a barbell or by using accentuated lips – Cahun reinforces this gender-fluid game by integrating elements into her photographs that inevitably evoked binary connotations during her lifetime. Through exaggerated staging, Cahun exposes gender as a constructed, socio-cultural masquerade. The fact that her photographs were taken at a time when anti-Semitism and homophobia were prevalent makes the images seem all the more significant today. Finally, Cahun's surrealist self- portraits also point to an early anticipation of the game with one's own identity that one can now explore and express more fluidly by making use of avatars or face filters.

**Cibelle Cavalli Bastos**
Brazilian-born artist and musician Cibelle Cavalli Bastos (b. 1978) uses their Instagram account @aevtarperform to create a continuous durational performance that challenges dominant narratives and normative ideas of gender and beauty reproduced and reinforced by the social media platform. Using Augmented Reality face filters that promote an understanding of non-binary identity and sharing critical content that supports trans-activist and anti-racist movements, the artist engages in a game with the platform, embracing the rules of networked image sharing while at the same time exposing the social construction of gender.
Cavalli Bastos also takes advantage of this mechanism by allowing users to 'wear' the artist's filter – which overlays the pronouns 'They/Them' on their face – and to infiltrate their selfies into the social space of Instagram. Cavalli Bastos's work reveals the fluid way in which identity is shaped and represent- ed and the possibility of reclaiming corporate social media platforms as a space to investigate and shape the self.

**Aneta Grzeszykowska**
How is the 'female' body imagined? With full lips and shapely breasts? Polish artist Aneta Grzeszykowska (b. 1974) confronts us with these questions, instantly bringing us face to face with our normative definition of gender, which we often link to physical features. The Selfie series (2014) consists of simulated body parts made of pigskin, with Grzeszykowska using her own body as a model. In this series, she lays claim to authorship in representing her body by sculpting the form herself, at times deforming it or even

giving it a grotesque appearance. In Grzeszykowska's 'selfies' the (self)images manifest as an interactive process: as a form of objectification that reinforces clichés and as a practice that can deconstruct these very clichés in all their absurdity.

**Andy Kassier**
We enact ourselves for the camera and post selfies on social media. But what is the underlying logic behind the self- images we curate? German artist Andy Kassier (b. 1989) carries this question to extremes in his online performances. On Instagram, he plays the part of a rich and successful man, in the process serving up all the different stereotypes that go with this idea – and thus exposing it as a construct that can be reproduced at will. This also comes out in his installation Stairways (Time) (2018/2021), which presents the artist's backdrop to his staged photographs, the set for his repetitive poses of happiness, beauty and wealth. Self-presentation on social media is thus not some expression of individual personality – instead it degenerates into a form of self-marketing that is oriented towards clicks and likes and therefore becomes ever more standardised in visual terms.

**Cindy Sherman**
For the series Untitled Film Stills (1977–1980), US American photographer Cindy Sherman (b. 1954) re-enacted iconic poses of female protagonists from the Hollywood films of the 1950s and 1960s. The black-and-white pictures evoke the stills that were used to market the individual films. The shots, which are appropriately generic, degenerate into clichés of femininity, whose one-dimensionality Sherman exposes and scrutinises. Taking on the role of the gauche woman, for example, she sits expectantly on the edge of the bed or stands wrapped in a towel in the bathroom, sensually looking over her naked shoulder into the mirror. Untitled Film Stills consists of seventy photographs and reads like a catalogue of female stereotypes that demon- strates the construction and appropriation of identity through media. Sherman's ambivalent re-enactments there- fore challenge normative images that are solidified through performances for the camera, their instrumen- talisation and marketing.

**Petra Szemán**
Whether we're reading a book or watching a film, we immediately put ourselves in the place of the protagonists. Identifying with the characters allows us to insert ourselves in fictional scenarios and exit again at any given moment. For the Hungarian artist Petra Szemán (b. 1994), virtual spaces have a similarly immersive potential inherent in them. In her video work Monomyth: Gaiden (2018–2020), she slips into the skin of an avatar and tries out different scenarios in a game-like landscape – in the process exploring variants of her own identity. In virtual space it becomes possible, then, to play with identities that in the real world are not accepted, become the targets of discrimination, or lie outside the purview of heteronormative ideas. Monomyth: Gaiden offers digital space as an arena in which the relationship to one's own avatar, and ultimately to oneself, can be explored. At the same time, Szemán's work prompts us to question the boundaries between real and virtual space.

**Danielle Udogaranya**
Even if avatars give the impression of projecting very different identities, the range of virtual proxy characters is quickly exhausted, amounting to little more than conventional roles and clichéd renderings. British artist Danielle Udogaranya (b. 1991), a.k.a. 'Ebonix', focuses on the fact that the available options do not adequately represent certain groups. She designs avatars for people of colour, whose appearance and skin colour are often not considered when a game is being developed or only acknowledged in the form of stereotyped templates. For the video game The Sims 4, for example, she designs avatars with different skin tones, including options for applying make-up and different hairstyles, which operate outside the realm of racialised and racist ideas. Udogaranya's project draws attention to the discrimination that continues to exist and is perpetuated in virtual spaces. At the same time, her work plays an active role in making representation more diverse

**THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALLERY**
The Photographers' Gallery opened in 1971 in Covent Garden, London, as the UK's first independent and publicly funded gallery devoted to photography. It was the first UK

gallery to exhibit many key names in international photography, including Juergen Teller, Robert Capa, Sebastiano Salgado and Andreas Gursky. The Gallery has also been instrumental in establishing contemporary British photographers, including Martin Parr and Corinne Day. In 2009 the Gallery relocated to a new multi-storey building in Ramillies Street, Soho and opened its doors to the public in 2012 after an ambitious redevelopment plan which provided the Gallery with three floors of state-of-the-art exhibition space as well as an education/events studio, a gallery for commercial sales, bookshop and cafe. The success of The Photographers' Gallery over the past five decades has helped to secure the medium's position as a vital and highly regarded art form, introducing new audiences to photography and championing its place at the heart of visual culture.
www.thephotographersgallery.org.uk

**About the Digital Programme**
The Photographers' Gallery Digital Programme is a dedicated research and experimentation strand to educate, inspire and raise questions about the present and future of photography for, and with, a global networked audience. The programme plays a central role in achieving the Gallery's vision to stimulate public understanding of and deeper engagement with photography and its value to society. Our research programmes have international impact and are regarded as an exemplar of innovative public programming: driving debate and new thinking around the role of the photographic image in society today.

**Visitor Information**
(please check website for latest opening information)

**Opening times**:
Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday: 10.00 – 18.00
Thursday & Friday (Late opening): 10.00 – 20.00
Saturday: 10.00 – 18.00
Sunday: 11.00 – 18.00

**General Admission:** £5 / £2.50 Concessions. Fridays 18.00 - 20.00 Free for everyone

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**Social media**
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THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALLERY

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