

ARWED MESSMER, RAF. NO EVIDENCE/KEIN BEWEIS RECORDED REALITY: FROM TRACKING THE CRIMINAL TO ARTISTIC RESEARCH

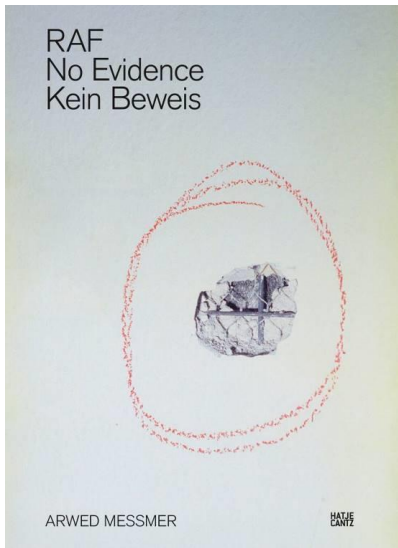
There are many photographs of Germany's Red Army Faction (RAF), but only a few that are really inscribed in the collective memory. The student generation of the 1970s was familiar with the photo of Holger Meins's corpse, or the ones of the night of death in Stammheim Prison published in *stern* in 1980. Today we still recall the pattern of the wanted posters or how kidnappers displayed the captive Hanns Martin Schleyer for the camera.

Berlin, August 29, 2017 — Ten years ago, when he began combing through archives and collections of photographs, Arwed Messmer realized that the legibility of photographs changes over time, and that they exchange their original function for a new epistemological value. The starting point for Messmer's new project, *RAF. No Evidence/Kein Beweis*, are the mostly disregarded pictures taken by police photographers: photos of demonstrations and crime sites, as well as mug shots, all of which he saw in various state archives. Here, Messmer asks how artistic research can turn these former criminal investigation aids into productive sources of different knowledge about this time period.

Messmer's compilation of photos spans the years 1967 to 1977, from the murder of Benno Ohnesorg and the Berlin student protests, to the early days of the RAF, all the way to the multiple acts of violence during the so-called *Deutscher Herbst*, or German Autumn, in 1977. In taking a second look, he brings to light some of the pictures that were on rolls of film alongside the photos that have made history. In this sense, Messmer's sources point out a perspective that is different from the classic photojournalism perspective. If the latter operates by condensing and emphasizing details, the crucial moment, the gaze of the police photograph is a more sober one that takes in everything. For Messmer these pictures are an enormous reservoir for editing and observing history after the fact.

Considering the functional coolness of the criminal gaze, the question of empathy for the people and things depicted arises. Yet, is empathy an inherent quality of the photographic gaze, or is it first created by the media context in which the image appears, perhaps even through the interest shown for the reality that has been captured?

RAF. No Evidence/Kein Beweis is the fourth book by Arwed Messmer to be published by Hatje Cantz, after *Reenactment MfS, Inventarisierung der Macht. Die Berliner Mauer aus anderer Sicht*, and *Zelle*. The companion exhibition will be on display until September 3 in the Museum Folkwang; afterward, it will travel to the Biennial for Contemporary Photography in Ludwigshafen, Mannheim, and Heidelberg.



RAF. NO EVIDENCE/KEIN BEWEIS

Texts by Florian Ebner, Uta Grundman, Arwed Messmer,
graphic design by Carsten Eisfeld
German, English

2017. 128 pp., 140 ills.

softcover, with an insert of 48 pages

24.50 x 34.00 cm

ISBN 978-3-7757-4346-4

45,00 EUR

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Especially in the digital age, Hatje Cantz regards itself an element linking museums, artists, galleries, collectors, and art lovers. Conveying knowledge - in terms of both content and visuals - as well as an enthusiasm for art is always at the heart of our engagement.

In keeping with our ambition to make it possible to experience art beyond the medium of the book, Hatje Cantz has launched the EDITION GERD HATJE as we continue to expand our portfolio of strictly limited, signed editions featuring works on paper, photographic works of art, and art objects.

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