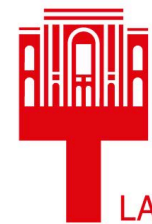


WALTER KELLER

PHOTOGRAPHIC CRESCENDO

Walter Keller (1953, Zurich) is co-founder of «Parkett Art Magazine», Fotomuseum Winterthur (Winterthur, Switzerland) and Scalo Publishers (active until 2006). He is a curator, editor, gallerist, and internationally well-known specialist in fine arts photography. Since 2011 he also is the programme director of Langhans Galerie, Prague, a non-profit institution for contemporary photography.



LA TRIENNALE DI MILANO

The story has been told internationally before, but is still worth telling: born in Zurich in 1954, Michel Comte, a young man and self-educated photographer, is discovered at the age of 24 by Karl Lagerfeld. Lagerfeld's instinct of commissioning Comte for fashion campaigns turns out to be impeccable, and a remarkable career takes off. Comte moves to Paris, only two years later to New York, and finally finds a home in Los Angeles with its atmosphere of vibrating creativity in the film and cultural world.

Numerous are the campaigns that Comte has photographed since the 80's, among them Gianfranco Ferré, Dolce & Gabbana, Armani, Nike, Swatch, BMW, Mercedes Benz, and impressive is the number of personalities he has portrayed, among them the most famous personalities from the world of glamour. The extensive number of commissions allows the Swiss photographer to very soon develop his individual handwriting in creating his own visual alphabet, oscillating between highly elaborated, staged, cinema-like scenes, and catching moments of great intimacy, of unexpected insights into the souls of the human beings in front of his lens. Comte inspires them to show him their very own freedom of mimics and expression.

The 80's and 90's, and even the first years of the first decade of the new millennium, is the time of supermodels, superactors, superartists, supermusicians. The world at that time is hungry for images that are like stamps, burnt into public consciousness just like pictures of political events of the time. It is the time right before the world wide web starts its "warhol-like" triumph that everybody could or is his or her own star...

Michel Comte's first exhibition in Milan presents appr. 100 images of Actors and Actresses, Artists, Musicians, Singer-Songwriters, Film Directors, Fashion Designers and Muses, Sportsmen, Nudes etc. The great variety of subjects, of various sizes, of black and white or colour immediately makes one thing clear: Many comments about Comte's impressive rise in the world of applied photography have emphasized how important the labels and trade marks of the campaigns photographed by this Swiss autodidact are, and that is certainly not to be neglected.

But the most important result of the ongoing international career of Michel Comte, who these days lives and works between Europe, the US and Asia, is that Comte has managed to launch himself as *his own, international brand*. And that is quite something in a world so extremely competitive as the world of show biz and glamour.