

Pieter Hugo

6 Sep – 23 Nov 2019 at the Priska Pasquer in Cologne, Germany

2 AUGUST 2019



Pieter Hugo_After Siqueiros, Oaxaca de Juárez, 2018, Pigment print, ©Pieter Hugo, courtesy PRISKA PASQUER, Cologne

Pieter Hugo is well known for his urgent portraits and everyday scenes captured at a wide variety of locations around the world. They come together to form a social “big picture” that reflects the current and radically critical everyday realities, and the complexity and inconsistency of modern-day society. Between 2017 and 2018, over 250 works from 15 projects were showcased in Wolfsburg, Dortmund and Lisbon in his major individual exhibition “Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea”. For the first time since this highly successful mid-career retrospective, Pieter Hugo – now 42 years old – is presenting a brand new series.

His latest project LA CUCARACHA was created in Mexico in 2018 and is to be presented in Europe for the first time by PRISKA PASQUER between 6 September and 23 November 2019. This photo series depicts people and situations encountered by the artist during time spent in Mexico City, Oaxaca and Juchitán. The portraits and still lifes bring to the fore the travelling artist’s openness towards generic yet unexpected situations.

Strong colours, exuberant vegetation, vigorous life and a kind of visibility of death and transience that is unfamiliar to European eyes – all of this is conveyed by the breathtakingly intense images contained in this group of works. We meet street sweepers whose amateur dramatic society recreates scenes from a monumental mural by revolutionary painter David Alfaro Siqueiros. The titular folksong “La Cucaracha” – “The Cockroach” – was reworked as a revolutionary song in the Mexican Civil War in the 1920s, caricaturing the dictator’s soldiers. A series of portraits shows the full-fledged transgender culture of Juchitán; here, Pieter Hugo is more interested in the aspect and expression of an older generation than in the stereotypical cult of youth that is more usually shown. Young people, old people, a wedding, prostitution, combat sports, slaughtering of cattle, a nudist beach, and a forensic facility – the images run the entire gamut of the *comédie humaine*.

One constant element in the photographer’s work is the profound respect he has for his protagonists, whose dignity always remains intact. His portraits are not snapshots, but are carefully executed in classical, static positions. They give the photographer and his subjects the space and scope they need to condense into a two-way observation the outer appearance with inner attitude and general life circumstances with individual backgrounds. The truth is to be sought where self-image and external perception overlap. And it is doubtless to be found in the authenticity and immediacy of the personal encounter that is transferred to the observer.

Born in Johannesburg in 1976, Pieter Hugo lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa. The major individual exhibitions of his work in museums around the world include the Berardo Collection Museum in Lisbon, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, The Hague Museum of Photography, Musée de l’Elysée in Lausanne, the Ludwig Museum in Budapest, Fotografiska in Stockholm and MAXXI in Rome. He has published a number of photo books to great critical acclaim. Hugo was nominated for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize in 2012. In 2015, he was the “Artist in Focus” for the Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize in London’s National Portrait Gallery and was nominated for the sixth cycle of the Prix Pictet.



1. Pieter Hugo_Burning Bush, Oaxaca de Juárez, 2018, Pigment print, ©Pieter Hugo, courtesy PRISKA PASQUER, Cologne
2. Pieter Hugo_Black Friday, Oaxaca de Juárez, 2018, Pigment print, ©Pieter Hugo, courtesy PRISKA PASQUER, Cologne
3. Pieter Hugo_Don Quixote, Oaxaca de Juárez, 2018, Pigment print, ©Pieter Hugo, courtesy PRISKA PASQUER, Cologne