

Baby (Pink cover)



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著者:

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Every era has its own beauty ideals: clothing, make-up, hairstyle and physical type change in line with public tastes. In advertising and on television we are incessantly bombarded with conceptions of the ideal human being. At present the idealised image seems to be so coercive that we even want to measure our newborn children against it. That this is no novelty becomes clear when we look at baby photos from the past 165 years. It turns out that the genre of baby photography is not quite as innocent as it seems.

Baby photos are often used to convey the values and norms of adults, and not just in commercial imagery, where one would expect it, but in every possible genre. Parents, studio photographers and producers of adverts and magazines propagate this idealised image of the young child. Market forces ensure that where there is a demand more of a commodity will be supplied, thus perpetuating that ideal image. On the other hand, this is apparently how people think babies ought to be: healthy, touching and innocent. We prefer a romanticised image to a realistic one.

At the other end of the spectrum stand documentary photographers and fine artists

who employ photography. They are not concerned with the desired image, confronting us with a realistic, unsentimental or reflective picture in their work. Sometimes, however, these categories intersect. One person's conception of the ideal can, after all, amount to someone else's idea of a real-life nightmare – and vice versa. Images both idealised and realistic evolve over the course of history. In the exhibition these two directions are set alongside one another as thematic guidelines. This gives rise to an intriguing field of tension, in which the baby photo emerges as a mirror of a specific era's values and norms, social habits and patterns, commercial trends and artistic developments.

Besides these two major themes there is also consideration for two important sub-themes: birth photos and images inspired by the Madonna. With photos from family albums, postcards, advertising, scientific, documentary and creative photography, BABY presents a unique view of infants since the dawn of photography.

BABY was curated by Hedy van Erp and Iris Sikking (ICON Foundation) for the Nederlands Fotomuseum. The exhibition was designed by Preta Wolzak (Fort Blink) in association with Cecilia Hendrikx (SuopuLab). Veenman Publishers has produced a book, designed by Victor Levie, presenting photographs from the exhibition and a poem by Peter Handke (available in the museum shop). On the occasion of the exhibition BABY. Picturing the ideal human, 1840-now, Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam, 22 March-1 June, 2008. On the occasion of the exhibition BABY. Picturing the ideal human, 1840-now, Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam, 22 March-1 June, 2008.

作者介绍:

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