

05/2018

**August Sander**

***Persecuted/Persecutors***

**People of the 20th Century**

### **Main description**

Recognized as one of the founding fathers of the documentary style, August Sander is the creator of many iconic twentieth-century photographs. Towards the end of the First World War, while working from his studio in Cologne, Sander began what would become his life's work: a photographic portrait of German society under the Weimar Republic. He called this endeavor *People of the 20th Century*. While his first publication was banned from sale in 1936 by the National Socialist government, in around 1938 Sander began taking identity photographs for persecuted Jews. During the Second World War he photographed migrant workers; Sander included these images, as well as some taken by his son Erich from the prison where he would die in 1944, in *People of the 20th Century*, along with portraits of national socialists made before and during the war. Sander was unable to publish his monumental work during his lifetime, but his descendants champion his vision to this day. These photographs are published together for the first time here, along with contact prints, letters and details about the lives of those photographed. They are portraits of dignified men and women, victims of an ideology taking their rightful place as "*People of the 20th Century*" in defiance of Nazi efforts to ostracize them.

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### **Biography**

The direct, objective style and constant search for truth of August Sander (1876–1964) decisively influenced the history of photography, marking a rupture from the idealized classical style of portraiture. The son of a miner from Herdorf, Germany, in 1910 Sander moved to Cologne and established a studio as a portrait photographer there. During the 1920s he frequented numerous artists, musicians, writers, architects and in particular the Cologne Progressives who shaped his photography. Alongside his commercial work, Sander photographed people from different social and professional spheres under the title "*People of the 20th Century*." In 1929 he published *Antlitz der Zeit* (Face of Our Time), a collection of 60 portraits constituting a sociological inventory of German society in the 1920s, which the Nazis eventually banned. In 1938–39 Sander took numerous identity photographs for Jews in Cologne; after the war he added twelve of these to his oeuvre under the title "*The Persecuted*." Sander died in 1964, leaving behind a chronicle and sociological inventory of his time in more than 40,000 photos.

## **Bibliography**

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*People of the 20th Century*

English / German / French

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