

10/02–20/05/2024

Jakob Tuggener The 4 Seasons



Fotostiftung Schweiz



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Jakob Tuggener (1904–1988) is one of the exceptional figures in 20th-century Swiss photography. He had the confidence to consider himself an artist from the outset. His expressive photographs of glittering ball nights are legendary and his book *Fabrik* (Factory) from 1943 is seen as a milestone in the history of the photo book. However, it has so far gone largely unnoticed that Tuggener was also captivated by a third subject: simple life in the countryside.

Already in the early 1930s, after his brief artistic education at the Reimann School in Berlin, Tuggener began to take an interest in rural life and the traditions of his homeland. This focus certainly had to do with the political developments in Europe, which prompted Switzerland to reflect on its own values and to disseminate them via the illustrated press. While Tuggener was earning his living as a freelance industrial photographer, he managed to make a name for himself with photographs of everyday country life, livestock markets and folk festivals, until the Second World War began. During his subsequent active army service, he still had enough time to pursue the subject further and also capture the changes of the seasons with his camera. As early as 1942/43, he compiled four individual book maquettes from the photographs he had taken since the mid-1930s – unique books that he designed himself and were ready to print. However, as was also the case with all his later book maquettes, Tuggener never found a publisher willing to publish them exactly as he had imagined. Only a small selection of images were presented by Arnold Kübler in the magazine *Du* in 1946. "Tuggener tries to hint at the inner workings of people and things in pictures," wrote Kübler, also pointing out Tuggener's special way of using the sequencing and juxtaposition of photographs to achieve a manner of artistic expression that went far beyond the documentary.

Almost thirty years later, in a societal environment characterised by fears of foreign infiltration, Tuggener once again compiled four book maquettes, under the title *Die 4 Jahreszeiten* (The 4 Seasons). They were created during the preparations for his first major retrospective at Helmhäus Zurich in 1974, which he conceived as a kind of arc, with sections ranging from 'Nature of Switzerland' to 'Peace and Earth in Farm Life'. With photographs from the years 1932 to 1973, these four book maquettes are among the last and most extensive that Tuggener created during his long career. Together, they convey a traditional image of the four seasons, as is familiar from music and painting. In sensitively observed, atmospherically charged, but never picturesque photographs, they reflect the recurring cycle of nature, while simultaneously contemplating life and transience. Alongside Tuggener's four unique books, the exhibition at Fotostiftung Schweiz also presents many other photographs that demonstrate how intensively this master of black-and-white photography devoted himself to the theme of 'country life' for more than 30 years.

In the military

After the outbreak of the Second World War in autumn 1939, Tuggener was called up for active service, like

**Vernissage: Friday, 9th of February 2024, from 6 pm
7pm Welcoming address by Peter Pfrunder, director of Fotostiftung Schweiz. Introduction to the exhibition: Martin Gasser, curator of the exhibition**

**Sunday, 18th of February 2024, 1:30 pm
Exhibition tour with Maria Euphemia Tuggener and Martin Gasser**

**Sunday, 17th of March 2024, 1:30 pm
Screening of Jakob Tuggener's silent films
Zürich – Stadt und Land (Zurich – City and Country, 1937–40),
Grimetz (1938) and *Die Versuchung des heiligen Antonius*
(The Temptation of Saint Anthony, 1963)**

**Sunday, 7th of April 2024, 1:30 pm
Exhibition tour with Guido Magnaguagno, Art historian and Tuggener connoisseur**

all Swiss men of military age. Naturally, he had his camera with him in his kit, so to speak, as he aimed to provide the illustrated magazines with pictures of daily soldiering life. This was only possible for a short time though, as censorship became increasingly strict and prohibited the publication of images with military content. Tuggener kept taking photographs, just for himself, but was beginning to run out of subjects. Although most of his time was spent on guard duty, Tuggener was certainly able to get something positive out of it: "When I stand guard at night," he wrote home, "I contemplate the full splendour of nature, because before us, there lies a marvellous land and a mighty, open sky."

During the winter of 1942, Tuggener was in the valley Fricktal, serving as a guard in the Oeschgen internment camp. It was a camp for Polish soldiers who had found refuge in Switzerland in June 1940 after being surrounded by Hitler's Wehrmacht on the French-Swiss border. They were subsequently distributed among camps set up at short notice, where they lived in safety until after the war, but were strictly kept apart from the local population. Compared to a number of larger camps in places like Büren an der Aare or Wettingen, Oeschgen was a relatively small and manageable one, so Tuggener was soon able to approach these foreign men he was supposed to be watching over and strove to establish a rapport with them. Despite language difficulties, he succeeded in doing so very well, thanks to his camera – particularly

as he came up with the idea of taking portrait photos of all the internees, then offering these to them for sale. As his financial situation was anything but a bed of roses during the war years, he appreciated this source of extra income, but was also pursuing a completely different goal with it: He was planning to publish a book about the internment camp, but it never materialised. Only a book maquette compiled shortly after his service in Oeschgen under the title *Polen-Wache* (Pole Watch) has survived. It is primarily a portrait book, a lively group portrait that visibly reveals Tuggener's sympathy for the interned men and shows that he treated them as equals, even in his role as a guard. The portraits are complemented by wintry atmospheric images and by photographs of the monotonous daily camp routine, from morning roll call to working in the forest, or attending to the barbed wire fences in the surrounding area.

The book maquettes

During the long months of active service that Jakob Tuggener spent in small villages in the canton of Aargau, in Bernese Seeland and in Ticino, he would travel around with his Leica whenever off duty, capturing what increasingly fascinated him: farmers at work, village scenes, and modest still lifes in barns and inns. He also photographed private rooms though, such as kitchens or bedrooms, when granted access. People always took centre stage; he captured them in their familiar surroundings, as rawly and authentically as possible.

Tuggener developed and enlarged his photographs when at home on leave. In 1942/43, almost at the same time as the publication of his book *Fabrik* (Factory), he compiled four individual book maquettes with the titles *Frühling*, *Sommer*, *Herbst* and *Winter* (Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter). With these 'farmer books', he created his own personal counter-world to the world of the factory. Jakob Tuggener also felt in his element in rural surroundings. In a later interview with Magnum employee Inge Bondi, he spoke very fondly about the smell of fresh manure in a snow-covered field, which he could still remember.

None of the book maquettes that Tuggener created during the war years were published, not even the one called *Uf em Land* (In the Countryside), which he compiled in 1953 using variations on earlier photographs and many new ones. Nevertheless, thirty years later, in connection with his first retrospective at Helmhäus Zurich, he returned to the theme and, between March 1973 and February 1974, put together new individual volumes on spring, summer, autumn and winter, under the title *Die 4 Jahreszeiten*. Compared to the original versions from 1942/43, these

are about four times as extensive. Most of the photographs were new, which shows how intensively Tuggener had addressed the subject. The format of the maquettes, still 30x24 cm, had not changed though, and he had also retained the same simple layout for the pictures: single images, arranged either each on one page (very rarely in non-page-filling landscape formats) or as borderless double pages. The major themes relating to the seasons also remained the same: from tilling the fields in spring to haymaking in summer, to harvesting in autumn and through to forest work in winter. This time perhaps not so much a counter-world to factory work, but to the hectic pace of the modern city, *Die 4 Jahreszeiten*, encompassing more than 300 photographs, reflects how, in nature, things come into being and disappear, and it is simultaneously an allegory of the cycle of human life.

Like all earlier maquettes, *Die 4 Jahreszeiten* from 1973/74 contain juxtapositions and sequences of images that evoke certain associations or feelings. Tuggener believed in the suggestive power of images and the narrative potential of montage, as used to great effect in German expressionist film during the 1920s. The fact that these unique books remained unpublished during his lifetime is probably due to their author's uncompromising nature: Tuggener insisted that his photographic compositions needed no explanatory text or captions. He saw them as an independent and viable means of expression – an attitude that put him far ahead of his time.

Zürcher Oberland (Zurich highlands)

In June 1955, Tuggener was commissioned by the printing house Wetzikon und Rütli to photographically document the region Zürcher Oberland for a photo book. This suited Tuggener well, as he was already quite familiar with the area. He worked on the project for a year and, for once, was well paid. The book came out in 1956 under the title *Zürcher Oberland* with the aim, as the publisher put it, of showing "the beauty of the [...] so scenically diverse areas, and of their inhabitants in their homes and workplaces". It is an idyllic world that appears in Tuggener's 240 photos, arranged in a somewhat restless-looking layout, with snow-covered Alps in the background, and peaceful lakes and ponds in the foreground. There are also plenty of pictures of the grain harvest and haymaking, as well as photos that thematise the area's rich cultural heritage. However, at the end of the pictorial section of this 'ideal-world book', a portrait of a contemplative man is juxtaposed with a nocturnal landscape in a manner that seems to call much into question. It is not surprising that Tuggener used only a few images from this book in his later book maquettes.

Forum alpinum

In 1964, Jakob Tuggener contributed photographs to the 'Mountain Farmers Exhibition' in the 'Field and Forest' pavilion at the Swiss National Exhibition (Expo 64) in Lausanne. He was also involved in a follow-up publication, which was meant to comprehensively present the problems of mountain regions. While the exhibition was still running, the book was advertised for sale by subscription, as a "contribution to the clarification of our mountain population's current existential issues" and was published in 1965 as a 400-page volume of texts and images, entitled *Forum alpinum*. It covers seven Swiss mountain regions: western Switzerland (Jura and Gruyère), Valais, Bernese Oberland, central Switzerland, Ticino, Graubünden, and eastern Switzerland (Appenzel and St Galler Oberland). For each of the seven regions, there is a picture section with photographs by Jakob Tuggener, almost 130 in total. The interspersed blocks of text are about the people, agriculture, art, customs and music. There are also map extracts, aerial photographs and numerous woodcuts by Bruno Gentinetta. *Forum alpinum* has an almost square format and was designed by Kurt Büchel. Tuggener was busy for months, researching in his archive, travelling to take pictures in all the regions to be covered and working in his darkroom.

In the new photographs that Tuggener produced, it is evident that he was endeavouring to depict as many regional features as possible, without compromising his artistic standards. Naturally though, such a broad collection of images taken over many years presents itself as very heterogeneous. The photographs are mostly arranged as juxtapositions: of old and new, for instance, or of inner and outer. They are visual contrasts like those that characterise Tuggener's own book maquettes, but in *Forum alpinum*, there are always comments inserted in between, which interrupt the images' dialogue and reduce it to a message that is easy to grasp. In the book, for example, a photograph of a jukebox in Saint-Ursanne is juxtaposed with the evangelists on a cathedral's medieval capitals. In the comment, it is noted with disappointment that young people are less interested in tradition and more open "to the superficial and international allure of the 'juke box'."

In the exhibition *The 4 Seasons* and the accompanying publication of the same name, Fotostiftung Schweiz is delighted to present a previously unknown work by Jakob Tuggener to the public. This follows on from numerous projects with which it, together with the Jakob Tuggener Foundation, has gradually provided access to Tuggener's oeuvre: In addition to various exhibitions and publications, the online collection, which now shows a comprehensive representative cross-section of Tuggener's work, also serves this purpose. None of this would have been possible without the artist's widow, Maria Euphemia Tuggener, who deposited his photographic estate at Fotostiftung Schweiz in 2004.

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication *Jakob Tuggener – The 4 Seasons*, released by Steidl Verlag, Göttingen. It includes an introduction by Martin Gasser and a selection of photographs from the four original book maquettes (German/English, available in the museum shop or fotostiftung.ch/shop).

To accompany the exhibition, Fotostiftung Schweiz is presenting a selection of works that Jakob Tuggener published in little-known magazines typical of his era, such as *Föhn* and *Der Gleichrichter*.

In cooperation with the Jakob Tuggener Foundation, Uster. With support from the Dr Werner Greninger Foundation, Winterthur.





The Expressionist Photographer

The expressionist photographer does not exist in the commercial register. He is the freest of the free. Unbound by any purpose, he photographs only the pleasure of his experience. He is the artist seeking to express himself with his instrument, in this case the camera. Indeed, art is not art at all until an idea has been crystallised, visualised or set to music, and it does not matter which instrument we use to achieve this.

However, the key factor is not reproduction, but the desire to make something. Ten years ago, I began to use photography as my language and to speak in self-contained books: about ball nights, about iron, about ships, about everything that particularly moves and excites my soul. The public, or rather the publishers, have no confidence in this approach. They say people would not understand a book without words, merely to be seen with the eyes. Yes, we are made more superficial by illustrated magazines and by reading: Everyone is at a loss when it comes to contemplating a picture without the aid of a text. And yet with a text, an image can only be explained, not experienced. That is because the soul resides at a greater depth, which words cannot reach. This realm is much larger than the periphery of the mind.

Jak. Tuggener
Schweizerische Photorundschau 23, 8th of December 1950.

Biography Jakob Tuggener
 1904 7th of February, born in Zurich.
 1910-19 Attends schools in Zurich.
 1919-30 Serves an apprenticeship as a mechanical draughtsman at Maag Zahnräder AG (MZAG), completing it in 1923, then works in MZAG's design department. Is introduced to photography around 1926 by the in-house photographer Gustav Maag.
 August 1930 - May 1931 Attends typography, graphic design, drawing and film courses at the Reimann School in Berlin. Returns to Zurich.
 1932 Starts working as a freelance photographer for Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon (MFO), specifically for its in-house magazine *Der Gleichrichter*.
 1933 Becomes a member of the artists' association Künstlervereinigung Zürich.
 1934 Buys a Leica with money earned at MFO.
 1935 Produces his first commissioned book on industry, a portrait of the MFO factory.
 1936 Joins the Zurich amateur filmmakers' association VZFA.
 1937 Starts making industrial films and experimental documentaries with his friend Max Wydler.
 1939 Is called up for active army service after the outbreak of the Second World War. Takes photographs and paints when off duty.
 1943 Produces a second portrait of the MFO factory while working on his book *Fabrik*. Takes photographs for the first time at the Palace Hotel's New Year's Eve ball in St Moritz.
 1945 Tuggener and Wydler win first prize in a VZFA competition for their surrealist film *Die Seemühle*.
 1949 The entire October issue of the Lucerne magazine *Camera*, with a text by Hans Kasser, is dedicated to the photographer and filmmaker Jakob Tuggener.
 1950 Co-founds 'Kollegium Schweizerischer Fotografen' (Academy of Swiss Photographers) together with Werner Bischof, Walter Lüubli, Gotthard Schuh and Paul Senn.
 1954 Starts taking photographs for the commissioned book *Zürcher Oberland*, which is published in 1956.
 1963-65 Produces large-format photographs and three sound films for the 'Field and Forest' section of the Swiss National Exhibition in Lausanne (Expo 64). His photographs are subsequently published in the book *Forum alpinum*.
 1967 The portfolio *Schweizer Landleben* with 5 photographs is published by Phot-Ami-Club.
 1969 On his 65th birthday, the film portrait *Zum Beispiel: Jakob Tuggener* is produced for Swiss television by Dieter Bachmann.
 1982 Receives the Award for Cultural Merit from the City of Zurich.
 1988 Dies on the 29th of April in Zurich.

Captions (in order of the newspaper): Lüscherz, 1944. Treshing machine in the Töss Valley (Tösstal), 1950s. In the Moor, near Brüttelen, 1944. In the spring wind, 1950s. Rain, 1949. Belfry, Rümlang, 1934. Gamekeeper of Sternenberg with his wife, 1956. © Jakob Tuggener Stiftung / Fotostiftung Schweiz.



