



Media Information

LONDON UNDERGROUND

Wolfgang Strassl's new series of photographs shows us the diversity of people you're likely to meet in one of the carriages on the London Tube. He deliberately resists the rules of portrait photography and edits the faces out. In erasing them, he allows an unbiased view of the travelers' appearances, putting our perceptive faculties to the test: What are we looking at? What do we recognize? Do we have a sense of these people's stories? Strassl's circumspect yet penetrating gaze takes in human life on the London Underground, and the diversity of this modern metropolis.

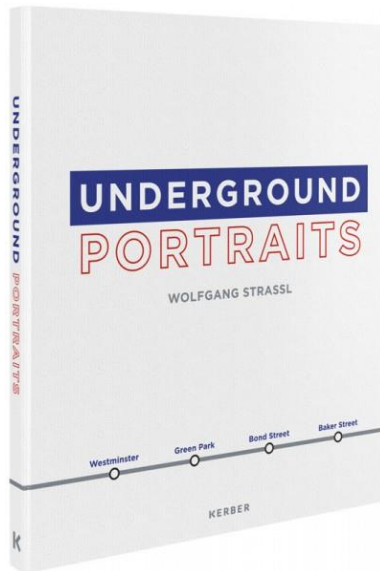
Bielefeld/Berlin, December 12, 2019 – London is one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. This is reflected in the London Tube: people of all different ages, social classes, religions, skin colors, nationalities, educational levels, and sexual orientations sit, stand, exist next to each other, in all of their diversity and individuality.

In his new book of photos *Underground Portraits* the photographer Wolfgang Strassl (*1956) explores this unique social space. His portrait study examines what peoples' visual appearances have to say about them, and how much we, the viewers, are capable of seeing, recognizing, and understanding. "Despite the popularity of so-called character portraits that make us believe that the human face is a mirror of the soul, I've always doubted that facial features alone reveal much about the special character of an individual. In *Underground Portraits* I deliberately cover the face to explore what we see, when we are simply looking at the body," says Strassl.

The Munich-based artist is convinced that physical appearance betrays more of the character than a face ever could. This is because much of our appearance is determined by our conscious or unconscious decisions about what we want to look like. In many cases we do not succeed in creating the desired visual impression in others; often, however, it is precisely these perceptible intentions that reveal who we are.

"With *Underground Portraits*, Strassl has succeeded in creating a document about twenty-first-century social equality and democracy among the Underground passengers," writes the curator and author Zelda Cheatle in the book's foreword.

And the best thing: thanks to *Underground Portraits*, this is the first time that we can stare at, evaluate, and judge without a guilty conscience—no one notices, after all.



Wolfgang Strassl | Underground Portraits

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Zelda Cheatle

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