

AMERICA! AMERICA! HOW REAL IS REAL?
9 December 2017 – 27 May 2018

Myths, projections, desires: In the era of “fake news” and “alternative facts”, we realize how the American Dream is interwoven with emotionally charged images and symbols. At the same time, hardly any other nation on Earth is so aware of the power of pictures. The images of the “American Way of Life” produced in the media and entertainment industries can cement existing power structures and perceptions of reality but they can also radically call them into question.

With about 70 masterpieces of contemporary US art, such as Andy Warhol’s *Race Riot* (1964), Jeff Koon’s life-size sculpture *Bear and Policeman* (1988) or Jenny Holzer’s neon writing installation *Truisms* (1994), *America! America! How real is real?* presents how artists from the 1960s to this day have commented on the American reality. With works from the Frieder Burda Collection and numerous high-caliber loans, the show invites visitors to an excursion into the heart of America’s visual culture.

Stars of pop art such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein or James Rosenquist were already transforming the surface of consumer culture into an art form that speaks of almost irresistible seduction and cool distance. By taking over the methods of commercial picture reproduction, they took their leave of traditional notions of authenticity. The feeling of alienation is also embodied by works by the great US painters of the 1980s. The psychologically charged canvasses of Eric Fischl, the hermetic scenes of Alex Katz, the enormous film-noir-like graffiti paintings of Robert Longo dissect the dreams and fears of an insecure white middle class. Simultaneously, artists such as Jeff Wall or Cindy Sherman conquer scenes that critically reflect our media-influenced perception, becoming models for subsequent generations. Using the strategies of conceptual art, performance and photography, they create pictorial worlds in which the border between reality and staged performance seems to blur. *How real is real?*



Alex Katz, *Scott and John*, 1966. 182.9 x 121.9 cm, oil on canvas.
Museum Frieder Burda, Baden- Baden
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