

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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(updated information)

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## MAJOR PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION AT NATIONAL GALLERY THIS SUMMER

Washington, D.C., March 10, 1989 - A major photography survey focusing on the artistic achievements of the medium throughout its history opens May 7, 1989 at the National Gallery of Art. In honor of the 150th anniversary of photography this year, the National Gallery of Art and The Art Institute of Chicago have organized the show to examine the history of photography as art through more than 400 original black-and-white and color photographs from public and private collections worldwide. The exhibition is made possible by a generous grant from Eastman Kodak Company's Professional Photography Division.

On January 31, 1839, in Cambridge, England, William Henry Fox Talbot announced his invention of a negative-positive process of photography. Describing his discovery as "the art of fixing a shadow," Talbot saw great potential for photography as a means of artistic expression. It was his invention that made possible the duplication of prints from a single negative. Talbot's announcement followed close on the heels of an announcement in Paris on January 7, 1839 by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre that he had perfected a single-image process of fixing a photographic likeness on a silver plate. Their announcements, however, were but the first step in the development of photography.

(more)

On the Art of Fixing a Shadow: 150 Years of Photography traces the evolution of an understanding of photography as a pictorial device from its announcement to the present day. The exhibition demonstrates that although photography itself was invented in 1839, the ever-changing potential of the medium has been rethought and revised countless times, with each new improvement to the process of photography and with each new cultural mandate.

"At this milestone in the history of photography, it is inspiring to survey the important artistic accomplishments of this relatively young art form," said J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery.

On the Art of Fixing a Shadow presents the works of more than 200 photographers including William Henry Fox Talbot, Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, Roger Fenton, Gustave Le Gray, Julia Margaret Cameron, Timothy O'Sullivan, Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, Eugène Atget, Jacques-Henri Lartigue, Edward Weston, André Kertész, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Ansel Adams, László Moholy-Nagy, Walker Evans, Robert Frank, Dorothea Lange, Garry Winogrand, Harry Callahan, Andy Warhol, and Cindy Sherman.

Arranged chronologically, the exhibition is divided into four sections -- The Pencil of Nature (1839-1879), The Curious Contagion of the Camera (1880-1918), Ephemeral Truths (1919-1945), and Beyond the Photographic Frame (1946-present). The work of the majority of the artists will be represented by one vintage photograph; however, in some 40 cases the photographers' work is shown in greater depth with several examples. Those artists with particularly long careers are represented in more than one section.

"1989 marks not only 150 years of photography, but also slightly more than fifty years since the first historical studies of the field were written," said Sarah Greenough, research curator at the National Gallery and co-curator of the exhibition with David Travis, head of the department of photography at The Art Institute of Chicago. "We want to use this opportunity to re-examine the history of photography in light of the significant historical research and critical examination that has been conducted in the last decade," she added.

Mr. Travis and Ms. Greenough selected the works included in the exhibition with Joel Snyder, professor of humanities at the University of Chicago, and Colin Westerbeck, assistant curator of photography at The Art Institute. The show will be at the National Gallery May 7 - July 30, 1989, before traveling to The Art Institute of Chicago, September 16 - November 26, 1989, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, December 21, 1989 - February 25, 1990. The installation of this exhibition at The Art Institute of Chicago is partially funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. A fully-illustrated catalogue of the exhibition containing scholarly essays by Mr. Travis, Ms. Greenough, Mr. Snyder, and Mr. Westerbeck will be published by the National Gallery of Art and The Art Institute and a hardcover edition will be distributed by Bulfinch Press. A biographical dictionary made up of some 200 entries will comprise a separate supplement to the catalogue.

# National Gallery of Art

*Washington, D.C.*

ON THE ART OF FIXING A SHADOW  
150 Years of Photography  
May 7, 1989 - July 30, 1989

## EXHIBITION

This exhibition is a major photography survey focusing on the artistic achievements of the medium throughout its history. In honor of the 150th anniversary of the invention of the medium the National Gallery of Art and The Art Institute of Chicago have organized the show to examine photography from public and private collections worldwide. The exhibition is made possible by a generous grant from Eastman Kodak Company.

## HOURS

The National Gallery's hours are Monday through Saturday, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm; Sunday, 12:00 noon to 9:00 pm.

## PASSES

Admission to the National Gallery and its special exhibitions is always free. On crowded weekdays and weekends, free passes will be distributed as necessary on a first-come, first-served basis. Passes are for specified half-hour entry times and may be obtained in the West Building Sculpture Hall at the designated desk.

## RECORDED TOUR

During normal Gallery hours, a forty-five minute recorded tour will be available: individuals, \$3.00 each; students or senior citizens, \$2.50 each.

## AUDIO-VISUAL

An audio-visual, made in conjunction with the exhibition, will be shown continuously in the West Building lecture hall.

## SPECIAL PROGRAMS

The monthly Calendar of Events will provide information on all other programs offered in connection with this special exhibition.

## REGULATIONS AND SERVICES

No photography or lecturing is permitted in the exhibition. No shopping bags, packages, or umbrellas are permitted in the exhibition. A limited number of baby strollers and wheelchairs can be borrowed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Access for the handicapped is available at the Constitution Avenue entrance to the West Building. There is limited parking for the handicapped near the East Building entrance.

## PUBLICATION

An exhibition catalogue, illustrated in color, is available for \$35.00, plus postage and handling. Please call (301-322-5900) to place your order or send your request to: Publications Department, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC 20565. For more information about posters, postcards, and related publications, please write to the same address.