

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL GALLERY ACQUIRES MAJOR PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION
RARE MASTERPIECES ON VIEW, SEPTEMBER 10 - DECEMBER 31, 1995

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The National Gallery of Art has just acquired 165 works from one of the country's finest private collections of photographs belonging to Mary and David Robinson of Sausalito, California, director Earl A. Powell III announced today. Twenty-seven photographs are partial and promised gifts from Mary and David Robinson. The remaining 138 photographs will be purchased by the Gallery with private funds. Rare masterpieces from the collection will be on view as part of the exhibition The First Century of Photography: New Acquisitions, in the West Building, September 10 through December 31, 1995.

"David and Mary Robinson have assembled an outstanding collection of the highest quality by selecting master photographs for their beauty and historical importance," said Powell. "This generous gift and purchase provide the Gallery with a solid framework on which to continue building its distinguished photography collection."

The new acquisitions cover many high points in the history of photography from inventor William Henry Fox Talbot's early

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experiments in the 1830s and 1840s to twentieth-century vintage prints by Edward Weston, Man Ray, Lee Miller, Walker Evans, and Paul Strand. Nineteenth-century works by such pioneers of photography as Eugène Atget, Édouard-Denis Baldus, Julia Margaret Cameron, Lewis Carroll, Gustave Le Gray, Nadar, and Carleton Watkins, will be entering the Gallery's collection for the first time.

"The David and Mary Robinson Collection significantly expands the scope of our photography holdings with seminal works by major photographers," said Sarah Greenough, curator of photographs, National Gallery of Art. The Robinsons, known for their collection of contemporary art, began acquiring photographs in 1984. According to Greenough, "They sought only select images in excellent condition by key figures."

The images span a wide range of subjects, including landscapes, portraits, still lifes, and nudes. Among the highlights are William Henry Fox Talbot's photogenic drawings from 1839/1840 of Lace and Leaf Study; Julia Margaret Cameron's portrait, Mrs. Herbert Duckworth (1867), the mother of author Virginia Woolf; a mammoth plate print of Cape Horn, Columbia River, Oregon (1867) by Carleton Watkins; Portrait of Xie Kitchen (c. 1870), a favorite model of Lewis Carroll; the only known vintage print of Etang de Corot, Ville-d'Avray (1900/1910) by Eugène Atget; Pablo Picasso (1933), the first photograph by Man Ray to enter the Gallery's collection; and The Breast (The

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Source) (1921), a seminal early work by Edward Weston. The most recent work is Garry Winogrand's Opening, Frank Stella Exhibition (1970).

The National Gallery has previously acquired major holdings of photographs by Alfred Stieglitz, Ansel Adams, Paul Strand, Walker Evans, and Robert Frank, with significant works by such photographers as Harry Callahan, August Sander, and Frederick Sommer. Photography exhibitions organized by the National Gallery in recent years include Robert Frank: Moving Out (1994), Stieglitz in the Darkroom (1992-1993), Walker Evans: Subway Photographs and Other Recent Acquisitions (1991-1992), Paul Strand (1990-1991), and On the Art of Fixing A Shadow (1989), co-organized with the Art Institute of Chicago.

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