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National Gallery of Art Celebrates the 25th Anniversary of Its Photography Collection with Three Major Exhibitions



Vera Lutter, *Ca' Del Duca Storza, Venice II: January 13-14, 2008*, 2008
gelatin silver paper negative
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund

Washington, DC—In 2015, the National Gallery of Art will commemorate the 25th anniversary of its photography collection with three major exhibitions exemplifying the vitality, breadth, and history of the Gallery's photography holdings. The celebration commences in the spring with two exhibitions—***In Light of the Past: 25 Years of Photography at the National Gallery of Art*** (May 3–July 26, 2015) and ***The Memory of Time: Contemporary Photographs at the National Gallery of Art, Acquired with the Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund*** (May 3–September 7, 2015). It concludes in the fall with ***Celebrating Photography at the National Gallery of Art: Recent Gifts*** (November 1, 2015–February 28, 2016), a selection of gifts and acquisitions made in honor of this anniversary. In addition, a series of lectures and other programs highlighting the importance of photography at the Gallery will be presented throughout the year.

"Each exhibition tells a concise and fascinating story about photography in general—and photography at the National Gallery of Art, specifically," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art, Washington. "We start by charting the history of the medium and probing its relationship to time, memory, and history, and end with an abundant display of gifts given in honor of our celebrated collection and programs for photography."

In 1949 Georgia O'Keeffe gave the Gallery an unparalleled collection of more than 1,600 Alfred Stieglitz photographs, but the museum did not actively begin to collect photography until 1990. Under the stellar leadership of Sarah Greenough, senior curator and head of the department, the collection has since expanded to nearly 14,000 American and European photographs, spanning from 1839 to the present.

"Anniversaries should be a time to celebrate, and to reflect on the past and contemplate the future," said Greenough. "Our intention is to present some of the most significant and compelling photographs we have acquired over the years, which both chart the development of the medium and reveal the beauty and dynamic versatility of photography over its course of more than 175 years."

Due to the fragility of photographs, which are subject to deterioration if exposed to light for extended periods of time, the greatest part of the collection is kept in storage. While dedicated photography galleries, opened in the West Building in 2004, have enabled the Gallery to highlight many works in the collection during the past decade, numerous photographs in this trio of exhibitions will be on public view for the first time at the Gallery.

Students and other visitors may take advantage of the Gallery's photograph study room—open weekdays from 10:00 a.m. to noon and 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.—to examine works not on view. To book an appointment, please call (202) 842-6144.

Photography at the National Gallery of Art

In December 1948, when Georgia O'Keeffe was deciding where to place the largest and most significant collection of photographs by her late husband, the seminal American photographer Alfred Stieglitz, she visited the National Gallery of Art. She wrote to a friend a few days later, "Stieglitz worked for the recognition of photography as a fine art—the National Gallery means something in relation to that." The following year, O'Keeffe and the Alfred Stieglitz Estate laid the cornerstone for the photography collection at the museum by donating the "Key Set" of more than 1,600 Stieglitz photographs. It

is the largest and most complete collection of his work in existence. The entire collection is documented in a two-volume publication *Alfred Stieglitz: The Key Set* (2002) and will soon be accessible on the Gallery's website.

After a series of exhibitions in the 1980s, the museum started actively acquiring photographs in 1990 and established the department of photographs under the direction of Sarah Greenough. The Gallery's holdings now include nearly 14,000 photographs spanning the entire history of the medium, including a choice group by British photographer William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877), the inventor of photography. Other 19th-century British photographers represented in the Gallery's collection include Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–1879), David Octavius Hill (1802–1870), Robert Adamson (1821–1848), Roger Fenton (1819–1869), and Peter Henry Emerson (1856–1936).

The Gallery also has exceptional examples by 19th-century French photographers, including Gustave Le Gray (1820–1884), Charles Nègre (1820–1880), Henri Le Secq (1818–1882), Édouard-Denis Baldus (1813–1889), and Charles Marville (1813–1879)—many of whom were trained as painters and brought highly refined aesthetic sensibilities to the new art of photography.

Nineteenth-century American photography is also well-represented in the collection with works by Albert Sands Southworth (1811–1894) and Josiah Johnson Hawes (1808–1901); Timothy O'Sullivan (1840–1882); Carleton Watkins (1829–1916); Eadward Muybridge (1830–1904), and William H. Rau (1855–1920), among many others.

Among the greatest strengths of the collection are large, often unparalleled groups of photographs by several major 20th-century American practitioners, including Paul Strand (1890–1976), Ansel Adams (1902–1984), Walker Evans (1903–1975), André Kertész (1894–1985), Ilse Bing (1899–1998), Frederick Sommer (1905–1999), Robert Frank (b. 1924), Harry Callahan (1912–1999), Irving Penn (1917–2009), Lee Friedlander (b. 1934), and Robert Adams (b. 1937). Modeled after the Stieglitz collection, each of these holdings includes works from throughout the photographers' careers and illustrates all aspects of their contributions to the art of photography. Often formed with input from the photographers themselves, each of these collections frequently contain exceptionally rare works.

The Gallery has also established an international reputation for its photography exhibitions and publications. In the last 25 years, it has organized and mounted more than 40 shows, often award-winning, of both 19th- and 20th-century photography, most with highly acclaimed scholarly catalogs and many which have traveled both nationally and internationally. Among the most notable are: *Garry Winogrand* (2014); *Tell It with Pride: The 54th Massachusetts Regiment and Augustus Saint-Gaudens' Shaw Memorial* (2013); *Charles Marville: Photographer of Paris* (2013); *The Pre-Raphaelite Lens: British Photography and Painting, 1848–1875* (2010); *Looking In: Robert Frank's "The Americans,"* (2009); *The Art of the American Snapshot, 1888–1978* (2008); *Impressed by Light: British Photographs from Paper Negatives, 1840–1860* (2007); *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918–1945* (2007); *Irving Penn: Platinum Prints* (2005); *André Kertész* (2005); *All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852–1860* (2004); *Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries* (2001); *Harry Callahan* (1996); *Robert Frank: Moving Out* (1994); *Walker Evans: Subways and Streets* (1991); and *Paul Strand* (1990).

About the Exhibitions

In Light of the Past: 25 Years of Photography at the National Gallery of Art

(May 3–July 26, 2015)

This exhibition charts the evolution of photography from the birth of the medium in 1839 to 1990. Some 100 works will be drawn from the Gallery's photography collection that have been acquired since its founding a quarter of a century ago, including stunning 19th-century works, turn-of-the-century pictorialist prints, examples of international photographic modernism of the 1920s and 1930s, the most influential mid-20th-century American photographers, and ending with the new directions photographers explored in the 1970s and 1980s, including color and conceptual work.

The curators of this exhibition are Sarah Greenough, senior curator and head of the department of photographs, and Diane Waggoner, associate curator, department of photographs, National Gallery of Art.

The Memory of Time: Contemporary Photographs at the National Gallery of Art, Acquired with the Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund

(May 3–September 13, 2015)

Representing the past in the present is one of photography's essential characteristics, but its relationship to time is by no means straightforward. Each photograph contains multiple layers of time, including the instant of exposure, the moment of viewing, and the lapse in between. This exhibition explores work by contemporary photographers—such as Sally Mann (b. 1951), Vera Lutter (b. 1960), Hiroshi Sugimoto (b. 1948), Carrie Mae Weems (b. 1953), and Sophie Calle (b. 1953)—who investigate this rich subject and explore the complexity of time, memory, and history. A fully illustrated catalog will accompany the exhibition.

All of the featured works were recently acquired through the generosity of the Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund. The curators of this exhibition are Sarah Greenough, senior curator and head of the department of photographs, and Andrea Nelson, assistant curator, department of photographs, National Gallery of Art.

Celebrating Photography at the National Gallery of Art: Recent Gifts

(November 1, 2015–February 28, 2016)

This exhibition will feature a selection of photographs donated to the Gallery in honor of the 25th anniversary of the museum's collection. Marking the culmination of a year-long celebration of photography at the museum, this exhibition brings together an exquisite group of gifts, ranging from experimental photographs made in the earliest years of the medium's history to key works by major 20th-century figures, as well as contemporary pieces that examine the ways in which photography continues to shape our experience of the modern world. The exhibition will be accompanied by a major publication celebrating 25 years of photography at the National Gallery of Art.

The curators of this exhibition are Sarah Greenough, senior curator and head of the department of photographs, and *Sarah Kennel*, associate curator, department of photographs, National Gallery of Art.

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt, Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc, and Instagram at <http://instagram.com/ngadc>.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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PRESS KIT

Press Release

Exhibition Press Release:

[In Light of the Past: 25 Years of Photography at the National Gallery of Art](#)

May 3–July 26, 2015

Exhibition Press Release:

[The Memory of Time: Contemporary Photographs at the National Gallery of Art, Acquired with the Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund](#)

May 3–September 7, 2015

Exhibition Press Release (coming soon):

Celebrating Photography at the National Gallery of Art: Recent Gifts

November 1, 2015–February 28, 2016

Questions from members of the media may be directed to the Department of Communications at (202) 842-6353 or pressinfo@nga.gov

The public may call (202) 737-4215 or visit www.nga.gov for more information about the **National Gallery of Art**.

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