

#12 THE CLASSIC

AUTUMN 2024

A print and digital magazine about classic photography

PARIS PHOTO

MUUS COLLECTION - The Larry Fink Archive

CASA MUSEO - Photography, Furniture and Sculpture

MALCOLM DANIEL - Photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

THE RESEARCHERS



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Sasha Belgrave

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Cover: **Larry Fink**. *George Plimpton and Models, Elaine's, New York, NY, January 1999*,
gelatin silver print. Courtesy MUUS Collection.

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© The Estate of Dan Budnik, Jasper Johns – with 'Target with Plaster Casts,' Ernst Haas studio, East 71st Street, New York, 1958



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From the editor

Our magazine has featured quite a few museums over the years, including the Victoria & Albert Museum, J. Paul Getty Museum, and Musée du Quai Branly.

In this issue, we talk to Malcolm Daniel at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Ettore Molinaro, due to open Casa Museo in Milan next spring. It's the first time we have featured a completely new museum, in this case, a live-in museum, shared by Molinaro and his wife Rossella Colombari.

There are also lengthy interviews with Michael W. Sonnenfeldt and Richard Grosbard of MUUS Collection and Robert Muir, Rachel Wetzels, Michael Greisman and Sasha Belgrave each discuss one of their research projects.

On the subject of research. In issue 5, I interviewed conservator Paul Messier and one of the topics we discussed was the monumental effort he put in to get to grips with the Lewis Hine scandal that shook the photography world at the end of the 1990s. Messier's scientific analysis proved that a large number of vintage Hine prints were in fact recent prints. His work also provided a useful tool for trade and aficionados alike, for determining the age of prints, that is, if they were printed before or after 1950 when manufacturers of photographic papers began adding optical brightening agents, causing prints to fluoresce when exposed to a blacklight.

Messier had assembled a vast collection of over 7000 photographic papers to carry out his analysis, dubbed The Paper Reference Collection, since acquired by Lens Media Lab at Yale. On 12 August this year, Messier and the Lens Media Lab held a symposium in New Haven, entitled *From Darkroom to Data: New Insights into the Material History of Photography*, and unveiled *Paperbase*, an interactive visual platform making it easy to explore and analyse the collection.

You will find an article about *Paperbase* on The Classic Platform, our online resource, as well as the first three interviews in a new series, *The Next Generation in Classic Photography* and *Heat and Dust – Captain Linnaeus Tripe's views of Burma*, an article about the prints held by Hulton|Archive, written by the archive's Vice President Matthew Butson.

Michael Diemar
Editor-in-chief

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Kansuke Yamamoto, *The Desert's Nest*, 1956, unique vintage print, 15.9 x 25 cm © Kansuke Yamamoto

山本悍右 KANSUKE YAMAMOTO | 瑛九 Ei-Q

London Exhibition - Unique Vintage Works

4 December 2024 - 24 January 2025
10 Portland Road | London | W11 4LA

Paris Photo

7 – 10 November 2024
Stand B41 | Grand Palais | Paris

This November at Paris Photo, Michael Hoppen will present a rare group of vintage prints illustrating the international influence of Surrealism on photography. Upholding the gallery's longstanding commitment to Japan, the presentation will spotlight works by Kansuke Yamamoto and Ei-Q, who began exploring photography's Surrealist potential during the 1930s. An illustrated catalogue dedicated to Yamamoto's oeuvre will be published alongside an exhibition at the gallery in London this November, celebrating the divergent visions of these pre-war pioneers.

THE CLASSIC Platform

An online resource

Recent uploads include

Paperbase: Visualizing Material History of Black and White Paper

By Damon Crockett, AI Engineer, Lens Media Lab and
Paul Messier, Director, Lens Media Lab

The Next Generation in Classic Photography – Kate Hershkowitz

By Michael Diemar

The Next Generation in Classic Photography – Wouter Lambrechts

By Michael Diemar

Heat and Dust – Captain Linnaeus Tripe's views of Burma

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ELSEWHERE DURING PARIS PHOTO...



Barbara Crane. *Whole Roll: Albanian Soccer Players*, gelatin silver print, 1975.
Collection Pavel and Melanie Plaksin. © Barbara B. Crane Trust © DR.

Barbara Crane at Centre Pompidou

American photographer Barbara Crane (1929-1919) was the creator of a plural body of work, consistently exploring form and photographic techniques; gelatin-silver and digital prints, Polaroid instant prints, photographic transfers, platinum-palladium prints, colour, black and white, etc.

For the series *Whole Roll* (1974-78), she divided entire rolls of exposed 35 mm films into strips, and placed them in an enlarger, shaping a new visual story in the process.

The exhibition, produced in partnership with the Barbara B. Crane Trust, focuses on the first 25 years of the artist's career, featuring hundreds of works, many of them never exhibited before.

Runs until 6 January 2025

Place Georges-Pompidou
75004 Paris

Johannes Faber in the Marais

In the last few years, Viennese gallerist Johannes Faber opted out of Paris Photo, choosing instead to exhibit at Galerie David Guiraud in the Marais district of Paris. Faber explains, "It was a gamble of course to move from the fair but the venture has proved to be very successful and I have had very good results."

Faber started out in 1973 as a photography collector and self-taught photographer, and in 1983, opened his gallery. "The emphasis is on Austrian and Czech photographers such as Heinrich Kühn, Rudolf Koppitz, Josef Sudek and Frantisek Drtikol, as well as European and American masters including Edward Weston, Irving Penn, and Man Ray."

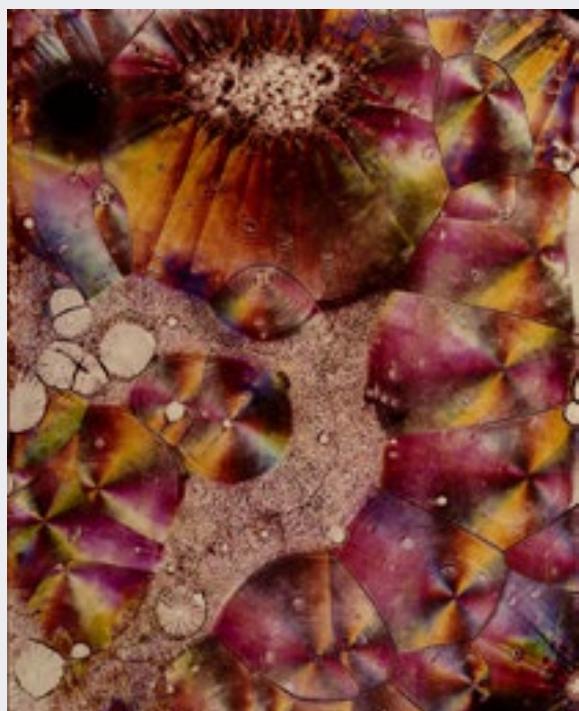
The exhibition at Galerie David Guirard is called *Classic and Modern Vintage Photographs* and includes important works by Otto Steinert, Joel-Peter Witkin, Margaret Bourke-White, Horst P. Horst, and many others.

4-11 November

Classic and Modern Vintage Photographs
Galerie David Guiraud
5 rue du Perche, 75003 Paris



Horst P. Horst. *End of the Party, Rome, 1952*, vintage gelatin silver print.
Courtesy Galerie Johannes Faber.



André Le Manchec. Untitled, gelatin silver print, 1970.
Courtesy of Photo Discovery.

André le Manchec at Photo Discovery – The Place

Bruno Tartarin, publisher of *The Classic*, is showing at Paris Photo for the first time this year. He is also presenting an exhibition of works by a hitherto overlooked artist at his Parisian gallery. Born in Bretagne, André le Manchec (1915-1987), discovered photography while serving in the army during the Second World War as part of a reconnaissance squadron alongside Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. He soon moved away from the rigid framework of military photography and into the realm of visual experimentation.

In the 1970s, parallel to his work at the French Agfa-Gevaert laboratory in Rueil-Malmaison, he invented a creative photographic technique he called "Pictograph".

He obtained his abstract, coloured images using colourless chemicals, glues or varnishes, cast onto a glass plate and transposed onto Agfacolor paper using an enlarger.

Runs until 28 November

Photo Discovery – The Place
4 Galerie Vivienne
75002 Paris

Yasuhiro Ishimoto at Le Bal

Minor White once described him as "a visual bilingualist". Yasuhiro Ishimoto was born to Japanese parents in 1921 in San Francisco, then raised in Japan until the age of 17, returning to the United States in 1939. Interned in the camps for Japanese Americans after the attack on Pearl Harbor, he was released and joined the Institute of Design in Chicago in 1948. Five years later, he returned to Japan and became a major figure on the Japanese photographic scene in the 1950s and 1960s. During the same period, he pioneered new ways of conceptualizing the photo book with the publication of one of the most important books in the history of Japanese photography: *Someday, Somewhere* (1958). The exhibition focuses on his early work and includes 169 images of Chicago and Japan.

Runs until 22 December

Yasuhiro Ishimoto – Lines and Bodies
Le Bal
6 Impasse de la Défense
75018 Paris



Yasuhiro Ishimoto. *Chicago, Beach*, gelatin silver print, 1948-1952
© Kochi Prefecture, Ishimoto Yasuhiro Photo Center.



Barnabé Moinard was interviewed on The Classic Platform in March this year.

theclassicphotomag.com/the-next-generation-in-classic-photography-barnabe-moinard

24.39 – The Paris tabletop fair under management

In recent years, Bruno Tartarin's Photo Discovery Fair, held during Paris Photo, has been a magnet for aficionados of classic photography from all over the world. Tartarin is now handing over the reins to the Parisian vintage dealer Barnabé Moinard, who explains.

– The ambition is to build on what Bruno has developed over the years and to ensure the longevity of the fair. I have given it a new name, for clarity and to give a certain impetus to the fair. 24-39 probably sounds like a code but I wanted the name to evoke the year 1839 when photography was launched and also to be a reminder of the upcoming bicentennial of photography.

The concept of the fair will not change.

– 24.39 will remain a tabletop fair, dedicated to classic and modern photography, from daguerreotypes to snapshots. It will continue to be a meeting place for professionals, as well as a wider audience. The change of management is also an opportunity to raise the game. Every year the fair attracts new visitors but even so, we need to expand our clientele and find new ways to invigorate the market. I am convinced that people cannot desire what they do not know so we need to be precise and ambitious, improve the presentation, with well-organised and clear tables with black tablecloths. We are exhibiting during Paris Photo so we should be betting on quality over quantity. I think the future of 24.34 lies in T.S. Eliot's words, "mixing memory and desire".



Keystone. 14th November 1975. Stunt driver Keith "T-Bone" Bowen jumps thirteen parked cars at Thruxton Racecourse, near Andover, and breaks the world record. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy Barnabé Moinard.



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August Sander at Paris Photo & a new App to engage with the arts

People of the 20th Century stands as one of the towering achievements in the history of photography. Its maker, August Sander (1876 – 1964) never got to see an exhibition of all the images in the project. At this year's edition of Paris Photo, visitors will be able to peruse all 619 images at the stand of Cologne-based gallerist Julian Sander, the photographer's great-grandson, who explains.

– It's the first time this body of work will be exhibited in Europe. This is a special year for Paris Photo as it returns to the Grand Palais. I wanted to do a presentation worthy of that. There are other reasons as well. We are currently engaged in a societal discussion about who and what we are. The last decades have seen the rise of societal generalisations. People react more to the group identity they assign to a person than to the person themselves. August's project, and specifically my curation thereof, represents a challenge to that manner of thinking.

Julian Sander describes *People of the 20th Century* as a conceptual project that formulated German society as a structure of portfolios based on a selection of identities.

– On the surface, it would appear that all subgroups are somehow represented. Looking closer, you will see that people appear in more than one group, like Erich Sander or Raoul Hausmann. You will also find figures within groups that agitate the homogeneity of the group. Consider that August put pictures of the blind reading into this project. It represents a contradiction in the mindset of that time and does so to this day.

The exhibition at Paris Photo is accompanied by a catalogue, with illuminating texts by Julian Sander himself and David Company. But that's not all. Julian Sander has long been preoccupied with technology's potential for building people's engagement with the arts. In February 2022, he launched The August Sander 10K Project, giving away NFTs of August Sander contact sheets for free. For Paris Photo, he is launching a mobile App, Collektion, enabling visitors to dig deeper into the exhibition.

– Collektion is a software I have been working on for nearly a decade. When I started my gallery, I needed an inventory management system, particularly for the extensive holdings of vintage work my father had amassed over his career. None of the systems I tried could capture all the information. Art is not just a simple list of objects in storage. Over time, it interacts with the evolving dynamic of the gallery and the broader flow of art history itself. I teamed up with two visionary partners to expand the software with plans to integrate AI for data management and blockchain technology for a viable integration of Certificates of Authenticity as well as long-term storage for cultural knowledge.



Collektion has a wide range of uses.

– First off, it's useful for art world explorers and art world guides. The explorers are the people who want to experience the arts foremost physically. The guides are the people who curate exhibitions, be it fairs, gallery shows, or artists' studio visits.

It's also perfect for galleries. Collektion is interoperable with any available inventory system, be it an Excel sheet or one of the big software packages with the word "Art" in it. As a gallerist, I curate the exhibitions very intentionally. They are a vital part of my function as a guide for my clients and visitors. Collektion makes it possible to keep that intent intact, allow visitors to access information, but also give them the show the way the curator intended. With Collektion, people can preview an exhibition if they can't see it in person, and it can archive an exhibition so that it can be relived with the intended curation.

www.COLLEKTION.com

Louis Stettner – Defying categorisation



Louis Stettner. *Boulevard de Clichy, Paris, 1951*, gelatin silver print. © Louis Stettner Estate.

A major new monograph on Louis Stettner (1922–2016), charts his work from the early days in New York and Paris, through to his later use of colour photography, before ending with his final meditations on the landscape of Les Alpilles. Born in Brooklyn, Louis Stettner acquired his first camera as a young teenager and quickly made a name for himself in New York’s famous Photo League.

He served as a combat photographer in World War II, and the experience of fighting fascism left him with a lasting belief in the fundamental humanity of the common man. After the war, Stettner arrived in Paris in 1947, intending to visit for three weeks, but ultimately stayed for five years, studying cinematography on a G.I. Bill. During this time, he forged a lasting relationship with Brassai, the city, and its people. Stettner’s work defies categorisation, containing elements of both the New York street photography aesthetic and the lyrical humanism of the French tradition.

A lifelong Marxist, Stettner celebrated the working class and Walt Whitman and the inner humanity that constantly drew him to the lives of ordinary men and women.

Michael Hulett, of Hulett Collection, Tulsa, Oklahoma, has been the US representative of the Louis Stettner Estate since 2022. Hulett explains,

“I’ve always felt a kindred spirit connection with Louis and his work. He blurred the lines between art and street photography and spent a lifetime redefining his artistry. On top of that, my first major photographic purchase was a Louis Stettner print. It set me on my current professional path so I’ll always feel compelled to nurture his legacy. *Boulevard de Clichy* is a quintessential example of the blurred line between Louis’ sensibility for photojournalism and his artistic eye. At first, it would seem as if everything in this image is mirrored but on second glance, you realise the man with his back to the camera and the reflected man in the window are two separate people. *C’est magnifique!*”

Louis Stettner is published by **Thames & Hudson**
in collaboration with **Fundación MAPFRE**.

Binia Bill – Images & Fragments at Fotostiftung Schweiz

After training as a concert cellist, Binia Bill (1904-1988) attended the photography class given by Lucia Moholy at Berlin's Itten School in 1930 and worked as a freelance photographer in Zurich. In 1931, she married the architect and artist Max Bill. To earn a living, the couple worked together on advertising commissions for which she produced the images while he designed the typography and layout. In the years that followed, Binia Bill created a remarkable photographic oeuvre: Her portraits and still lifes are characterised by a clear visual language that is related to the aesthetics of the "Neues Sehen" movement. When she became a mother in 1942, Binia Bill gave up photography, her oeuvre falling into oblivion. What remains of it not only bears witness to her extraordinary creativity but also gives her an important place in the history of photography.

Runs until 26 January 2025

Fotostiftung Schweiz
Grüssenstrasse 45
8400 Winterthur

Binia Bill. Untitled, circa 1933. © Jakob bill / Fotostiftung Schweiz.



Peter Rose Pulham. Untitled, gelatin silver print, circa 1940.

Out of this World Surreal & Fantastic Art in Photography

In honour of the 100th anniversary of Surrealism and the publication of the movement's first manifesto, Keith de Lellis Gallery presents a large exhibition of vintage photographs by some of the leading figures of the movement along with some lesser-known artists that were contributing to the art of surrealism. Among the artists are George Platt Lynes, Herbert Matter, Peter Rose Pulham, Edward Quigley, Percy Rainford, Cecil Beaton, Gordon Coster and Florence Homolka.

Keith de Lellis explains, "Surrealism permeated the culture in portrait photography, advertising photography, fashion photography, dance photography and almost any other form of photography that permitted the artist the leeway to experiment with images that piqued their imagination."

Runs until 15 November

Keith de Lellis Gallery
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Mexico, Day of the Dead. Vintage silver print, 1934.
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THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALLERY'S ONLINE ARCHIVE

By Mary Pelletier



Climb the stairs to any level in The Photographers' Gallery, and you'll encounter Elliott Erwitt, Shirley Baker, William Klein, Brian Griffin, David Bailey, Saul Leiter, Florence Henri, Manuel Álvarez Bravo... the list goes on. Each photographer is a part of this London institution's history. Having exhibited there in the years since its founding in 1971, their exhibition posters now have a permanent place lining the stairs. It's a time capsule that warrants lingering between current exhibitions, thinking about the many great photographers who have contributed to the history of the UK's first gallery dedicated to the medium of photography.

Earlier this year, The Photographers' Gallery announced the launch of its online archive, letting users and visitors delve into the institution's history beyond the confines of photography; instead, the archive serves as a growing record of its institutional history through images, correspondence, documents, plans, posters, audio recordings and more. TPG Archivist Kathryn Tollervey took a break from digitising to explain how the archive works.

The Photographers' Gallery was established in 1971 by Sue Davies, its first Director. The institution is just over 50 years old. Was there always an idea that the gallery would have an archive, or has this developed over the years?

– TPG amassed a broad selection of material about its founding and programmes from the start. It was originally housed at the gallery's original home, 5 Great Newport Street, and in offsite storage. In 2009, when staff moved into temporary office premises for 18 months as our new Ramillies Street home was being refurbished, this material started to be reviewed, with the support of a student internship. The gallery also received a grant from The Pilgrim Trust to digitise recorded talks on reel-to-reel tapes. In 2012, the archive was given a dedicated space on the 3rd floor at the current site at Ramillies Street. The value of the archive has increased substantially over the last few years and is now recognised as a significant element of TPG's larger charitable objectives and vision, including an ambitious digital strategy. This includes the commitment to increase the accessibility and engagement of our collection to the widest possible audience by creating a visually engaging online catalogue of the archive's material.

What does the archive hold, and how is the material organised?

– The archive documents the institutional history and artistic programmes of TPG from its founding documents prior to the first exhibition in 1971 to the present day. Our collections consist of an abundance of physical and, increasingly, digital material. These two areas are interlinked and continue to inform each other. They are also the predominant focus of research requests, from academic to general public enquiries. The Institutional History Collection is made up of founding documents, strategic documents and mission statements, documentation related to TPG's audiences, staff and trustees, director/trustee/annual reports and minutes from 1971 to the present day, architectural plans and documentation, past and present locations of TPG, director's correspondences, talks, images, etc. There is also the Sue Davies Collection which contains diaries (1970-1999), correspondence and imagery.

Left. Make-Believe poster, 1991. © The Photographers' Gallery, the artist, the designer. The Photographers' Gallery Bookshop catalogue 1986.

Right. Sue Davies outside 8 Great Newport Street, 1977. © Mayotte Magnus. Courtesy The Photographers' Gallery.



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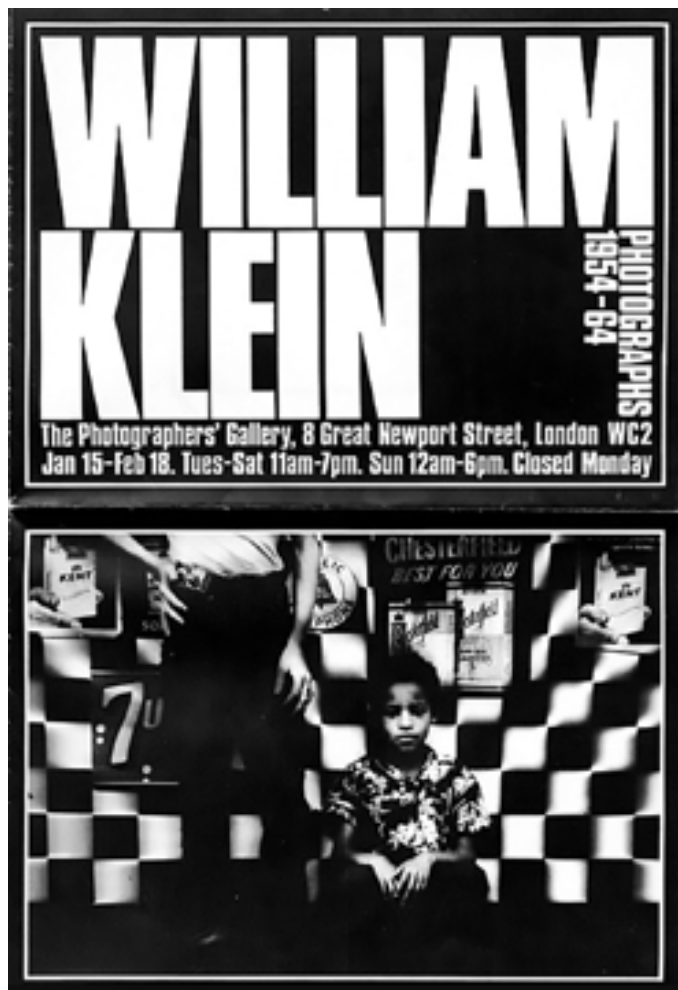
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The Photographers' Gallery

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The other part is the Programme History Collection. It contains proposals submitted by photographers/artists and curators, correspondence and contract agreements with artists, galleries and lenders, promotional materials such as press releases, images and press cuttings, communication material such as wall texts, video and interviews. There are visitor comment books and audience responses, curator and artist interviews, both audio and film, exhibition trailers and social media assets, photographs of openings, events and exhibition installations, private view invitations, exhibition posters, publications and leaflets, and other ephemera. We also have audio recordings of talks by a range of photographers and historians taking place at the gallery from the 1970s onwards.

The digital archive was launched in early 2024. Why was the physical archive brought into the digital realm?

– At the end of 2022, TPG embarked on the implementation of a digital asset management system to house all the material within the archive. The digital archive is accessible through a portal on TPG's main website. Creating an accessible, visually engaging and intuitive online catalogue increases the reach and impact of the collection enabling a transparent and seamless experience for our audiences. TPG is one of the few UK

galleries that will have its exhibition and institutional history searchable through its website. We hope that the archive helps to tell the story of The Photographers' Gallery's rich and varied history and supports future learning about photography, how it is exhibited, contextualised and discussed.

What are your plans for collaborating with other archival initiatives outside, both local and further afield? I know that you've been working on the Fast Forward/Enter the Archive project.

– The Using History partnership programme with Fast Forward/UCA enabled TPG to undertake valuable research related to the representation and inclusion of women* within its exhibition and public programmes, as well as the senior staff team from 1971 to 2023. The findings from Using History have enabled us to reflect on how we capture data from our programmes. We are particularly interested in how this data can inform our equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) values, ensuring equal access, representation and opportunities for under-represented groups within our workforce, collaborators, participants and audiences. This research will play a key role in informing our programme strategy and enables us to back up our ideas with data. From 2024 onwards The Photographers' Gallery is committed to having a gender-balanced programme, ensuring at least one solo exhibition by a woman photographer each year. We hope to continue to work with other archival initiatives to not only increase the reach and knowledge of the TPG archive but archives in general.

What's next for the archive now that you are online?

– To keep building on it! There's still a lot of fascinating material to be catalogued and digitised, as well as a vast amount of born-digital material. As we plan to digitise the majority of the material, we will prioritise the at-risk material and material that we hope will be of most interest to the public. We want to continue making our collection publicly accessible and to keep up with advancements in digital preservation. We also want to build new stories, from audiences through to people who have worked or shown at TPG.

As we expand the digital archive, we will reach those with a general interest in visual arts and culture, exhibition production, learning programmes, institutional archives, photographic collections, social history, local history of Soho and surrounding areas, graphic and digital design, architecture and spatial design and many more. Our aspirations for the collection are to continue developing the archive as an accessible space that showcases a broad range of contributors, including visitors who can actively contribute to TPG's archive.

And one such project is the digitisation of the audience response cards.

– These have little public visibility beyond the dates of the exhibition, a selection of which are on display during each exhibition run. This project marks a step-change in the ongoing development of the gallery's digital archive. Our exhibition response cards are an invitation to contribute personal reflections on our exhibitions and often elicit surprising and moving submissions. Digitising, cataloguing and sharing these

William Klein: Photographs 1954-64 poster.

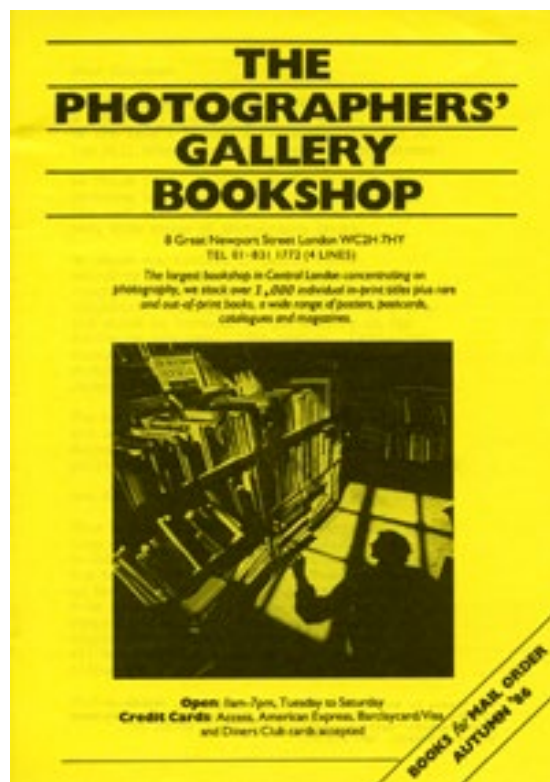
© The Photographers' Gallery, the artist, the designer 15/01/1978–18/02/1978.



responses, beyond the dates of each exhibition, further emphasises their integral value as cultural records that can sit alongside other ephemera related to the exhibitions within our archive.

The majority of our audiences are not professional artists or photographers, so in this way, the digitised cards will retain significance alongside other archival material, such as exhibition catalogues, press releases and reviews by photography and art specialists. In seeing their responses reflected through the gallery's archive, we aim to foster a culture of exchange and inclusivity. This means our audience demographic is broad – as photography is considered an accessible medium with extensive applications, and our visitors often attend exhibitions that are personally relevant to their interests and identities. Their answers give a flavour of people's different views about photography and art at a particular point in time, often addressing trends and developments in the medium, which will be useful to a range of researchers – from social historians to academics.

Access The Photographers' Gallery Archive online at:
<https://archive.thephotographersgallery.org.uk>



Left. Front cover of Out Of Fashion; Koto Bolofo; Roman Osin; A Spring Collection poster, 1989. Publisher: The Photographers' Gallery.

Top right. The Photographers' Gallery Bookshop catalogue 1986. Courtesy The Photographers' Gallery.

Bottom. The Black House poster, 1977.
 © The Photographers' Gallery, the artist, the designer.



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THE HULETT COLLECTION

thehulettcollection.com

Lawrence Schiller. Tuesday Weld, Sunset Blvd, Hollywood, 1963.
© Lawrence Schiller

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Henri Cartier-Bresson (French, 1908-2004)

New Orleans, 1947

Gelatin Silver Print, printed later

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AUCTIONS

Paris Photo

7-10 Nov.2024

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PARIS PHOTO

For its 27th edition, PARIS PHOTO, the world's leading art fair devoted to photography, returns to the Grand Palais after a three-year closure for refurbishment. It was worth the wait. The Art Nouveau masterpiece now shines in all its original splendour.

Once again, *The Classic* is an official media partner with Paris Photo, so should you need more copies of the new issue, you will find them at several distribution points, in the racks by the entrance of the fair, the kiosk, and the VIP area.

This year, Paris Photo sees the participation of 236 exhibitors, featuring 191 galleries and 45 publishers from 33 countries, with 64 first-time participants. There's an impressive programme of talks, conversations, book signings and curated fair paths.

With the newly curated sector, Voices, the expansion of Digital and Emergence sectors, the coming of new contemporary book publishers and the return of antiquarian books, Paris Photo offers a broader range of artistic projects exploring the boundaries of the medium.

Florence Bourgeois, Paris Photo Director, explains, "On this occasion, we have worked with Anna Planas, Artistic Director of Paris Photo, and the selection committee, to present a fair showcasing projects worthy of the most prestigious institutions and pushing the boundaries of the image. Once again, the enthusiasm of our galleries and publishers highlights Paris' key role in the art market. We look forward to welcoming our collectors, institutions, professionals and art lovers to the fair in November."

There's much going on outside the fair, 24.39, the satellite fair for classic photography is held at Pavillon Wagram on 9 November. There are several interesting exhibitions, including Raymond Meeks at Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson and *Science/Fiction – A Non History of Plants* at Maison Européenne de la Photographie.

The photography auction calendar is as busy as always. To keep yourself updated, visit: www.theclassicphotomag.com/the-classic-auction-calendar

Grand Palais
7-10 Nov.2024

www.parisphoto.com



STEPHEN DAITER GALLERY

Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago, is showing portraiture, from straight-portraits such as Dawoud Bet's *Street Portraits* project, to more direct self-portraits by LaToya Ruby Frazier in the *Notion of Family*, as well as Annie Wang photographing her and her son in *Me and My Son are The Same Height*. Also featured are much more experimental takes on the portrait including Barbara Blondeau's nude montages of herself, and David Lebe's "Light line drawings." Other artists include Robert Frank, Peter Hujar, Barbara Blondeau, Barbara Crane and David Heath.

David Lebe. *Angelo On The Roof 1979*, gelatin silver photograph. Copyright David Lebe, courtesy of Stephen Daiter Gallery.

ATLAS GALLERY

Atlas Gallery, London, is presenting a solo show of Richard Caldicott, showcasing a variety of works from his career, with early photographs from the late 90's to new works, shown for the first time. Visual elegance is carried through his practice from minimalistic black and white photograms to the vibrant and complex *Constructions* series. The chosen works illustrate the sustained innovation and experimentation within Caldicott's unique personal aesthetic.

Richard Caldicott. *Untitled #68*, C-type print, 1999. Courtesy of Atlas Gallery.

LUNN LTD. & BOOGIE WOOGIE PHOTOGRAPHY

Lunn Ltd., New York/Paris, and Boogie Woogie Photography (Hong Kong) presents a solo exhibition with Japanese artist Takeshi Shikama. Self-taught, having embraced photography late in life, Shikama favours the platinum/palladium process to sublimate his portraits of nature elements with the urban construct. His choice of artisanal paper, composed of Gampi fibers, reinforces the link he experiences with his subjects.

Takeshi Shikama. *Urban Forest, Central Park, NY N°40*/platinum palladium print on Gampi paper. Copyright Takeshi Shikama. Courtesy of Lunn Ltd and Boogie Woogie Photography.



GALERIE BAUDOIN LEBON & GALERIE P

Galerie Baudoin Lebon, Paris, and Galerie P, Oostende, are sharing a stand to present *Que d'eau que d'eau – a photographic journey through the theme of the aquatic landscape*. There are three main themes; capturing reality, staging and symbolism. Photographers include Gustave Le Gray, Charles Marville, Lisette Model, Lynn Davies, Joel-Peter Witkin, Bart Ramakers and Karel Mus.

Joel-Peter Witkin. *Imperfect Thirst*, *New Mexico*, gelatin silver print, 2016.
© Joel-Peter Witkin – Baudoin Lebon.

HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY

Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York, is showing a wide range of photographers, including works by Edward Burtynsky, Edward Weston Brassai, Josef Sudek, Ray K. Metzker, Alfred Stieglitz, Dennis Stock, Sarah Moon, Nadav Kander, Charles Mary Ellen Mark, and Saul Leiter. Among the many highlights is an important group of prints by Charles Jones. Charles Jones (1866-1959) remains one of photography's mystery figures. Born in Wolverhampton, he created a prodigious and concentrated body of work, of vegetables, fruits and flowers.

Charles Jones. *Tomato Ailsa Craig*, gold-toned gelatin silver print. © Estate of Charles Jones, courtesy of Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York.

ROLF ART

The presentation of Rolf Art, Buenos Aires, aims to explore the biopolitical dimensions of Latin American territory, delving into the multiple possibilities and the boundaries of photography. The project presents a dialogue between two Latin American artists: Roberto Huarcaya, Peru, and Santiago Porter, Argentina. Huarcaya's recent monumental photograms from his series *Amazogramas* pay homage to the Amazon Rainforest through a non-instrumental & immersive perspective; where the crossroad of photography, installation, and land art emerges, challenging our approach to (re)presenting the environment.

Roberto Huarcaya. *Amazograma II*, photogram on Ilford multigrade pearl RC paper, 2014. Courtesy of Rolf Art.



EINSPACH

Einspach, Budapest, is showing a solo exhibition with Tamas Dezsö. In addition to human, non-human and vegetal identity, Tamas Dezsö's works focus on a human being's relationship to the environment and to nature, that is to the non-human world. With theoretical background and research, he highlights the questions and problems which the ecological crisis and the advancing climate catastrophe, by applying varied art forms and media, including photographs, statues, kinetic works and installations.

Tamas Dezsö. *inderwelt*, 2022, triptych with convex oval mirror made from a piece of the Campo del Cielo meteorite, photographs taken of 19th century fairyfly (Mymaridae) microscope slides, archival pigment prints on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Baryta paper. Courtesy of Einspach.

IBASHO & IN-DEPENDANCE

IBASHO, Antwerp, specialises in photography related to Japan. This year, gallerists Martijn van Pieterse and Annemarie Zethof opened a second gallery in Antwerp, IN-DEPENDANCE, focused on European photography. Both galleries are showing at the fair. IN-DEPENDANCE is showing Anton Kusters' *The Blue Skies Project*. Over a six-year period, Kusters researched and photographed a blue sky at every former Nazi concentration camp and killing centre across Europe, camps that existed from 1933 to 1945 in a system of imprisonment, forced labour, and murder.

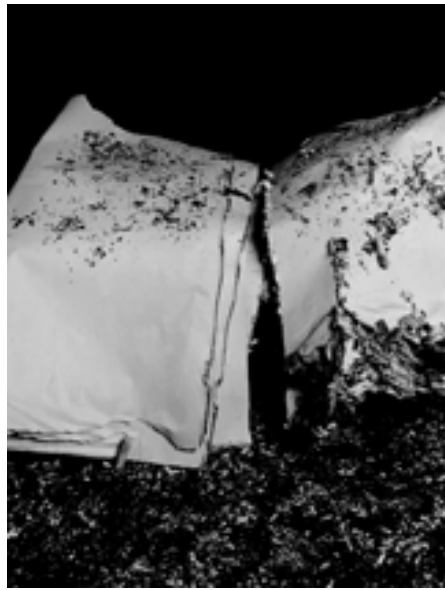
Anton Kusters. *The Blue Skies Project* – *The Redistribution* 0026, 2016.

Copyright Anton Kusters, courtesy IN-DEPENDANCE by IBASHO.

GALLERY FIFTY ONE

Gallery Fifty One, Antwerp, celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, with a 50 square meter booth. One section is dedicated to a presentation of works by Saul Leiter, including a unique collection of postcard-sized prints made by Leiter in the 1970s, another to studio work by Jacques Sonck. Other artists include Harry Gruyaert, Robert Frank, Michael Wolf, and Jan Yoors.

Jacques Sonck. *Untitled*, Knokke, gelatin silver print, 1991. Courtesy of Gallery Fifty One.



GILLES PEYROULET & CIE

Gilles Peyroulet & Cie, Paris, marks the return to Grand Palais with a presentation named *Paris est une fête*, showcasing vintage prints from 1920-1940, by the photographers who came to Paris and started to document the city with the help of the new photographic technology. Among the many names are Marcel Bovis, Germaine Krull, Daniel Masclet, Jean Moral, Eli Lotar and Robert-Hubert Payelle.

Germaine Krull. *Publicité, Paris*, gelatin silver print 1928. Courtesy Gilles Peyroulet & Cie.

MIYAKO YOSHINAGA GALLERY

Miyako Yoshinaga Gallery, New York, is pairing Japanese photographer Hitoshi Fugo with Korean photographer Joo Myung Duck. Fugo embarked on his series *KAMI* in 2001. He experimentally records each destructive stage of a roll of paper half-burned in a fire and cut with a chainsaw. The detailed textures and irregular shapes are carefully staged despite the velocity of the violence. The series delves into multifaceted expressions of beauty and other essentials underlying objects whose practicality and identity are entirely dismantled.

Hitoshi Fugo. *KAMI 14*, 2001, gelatin silver print, printed in 2023. © Hitoshi Fugo, Courtesy Miyako Yoshinaga Gallery, New York.

LUMIÈRE DES ROSES

Lumière des Roses, Montreuil, focuses on unique photographs, vernacular images by unknown names as well as rarities by the leading masters. The gallery has built up a loyal following of collectors who dash to their stand as soon as the doors have opened. As Philippe Jacquier explains, "That's the game for us. There's no time to think about it, our clients have to buy immediately."

Unknown photographer. *Roller skate racing, England*, gelatin silver print, circa 1930.

Courtesy of Lumière des Roses.



HANS P. KRAUS, JR. INC.

Hans P. Kraus, Jr. Inc., New York, is showing *Drawn with Light*, featuring still life and architecture in early British and French photographs. It recognises Lacock Abbey, Talbot's ancestral home, as the birthplace of photography on paper. The grounds, architectural elements and interiors of the Abbey often provided the subject or the background of Talbot's first experiments and successes. Other photographers include Hippolyte Bayard, Rev. George Bridges, B. B. Turner, Roger Fenton, Julia Margaret Cameron, Charles Nègre, Gustave Le Gray and Nadar. Also featured will be some of the earliest photomechanical prints by Talbot, Hippolyte Fizeau, Choiselat & Ratel and others.

William Henry Fox Talbot. *The Ladder*, salt print from a calotype negative, 1844.
Courtesy of Hans P. Kraus, Jr. Inc.

ENGLAND & CO

England & Co, London, is focused on images relating to Performance and Conceptual Art from the 1970s and '80s by artists who used photography to bring material presence or to document their ephemeral, time-based events and concepts. The "male gaze" is explored in works by the British Conceptual artist, James Collins (1939-2021). In his series *dialogue-as-portrait*, the women who appear in his photographs vary, while all the male images are self-portraits of Collins. As a review in *Art Forum* pointed out in 1977, in his *Watching* series, Collins created double portraits of male-female encounters that convey a sense of isolation, intimacy, and tension with an erotic charge. Other artists include Li Yuan-Chia, Silvia Ziranek, Anne Bean, David Thorp and Hannah O'Shea.

James Collins. *Untitled 1977*. ©England and Co.

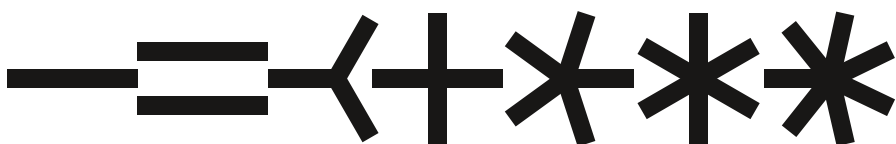
MICHAEL HOPPEN

Michael Hoppen, London, is showing a wide range of artists, among them, Guy Bourdin, Ei-Q, László Moholy-Nagy, Duchenne de Boulogne, Kansuke Yamamoto and Dora Maar. The latter made a series of striking photomontages in the mid-1930s, using both found imagery and her own photographs, such as the 1932 image of boys playing on a street in Madrid, later turned into one of the elements in *Le Simulateur*, created in 1936.

Dora Maar. *À l'origine du Simulateur, Madrid, 1932*, gelatin silver print. Courtesy Michael Hoppen.

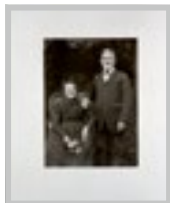
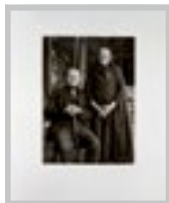
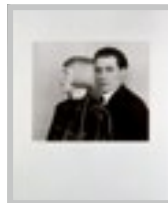
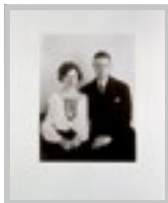
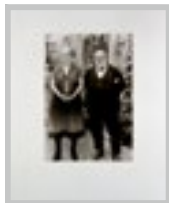
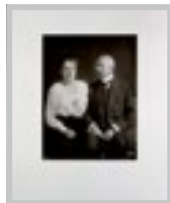
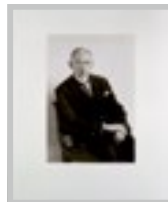
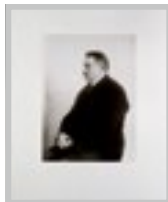
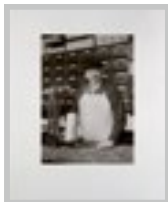
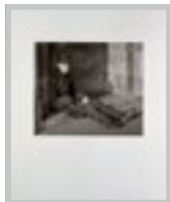
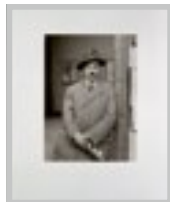
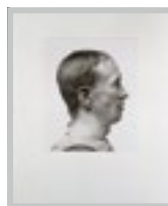
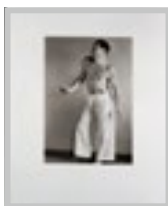


August Sander
People of the 20th Century

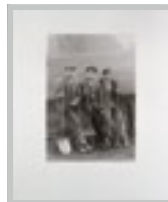
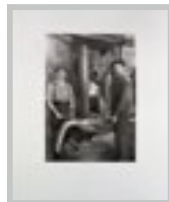
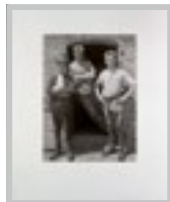
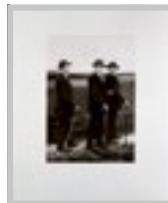




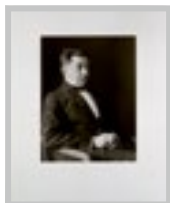
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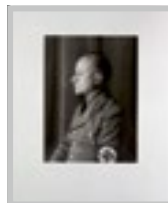
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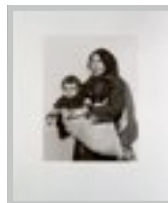
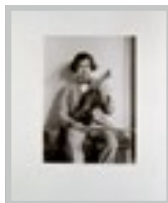
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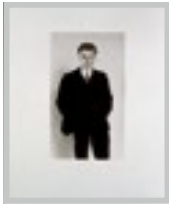
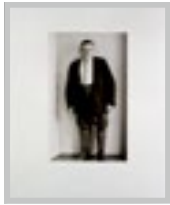
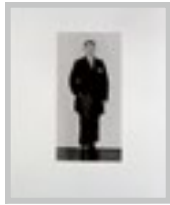
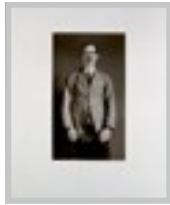
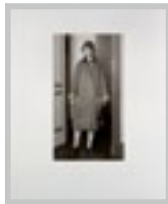
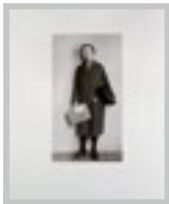
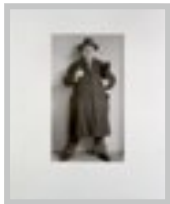
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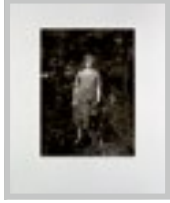
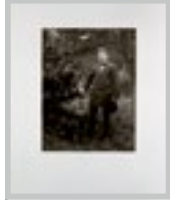
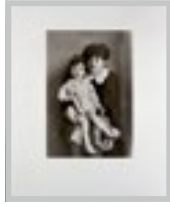
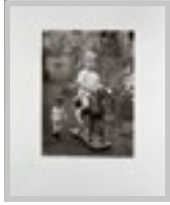
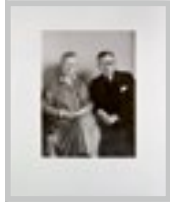
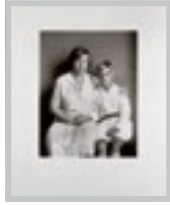




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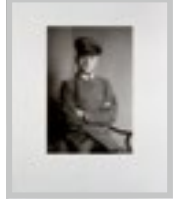
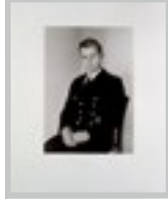
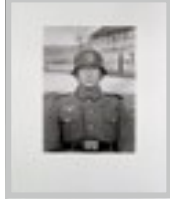
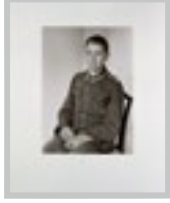
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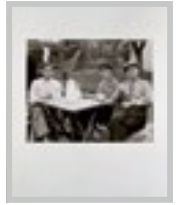
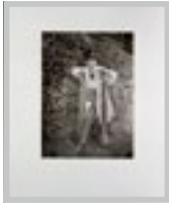
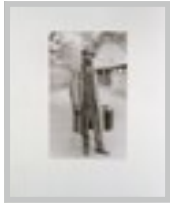
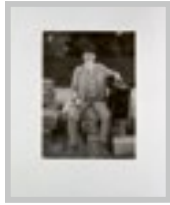
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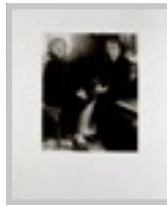
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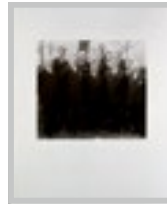
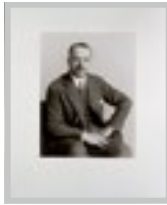
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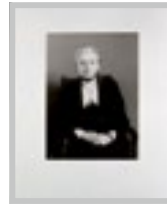
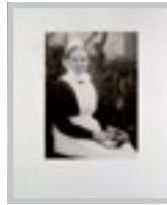
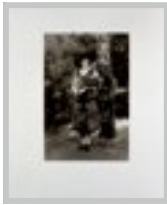
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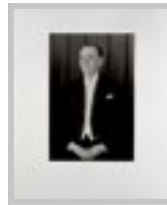
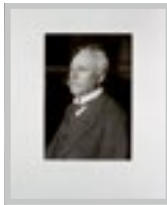
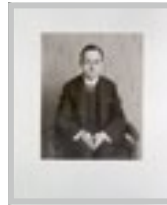
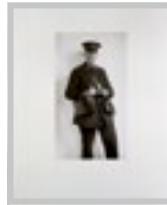
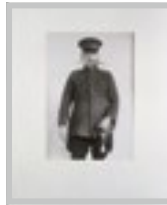
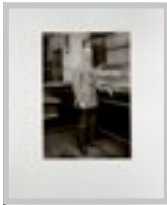
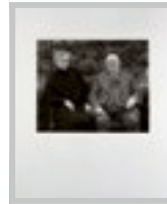
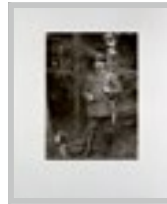
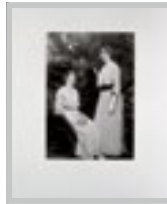
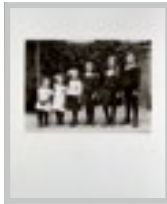
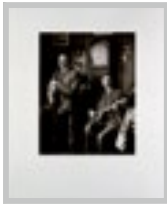
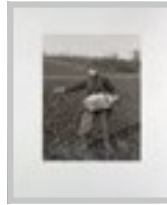
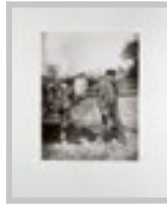
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BY MICHAEL DIEMAR

MUUS Larry Fink exhibition COLLECTION at Paris Photo

The highlight of the public programme at Paris Photo this year is an exhibition of works by one of the most important and certainly most individual American photographers of the postwar era, Larry Fink (1941-2023). *Sensual Empathy* as it's titled, is curated by Lucy Sante and presented by MUUS Collection.

MUUS Collection acquired the Larry Fink estate earlier in the year and the team is still in the very early stages of getting to grips with all its contents, as founder and owner Michael W. Sonnenfeldt explained: "Larry Fink kept his vast archive in various locations on his farm in Martins Creek in Pennsylvania. We are dealing with an enormous amount of material. To give you an idea of the size, it took three 30 feet trucks to pick up all the boxes."

MUUS Collection will be familiar to the Paris Photo audience by now. It presented its first exhibition at the fair in 2021, *Deborah Turbeville: Passport*, with unearthed works from the estate. It was followed in 2022 by an exhibition of early work by Rosalind Fox Solomon, and last year, MUUS Collection showed a selection of Fred W. McDarrah's images of the struggle for LGBTQ+ rights, starting with the Stonewall Inn Uprising in New York in 1969. Elsewhere, it presents exhibitions at AIPAD's The Photography Show, as well as museums and galleries around the world.

Larry Fink. *A Sabatine Christmas, Martins Creek, PA, December 1983*, gelatin silver print. ©Larry Fink/MUUS.



Richard Grosbard left, with Michael W. Sonnenfeldt
Courtesy of MUUS Collection

The story of the MUUS Collection is fascinating, as my conversation with Michael W. Sonnenfeldt reveals. Later on, I spoke to Richard Grosbard about his contributions to the collection.

Sonnenfeldt describes MUUS Collection's modus operandi as "truly unique". It is. In the last few years, the collection has exclusively focused on acquiring estates and whole archives, exactly what most museums and collections shy away from, as they require space, investment, and above all, real commitment.

Outside the world of photography, Michael W. Sonnenfeldt has had a long career as an entrepreneur, investor, and philanthropist. In the last



25 years, he has been involved in numerous non-profit organizations focused on the environment and climate change, national security, Middle East peace, international peacekeeping, and the US/UN relationship.

MUUS Collection was officially founded in 2013. It had just opened its own facility in Tenaflly. But the story of Sonnenfeldt’s involvement with photography begins much earlier. While a student at MIT studying for his bachelor’s degree, he took a course with photographer Melissa Shook, an experience that would have a profound influence on his way of looking at photography. Later on, when his son was at Princeton University, Sonnenfeldt acted as a photographer for his sports team.

In 1989, he acquired an important album with images of Jerusalem, taken by the Scottish photographer James Graham between 1853 and 1857, which he donated to the Israel Museum in 2005. It marked the genesis of Sonnenfeldt acquiring pivotal moments in history captured by photography.



Top. **Deborah Turbeville**. *Asser Levy Bathhouse*, from the series *Bathhouse*, New York, New York, gelatin silver print, 1975. © Deborah Turbeville/MUUS.

Right. **Andre de Dienes**. *Untitled (Marilyn Monroe)*, Beverly Hills, California, gelatin silver print, 1953. © Andre de Dienes/MUUS.



In 2008, he began acquiring large portfolios, soon followed by whole estates. I asked Sonnenfeldt if he in those early years had a clear idea of how he wanted MUUS Collection to collect American archives.

– Absolutely not! It was a passion that turned into an insight. Whenever we made an acquisition, it felt like we were tapping into a unique opportunity, discovering a gold vein. At that early stage, we had no way of knowing what it even meant to take on an estate. It's taken us a decade to get a proper sense of how complex it is. The more complex an estate is, the more it meets our mission. We have the fortitude, and frankly, the excitement it takes to work with these estates.

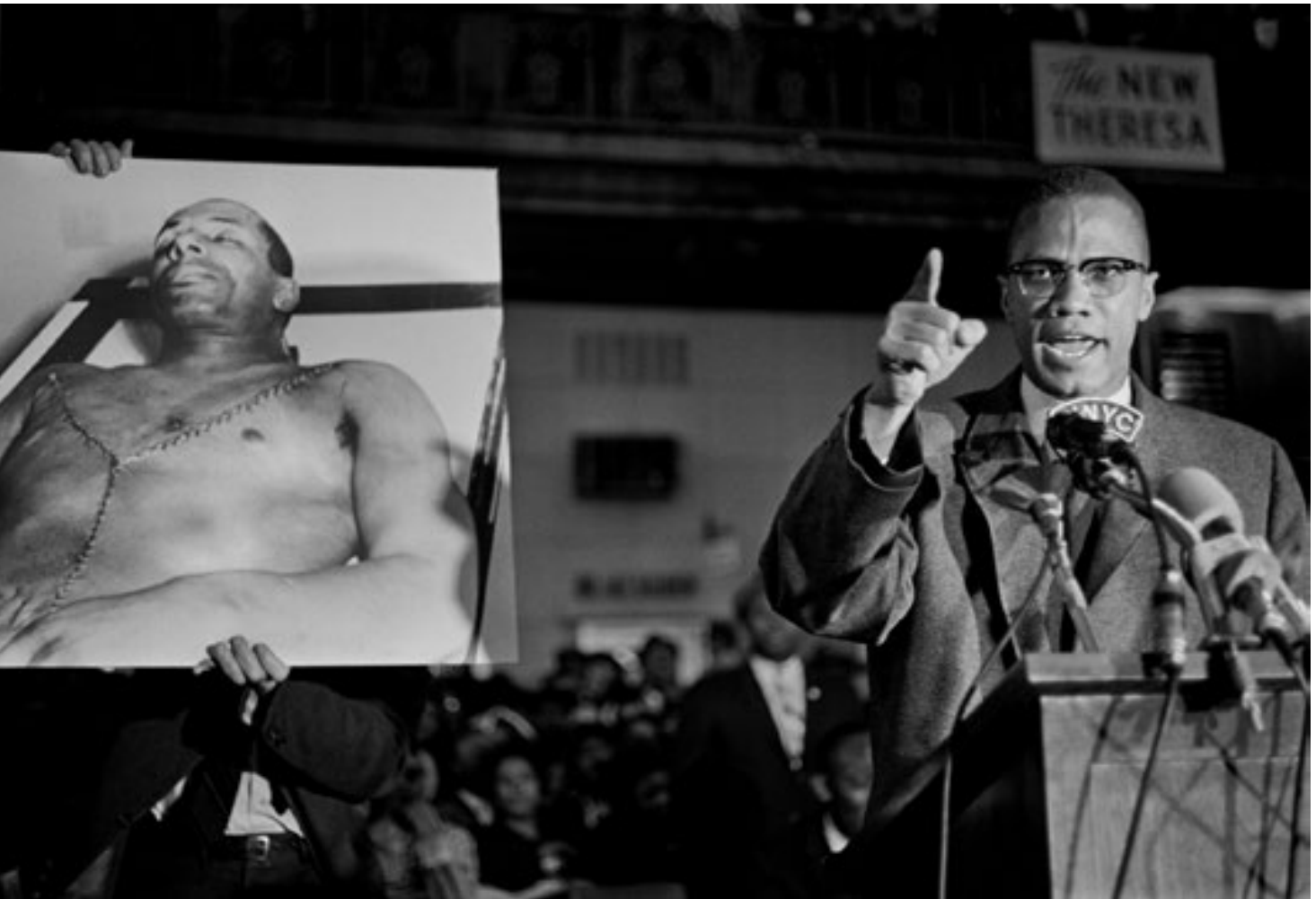
Before you started acquiring estates, you were acquiring portfolios.

– Sometimes, an artist looks to a collector to help support him or her and might sell 100 pictures or 1000 pictures for whatever reason. What we realised as we were collecting these portfolios, was that they still weren't giving a picture of an entire lifetime career. There's very little serendipity in a portfolio because an artist takes bodies of work and then extracts from them. You get a selection. That's very different from acquiring a whole estate, as we just did with Larry Fink. Many of those boxes might not have been opened in 10, 20 or 30 years, and it will take years for us to assess what it all is.

Rosalind Fox Solomon. *Girl with Curlers, First Mondays, Scottsboro, Alabama*, gelatin silver print, 1975-1976. © Rosalind Fox Solomon/MUUS.

Alfred Wertheimer. *The Kiss, Mosque Theater, Richmond, Virginia, June 30, 1956*, gelatin silver print. © Alfred Wertheimer/MUUS.

Fred W. McDarragh. *Craig Rodwell, founder, Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookstore, New York, New York, October 14, 1969*, gelatin silver print. © Fred McDarragh/MUUS.



Larry Fink. *Malcolm X, Harlem, NY, May 1963*, gelatin silver print. © Larry Fink/MUUS.

Larry Fink. *Black Mask, New York, NY, February 1967*, gelatin silver print. © Larry Fink/MUUS.

Museums and other institutions find whole archives problematic. They require a lot of storage space, conservation and research.

– It's a daunting task, and very few collections, either private or institutional, have the capacity or the will to take on projects like these. We have a large staff, a big facility, the resources and the long-term perspective, which you need to take on an estate. When we acquire an estate, it takes five to 10 years to reveal, review, digitise, catalogue, research, and present work within it that current audiences don't know about, or in many cases, no audience knows about. The artist might have worked on body of work but never had a chance to show it to the public. Having access to an entire estate gives scholars access to a body of work that they wouldn't otherwise have. The legacies of the most famous photographers, like Richard Avedon, are ensured through foundations, but there are so many other great photographers that have not gotten their dues. When they start thinking about their legacies, they find that there are no homes for the entire archives. Many estates get broken up or unfortunately, thrown away. If an institution accepts them, the material is often filed in boxes, put in storage somewhere, and forgotten, possibly never to be seen again.



Taking on a whole estate signals a wish to explore a photographer's work in depth.

– One of our most famous pictures is Alfred Wertheimer's 1956 Elvis Presley image *The Kiss*. There is a lot to be learnt from that one picture but Wertheimer made roughly 10 photographs of that moment and the sequence shows the artist's working methods and the process of choosing the final image. You could write a dissertation on chosen photographs, but you can't even begin the research until you have seen the whole series. It's only when you have an estate that you can make that kind of critical analysis that academics love to make when they come to our facility to look at an artist's work.

Acquiring whole estates is different from buying a large group of prints.

– A typical acquisition can take a year to two years to negotiate. There's a very difficult transition that goes on with a photographer's heirs, about what to do with the legacy of their mother, father, husband, wife or friend. The sellers are caught between wanting to do what's best

for the legacy of their loved one and not knowing what to do with it. To them, it might feel like every piece of work is a piece of gold but that's not the way it works. We have walked away from negotiating estates several times. Something is only worth what a buyer can afford to pay or is willing to pay and what a seller is willing to sell for. Sometimes, the gap is just too big. Because we're a collection, people make all sorts of assumptions about our resources and what we can afford. We have to buy at a price that allows us to invest a significant amount of money in the scholarship, the resources, the research, the shows, the documentaries and the books that we do. It's very challenging to do all those things but we're privileged to have the resources to underwrite it all. The most important part of what we do is that we take as seriously as possible the trust that's invested in us by taking on an entire life's work of an artist.

You focus exclusively on estates of American photographers. As the profile of MUUS Collection has grown, are you now increasingly contacted by photographers or their heirs looking for a permanent home for their estates?

– We are! I think maybe the proudest of our accomplishments is that we now have children, heirs, and spouses



Top. **Larry Fink.** *Jean Sabatine and Moll, 1983*, gelatin silver print. © Larry Fink/MUUS.

Right. **Larry Fink.** *Oslin's Graduation Party, Martins Creek, PA, 1977*, gelatin silver print. © Larry Fink/MUUS.

Bottom. **Larry Fink.** *Oscar Party, Los Angeles, CA, February 2005*, gelatin silver print. © Larry Fink/MUUS.



of some major fantastic photographers come to us and say, "You must acquire my mother's, father's, sister's, brother's estate!" because they've seen what we've done with Deborah Turbeville and the other estates. Having said that, we can only acquire an estate every two or three years because we are looking far and wide to create a cohesive stable of artists, and we have space and staff considerations.

MUUS Collection doesn't have its own exhibition space. Instead, you have opted to collaborate with fairs and museums around the world. It seems to have worked out very well for you.

– It has. We started at Paris Photo in 2021, and then we built a presence at AIPAD's The Photography Show, and we show exhibitions in museums around the globe. This year, there are 12 travelling shows, including the *Deborah Turbeville: Photocollage* show that started at Photo Elysée in Lausanne, travelled to Huis Marseille and just opened at the beginning of October at The Photographers' Gallery in London. MUUS Collection exists within an ecosystem of great photography museums and fairs. We want to work with museums, support them and absorb

their expertise. To make the work available to a new public, we realise how important these collaborations have been for us and our partners.

Can you tell me about the facility in Tenafly and the size of the collection?

– The size of the facility is about 5 000 feet, and we have some additional storage space. It's of the same standard as any first-class institutional archive in the world, with temperature control, fire suppression, storage and data retrieval. Before the arrival of the Larry Fink estate, we had just over 500 000 works in the collection. Right now, we are expanding the facility to incorporate Larry's archive and we are having to build additional racking with temperature control systems. While we don't have a public exhibition space, we do have a beautiful showroom that can accommodate a dozen people at a time, may they be researchers, curators or other visitors. We have a wonderful team of 8 people, two of whom are based in Europe.

The first time you exhibited at Paris Photo was in 2021 when you showed the Deborah Turbeville exhibition *Passport*. People travelled from all over the world just to see it. The exhibitions you have shown elsewhere of her work have also been packed. Were you surprised by the reactions?

– The Deborah Turbeville estate was acquired after Richard Grosbard joined us in 2020. We were collecting some very interesting things before Richard arrived, but I didn't have the eye that Richard brought to my vision. When he went to see the Deborah Turbeville archive, he came back thoroughly excited about it. I might have not fully understood it at the time, as I was thinking about a different part of our process. Richard was absolutely right about the archive and it has worked out really well. We have just published a book of her Mexican work in collaboration with Louis Vuitton. If you own the whole archive, the Mexican work might seem like a footnote, but with a new lens, all of a sudden there's a fantastic book. Turbeville has a unique place within our collection as she lived both in the world of reality and the world of fantasy, in a way that is different than any of our other artists.

...

After my conversation with Sonnenfeldt, I spoke to Richard Grosbard, Advisor to MUUS Collection, and Consulting Director of the Deborah Turbeville Archive. Grosbard has been a collector of masterworks of photography for 50 years. Because of his long friendship with Rosalind Fox Solomon, Grosbard was able to acquire her collection for MUUS; similarly, it was Grosbard who took the first important steps in the process that led to the acquisition of the Larry Fink estate. I asked him how it all came about.



Top. **Larry Fink.** *Meryl Streep and Natalie Portman, Oscar Party, Los Angeles, CA, February 2009*, gelatin silver print.
© Larry Fink/MUUS.

Bottom. **Larry Fink.** *Pat Sabatine's 8th Birthday Party, April 1977*, gelatin silver print. © Larry Fink/MUUS.



Top. **Larry Fink.** *Oslin's Teen Party, Martins Creek, PA, June 1977*, gelatin silver print. © Larry Fink/MUUS.

Bottom. **Larry Fink.** *Oscar Party, Los Angeles, CA, March 2000*, gelatin silver print. © Larry Fink/MUUS.

– The first time I met Larry Fink was in November 2022. I had been introduced to him by Cologne-based gallerist Julian Sander. I went to see Larry and his wife Martha Posner at their farm in Martins Creek. Larry kept his amazing archive in a number of locations on the property, in studios and barns. It was absolutely daunting to see the sheer quantity of material and to see just how amazing it all was. Afterwards, I spoke to Michael and told him that the collection was definitely something we should acquire. We entered into negotiations with Larry and Martha but then Larry became very ill in 2023 and sadly passed away on November 25th of that year.

We were very cognisant of Martha's grief and wanted to give her time to think about what she wanted to do with the archive. I then worked with Martha for the next six months trying to find a way to come together with MUUS Collection. There were a lot of issues to resolve, including some publications and exhibitions that were in the works. Martha told me that Larry had wanted his archive to go to MUUS Collection, so she really wanted to make it happen. With Michael's negotiation skills, we were able to come together in June of this year.

What is the focus of the exhibition at Paris Photo?

– The exhibition is called *Sensual Empathy*, the two words that Larry often used to describe his own work. It's curated by Lucy Sante. She and Larry were great friends. They both taught at Bard College for many years. Lucy was enamoured with Larry's work, and they developed a very strong relationship. The exhibition comes out of the book that Powerhouse is going to launch at the Karl Lagerfeld Library in Paris, *Larry Fink: Hands On / A Passionate Life of Looking*. Lucy decided to focus on the prevalent themes of Larry's work. The centrepiece of the exhibition is a postcard of a Fink image that Lucy loved and always kept; we are showing it alongside the original photograph. We're proud to be working with Yolanda Cuomo on the design of the exhibition as she also worked on Powerhouse's book. We're also grateful to Peter Barberie, the curator of photographs at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, who has consulted with our team as we've developed the show.

The exhibition will include more than photographs, I understand.

– The images are presented in conjunction with his poetry. People think of Larry as a photographer, but besides being a poet, he was a musician, and a painter, which all contributed to his work. He explored the arts. He played piano and harmonica.

In fact, he was playing the harmonica and talking throughout our first meeting. It was just fantastic to witness the kind of character he was.

He had an unusual upbringing. His parents were left-leaning, came from a Marxist background but also enjoyed a glamorous lifestyle, with big parties and beautiful cars. He often described himself as “a Marxist from Long Island”.

– Larry was a socialist and a rebel from the beginning, but he was not a hard-line Marxist. He was more what I would call in the world of Woody Guthrie’s type of politics. He was certainly not anti-American.

Fink took his first photographs at the age of 13. His parents would take him to jazz clubs and he photographed many of the greats, including Billie Holiday and Coleman Hawkins. When and how did photography become a career for him?

– Larry’s parents sent him to a college in Iowa. It didn’t last long and he dropped out after eight months. He moved to the East Village in New York where he met and photographed all the famous Beats. They had a great influence on him. His career as a professional photographer came about in a roundabout way. Larry and some friends in the East Village decided to go to Mexico to buy some dope. Off they went, and coming back to the US, they got busted. Hardly surprising, as the person who had sold them the dope had informed the police. Larry was put on parole, and when back in New York, his parole officer told him that it was time for him to straighten himself out. The probation officer realised that Larry was a talented photographer and suggested he should focus on his photography. Larry followed his advice. Photography saved him.

He taught throughout most of his career. In the late ’60s, one of his students at Parsons School of Design introduced him to the upper crust of New York, enabling him to photograph balls and high society parties. He wasn’t the first, nor the last, to photograph that world but he did so in his own particular way.

– His technique was definitely special. He held the flash away from the camera so that the light would bounce off in all kinds of strange ways and create these incredible, long shadows. The images were also kind of disorienting, in the sense that you don’t know where the light is coming from. Larry spent a lot of time looking at art in books and museums. He had paintings all over his house. When I first met him, he told me that Caravaggio was one of his



Top. **Larry Fink.** *Studio 54, New York, NY, 1977*, gelatin silver print.
© Larry Fink/MUUS.

Left. **Larry Fink.** *Peter Beard and Friends, Montauk, NY, August 1976*, gelatin silver print. © Larry Fink/MUUS.

greatest influences. “When you look at my photographs, you can see the chiaroscuro effects, light and deep, long shadows, just like Caravaggio.” His highlighting of subjects allows the viewer to look at his subjects in a way so that you see them as the individuals they are.

In 1973, he and his first wife, artist Joan Snyder, moved to a farm in Martins Creek. In need of a lawnmower, he went to a local shop owned by the Sabatine family. He quickly became friends with them and he would use the same chiaroscuro technique when he photographed them.

– There was great fondness between Larry and the Sabatine family and they became very close. He photographed their everyday lives, marriages, birthdays, baptisms, and holidays. Some of his most important images come from that series. He was able to connect with everyone, whether they were his neighbours, farmers, or people in high society as Larry had great empathy for humanity.

His photography reached a wider audience in 1979 when MoMA presented a solo show, *Social Graces*, which was turned into a book in 1984. It showed two very different worlds, high society and the Sabatine family. The difference in lifestyles between those two worlds is obvious. Are there things that unite them in the way that he looked at humanity in general?

– I think it goes back to Larry’s own words: *sensual empathy*. He had an awareness of who people were, whether they were part of the high society, or working on a farm. He was able to cut through the everyday veneer and see what was going on in front of him. How people interacted, how their eyes moved. He was aware of the drama that took place in those situations. He created a stage lighting that captured people in a dramatic way so that they appeared larger than life. As a viewer, you feel like you’re watching them perform on stage. He did all this with empathy, and without deference, and that’s what separates his work from other photographers. He recorded what was going on in all parts of our society. He captured moments in time that allowed the viewer to bring their own reading of the images in front of them.

Larry Fink produced many other series, such as the boxing series and the images of the people who hung out at Andy Warhol’s Factory.

– The boxing series contains his seminal and very energetic work. It came about because of Larry’s love for the sport of boxing. It showed the grittiness, the difficulty, the suffering and the punishing life of boxers in a way that nobody before him had done. His Andy Warhol Factory photographs are another example showcasing Larry’s ability to access all different parts of society. It’s interesting to compare Larry’s images with Avedon’s portraits from the Factory. Larry did something different.

He explored their souls as opposed to Avedon’s lining up individuals in a static formation. That was Larry! Since acquiring the estate, MUUS has had many people coming to us, wanting to share stories about how Larry did something for them, helped them, or said this or that. He was eccentric and he was very funny and he liked to perform. When you were in front of him, you were his audience. Once he found his way into what you were interested in, he got very serious and would start a discussion with you in depth.

Alongside his personal work and his commercial work, for the *New York Times*, *Vanity Fair*, and other publications, he was also an important educator. We have mentioned Parsons School of Design but he also taught at Yale University, Cooper Union, New York University and Bard College. Have you come across any of his teaching materials?

– We know that Larry lectured of course, and probably took copious notes, but as of right now, because of the enormity of the archive, we are still trying to find all of the pieces of this huge puzzle. The public’s knowledge of Larry is his famous images, but MUUS Collection endeavours to show the many other sides of this amazing person. Right now, we are working to put this archive in order, so that we can tell a larger story about Larry, his life, and his work.



Larry Fink. *Boxing: Ring Girl, Blue Horizon Gym, 1990*, gelatin silver print. © Larry Fink/MUUS.



What else do you have planned for MUUS Collection at this stage?

– Our main mission is to represent, preserve and showcase the estates that have been entrusted to us. At the same time, MUUS Collection is looking for more opportunities to present these archives through museums and galleries. We are also looking at acquiring more archives that speak to our wonderful stable of artists. We are constantly thinking of new and creative ways to organize these great collections. A good example of this would be our collaboration with Paulina Ołowska, a Polish artist who is represented by Pace Gallery. She, like myself, is a firm believer that photography is an art form that can engage with other mediums. She credits Deborah Turbeville as her muse. When I met Paulina two years ago in Mexico City, at Kurimanzutto Gallery. She had created a series of Turbeville-inspired murals and her exhibition

created a sensation in Mexico's art world. MUUS was proud to provide some of Turbeville's photographs and associated ephemera that were shown in conjunction with Paulina's work. Our newest focus at MUUS Collection is creating more publications and starting a documentary programme. We are proud that a number of PhD scholars have started dissertations on our artists. Our collaboration with them has enabled them to publish their work. All of these endeavours would not have been possible without Michael Sonnenfeldt's generosity and commitment. Michael and I share the belief that photography is a universal touchstone. We are excited at MUUS Collection to share these extraordinary collections with new audiences.

Larry Fink. *Boxer, Blue Horizon, Philadelphia, PA, January 1990*, gelatin silver print. © Larry Fink/MUUS.



• Otto Steinert, mask of a dancer, Paris 1952, vintage silver print

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BY MICHAEL DIEMAR

CASA MUSEO

Photography, Furniture & Sculpture

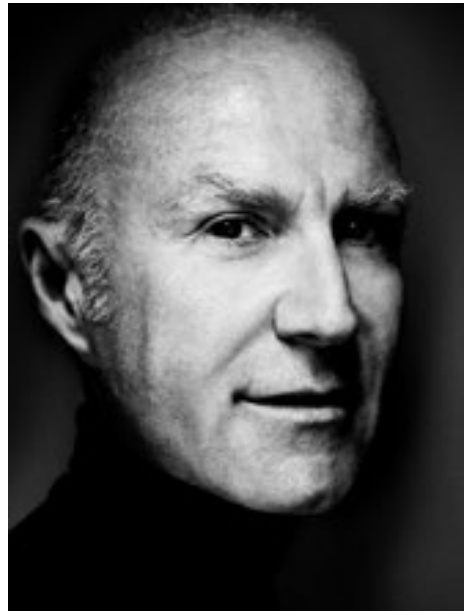
All images Courtesy of Collezione Ettore Molinario

In March 2025, Italian collector Ettore Molinario and his wife Rossella Colombari will open the much-anticipated Casa Museo in Milan, a live-in museum, showcasing an impressive collection of photography, furniture and sculpture, for private tours, exhibitions and conferences.

Molinario is well known in the international photography world as a collector of images of gender fluidity but a visit to his website, collezionemolinario.com, makes clear that he collects other types of imagery as well. Juxtapositions of two seemingly unrelated images can reveal deeper meanings and so a few years ago, Molinario launched *Dialogues*, a free newsletter, discussing such meetings. As he explains in the introduction, “The images in the collection date from 1850 to today and come from all over the world. The *Dialogues* retrace the themes most dear to the Collector’s reflection, hence the search for oneself, gender identity, desire, and melancholy. Through these combinations, highlighted by the temporal anachronism and Warburgian montage, the Collector reinterprets the images, bringing to light new meanings.”

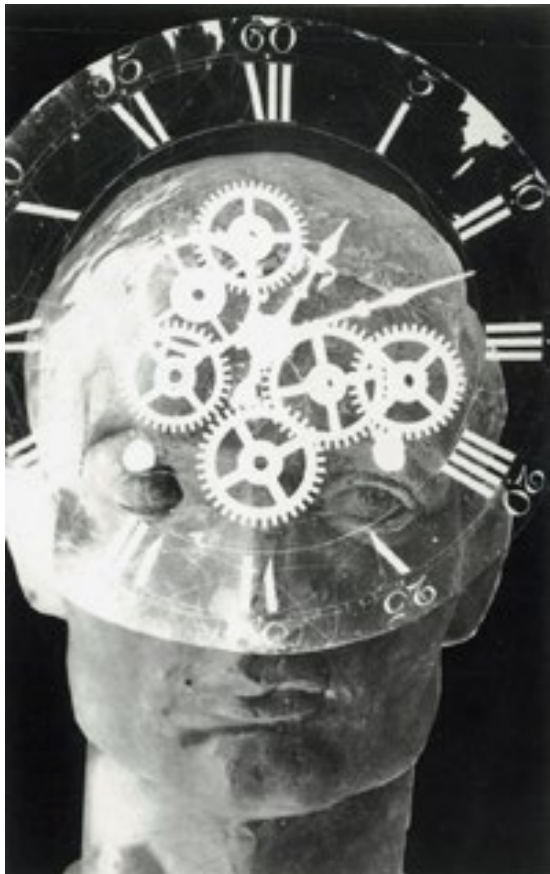
On the wall, *L'âme du couteau* by Alain Fleischer, gelatin silver print, France, 1982. Dining table designed by Melchiorre Bega, Italy, circa 1950.

ETTORE MOLINARIO



Credit Giovanni Gastel. © Image Service
/Archivio Giovanni Gastel.

He spells collector with capital C, implying an activity that goes way beyond mere acquisition. How are collectors made? How are any of us made? I was intrigued to read edition 35 of *Dialogues*, published in April this year, where Molinario writes, “It happened exactly fifty years ago, and it is an important anniversary. In April 1974, the exhibition *Transformer: Aspects of Travesty*, curated by Jean-Christophe Ammann, shone at the Kunstmuseum in medieval Lucerne. If there is an event, a vision and a handful of provocative and revolutionary agents who inspired me, here they are, and one of the cornerstones of my collection is precisely the study of the artists who made that exhibition their flagship.”



The title of the exhibition referenced Lou Reed's album *Transformer*, released in 1972. Produced by David Bowie and Mick Ronson, it was a far more direct statement on gender fluidity than Bowie's *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars* released the same year, such as the opening lines of *Walk on the Wild Side*, "Holly came from Miami FLA/Hitchhiked her way across the USA/Plucked her eyebrows along the way/Shaved her legs and then he was a she."

Listening to the album again while reading the *Dialogues*, I was struck by the way its lyrics resonated with so many of the images, whether they be contemporary or from the 19th century. Glam Rock had a major impact on Molinario, he tells me.

– Glam Rock was my gateway to discovering transgression in terms of sexual identity. In those years in Italy, there were politics, a lot of politics. I had zero interest in those politics. My militancy was that of Lou Reed, perhaps because in 1972, a song like *Walk on the Wild Side* showed me precisely the direction I had to take to close the narrow, moral and family confines of my past. And then there were those fantastic lines in the song *Vicious* that opens the album, "Vicious/Hey, you hit me with a flower/You do it every hour/Oh, baby, you're so vicious." It's hardly surprising that there are so many flowers in my collection.

Top. Jürgen Klauke. *Umarmung*, C-print, West Germany, 1973.

Left. Gyula Szabó. *Untitled*, gelatin silver print, Hungary, circa 1960.

The photography world knows you as a collector but what's your professional background?

– I worked in high finance, during what was perhaps its most exciting period, brutality and excess included, namely the decade between the '80s and '90s. I was very lucky because I was living in New York at the time, and I explored every nocturnal nuance of the city. Even after all these years, there are many images in my collection that trigger emotions from that time that I cannot forget. I then left New York and returned to Milan. As times changed, I changed too. I could say that I have matured but not in the sense of having given up certain experiences, on the contrary, I pushed them to an extreme limit of authenticity and concreteness. I also became a marine speleologist, an explorer of caves, to make my research go even deeper. Even today, at the age of 67, when I descend to a depth of almost one hundred meters below the earth's surface, I live at the very limits of my physical and mental balance, and I experience the riskiest and potentially deadliest descent within myself. But in the face of my impulses, being underground and immersed in the darkness of the water, I learned to remain calm and rational and have everything under control. And for me, control is a strong theme. Indeed, I could say that my collection is a way for me to control and dominate my imagination.

You're known as a collector of images of gender fluidity. When did you start collecting these images and what were the first images you acquired?

– My love for photography was born from a dazzling encounter, *Man with Dog* by Joel-Peter Witkin. I saw this extraordinary image in an exhibition curated by Germano Celant at the Castello di Rivoli in 1995. The body of a man and a woman combined, holding a small dog. It had the serenity of a Renaissance painting and it completely seduced me. I bought it instantly. Later on, during a psychoanalysis session, I found myself complaining about the maybe excessive cost of the Witkin print but my analyst, with intuition, told me that the money meant nothing because in buying the print, I had bought

“a piece of myself”. Then came the second insight. I understood that gender identity, that underground and destabilising confrontation between male and female, was my theme. My impulses took shape around it, between dominance and submission, violence and melancholy, love and death. It gave me a firm direction and so I found “my authors”, Claude Cahun, Marcel Duchamp as Rose Sélavy, Pierre Molinier, Nan Goldin, Cindy Sherman, Yasumasa Morimura, David LaChapelle, Lisetta Carmi, Robert Mapplethorpe, Peter Hujar and Jürgen Klauke.



Claude Cahun. *Autoportrait au chat*, gelatin silver print, France, 1927.



Initially, you focused on contemporary works. When did you move towards works from the classic era, including the 19th century?

– For me, it was vital to historically broaden the scope of my research. The start in this sense, thanks to a sensitive gallery owner like James Hyman, was the entry into the collection of one of the two 1930s enlargements of the *Scherzo di Folli*, the portrait of the Countess of Castiglione by Pierre-Louis Pierson. In 1863, she explored her identity and her roles, changing her dress and putting herself on stage. Looking and looking at yourself, as suggested

by the oval that frames the countess' eye, is the key verb of modernity. I felt that André Kertész's *Distortion* #34 was also going in the same analytical direction, the body that deforms when mirrored. Looking at yourself is always a painful operation, as suggested by Nino Migliori's *Cancellations*, a work from 1954 that I love very much. And love, even love, can become pain. A weapon and a wound together. When I encountered on my path *L'âme du couteau* by Alain Fleischer, an immense author, I immediately felt a very strong resonance, so much so that I entrusted this image, depicting Danielle Schirman, Alain's magnificent lifelong companion, with "the message" of my collection.

What possibilities did 19th-century photography present to you?

– At a certain point I understood that through the theme of gender identity, I could explore the entire history of photography. A wonderful vertigo. It is no coincidence that the image that opens the collection, the oldest, is a Daguerreotype from around 1845, that portrays the mysterious Louise, perhaps

one of the first female cross-dressers to pose in front of the lens. I can never thank Daniella Dangoor, dealer and friend, enough for offering me this treasure. And I also owe Daniella my gratitude for the encounter with the beauty of ancient Japanese photography. Owning a portrait like the *Samurai in Armour* by Shin'ichi Suzuki, or *Oiran* by Tamamura Kōzaburō, allowed me to better understand, for example, Nobuyoshi Araki and Daido Moriyama. But nineteenth-century photography also gave me other food for thought. First of all, I was impressed by the strength of these images, so fragile and yet so resistant in the face of the violence of time. The images of the 1990s had conquered me with their gigantism but with patience, a skill almost unknown

Pierre Molinier. *Le Chaman*, gelatin silver print, France, 1968.

to me, I learnt to appreciate the small size of the 19th century images. Every day, 19th-century photography gives me lessons in intimacy, discretion and tenacity.

You have worked for a number of years with an independent photography curator, Laura Leonelli. When did you start working together?

– I started working together with Laura Leonelli five years ago and from our first meetings, I felt that her independent and somewhat eccentric gaze complemented mine. Together we transformed a

Pierre-Louis Pierson. *Scherzo di Follia (The Countess of Castiglione)*, circa 1863, France. Gelatin silver print, enlargement printed circa 1930 by Braun & Cie.

André Kertész. *Distortion #34*, gelatin silver print, France, 1933.





primary drive, my attraction to cross-dressing, into a “reasoned drive”, which for me is synonymous with collecting. Above all, Laura invited me to also consider the images of lesser-known or anonymous authors, first of all, Monsieur X, to give depth to some of the collection’s strong themes and reconstruct the horizon on which some of my favourite masters were formed, such as Erwin Blumenfeld and Helmut Newton. In the beginning, I experienced this proposal as a provocation, a financial man like myself, to welcome images worth a few euros. But then I discovered that it was only my gaze, my sensitivity that gave value to these images. This too was a rebellion, and this rebellion against the classic rules of the photographic market thrilled me.

Top. Living room. On the walls; photographs by Paolo Gioli, Urs Lüti, Joel-Peter Witkin, Bettina Rheims, Bill Brandt, Herb Ritts, Henry Callahan and others. White armchair with Ottoman model P110-Canada, designed by Osvaldo Borsani, Italy 1969. Red chairs designed by Carlo Scarpa, Italy, circa 1950. Dining table designed by Gio Ponti, USA, circa 1950. Ceiling lamp designed by Luigi Caccia Dominioni, Italy 1967. Prestige Club, Fiji Islands, circa 1820.

Anonymous. Louise (Female Cross Dresser), Daguerreotype, England, 1845.



How do you work together?

– We have a lot of discussions, and we are joined in our meetings by Martina Conti, the precious conservator of the collection, and Jelena Mirković, our assistant. The goal is to identify the “backbones”, that is, the themes that run through the entire collection and to contribute to making the discussion of “my identity” broader, stronger, and more personal. For example, there’s the theme of aggression, and so we included images of weapons and warriors, from the Samurai to the inflorescence of the atomic bomb, from Zorro’s whip among pink carnations to Alain Fleischer’s knife-wielding woman. There’s also the theme of colonial photography, with Christopher Columbus’ armour, an emblem of Western curiosity and voracity. And then there’s the theme of instinct, of animality, exemplified by

Left. Ettore Molinaro studio. Portrait of Patti Smith by Robert Mapplethorpe, USA, 1986. Desk and chair by Josef Hoffmann, Austria, circa 1900. Mirror designed by Carlo Bugatti, Italy, circa 1900.

Right. First floor, armchair designed by Ettore Zaccari, Italy, circa 1910. On the shelf, Untitled (Rose) by Edward Steichen, gelatin silver print, USA, circa 1920. Marchesa Casati by Baron Adolf De Meyer, gelatin silver print Paris, 1912.

a nude by Gaudenzio Marconi, with a wolf’s head printed on the fabric of the drapery. Another theme is the hand and the glove, with images of gloves of lace, satin, and leather, which brings me back to the pleasures of fetishism.

The *Dialogues* is your way of communicating with the world at large. What gave you the idea?

– The *Dialogues* are inspired by my experience as a marine speleologist and my collection is nothing more than an underground network of caves and tunnels, like the ones I explore every year in my dives in Yucatan. In the depths of the collection, the images travel along secret paths. They attract each other and they “choose” each other. There is a certain risk in these contaminations, but above all, there is the desire to experience the collection as a world of deep relationships. At first sight, they might seem irrational but they have a very precise logic. No image enters the collection by chance, and no image enters it in order to “make” a dialogue with another. The dialogue between Joel-Peter Witkin and Paul Coze, for example, was born this way. I was returning from Japan and that calligraphy of hair in a river of ink suddenly became a way to tell the fluid identity of Witkin and myself. It was as if the braid adorning the head of *Man with Dog* had dissolved



and with it every bond of gender. Another example is the dialogue between Paolo Gioli's *Vulva* and an aerial photograph from the First World War, that painful opening in the earth, where hundreds of thousands of men died, was metaphorically the female sex. Orgasm, as Georges Bataille teaches, is always a small death.

Do you have plans to publish the *Dialogues* in book form?

–I think about it from time to time, and then I tell myself that the light form of sending them out is the one I prefer. Books can give the impression that the mission is accomplished, that it's over. Instead, I want to continue the *Dialogues* for a long time.

In addition to photographs, you also collect sculpture, Khmer, Gandhara and early Medieval Indian. Do you regard them as linked to the photography collection?

– Yes, indeed. I started collecting Khmer, Gandhara and early Medieval Indian sculpture as a three-dimensional completion to the fetishism of photography. To give you some background, I was born in Rome, in the baroque and Catholic Rome of Bernini and Borromini, among saints, tears, blood, twisting bodies and dizzying ascents to heaven. The choice of the most ascetic sculpture in the world, Khmer, Gandhara and early Medieval Indian, austere, androgynous in virile bodies, and at the same time extremely delicate, was yet another rebellion in my personal history. To be honest, it is also proof of my contradictions. Many of my sculptures are Bodhisattvas. One of the phrases from the Abhiniskramana Sutra that I reflect upon most is this: "Only the madman is blinded by the external appearance of beauty. Where is the beauty when the decorations are removed, the jewels removed, the dress lies on the floor, and flowers and garlands turn white and die? The wise man looks at the illusory charm of these vanities as dreams, mirages, fantasies." Here, collecting, accumulating, investing, remaining close to the beauty of these works, loving them, touching them and at the same time reflecting on their impermanence, is a significant spiritual exercise.

There are also works from Oceania in your collection.

– They are an invitation to travel, to the life I would have wanted to live if I had been born two and a half centuries ago. James Cook was one of my heroes as a boy. When on "my path", I came across a magnificent 18th century Akatara, almost two and a half meters tall, from the Central Cook Islands, I understood that we were meant for each other. It also attracted me that there were two eyes engraved at the attachment of the "blade". And that look of aggression and conquest, which also has the shape of the symbol of infinity, anticipates the look of photography. Beauty and terror together.



Top. **Zorro**. Untitled, C-print, France, 1968

Bottom. **Monsieur X**. Untitled, gelatin silver print, France, circa 1930.



Left. **Joel-Peter Witkin**. *Man with dog*, Gelatin silver print, USA, 1990.

Right. **Paul Coze**. *Étude de chevelure*, gelatin silver print, France, circa 1950.



Left. **Paolo Gioli**. *Vulva*, gelatin silver print, Italy, 2004.

Right. **S. LT. Ioanid**. WWI trench, aerial photograph, Romania, 1917.





Let's move on to Casa Museo. It's a live-in museum, combining photography, sculpture and masterpieces of furniture. What gave you the idea?

– Casa Museo was born from the need to live together with the images I collect. For me, collecting photography means creating the ideal space in which to discover myself and explore the most secret chambers of my personality. My dream was this, a house museum that would make it possible to “inhabit” every part of me, even the most extreme, in a very natural way. And from this perspective, the images have become my “sentinels”, who protect me, guide me, and comfort me. Collecting also means never being alone. My wife, Rossella Colombari, is one of the most authoritative art gallery owners of Italian design who rediscovered and relaunched Carlo Mollino's design work. We started imagining this house thirty years ago when we met. Even then, the idea was a Casa Museo, a theatre house to accommodate the passions of both of us.

Dining room. On the wall: Yasumasa Morimura, *Self-portrait (actress) after Vivien Leigh 2*, Ilfochrome print, Japan, 1996. In the back, Eikoh Hosoe, *Untitled*, gelatin silver print, Japan, 1969. Dining table designed by Melchiorre Bega, ca 1950, Italy, red chairs designed by Carlo Scarpa, ca 1950, Italy.

Akatara, power insignia in the shape of a spear. Central Cook Islands, Aitutuaki, Mitiaro, Mauke 18th century.

When did you start turning the dream into reality?

– Five years ago, the wish came true when I purchased an early 20th-century silversmith factory in the Isola district of Milan. Today, Isola, which means the island, is one of the most vital epicentres of the city. I entrusted the project to architects Claudio Lazzarini, Carl Pickering and Marco Lavit. Together with them, the idea of a large circular, dynamic, open and very bright environment was born. In the scenography of the double-height building, every space, convivial and private, is also an exhibition space. Approximately 1000 square metres are devoted to the photography collection. Of the approximately 800 images that make up the collection, I have displayed around 200. I change them in rotation so that I can also enjoy the latest arrivals. The design collection, mainly Italian, was created thanks to my collaboration with Rossella. The furniture pieces bear the signature of, among others, Carlo Scarpa, Gio Ponti, Ignazio Gardella, Osvaldo Borsani, and Luigi Caccia Dominioni. Each of these masters speaks of research, beauty, and modernity, and I believe that their talent still represents one of the highest Italian contributions to 20th-century culture.

How will the photographs, sculpture and furniture work together?

– Each presence participates in the deep sentimental dialogue that unites my life and that of my wife. And as in the best style of my collection, it is a clash, a meeting between two different, complementary, very strong personalities. A war, a peace, every day.

When do you plan to open to the public?

– Casa Museo will be open for private visits which can be booked on the soon-to-be-launched website. We will have the official inauguration in March 2025 and from then on, we will be happy to organise conferences, book presentations and exhibitions. And it will be wonderful to start collaborating and host masterpieces from other private collections. Meanwhile, my collection is online, collezionemolinario.com



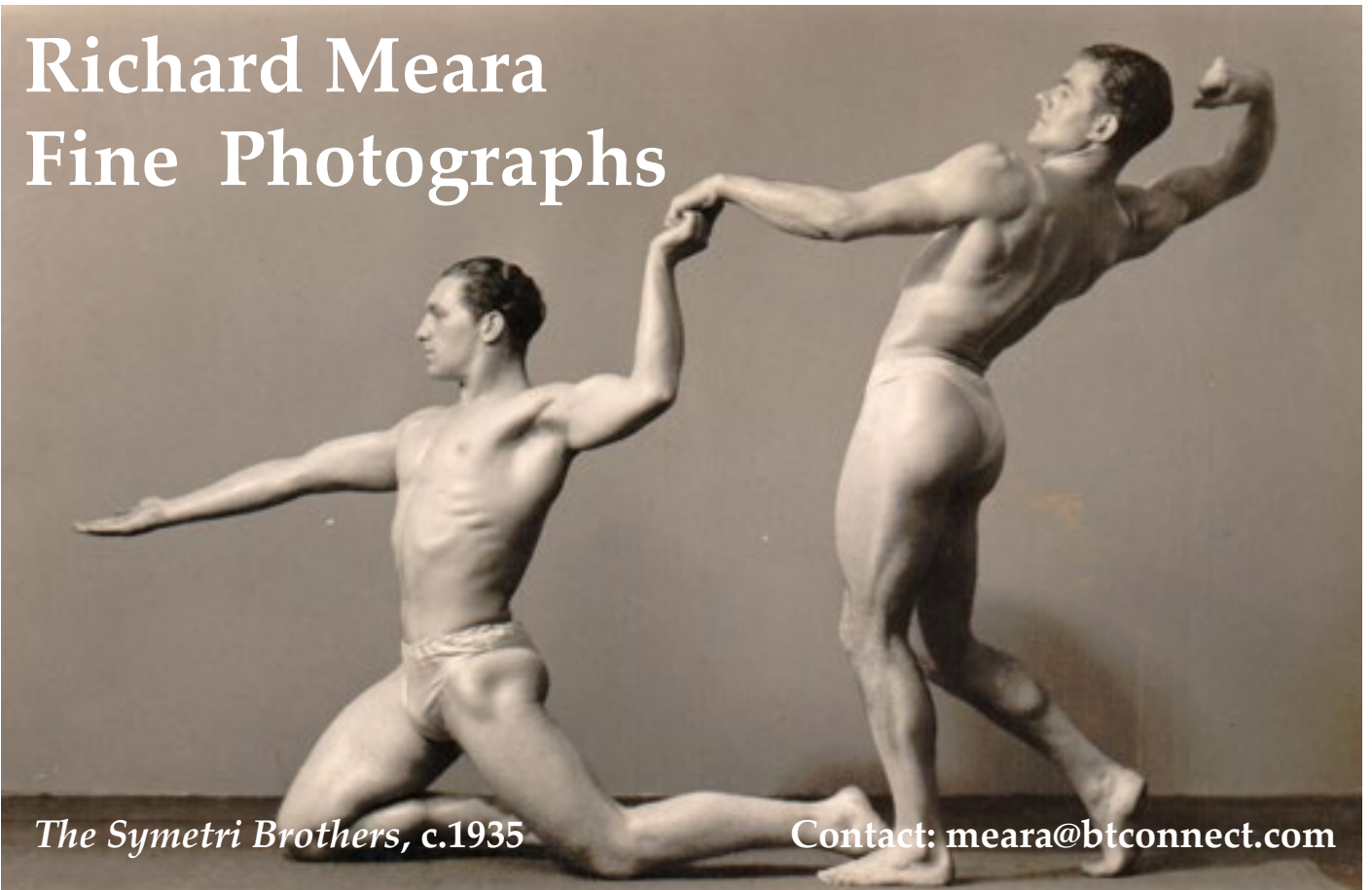
Top. Bust of Bodhisattva, Gandhara, 2nd - 3rd century.

Bottom. Torso of Buddha, Dvaravati, 7th century, Cambodia or Thailand.

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GUSTAVE LE GRAY. Brig on the Water (Brick au Claire de Lune). 1856. Albumen print. 31.5 x 40.5 cm.

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BY MARY PELLETIER

MALCOLM DANIEL

Photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

“You can’t build the audience for early photography unless you show it,” Malcolm Daniel tells me during our exchange about his thirty-something years working in photography. The expert curator has been busy organising an exhibition of 19th-century treasures at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, where he has led the photography department for over ten years. But Daniel’s name has been synonymous with early photography since he began his career at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the late 1980s – and where, as a trainee, he was able to turn his Master’s thesis into a landmark exhibition and catalogue about a (then, little-known) photographer named Édouard Baldus.

During our conversation, Daniel describes studying with Peter Bunnell at Princeton, his formative years at the Met, his move from New York to Texas, and his focus on enriching the world-class photography collection at MFAH.

Paul Outerbridge. *Advertisement for George P. Ide & Company*, 1922, platinum print, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Target Collection of American Photography, museum purchase funded by Target Stores, 76.296. Paul Outerbridge, Jr.

© G. Ray Hawkins Gallery, Beverly Hills, CA.

MALCOLM DANIEL



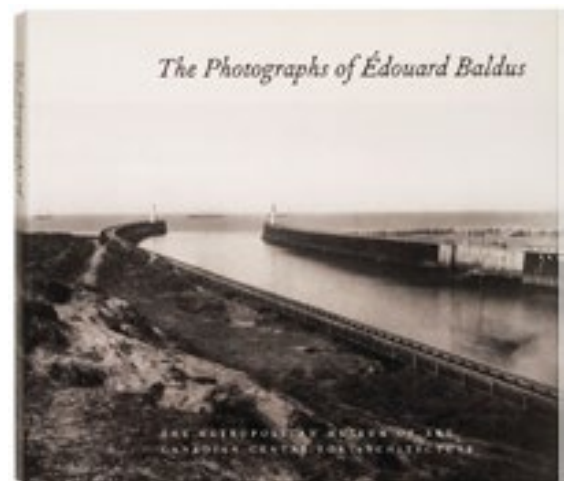
Let’s start with your photography origin story – how did you become interested in the medium?

– I’m not one of those people who knew from a young age what I would end up doing, nor did I come to the study of photographic history from having been a teenage photographer tinkering in a basement dark-room at home. I really came to it through a love of the graphic arts more generally, and ultimately because



of a graduate school professor, Peter Bunnell. In college, I was a studio art and art history major, and my studio practice focused on printmaking. I should add that when I was in college there was neither a history of photography course nor a studio class in photography... it really wasn't on the radar back then. That was in the mid-1970s at Trinity College, Hartford. But what Trinity did have, and what proved to be consequential, was a semester-abroad programme in Rome, and there, two things happened: first, the more great art I saw, the more humble I became about my own; and second, it was thrilling to be studying art history in front of the actual works of art – paintings by Caravaggio and sculptures by Bernini – instead of slides and reproductions in books. Together, those two factors, later reinforced by a year of travel abroad after graduation, led me to a career in museum work. After that year of

Édouard Baldus. *Entrée du Robinet*, c. 1861, albumen silver print. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, gift of Michael S. Sachs, 2020.172.20.



travel, I got a job in the Education Department of the Baltimore Museum of Art (my hometown) running the docent program. After four or five years there, I missed the academic environment and understood that I'd need a graduate degree to become a curator, and I ended up at Princeton in the fall of 1984.



Peter Bunnell ran the history of photography programme at Princeton. How did studying with him influence your academic and curatorial interests?

– Honestly, it is entirely because of Peter that I ended up studying the history of photography. Other students from around the world went to Princeton specifically to study with Peter, but I was not yet focused on a particular area of study when I entered graduate school and had never heard of him. In fact, my first year there, Peter was on sabbatical and – funny story – there was a woman who was offering a seminar on nineteenth-century photography, but I’d heard that Peter was a great professor and decided that if I was going to take one seminar in photography, I might as well wait until he was back the next year. I say “funny story” because that visiting professor was Maria Morris Hambourg, who would later

become such an important mentor to me! Anyhow, I took both of Peter’s seminars the following year, one on photography at the 19th-century salons and world fairs and the other on Minor White. Like so many other students, I was completely seduced by Peter’s deep knowledge of the medium, his personal connection to many 20th-century photographers, and his infectious enthusiasm for the history of photography.

I had been working with Tom Crow and thought I might write on a 19th-century French painting topic, but when Tom moved to Ann Arbor at the end of my second year of grad school, I thought, “Maybe it’s possible to combine my interest in 19th-century French art with the excitement I’ve felt working on photographic topics with Peter.” It turned out that, if you wanted to write about a French painter of the period, you could either spend five years reading everything already written about Manet or Degas and hope you might have some original tidbit to add to the scholarship, or you could spend years of your life working on a third-rate painter. But in

Édouard Baldus. *Le Moine*, c. 1861, albumen silver print from paper negative. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, gift of Michael S. Sachs, 2020.172.64.



photography, there were artists of absolutely the first rank about whom virtually nothing was written. It was relatively virgin territory. I ended up writing about the architectural, landscape, and civil engineering photographs of the French photographer Édouard Baldus. His work had appeared in a number of surveys and exhibition catalogues, but there was just a single scholarly article about him by Françoise Heilbrun and Philippe Néagu. Most of my dissertation work involved archival research and close examination of his photographs, rather than a review of existing literature.

Alvin Langdon Coburn. *Vortograph*, 1917, gelatin silver print.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum purchase funded by Alexandra Marshall, the S. I. Morris Photography Endowment, Louisa Stude Sarofim, The Brown Foundation, Inc. courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. M.S. Stude, the Director's Accessions Endowment, and friends of the Museum of Fine Arts in honor of the 16th Anniversary of the Photography Department, 93.266.

What drew you to Baldus' work? And what discoveries did you make while writing your dissertation?

– What drew me to Baldus, and what continued to be exciting throughout my research, was the way his work engaged so many of the issues that seem central to the period of the Second Empire (1852-1870): the relationship between modern civil engineering and the great monuments of the past like Roman aqueducts and Gothic cathedrals, for instance; and also the relationship between industrialization and the natural environment, how the railroads intervened in the landscape but also made the countryside accessible to urban dwellers. It was also appealing that he was celebrated in his day as one of the greats, enjoying commissions from captains of industry and government ministries, and that his work survived in abundance, but despite all that, there wasn't a single monograph on Baldus. And, of course, most importantly, I thought his photographs were beautifully composed and graphically powerful, and the best preserved of his prints were just delicious to behold. Besides exploring those issues, I was able to fill out Baldus's biography and clarify his oeuvre – I was able to show, among other things, that some of the most widely reproduced works attributed to Baldus were not his at all. No loss, though – he made plenty of great pictures!

Your dissertation on Baldus formed the basis of your landmark work with his prints at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. How did that research become an exhibition, and is that when your relationship with the Met began?

– Well, for me the exhibition and catalogue were a dream come true, to introduce a wide audience to the work of an artist I so greatly admired but who was virtually unknown outside of a pretty small circle of photography curators, dealers, and collectors. I was a fellow at the Met in 1987-88 as I began my dissertation research and then, after a year of research in Paris, I joined the staff as a curatorial assistant to Maria Hambourg in 1990 as I was wrapping up the writing. It was incredibly generous of Maria Hambourg to suggest that I transform the dissertation into an exhibition and catalogue. Many academic friends I know have struggled to find a publisher for their dissertations, have spent every weekend and evening revising their texts, have enlisted friends to be editors and proofreaders, have had to pay reproduction fees personally, and have settled for a dozen or so halftone reproductions in a volume published by a university press. I had the luxury of a team of experts by my side – most notably Maria, whose guidance on both the orchestration of the show and the refinement of the catalogue text was essential, but also the best editors, proofreaders, designers, and preparators. We printed the book at the best possible press, Jean

Genoud in Switzerland, and the exhibition had a guaranteed audience among the millions of New Yorkers and tourists who move through the Met's galleries each year.

How did working with Maria Hambourg help shape your curatorial vision?

– Maria Hambourg hired me in 1990 as a curatorial assistant, and I've often jokingly said that those first years at the Met were my "post-graduate vocational training". There are so many skills that one needs as a curator that aren't part of what you learn in grad school: how to select and sequence an exhibition, how to write about art for the general public rather than fellow graduate students, how to develop a sense of connoisseurship, how to make decisions about the matting, framing, and presentation of photographs. And, of course, how to work with a team of colleagues in the museum to accomplish your goals and how to cultivate a network of supporters. Maria was not only a great model and mentor for those things, she was also amazingly generous in giving real responsibility and credit to those who worked for her – perhaps more credit than we deserved. Trusting me to organize the Baldus exhibition when I was just a curatorial assistant and then assistant curator, was something most senior curators would not have done.

You spent over 20 years working in the photographs department at the Met. What were your responsibilities, and how did your interests and roles evolve during your time there?

– Well, as I said, Maria Hambourg was deeply influential in how I came to think about photography, particularly early French and British photography. But she was not alone. The extraordinary sense of connoisseurship and adventure that Pierre Apraxine brought to his formation of the Gilman Paper Company Collection set a standard that I try to uphold even today in my work. Other colleagues in the field whom I had the pleasure of working with on various exhibitions also expanded my knowledge of photography's history and the way I came to look at pictures – Roger Taylor and Sarah Greenough, for instance, who were my partners on several shows. Over the years, I rose through the curatorial ranks at the Met and was eventually appointed by Philippe de Montebello to head the department when Maria retired. In that role, I set the overall agenda for the department in terms of acquisitions, exhibitions



Top. Unknown French. [*Standing Male Nude*], c. 1856, salted paper print from an enlarged glass negative.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum purchase funded by the Brown Foundation Accessions Endowment Fund, 2014.811.

Bottom. Unknown. [*Boy Overseen by His Father's Spirit*], 1890-1900, gelatin silver print. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum purchase funded by the S. I. and Susie Morris Photography Endowment, 2019.255.



and its administration, but some of the department's most memorable shows were also the passion projects of my fellow photography curators Jeff Rosenheim, Doug Eklund, and Mia Fineman.

You took over the Department of Photography at MFAH in 2013 from Anne Wilkes Tucker, who founded the department in 1976. What was that transition like on a professional level?

– I left the Met after 23 years and moved to Houston in December 2013. There was a certain degree of friction between Tom Campbell, director of the Met at the time, and me. Gary Tinterow, who had organized all the great 19th-century painting shows at the Met and who led the department of Nineteenth-Century, Modern, and Contemporary Art there,

had been named director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the previous year, in 2012. Gary and I shared a love of 19th-century French art and photography, had occasionally worked on projects together (he was a great advisor and sounding board for my Degas photography show, for instance), and respected each other's work. I knew what kind of a director Gary would be, and he knew what kind of a curator I'd be. With Anne Tucker's announced plans to retire, she and Gary thought I'd be just right to take the reins from her, and the offer was enticing and perfectly timed for me. My move in late 2013 allowed for an 18-month overlap before Anne retired. It gave me a chance to learn about the collection from her and to establish a relationship with the

supporters she had nurtured over nearly 40 years. Over and over, I was told I had "big shoes" to fill, and having the "Anne Wilkes Tucker Seal of Approval" made it easier to do so. Even with the warm and respectful relationship I already enjoyed with Gary, I would not have come to Houston if it weren't for the world-class collection that Anne had built in the course of nearly four decades, with the crowning achievement being the 2002 and 2004 acquisition of Manfred Heiting's collection, which included the bulk of the Museum's 19th-century photographs.

The foundation of the department was based upon the creation of The Target Collection. How did that initial gift come about and influence the future of the department?

– Because it's called "The Target Collection" you might think it was a corporate collection assembled by someone else and acquired by the Museum. In fact, it is Anne's creation, made possible by one of the department's founding supporters, Joan Alexander and her husband Stanford. In 1976, Steve

Imogen Cunningham. *Calla*, late 1920s, gelatin silver print, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum purchase funded by the Alice Pratt Brown Museum Fund as a matching gift to the donations of Gay Block, 2000.345. © Imogen Cunningham Trust.

Pistner, CEO of Dayton-Hudson, asked Joan to recommend an organization to which they might donate five percent of pretax profits from their Houston Target stores. Joan asked Bill Agee, then director of the MFAH, what he would do with \$25 000. He answered that he would start a photography department. When he received the grant, he did just that and hired Anne Tucker. With that first grant in 1976, Tucker purchased one work each by 68 photographers, which was the start of the Target Collection. Boy, it was a different market in 1976! As that visionary corporate gift was repeatedly renewed, Anne acquired more than 400 photographs by artists considered foundational in the American photographic tradition.

The MFAH holds over 35 000 photographs, including some specific “collections within the collection”. Can you describe how the collection is organised?

– The MFAH is an encyclopaedic museum, and in the photography department, we try to be encyclopaedic also. Indeed, it’s been enriched by the acquisition of whole collections formed by others: the Manfred Heiting Collection that I just mentioned; Allan Chasanoff’s collection, nearly a thousand 20th-century pictures, donated in 1991; the Marvins Family Collections, focused on portraiture; the Barbara Levine and Paige Ramey Collection of vernacular photography and “pop photographica” to use the term Daile Kaplan coined; and most recent, the Madeleine P. Plonsker Collection of contemporary Cuban photography.

Naturally, the MFAH collection differs from other encyclopaedic collections, and part of the fun and challenge of moving from the Met to the MFAH was to discover the areas where we were weaker or stronger than the collection I had long worked with. We have nothing like the strength in Photo-Secession and Pictorialist works that the Met has, for instance (no museum does!), but we have other areas where we outshine the Met: post-war Japanese photography, thanks to Anne Tucker’s pioneering “History of Japanese Photography” show in 2003 and acquisitions shepherded by former Associate Curator Yasufumi Nakamori; photography of Central and Eastern Europe and Russia thanks to Anne’s Czech Modernism show in 1989 and Manfred Heiting’s German and Russian collecting; 1970s Conceptual photography; photographs by African Americans and about African American life and history; conflict photography, building on Anne’s 2012 “War/Photography” show; and now, arguably

the strongest museum collection of post-revolution Cuban photography. And, with Manfred Heiting’s collection and what I have been able to add with the support of Gary Tinterow and our trustees, we can now claim one of the strongest 19th-century collections in the country.

As I understand it, you’re working on a display of 19th-century photography. Can you tell me about the idea behind it and some of the works you have chosen?

– With the annual conference of the Daguerreian Society coming to Houston this October, I wanted to get as many of our great treasures as possible on view as part of our rotating selection of works from the permanent collection. In addition to individual prints by many of the greats – Talbot, Cameron, Le Gray, Baldus, Watkins, Tripe, and others – we’re showing a lot of the bound volumes we’ve acquired in recent years: *The Pencil of Nature*; the Photographic Exchange Club’s *Album for the Year 1857*; Alexander Gardner’s *Photographic Sketch Book of the War*; Maxime Du Camp’s *Égypte, Nubie, Palestine, et Syrie*; Baldus’s *Chemin de fer du Nord*; Bradford’s *Arctic Regions*; as well as unique albums including Julia Margaret Cameron’s “Norman Album.”



Ishimoto Yasuhiro. *The Old Shoin*, viewed from the north-east, 1981-1982, printed 1989, gelatin silver print. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum purchase funded by Louisa Stude Sarofim, 2000.4.2.
© Kochi Prefecture, Ishimoto Yasuhiro Photo Center.



How do you view engagement with 19th-century photography exhibitions in today's America? And how might your displays of this material necessitate different focal points, or face different challenges, compared to places like the UK or France?

– I wish I could tell that the public is clamouring for more exhibitions of 19th-century photography! I think that the major American museums have, over the years, presented a steady stream of such shows and developed an audience with a baseline of knowledge, but I also think it's not surprising that the public is generally more engaged with photography (and art in general) that addresses issues of contemporary life, or even classic 20th-century photography that remains closer to lived experience and historical memory. People can get stymied by unfamiliar processes ("What's an ambrotype?") or the

historical context ("What was the Second Empire?") and names far less familiar than Ansel Adams or Richard Avedon. But I've always felt that, given the right presentation and context, anyone can fall in love with those pictures I love so much.

They might simply enjoy seeing old pictures of Paris or Yosemite or portraits of Alexandre Dumas or Sarah Bernhardt. They might be fascinated to see the early manifestations of a technology that transformed the world, especially if they themselves are photographers. They might just fall for the beauty of the pictures and the lusciousness of the prints. In any case, that's what I hope for. I'm always trying to proselytize for the 19th century! You can't build the audience for early photography unless you show it.

You've been at the MFAH for just over ten years now – what have been some of your most memorable projects and exhibitions?

– The next one is always the most exciting. In this case, it's an exhibition of contemporary Cuban photography that opens in late September and has a long run, through August 3, 2025. It celebrates the acquisition of some 300 photographs

James Presley Ball. *Escapees to Freedom on the Underground Railroad with Levi Coffin and Rev. Henry M. Storrs*, 1862-1867, albumen silver print from glass negative. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum purchase funded by the Buddy Taub Foundation, Dennis A. Roach and Jill Roach, Directors, 2019.259.

assembled by the Chicago-based collector Madeleine Plonsker, which, when combined with our already strong holdings, puts us in the very top rank of the museum's collecting in this area. For me, it's been exciting because this is not an area I've explored before, and I've been enormously fortunate to have a project partner with deep expertise in this area, Raquel Carrera, a Cuban curator now on the MFAH staff. At the Met, we each had our bailiwick and rarely strayed into each other's territory; mine was 19th-century and early 20th-century photography, especially European work. At the MFAH, I've certainly remained committed to that focus, but I've enjoyed organizing or working on shows of contemporary photographers, too – Vera Lutter, David Levinthal, Fazal Sheikh, Sally Mann, Dawoud Bey, and others.

What is your acquisition programme like? Are you actively buying, and are there any areas you are looking to expand?

– Absolutely, we continue to build the collection. I have a desiderata list, but to a certain extent, we try to be opportunistic – on the lookout for great photographs, not so focused on a specific collecting plan that we miss things that are unexpected. Because the collection that Anne Tucker built was already so rich in great works from the middle half of the 20th century, I've mostly concentrated on strengthening the "bookends" – expanding our 19th-century holdings and acquiring major works by contemporary artists whose work was largely out of reach when Anne was collecting, artists such as Sarah Charlesworth, Laurie Simmons, Stan Douglas, Marilyn Minter, Ana Mendieta, or Mickalene Thomas. That said, we occasionally do find 20th-century photographs that fill gaps or add strength to what Anne built, and we continue to acquire contemporary photographs by emerging artists.

In the 19th century, most of our strength when I arrived was in the Heiting Collection. Manfred set out to acquire the best possible prints of the key images by the great masters. That meant that we already had superb works by many of the big names – Talbot, Hill and Adamson, Cameron, Le Gray, Nadar, Baldus, Nègre, Greene, Caneva, MacPherson, Teynard, Tripe... I could go on – artists that it would be almost impossible to collect in such quantity or



of such quality now, even if one could afford to do so. That strength has allowed me to focus on some areas that were of lesser interest to Manfred such as daguerreotypes or 19th-century American prints and also to explore a more expansive view of early photographs that relate to science, medicine, criminology, spirits, industry, expression, costume, etc., works not necessarily intended as "fine art" when they were made. And having strength in the great masters hasn't kept me from wanting more! You'll see that in the new installation in our galleries, much of it acquired in the past ten years.

What are the most notable 19th-century acquisitions you have made in recent years?

– First is a remarkable American photograph showing a group of formerly enslaved people on their way to freedom, with the Quaker abolitionist Levi Coffin, dubbed the "President of the Underground Railroad," standing behind them. We purchased it at auction with the amazing support of one of our committee members, Dennis Roach. At the time, it was listed as the work of an unknown maker, but we can now show that it was made in the Cincinnati studio of the African American photographer John Presley Ball, whose work Frederick Douglas greatly admired. And indeed, Ball has captured the beautiful body language of the group.

Second is the "Norman album" that I mentioned before, an album of 75 photographs that Julia Margaret Cameron assembled six years into her

Julia Margaret Cameron. *Mrs. Cameron's Photographs from the Life*, 1864-1869, assembled 1869, album of albumen silver prints from glass negatives. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum purchase, 2021.282.1-.75.



photographic career as a thank-you gift for her daughter Julia and son-in-law Charles Norman who gave her first camera for Christmas in 1863. It's filled with near-perfect prints of many of her greatest images. It descended within the family until 2021 when the Museum acquired it through Hans Kraus.

And the third especially notable item is a whole-plate daguerreotype still-life of artistic bric-a-brac from the first months of the medium by Daguerre's assistant, Alphonse Eugène Hubert. It's an astonishingly well-preserved plate that was virtually unknown until it appeared at auction last year in the estate sale of the longtime French dealer of 19th-century photography, François Lepage. It's a dazzling thing and as close to a piece of the true cross as we are likely ever to get. For anyone who wants to see in greater detail how actively we are collecting, I'd invite them to explore the

photography collection at emuseum.mfah.org. With "advanced search", you can limit items by department and sort by accession number or date of the work. It's now also possible to search by keyword – not just by artist, medium, or date, but also by terms like "war," "African American," "landscape," "happiness," "FSA"... and of course the most commonly searched terms, "cat" and "dog"! Well, probably "nude" is more frequently searched, but you get the idea.

How do researchers engage with the collection? Can you tell me a bit about the Anne Wilkes Tucker Photography Study Center, which opened in 2021?

– I'm so glad you asked. Our Study Center is – I can confidently claim – the most beautiful photography print room I know at any museum. It's spacious, beautifully appointed, has a long stretch of two-tiered picture rail for laying out exhibitions or displaying works when teaching a class, has ample table space for visiting researchers, and has none of the distractions that sometimes make concentration hard, like office conversations or phone calls going on in the same room.

Alphonse Eugène Hubert. *[Still Life]*, 1839-1840, daguerreotype.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum purchase, 2022.480.

Curators, collectors, dealers, professors, students, researchers, artists, and members of the general public can explore the collection online at emuseum.mfah.org and then make an appointment to come see the original works of art. The Study Center has actually existed since the Museum's Rafael Moneo – designed Audrey Jones Beck Building opened in 2000, but it was renovated and redesigned as part of our recent capital campaign and was named for Anne Tucker thanks to a gift from Joan and Stanford Alexander. It's now more efficient and flexible, includes an office area for fellows, interns, and volunteers, and houses and displays the Manfred Heiting Photography Book Collection. Everyone should see it!

I'm curious about the local interest in photography – how does the community engage in the collection?

– Houston is a photography town. There is strong public interest and we have wonderful supporters. Many of the members of our photography committee and of our patron group, Photo Forum, are also involved with Houston's other photography-focused organizations, FotoFest and Houston Center for Photography. Founded almost 40 years ago and modelled on the Rencontres d'Arles, FotoFest organizes a major photography exhibition, portfolio review, and city-wide photography festival every two years with smaller exhibitions year-round and a K-12 learning program in the schools. Houston Center for Photography offers classes and workshops in photography for all ages and presents exhibitions throughout the year. It's nice because each of the three institutions – the MFAH, FotoFest, and HCP – has a different mission. Of the three, only the Museum is a collecting institution. Similarly, exhibitions at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, right next door to us, sometimes include photography ("The Dirty South" or the retrospectives of Marilyn Minter and Ming Smith, for example), but they also are a non-collecting institution. The Menil Collection, an amazing museum, collects photography, but it's a minor part of their program.



What are some of your favourite things about working at the MFAH?

– Favourite things? A rich collection, great colleagues, an amazingly supportive director and trustees, and beautiful galleries.

And, what are you planning for the coming year(s)?

– Stay tuned.

Edward Steichen. *Trees, Long Island*, 1904, printed 1905, carbon print. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum purchase funded by the Long Endowment for American Art and the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, 86.1. © 2024 The Estate of Edward Steichen / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

MILLON¹⁹⁷⁶

Maison de ventes aux enchères

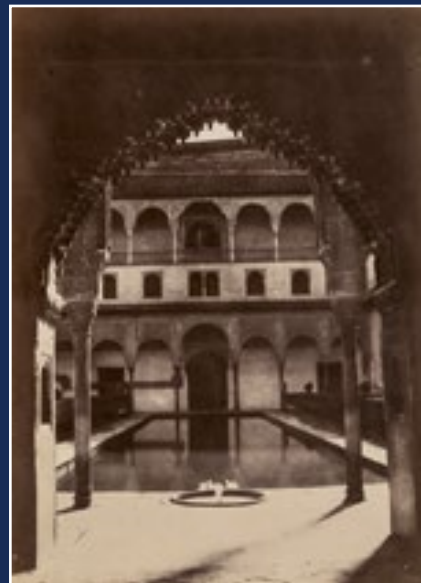
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1. Man RAY (1890-1976), Portrait of a Half-Hidden Man With Expressive Hands (Russell H. Greeley), 1920-1930, silver print.

2. Gustave LE GRAY (1820-1884), Place de la Concorde, Paris, albumen print, 1859.

3. Alphonse DE LAUNAY (1822-1891), View of the Alhambra, Great Courtyard in Front of Ambassador's Hall, albumenized salt print from a paper negative, 1854.

4. Félix NADAR (and painted by E. Vieusseux), Charles-Albert Costa de Beauregard in Military Uniform with Sword, painted albumen print from enlarged wet plate negative, 1871.

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THE RESEARCHERS

Whether technical, social or art historical, research is a recurring subject in *The Classic*. For this article, I asked Robin Muir, Rachel Wetzel, Michael Greisman and Sasha Belgrave to discuss one of their projects.

Clifford Coffin

With Robin Muir

In 1997, the National Portrait Gallery, London, presented *Clifford Coffin; The Varnished Truth – Photographs from Vogue 1945-1955*, curated by Robin Muir and accompanied by a book, published by Schirmer/Mosel Verlag, with text by Muir. It not only rescued the reputation of Clifford Coffin (1913-1972), the greatest of *Vogue*'s so-called lost photographers, a perfectionist, highly strung, volatile. It also shed light on his personal life, about which very little had been known before Muir embarked on his almost ten-year-long research.

Prior to 1997, Clifford Coffin was known to aficionados of fashion photography but purely through vintage magazines. There had been a fire in his New York studio in 1965, his work going up in flames. There were no prints on the market nor in the archives of British *Vogue* where you had taken up your position as picture editor in 1985. In 1986, however, you made a sensational discovery.

– One day, I was rustling around in the storeroom at the back of the *Vogue* library. The lights didn't

work. I could barely see anything so I asked the guys from the workshop to install strip lighting. Suddenly, that area revealed filing cabinets, boxes and other things. Some of the filing cabinets were locked. There were no keys to be found so I asked the guys to chisel them open. One cabinet contained negatives and prints by Clifford Coffin, and the other two had negatives and prints by John Deakin. It was unbelievable! We knew right away that we could do something with this extraordinary material. Deakin's work had already become better known,

due to the exhibition that Bruce Bernard did at the V&A in 1984 – 85, *The Salvage of a Photographer*, but this cache added a massive and whole new dimension to him. The Coffin material was like a bolt out of the blue. It was absolutely first-rate and we matched the images to the magazines. It was all very exciting.

What was the next step?

– My friend Robin Gibson, then Deputy Director of the National Portrait Gallery, happened to

come by to look at something in the *Vogue* library. We spread out the magazines and showed him what we'd found and he said, "I want to do these two exhibitions. Let's do John Deakin first, then Clifford Coffin." The Coffin show looked wonderful. These days, because of funding cuts, every show has to be a blockbuster. It was great that they gave this unknown photographer an airing and the exhibition got a lot of attention.



Clifford Coffin. *Jean Patchett*, 1951. Archives of British *Vogue*.

© The Condé Nast Publications Ltd.



Most of the Coffin material you found had been produced for *British Vogue* during his time in London, from April 1946 to April 1948. Why did he come to London in the first place?

– There was a lack of good talent locally. In 1946, Cecil Beaton was still finishing off his war work, as was Lee Miller in Eastern Europe. Norman Parkinson was combining photography with farming. They needed somebody to do the main batch of fashion photography so Alexander Liberman, who had taken up his post as art director at Condé Nast a few years before, sent Coffin to London to do the work. Coffin was throughout the next decade, a stalwart *Vogue* photographer. He has always been regarded as second string, second tier, which is not to say that he was at all bad, he was a fantastic fashion photographer. He just didn't reach the dizzying heights of Irving Penn or Richard Avedon. Liberman was very pleased to have photographers like Coffin. As he said, "A little Penn goes a long way" but sometimes Penn was too impactful. Liberman needed to lighten the pages with other talents and Coffin was certainly one of those.

Coffin had a major impact on *British Vogue*.

– Indeed. If you look through the magazines, he was the chief photographer of *British Vogue* and contributed in a major way to how it looked. He's in virtually every issue. In addition to fashion sittings and portraits, he also shot the twice-yearly collections in Paris. Those images are reminiscent of La Belle

Epoque and they went into American *Vogue* and French *Vogue* as well as British *Vogue*. He went back to the US but returned to London and Paris on occasion to do shoots.

Before you presented your research, Coffin was very much a mystery man. Was there any information at all about him at *British Vogue*?

– There was a note, giving his address as a post box in Pasadena. That proved to be a dead end. But we're very lucky to have an archive of letters. Audrey Withers was editor of *British Vogue* when Coffin was in London and she was very fond of him. By her admission, she knew very little about fashion but she realised that Coffin and Deakin were very special talents. Her secretary Lillie Davies assiduously kept all the correspondence Audrey had with her photographers so there was a pile of letters that gave insight into him. The letters also gave me some addresses so I started writing letters.

This was old-school research. You embarked on it just before the web was launched in 1989.

– In many ways, I have a nostalgia for those days when researching meant picking through books, going through telephone directories, and trying to make connections, which often took an awful lot of time. It was like embarking on a detective story, to discover things about people who had left no trace.

I was very lucky that my boss at *Vogue* was Alex Kroll, who was in charge of Condé Nast Books. He'd also been art director of *British Vogue* in the 1940s and was famously the only person that Lee Miller trusted to lay out the pages for her wonderful war photographs. Alex had a great memory and he could remember all kinds of things about Coffin. I was very fortunate that there were still people alive who knew a little bit about Coffin and from there I tried to connect the dots. Researching the book took quite a long time. I spoke to Alexander Liberman and he gave me some leads about who to talk to. I talked to art directors who had worked with him and I managed to track down his assistant, William Margerin. All those people put me in touch with somebody else so it became a sort of a daisy chain of contacts. I also wrote to as many of his sitters as I could, not just models, but also people he took portraits of, like Audrey Hepburn, Gore Vidal and Truman Capote. I received some very informative and encouraging replies from people. Gore Vidal especially was incredibly helpful.

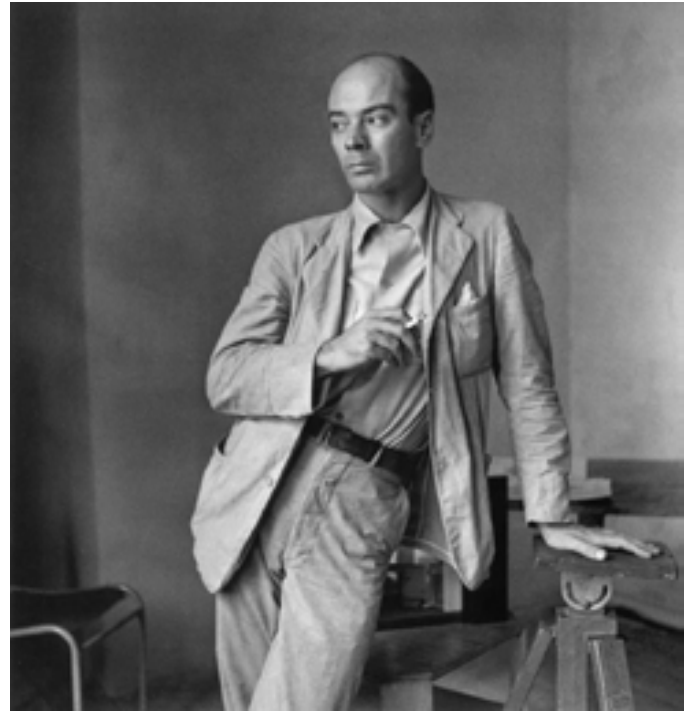
Coffin was always very secretive about his early years and relished in the many misleading stories that sprung up around him, including his age. Your research revealed that

he had been born in Illinois in 1913, that his father had set up a business, supplying silk to the undertaking industry, taking his son with him on buying trips to Europe and so exposed him to the beauty of Paris and Rome. Later on, he studied art at the Art Institute, Pasadena, but his father insisted he prepare himself for a career in business. He graduated in finance from UCLA in 1935. I assume a lot of that information came from Dwight Coffin, his cousin, whom you interviewed. You also dedicated the book to him. How did you track him down?

– I didn't actually. He got in touch with me. He'd heard about this young guy in London, trying to do some work on his cousin and contacted me via the National Portrait Gallery. He was able to fill in an awful lot of detail about Coffin's early life, how the family reacted to his fame and his sexuality. Dwight was a remarkable man, like Clifford Coffin himself.

Having graduated from UCLA, what did he do?

– He had a series of jobs, he worked at the front desk in a hotel, did a stint at an advertising agency, then at MGM. He moved to New York in 1938 or 39 and took up a post as a financial analyst at Texaco. According to Dwight, it was a lonely time for him and that was when he decided to become a photographer. He greatly admired the photography in *Vogue* and felt it would be a good place to start. He bought a cheap camera, put together



a portfolio and sought out an art director at *Vogue*, possibly Alexander Liberman, who kindly advised him to buy a new camera, concentrate on one subject, the cityscapes of New York, and come back and see him in six months. Alongside, he also took classes run by George Platt Lynes. When the war broke out, many photographers were drafted. Coffin was offered the chance to work at *Vogue* on a three-month trial base, without salary, and took it.

His first photographs for American *Vogue* appeared in 1944. He quickly immersed himself in fashion. Just two years later, he was dispatched to London.

– The work he produced was of a strikingly high standard and records show that his workload was immense. During the two years he was in London, he organised 364 fashion and portrait sittings, and for a period in 1947, he was almost singlehandedly keeping British *Vogue* creatively alive.

Unlike Deakin, for whom shooting fashion was a job, Coffin really loved fashion.

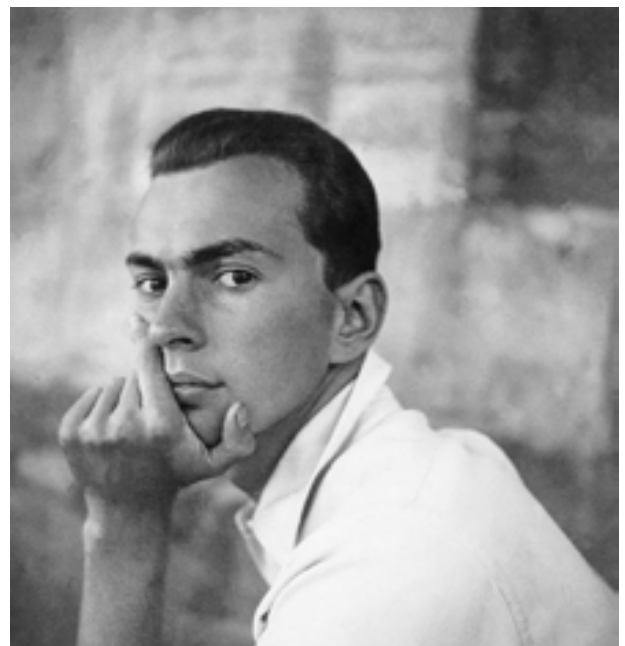
– He did, and he was obsessed with every detail, the clothes, the makeup, the hair, the light, the pose and he simply didn't recognise limits. Simone Eyrard, who worked in the Paris studio, recalled an incident when the authorities at the Gare St Lazare refused his request to halt a passenger train as it pulled into the station, just so he could take a few shots on the platform. The refusal triggered a nervous crisis in Coffin. Simone Eyrard informed me.

Top. **Clifford Coffin.** *Self-portrait, The Old Vic Theatre, London, 27 August 1947, gelatin silver print.* Archives of British Vogue.

© The Condé Nast Publications Ltd.

Left. **Clifford Coffin.** *Unknown models, 1949.* Archives of British Vogue.

© The Condé Nast Publications Ltd.



When and why did he stop taking fashion photographs?

– I think photographers have their moment and then the fashion world moves on. His style began to look dated. He delighted in the opulence of 50s Couture and that was at odds with how the fashions of the '60s were shaping up. Another factor would have been Coffin's personality. It's quite likely that he had some sort of falling out with *Vogue*. Having left *Vogue*, he went into advertising photography. This was during the *Mad Men* era. It was a very, very lucrative area of photography.

One chapter in the Clifford Coffin story concerns the tool he invented, the ring light, which would inspire the ring flash.

– The story is that he got the idea after a visit to his dentist. To get a closer look, the dentist

brought out an array of lights, a ring of light bulbs placed on a stand. He told Coffin that it eliminated all the shadows, enabling him to see properly. Coffin picked up the idea and adapted it for his photography. His ring light not only eliminated all shadows but also created a fine halo, which the editors immediately loved as it highlighted the outlines of the garments. Sometime in the 1960s, Helmut Newton discovered Coffin's contraption in a cupboard at the studios of French *Vogue*. Newton, along with David Bailey, started using a ring flash, as did Nick Knight in the '90s but the idea was Coffin's.

He also produced another body of work, of male nudes.

– That was later in his life. He was kind of riffing on his mentor and tutor George Platt Lynes who produced a large amount of male nude photographs. One of his Coffin's properties was burgled and many of those prints were stolen. It filled him with absolute horror that they might turn up somewhere and then be traced back to him. He panicked and destroyed what remained of that work. Jack Woody, the publisher of Twelvetreets Books, came across a cache of Coffin's nudes, but it didn't result in a book. Very little of that work has emerged.

Top left. **Clifford Coffin.** *Truman Capote*, gelatin silver print, 1948. Archives of British Vogue. © The Condé Nast Publications Ltd.

Top right. **Clifford Coffin.** *Gore Vidal*, gelatin silver print, 1946. Archives of British Vogue. © The Condé Nast Publications Ltd.

Left. **Clifford Coffin.** *Helen Connor*, partial gelatin silver contact sheet, 1954. Archives of British Vogue. © The Condé Nast Publications Ltd. **Clifford Coffin's** ring light. As the light worked best in close-up, it all but blinded his models. The heat was tremendous, on a par with two electric fires.



What are you working on at the moment?

– I'm working on another Cecil Beaton show for the National Portrait Gallery. I did a Beaton show for the gallery in 2020, *Cecil Beaton's Bright Young Things*. It closed after a week due to the pandemic. This is a much larger show. It starts in the 1920s, goes to the end of the 1950s. The show opens in October 2025.

On the subject of Beaton. There's a photograph of him, sitting on a small mountain of his prints, which along with all other prints at *British Vogue*, were pulped in 1942 as part of the war effort. But in addition to Coffin and Deakin material, you also found some pre-1942 prints that day in 1986.

– Yes, I came across an old cardboard box where somebody had scrawled "Atoms of the past". I carefully opened it and discovered a treasure of pre-1942 prints, including early 1920s images by Adolph de Meyer and others. I have no idea what "Atoms of the past" referred to. Perhaps there had been a plan to do a book at some stage. In any case, they were lucky survivors. A truly great find.

Coffin made a lot of money from advertising and was able to retire in the mid-60s. And yet, at the time of his death in 1972, he was living in a room at the YMCA in Pasadena. Did he simply self-destruct?

– There are still an awful lot of things we don't know about him. For a time, he was working as a part-time librarian at New York University. He was also very active on the stock market Dwight Coffin told me. He also told me that Coffin was a habitual user of LSD and minor hallucinogens, though he knew they weren't very good for him. He lost control of his addiction. Did he lose his money on the stock market? Did he give it away? Or simply spend it? Dwight didn't know. He's still a mystery. The interesting is, after I did the show and the book in 1997, I was inundated with letters from people who had known Coffin, with stories about what he had done and things he had said, testifying to his brilliance and extreme behaviour. If I were to rewrite the book, I would be able to fill at least some of the gaps.



Top. **Clifford Coffin.** *Unknown model*, gelatin silver print, 1948.
Archives of British Vogue. © The Condé Nast Publications Ltd.

Bottom. **Clifford Coffin.** *Unknown model*, gelatin silver print, 1946.
Archives of British Vogue. © The Condé Nast Publications Ltd.

The Robert Cornelius Daguerreotype Database Project

With Rachel Wetzel

It has become known as “The world’s first selfie”. In October or November of 1839, Robert Cornelius (1809-1893) set up his camera in the backyard of the family business, Cornelius and Son, Philadelphia, the lighting company that had lit up the city, to take his famous self-portrait. His extant Daguerreotypes, numbering around 60, have been the focus of intense research, resulting in the Robert Cornelius Daguerreotype Database Project, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and published by the Library of Congress in 2019. The complete dataset can be accessed here, www.loc.gov/item/2019667241

The purpose of the project was to “gain a better understanding of the changes made to Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre’s original formula for making the Daguerreotype, through one cohesive body of work from the experimental era of photography. Cornelius was specifically identified because his Daguerreotype portraits have distinct attributes and he worked through all of the major changes made to the Daguerreotype process during the first three years of its public use.” The dataset includes detailed information on each Daguerreotype, provenance, measurements, cases, frames or other housing, glass, plate construction, poses, lighting direction, and if applicable, previous treatments, exhibition history, and scientific analysis, if the plates had been sensitized with iodine only (single sensitisation) or using iodine and bromine (multiple sensitisation), if they were gilded (toned using gold chloride) or not.

The project also added 25 plates to Cornelius’ oeuvre, and shed light on the fascinating story of early photography, not just in Philadelphia but in the US. On 22 October 1839, Joseph Saxton made a Daguerreotype in Philadelphia, now known as the oldest extant Daguerreotype in the country. In search of better plates, he sought out Cornelius, a highly skilled metalworker, who himself took up Daguerreotype photography, using an improvised Camera Obscura.

Shortly thereafter, Cornelius teamed up with Dr Paul Beck Goddard, a renowned chemist and physician, who became his silent partner. Goddard had been experimenting with the use of bromine as an accelerant while Cornelius had been perfecting plate polishing techniques, and together they made the Daguerreotype viable for portraiture. On 6 May 1840, Cornelius opened his first studio in Philadelphia, and then a second studio

on 16 July the following year. In 1842, he closed the studios, giving up photography as a profession.

The dataset was compiled by Rachel Wetzel, who by her admission is “obsessed with early photography from Philadelphia”. Wetzel is currently working on a book about Cornelius. She took up her position as conservator at the Library of Congress in 2019. Before that, she worked at the Conservation Center for Art Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia, and that was where the idea for the database project was sown, she tells me.



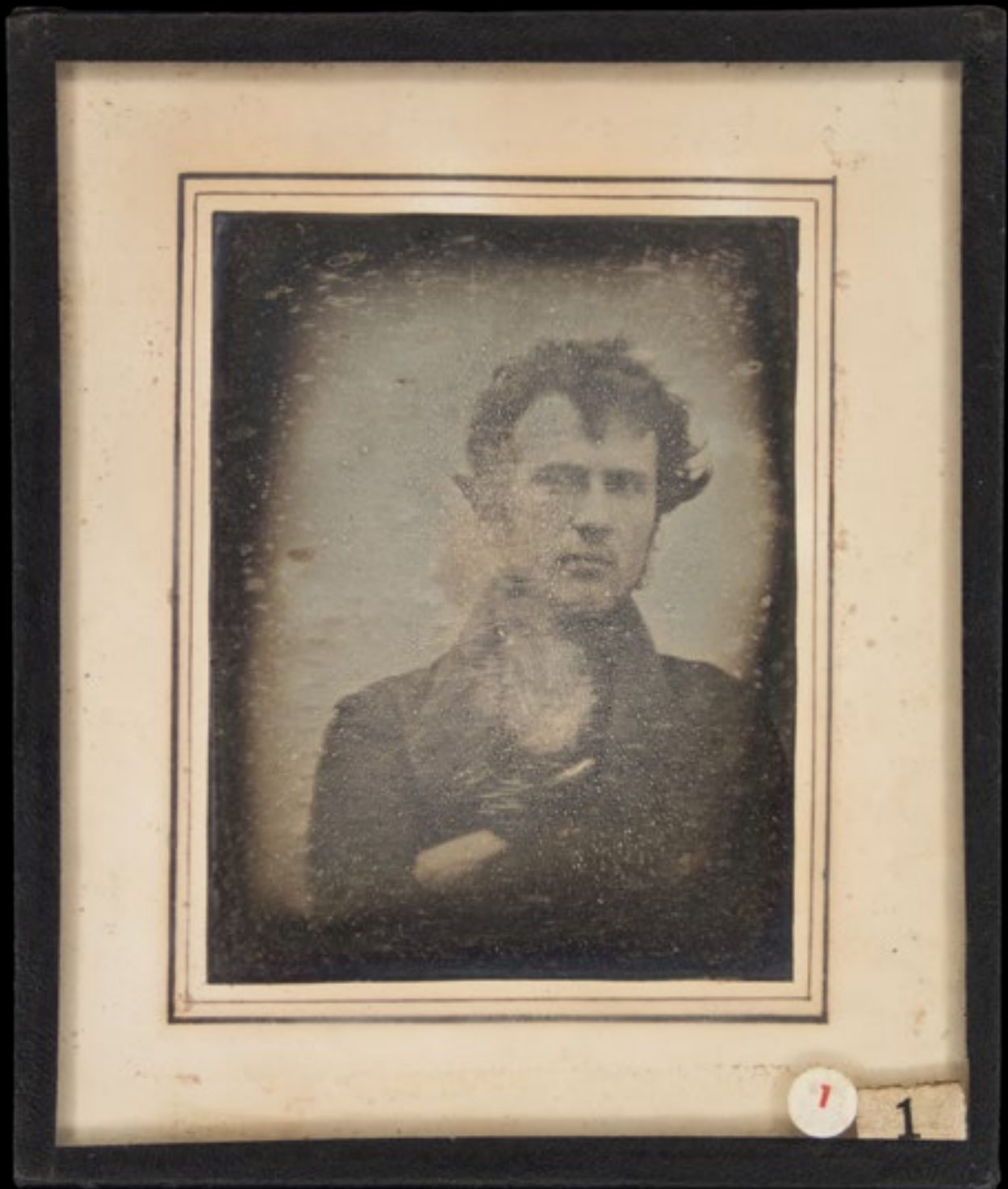
– It all started when a conservator at the American Philosophical Society brought two Robert Cornelius Daguerreotypes to show me. Portraits of Dr Paul Beck Goddard and Pierre Etienne DuPonceau. She said, “I remember looking at these 10 years ago, and they seem to have degraded. Can you treat them?”

I told her it was not advisable, as these were some of the earliest Daguerreotypes made in the country. I agreed, however, to do a thorough examination, look at them under a microscope, use different lighting techniques, and investigate if there were treatment possibilities, if any. The two portraits already had a treatment history. Daguerreotypes have been treated since the 19th century. Back then, they used potassium cyanide to remove silver tarnish. In the 1950s, a Silver Dip material called Thiourea was introduced. These two had been cleaned with Thiourea at the Smithsonian in 1978, and very aggressively. The Thiourea took the tarnish off but also left a bad foggy haze on them. That’s why I was

hesitant to offer her any treatment because these were early, ungilded Daguerreotypes and had already been treated. What I know about Thiourea from other studies is that it’s pretty much irreversible. I felt like I had a conservation problem to solve and that was how the project began.

How did you progress from there?

– I started looking at other Cornelius Daguerreotypes. This was early Philadelphia photography and there were a lot of collections in neighbouring institutions. I also talked to Adrienne Lundgren, Senior Photograph Conservator at the Library of Congress, which has the largest collection of Cornelius Daguerreotypes anywhere. I asked her what kind of treatment they were doing on ungilded daguerreotypes and was told that they were not intervening due to the lack of research and information. Daguerreotypes were gilded after the first two years of the existence of the process, so they make up a small fraction of the extant daguerreotypes. Frustrated with this overlooked area of Daguerreotypy, Adrienne and I decided to assemble a team of experts to tackle this subject. The collaborative group included photograph conservator Andrew Robb, curators William Stapp, Beverly Brannan, and Sarah Weatherwax, conservation scientist Edward Vicenzi, and modern-day Daguerreotypist Mike Robinson. The meeting was held in Washington DC and we decided to create a database. It kind of fell in my lap to lead the project because I was the only non-government employee. I worked for a non-profit organisation, and as such, I could seek funding from institutions like the National Endowment



"The world's first selfie." **Robert Cornelius**. *Self-portrait*, sixth plate Daguerreotype, October or November 1839. Library of Congress.



for the Humanities. I wrote the proposal and we got the funding. What started out as a conservation conundrum turned into this everlasting research project. As the database is held by the Library of Congress, it's there permanently and can be accessed by anyone. I can update it as new information comes in or when new discoveries are made.

Robert Cornelius was a skilled metal worker. How did he become a Daguerreotypist?

– That is still to be figured out exactly! The photo history and writings from that time are pretty scant. The story is that Cornelius was approached by Joseph Saxton who worked at the US Mint, that Saxton was trying to make Daguerreotypes and that he went to Cornelius to get better plates. There is evidence the two men were experimenting together with the Daguerreotype in October of 1839 and while I have seen the Saxton Daguerreotype, I have not inspected the bare plate myself to see if it is the same composition as the plates that Cornelius was using. Saxton was said to have pounded down coins to make his plate, but knowing what I do about Daguerreotype plate stock, this wouldn't be possible due to impurities in the metal. Perhaps he tried this unsuccessfully, and that's when he reached out to Cornelius.

Saxton and Cornelius moved incredibly fast. They made their first Daguerreotypes just a few months after Daguerre made his formula public, in August 1839. Knowledge about it reached the US on 10 September, when the Great Western steamship docked in New York harbour, with copies of *London Globe*, which had a description of the process.

– As I've been researching all this, I have found the timeframes almost impossible. There were people in New York who made

Daguerreotypes before Cornelius, just a week after the description of Daguerre's process arrived in the city. And remember, they couldn't go to a store to buy a camera, chemicals and plates. They just cobbled together the cameras and all the materials, including darkroom apparatus. A lot of these early plates don't exist anymore so it's really hard to study the photography that was made in 1839, but when you look at what does remain, like the self-portrait and how exquisite that is, you can tell Cornelius and the other Americans let nothing deter them from exceeding and advancing Daguerre's process.

They brought the technology forward and were the first to use bromine as an accelerant. Did they publish their discovery?

– They kept it a secret and didn't want to let other people in on it. There's a story, I'm not sure where it came from, that they had an apprentice in the studio, who went to New York, thinking that everybody knew about bromine, talked about what was a secret, whereupon other people started using it. But if you read the writings of John Johnson about the Wolcott and Johnson studio, they describe having tried bromine, but that it wasn't successful for them. Cornelius and Goddard didn't publish their discovery. They talked about it at a meeting at the American Philosophical Society but that was towards the end of the studio lifetime. They made several improvements to the process but Cornelius' biggest contribution was his primary skill set as a metal worker. His plates are simply extraordinary. I recently read the Scovill Company archives. They make clear that Cornelius, Morse and other Daguerreians were complaining about the poor-quality plate stock in 1839. Others continued to complain, but Cornelius stopped. He took something that was not the highest quality, not the ideal French plate, and was able to make it into something special, with his finishing

Top left. **Robert Cornelius.** *Pierre Etienne DuPonceau*, sixth plate Daguerreotype, May 1840. American Philosophical Society.

Top right. **Robert Cornelius.** *Dr Paul Beck Goddard*, sixth plate Daguerreotype, December 1839. American Philosophical Society.



1891

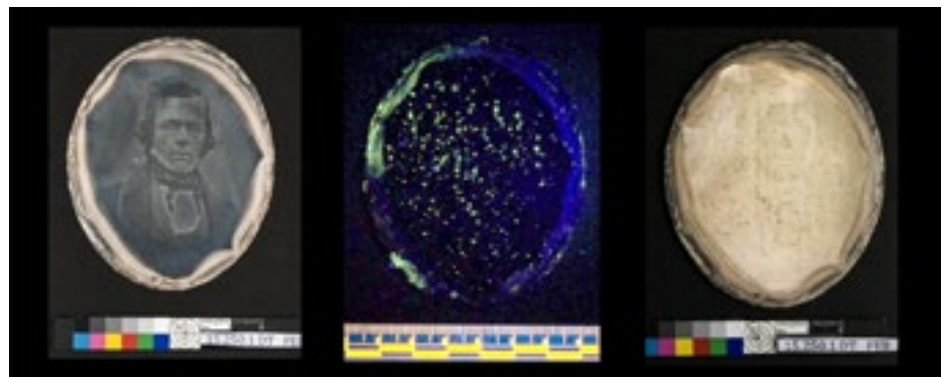


2022

The Robert Cornelius self-portrait as it appeared in 1891 before cleaning and in 2022. Illustration from Library of Congress PDF, *Preserving the Legacy of Robert Cornelius: Daguerreotype Research at LOC*.

Robert Cornelius.

Dr Paul Beck Goddard. The sixth plate Daguerreotype was cleaned at the Smithsonian in 1978, “very aggressively”, with Thiourea. “The Thiourea took the tarnish off but also left a bad foggy haze on them.” Illustration from Library of Congress PDF, *Preserving the Legacy of Robert Cornelius: Daguerreotype Research at LOC*.



Normal illumination

Ultraviolet C illumination

Specular illumination

techniques and the way he manipulated and polished the plate. Sure, the application of bromine was important but some of his Daguerreotypes are just sensitized with iodine and they are exquisite. His platemaking skills were his superpower.

Cornelius is known for his portraits but there’s an extant street view. Did he produce other street views? Landscapes? Still lifes?

– He did but they have been lost. One of the accounts of the studio describes several Daguerreotypes on the walls, that there was one of the Catholic Church across the street from the US Mint, probably taken when he and Saxton were experimenting together. There is a lithograph, made in 1903, of that church, with a text at the bottom, stating that it’s based on a Daguerreotype by Cornelius from 1840. The account also mentions a view of a hotel and panoramic views of the city but they have sadly been lost or perhaps not yet uncovered.

Going through the portraits, I’m struck by the relaxed poses and expressions.

– In the progression of the studio work of Cornelius, you can see how he evolved, that the sitters are getting more comfortable, sometimes playful even. Another great thing about this project is that I’ve met four of Cornelius’ descendants. One of them has a genealogy and a history, running to several volumes, written

by his grandfather, Cornelius’ grandson. It has accounts of what he was like as a person. Apparently, he was very funny. He was a ventriloquist and he was into playing pranks and practical jokes. Maybe there was something about his personality that made the sitters relax. When you start researching somebody, you just hope you’re not going to dig up something really terrible about them. Everything I’ve read about Cornelius has been very favourable. I think he was a very nice person.

Is the famous self-portrait mentioned anywhere in the literature or in letters?

– There are mentions that are interesting. Julius Sachse was a collector of photography and prints in Philadelphia. He wrote a series of essays on the Philadelphia share in the history of photography, published in the 1890s in *The American Journal of Photography*. His father, John Frederick Sachse, was a lamp designer at the Cornelius, Baker & Co. When you look at photography history, it’s very New York-centric, but so many things happened in Philadelphia that are significant to the early history of American photography. Sachse put forth statements that were more than a little outrageous, and they definitely caused a lot of rifts and rebuttals. I sometimes question what he writes, especially his intimate knowledge of Cornelius that he quotes from correspondence. In one letter, he reports Cornelius recounting the self-portrait. He talks about being in



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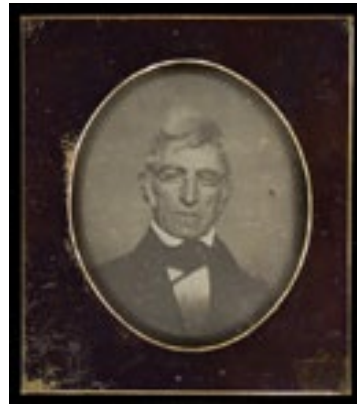
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Robert Cornelius.

1. *John Henry Frederick Sachse*, Half-length Daguerreotype portrait, 1842.
2. *Isaiah Lukens*, sixth plate Daguerreotype, 1840.
3. *James Curtis Booth*, sixth plate Daguerreotype, 1840.
4. *William Robinson Grant*, sixth plate Daguerreotype, 1840.
5. *Emlen Cresson*, sixth plate Daguerreotype, 1840.
6. *William McAllister Jr.*, sixth plate Daguerreotype, May 1840.

Library of Congress.

the backyard of the company showroom, taking the picture by himself, explaining that he's crooked in the image because he couldn't tell where the frame was. To me that solidifies that it was a self-portrait, not made with the help of an assistant. Before I started on my research, I often wondered if that and other stories were legitimate, or if Sachse was merely reiterating some tales he had grown up with but when I met one of the descendants, she showed me the corresponding letters between Sachse and Cornelius. Cornelius doesn't give a date for the self-portrait but we know that he started making Daguerreotypes in October 1839. There is a portrait of Dr Paul Goddard, from 8 December 1839. It had to come before that portrait and after he started. So that's why the date for the self-portrait is October or November 1839.

He opened his first studio in 1840, the second one in 41. Was he working full time as a Daguerreotypist or was it a sideline?

– I think it was a sideline. People describe how he was busy making Daguerreotypes but I also have records of him inventing and patenting gas lamp fixtures during the years when the studios were open. Goddard was supposed to be his silent partner, and I don't know how much he was in the studio taking photographs. I would imagine that Cornelius had other people in the studio because of the huge workload. My dream would be to find a datebook or studio log, to find out just how many people sat for him in the studio. By now, I'm up to some 60 Daguerreotypes by Cornelius. It may not seem like much but compared to other early Daguerreotypists it's a lot.



When and why did Cornelius close his studio? Was there too much competition in Philadelphia?

– As far as I can tell, he closed it in March 1843. During the pandemic, I put together a dataset on the Philadelphia Daguerreotype studios, going through newspapers and business directories. He didn't have a whole lot of competition in 1842. There were seven Daguerreotype studios and ten Daguerreotypists in Philadelphia. My guess is that the lighting business was in greater need and perhaps there was pressure from the family as well.

But he made some Daguerreotypes after he closed his studio, of chemist Martin Hans Boyé conducting an experiment.

– He made them in December of 1843, and they were used as studies to make woodblock prints for reproduction in *The Encyclopedia of Chemistry*. They were made on French plate stock and they have the LBB & Co hallmark, which is quite different from all of Cornelius' studio plates which lack hallmarks and were made on American clad metal. As he had long shuttered his doors, I am not certain if they were taken in what was his previous studio or somewhere else.

In 1983-1984, there was an exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery, Washington DC, of 37 Daguerreotypes by Cornelius, and his colleagues in Philadelphia, curated by William Stapp, with an accompanying catalogue. The works were also analysed scientifically. How has the science progressed since then?

– The analysis Susan Barger did in 1982 was pretty cutting-edge. Before that, Alice Swan, who was at the Eastman House, had done analysis, using a scanning electron microscope to look at the Daguerreotypes. The catalogue resume is very impressive.



Left. **Robert Cornelius.** *Martin Hans Boyé*, sixth plate Daguerreotype, December 1843. Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Martin Hans Boyé (1812-1907) was a Danish-born chemist. At the age of 24, he emigrated to New York before settling in Philadelphia.

Right. **Robert Cornelius.** *View of Eighth Street and Market Street*, sixth plate Daguerreotype, 1840. Library of Congress.

You just don't find that kind of information in other catalogues about photography. Still, it was the early '80s, pre-computer. The equipment has evolved. Right now, I'm collaborating with the Museum of American History, which is part of the Smithsonian. They own 26 early plates by Henry Fitz, Jr. and some others by Walter Rogers Johnson, John William Draper, and Samuel Morse from the first two years of photography. Scientists Edward Vicenzi and Thomas Lam at the Smithsonian MCI and we're looking at all the Daguerreotypes, using mapping XRF and scanning electron microscope, primarily looking at the plate stock. It's fascinating to see how different each person's materials were and what they used to make a photograph. We can visualize with the software and we are also developing some other techniques, to look at the thickness of the plate, to see how thick the copper layer is versus the silver, the tarnish and the gilding, and that couldn't have been accomplished in 1982.

You're going to be with Robert Cornelius for a while yet?

– Yes, as I am currently writing a book on Cornelius for the Library of Congress. Who knew? I worked at the Conservation Center for Art Historic Artifacts for 15 years. I didn't research anything else that came across my desk. I don't know what it was about these two Daguerreotypes that spoke to me but years later, they're still speaking.

The Boris Bennett Studio

With Michael Greisman

All images from *Vintage Glamour in London's East End*, courtesy of Michael Greisman and Frank Harris.

Wedding photographers do not have a prominent place in the photography history books. Had it not been for Michael Greisman and Frank Harris' book *Vintage Glamour in London's East End* (2014), the Boris Bennett Studio would probably have been forgotten. By the world at large that is. He hasn't been forgotten by London's Jewish community where he became a legend. There was even a saying in the community, "If you haven't got a Boris Bennett wedding photograph, you're not married." And Bennett turned the sessions into unforgettable experiences, as Michael Greisman explains.

– He brought Hollywood glamour to the East End, in a truly spectacular way. He had a large shop front with neon lights, the patrons were greeted by a commissionaire, dressed in an elegant uniform, and the Art Deco interior was like something out of a film. He made them feel like a million dollars on the most important day of their lives.

Like many of those he photographed, Boris Bennett, né Sokhatetchevsky, came from Eastern Europe. According to a biography by his eldest son, Michael Bennett, he was born in 1900 in Ozorków in Poland, the seventh of eight children. When he was five, the family moved to Łódź and started a small textile factory. Poverty was widespread, anti-Semitism was on the rise, and at the age of 18, he moved to Paris, with a view to eventually settling in the US. In Paris, he took a variety of jobs before being employed by a branch of a German company that specialised in printing photographs on brooches, cameos, and earrings. In 1922, he moved to London as an agent for the company. Within 18 months, he had saved enough money to realise his childhood dream, of becoming a photographer with his own studio. He named it The Parisienne Studio. Greisman continues.

– It was a short-lived venture. It was evident that he needed to improve his technical skills, so he moved to Leeds, then Glasgow, and took a number of courses in photography. In 1927, he returned to London and opened a studio just off Whitechapel Road in London's East End. He moved premises several times. In 1934, he purchased 14 Whitechapel Road, a former pub. He refurbished it completely and that became the famous Boris Bennett studio.

Vintage Glamour in London's East End is a gripping document of a community that has since dispersed. I started by asking Greisman how the book project began.

– I'm an amateur photographer and black and white printer. I belonged to a photography group, and we used to meet once a month to share our work. We also had guest speakers sometimes and one of the speakers was Michael Bennett, Boris Bennett's

eldest son. He gave a wonderful talk about his father's work. The story was simply fascinating. The Jewish Museum in London had shown a retrospective of his work in the late '70s and produced a little booklet but it was of very poor quality and didn't do justice to his wonderful images. After the talk, I asked Michael, "How come nobody's done a high-quality photo book about your father's work? The images are absolutely wonderful." He told me that he didn't have the time and that he was too old to do it. I asked if he would be interested in me doing the book, and he agreed on the spot.

What was the next step?

– Frank Harris, a friend of mine and a fellow amateur photographer, is very well-connected within the Jewish community in North London and that enabled us to find the first Boris Bennett photographs. We also did some advertising, and then it all grew and grew. Somebody knew somebody else who had photographs, and we visited hundreds of families, to make high-resolution scans of their Boris Bennett photographs and write down their stories. We tried to get as much biographical information about the people in the photographs as possible to make the images come alive. What they had experienced before the photographs were taken and later on, during and after the war.

Had Boris Bennett not left his archive for prosperity?

– No, and there were no negatives at all. Boris used glass plates and they had all been destroyed. Michael Bennett had a few portraits but apart from one, there were no names attached to them, and we wanted to only use pictures of people that could be identified.

The only portrait the Bennett family owned that had a name attached was of Fanny Borona, and it was so beautiful that it was chosen for the front cover of the book. There were no biographical details, but we did a lot of research. It turned out that she was also known as Felice Flatto. She was a shop assistant and married Morris Winter, a tailor's cutter, on the 1st of May 1932, at the Great Synagogue, Dukes Place, in the City of London. She died aged eighty-eight on the 27th of January 1996, in Hove, after an unspecified accident. Anyway, that's how it all got started. The work took about four years. I did all the restoration work on the photos, put the whole thing together and found a publisher who was very keen to take it on.

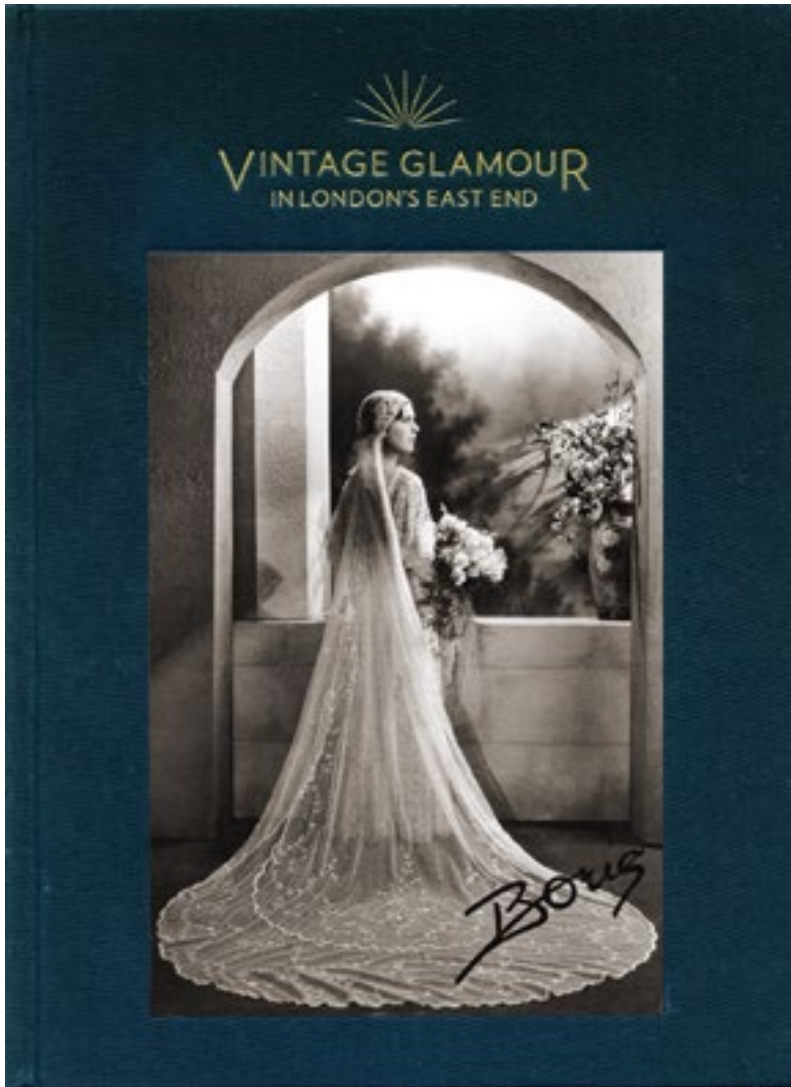
When you say that you worked on the images, you mean digitally, I assume?

– Yes, there was only one copy of the photographs, held by the respective families. I didn't want them to send the photographs to me in case they got lost or damaged. I went to their homes with my high-resolution scanner and then started working on



Boris Bennett. Israel "Victor" Pliskin and Elsie Pliskin, first cousins, aged 9 and 6, at the wedding of Minnie Pliskin, a milliner, and Barnett Cooklin, a cabinet maker, on 11 December 1932. Victor's winged collar was specially made by the outfitters Mays in Whitechapel Road. Gelatin silver print.





the digital files. Some of the photographs were in pretty rough condition, they had tears or stains, and I wanted them to look just as good as when they left Boris Bennett's studio.

He opened the famous studio in 1934. Prior to that, in 1930, he married Juliet Vines.

– They met in 1929, when she came to the studio, requesting a passport photograph. It wasn't a service he provided, but he fell in love with her at first sight. They went on to have four children. She worked with him in the studio, but he was the photographer. She dealt with the management side of the business, did all the ordering, dealt with booking contracts and made sure the clients arrived on time and in the right order.

Vintage Glamour in London's East End. The cover shows Fanny Borona, also known as Felice Flatto. She was a shop assistant and married Morris Winter, a tailor's cutter, on the 1st of May 1932, at the Great Synagogue, Dukes Place, in the City of London.

The Boris Bennett studio really stood out.

– That's how he built up his reputation. It had neon lights at the front and large shop windows with beautifully framed photographs. The windows were illuminated at night, so the studio certainly got noticed. He spent a lot of money and resources on the studio to make it look like a film set, bringing a bit of Hollywood glamour to East London. There wasn't anything else that looked remotely like it in the rest of the area.

The East End was traditionally an area of immigrants, starting I think with the Huguenots, protestants who had fled from France and Wallonia, present-day Southern Belgium. When did Jewish people start settling there?

– There have been Jewish people in the East End for hundreds of years, but the first real wave came from Eastern Europe at the end of the 1860s. The second wave came at the beginning of the 20th century. My immigrant grandparents came from Lithuania and settled in the East End in 1913. It was inexpensive to live there, and there was work in the factories and businesses. There was a large Jewish community in the East End until after the Second World War when a large number of families moved to the London suburbs.

The captions that accompany the images in the book make clear that many had fled pogroms. Others would lose family members in the Nazi extermination camps. How were they received in the East End? Was there much racism?

– There was always some racism of course, but the real problems emerged in the 1930s, with antisemitic attacks, fired on by Oswald Mosley's fascists. But still, life went on.

Boris Bennett provided the sets and the couples and families were all very elegantly dressed.

– As I found out, a lot of the dresses you see in the wedding photographs were actually made by the people themselves, or by family members, as so many were in the clothing business. They couldn't afford to go out and buy new dresses, so they made their own. They would tear pages out of fashion magazines and copy them. As is evident in the photographs, they made wonderful dresses. Boris Bennett had a wonderful sense of style. It permeated everything he did. Julia's wedding dress was



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1. Boris Studio on 14 Whitechapel Road. Scan from undated press clipping.

2. **Boris Bennett.** Self-portrait with Big Bertha, his Kodak plate camera. Gelatin silver print.

3. **Boris Bennett.** Sidney Long, commissionaire at the at 14 Whitechapel Road. Gelatin silver print.

4. **Boris Bennett.** Isabel "Belle" da Costa and Philip "Tubby" Lolosky were married on 8 May 1930 at the Great Synagogue in Dukes Place. Tubby was a professional boxer, and at the time, served an apprenticeship as a process engraver. During his boxing career, from 1925 to 1934, he had 37 fights and won 24. Belle was a dancer and performed at the London Palladium as one of the Tiller Girls. She also modelled hats and gloves. Seen to the left of the bride are her parents, Jacob and Rose da Costa. To the right of the groom are his parents, Rachel and Barnet Lolosky. Gelatin silver print.

5. **Boris Bennett.** Boris Bennett and Julia Vines, né Vigonsky, were married on 4 June 1930, at the New Road Synagogue in Whitechapel. The dress, made of white and pink satin, was designed by Boris himself. Gelatin silver print.



designed by Boris himself. He was a very artistic man and knew how to present his images. He always made sure that the men were dressed in evening suits, with a handkerchief sticking out of the top pocket, that the white cuffs were showing and that the groom always stood on the right side of the bride. The bride normally had a train, and if she didn't have a train, the studio could provide one.

He was very good on detail. Like the commissionaire, who greeted the patrons as if they were Hollywood stars.

– His name was Sidney Long. Boris took a great portrait of him. He was somebody who was out of work. Walking down Whitechapel Road one day, he saw Boris unloading a lorry load of supplies and asked. “Do you have a job for me?” Boris and Julia trained him to be a commissionaire and put him in a

Boris Bennett. The couples were sometimes photographed singly. Anne Cohen and David Lewis were married on 2 September 1935 at the Great Synagogue, Dukes Place. Both were born in the UK. Anne's parents came from Russia, David's from Poland.

At the time of their wedding, Anne was couturier making wedding dresses, including her own, from silver lamé and ostrich feathers, dyed blue.

David had a cloth business. After the outbreak of the war, he joined the fire services. Hand-coloured gelatin silver print.



wonderful uniform. He added an important touch to the whole proceedings. It wasn't all for show. Sidney Long had an important job to do. He made sure the cars arrived at the right time, in the right order, and would usher the couples and their families into the studio. Also, there would be huge crowds outside the studio to see the couples, and Sidney Long often had to hold them back. Most weddings took place

on a Sunday and at peak periods, Boris would photograph up to 40 weddings in a day.

He once claimed to have taken 150 000 wedding photographs. Despite the immense workload, he worked alone in the studio.

– Yes, he would start at 8 am and often finish at 7 pm. After that, he headed down to the darkroom in the basement to develop the glass negatives and make prints, often making several until he was pleased with the result. In some cases, a couple would have a photograph of themselves together, photographs of them singly, then family members, then all of them together, so there might be six or seven different photographs. Some people would spend a bit of extra money and have the photographs hand coloured. Boris employed some ladies who were wonderful at hand colouring. His reputation grew and grew and he opened several studios in London's West End, on Oxford Street, Bond Street, Marble Arch, Leicester Square and the Strand.

Boris Bennett. Fay Sirett married Judah Oberman in June 1936, at the Great Synagogue, Dukes Place. Fay was a machinist, Judah was a manufacturer of ladies blouses. During WWII, he served in Egypt as a Sergeant in the British Army. Gelatin silver print.

He closed the studio in 14 Whitechapel Road in 1950, why was that?

– Boris Bennett was really one of the last great studio wedding photographers. He worked with his large studio camera, Big Bertha, as he called it. After the war, with the advent of the small portable camera, that sort of studio photography went into its decline. Instead, people had their wedding photographs taken outside churches, at receptions etc. It was only very, very wealthy people who still wanted to have their wedding photographs taken in studios and so in 1950, he closed the studio on 14 Whitechapel Road. Still, he remained active as a photographer in the other studios. He branched out and became a portrait photographer. He also had a contract with the British Armed Services to take portraits of the personnel. That lasted a few years. After that, he changed tack. He closed the studios and opened a camera shop, Bennett Cameras, catering to the huge market for 35-mm cameras. The shop became a nationwide chain, and then he sold it to Dixon's, the big retailer, in 1963. After that, he launched a very successful career as a financier. One shop remained though, in Golders Green in North London. It was run by his daughter, Ruth Hilton, up until some 15 years ago.

What reactions did you have to the book?

Did people come forward after that?

– The publishers did two press launches, and they were absolutely packed. They were full of people who knew about Boris, had memories of him and wanted to talk about him. Even long after the book was published, I'm still getting people contacting me, asking me if I would want to scan their pictures and I always oblige. I've built up a large archive of Boris Bennett photographs. Most of them never made it into the book. I had to limit myself to 125 images, but over those four years we worked on the book we collected around 700 photographs and stories and I have since added to those.

Of all the stories you collected, is there one that really stuck in your memory?

– There were so many, but one that has stayed with me is the story of Chaim Zytnik, who later changed his name to Henry Lewis. He was born in 1923, in Wierbcuzy, near Lublin in Poland. In WWII, his family was rounded up by the Nazis. His mother, brothers and sisters were sent to a ghetto in Tarnopol and were never seen again. Chaim and his father

were deported to a slave labour camp in Glomboczek, a stone quarry. He was separated from his father. With the help of some sympathetic Poles, he managed to escape. He made his way to a part of Poland that had been liberated by the Soviet Army where he joined the underground. In 1946, he was repatriated to Dzierzanow in Western Poland before settling in the UK in 1948. He worked for Boris Bennett for a year and then joined a manufacturer of surgical instruments before setting up his own property management company. In 1954, he married Lottie Kalmanovitch at Clapton Synagogue. They had one daughter, Sonia, and two sons, Howard and Mark. Chaim died in 1998 at Whipps Cross Hospital. His was a remarkable story.



Boris Bennett. Portrait of Chaim Zytnik, later changed to Henry Lewis, gelatin silver print, 1949.

The Julia Bennett Studio

With Sasha Belgrave

Art Direction student at University of the Arts, London

All images, excepted where indicated, by the Julia Bennett Studio, courtesy of the Archive of Modern Conflict.

Though Boris Bennett closed all his studios in the 1950s, the Bennett family's involvement in studio photography didn't end there. In spring of 2023, the Archive of Modern Conflict acquired the archive of the Julia Bennett Studio, with some 22 000 portraits, 20 000 black and white, the rest in colour. The archive is currently being researched by Sasha Belgrave, who tells me.

– Julia Bennett ran the studio, with her daughter Ruth Hilton acting as photographer. Unlike the carefully staged photographs that Boris Bennett took, the portraits in this archive are mostly pretty straightforward, many probably to be used for passports. But what makes the archive so interesting is that the vast majority of the portraits are of immigrants, who had come to London from Africa, India, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe. As such, it's a document of immigration to the UK in the post-war era.

By what route did the Julia Bennett archive come to the Archive of Modern Conflict?

– Originally, it was sold at a house clearance auction held by Marcus Rowell. For a while, it was with somebody in Soho, then with somebody in Peckham in South London. The Archive of Modern Conflict acquired it from Carl Williams Rare Books in London.

When and why did Julia Bennett open her own studio?

– Michael Bennett, Boris and Julia's son has been my main source of information. He told me that while Boris enjoyed his retirement, Julia quickly got bored, and so decided to open a camera shop with her daughter, Ruth Hilton. It was called Hilton Cameras, and located in Rathbone Place, just off Oxford Street in London's West End. A few years later, they moved to 73 Oxford Street and added the Julia Bennett Studio to their business. Michael wasn't sure about the exact dates. Ruth has sadly passed away, but the earliest portraits in the archive are from 1965 so I guess that was when the studio

started. The Oxford Street location was well-chosen, but the studio also attracted a lot of people simply through word of mouth. There were a lot of immigrants coming to London, and they were treated well at the studio.

It's a vast archive. What is the main focus of your research?

– I'm researching the images in the context of immigration and race relations. Two dates are relevant to this discussion. On 30 July 1948, Parliament passed the British Nationality Act, and on 25 October 1968, it passed the Race Relations Bill. The British Nationality Act gave people from the British colonies the right to live and work in Britain. They are referred to as the Windrush generation, named after the ship HMT Empire Windrush, which brought hundreds of immigrants from the Caribbean to Britain in 1948. It also applies to the immigrants who came on other ships until 1971. At the time, there was a severe shortage of labour in Britain. Many of those who came had been promised good job opportunities, only to find that it was a lie. The jobs that were available to them, such as porters, cleaners, manual labour etc. were poorly paid.

In 2017, the so-called Windrush scandal began to emerge, that the government had not properly recorded the details of people granted permission to stay and work in the UK, leading many to be mistreated, and even deported.

– The government was clamping down on immigration. Many of those who had come over as part of the Windrush generation were told that their documentation was no longer valid and that they were to be deported, despite having lived in the UK for decades. It was deeply dehumanising. They had been used as cheap labour and then told to return to the Caribbean decades later.

Prior to the Race Relations Bill being passed in 1968, it was perfectly legal for landlords to have signs in their windows saying "No Blacks, No Dogs, No Irish". Some employers had signs saying "No Coloureds".

– While still living in their countries of origin, many immigrants looked up to Britain. What many encountered once they got here, was in many cases deep-rooted racism, whether they were attacked verbally or physically. It must have been really difficult,



Mr O. Agbaje, of 27 Lytton Road, New Barnet, Hertfordshire.

COL graduation Master.

Date 23/5/78

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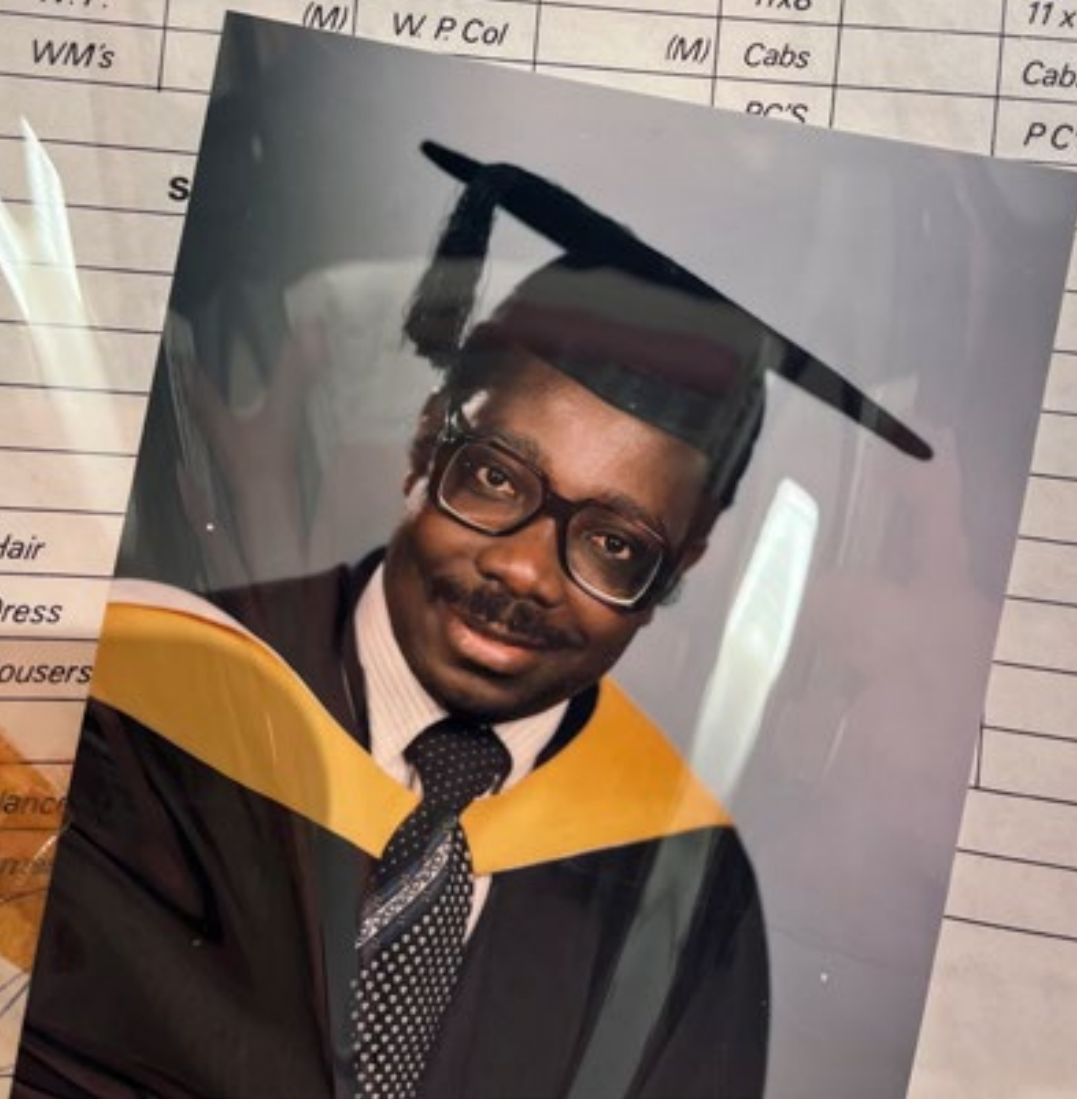
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Boris Bennett. Portrait of his wife Julia and their daughter Ruth, late 1930s. Reproduced in *Vintage Glamour in London's East End*.

As I understand it, there are also portraits in the archive that weren't taken in the studio in Oxford Street but in Lagos.

– According to Michael, it just so happened that some Nigerian Chiefs and clergymen came to the studio to have their portraits taken. They were very pleased with the results and told their friends and acquaintances back in Nigeria. After that, Ruth would be called up to travel to Lagos and take portraits. Initially, she would visit Lagos two to three times a year, then once a year. But even after the studio shut

suddenly being in an unfamiliar, very hostile environment. 1968 was also the year when the British right-wing politician Enoch Powell held his notorious “Rivers of Blood” speech. Racism is part of the story of these photographs. It was affecting most people who came to the studio to have their photos taken. But the immigrants who came to London at that time helped create the rich, dense texture of London culture, which makes it such a vibrant city today. In South London, there are some 12 000 Nigerian immigrants and Hackney has the largest Hasidic Jewish community in Europe. Eventually, after much resistance, many UK citizens and communities have grown to accept the multicultural aspects of society but as recent events this summer show, it's an ongoing struggle. Those movements of people are very important for what London has become today. Boris and Julia's studios reflect those movements of immigration to London. Of course, the people try to look their best in front of the camera but at the same time, I can't help but reflect that they do their best to hide what they're going through internally, a feeling of displacement, acclimatising to a new inhospitable country. It reminds me of the term and idea of “double consciousness”, first published in W.E.B. Du Bois' 1903 autoethnographic book, *The Souls of Black Folk*. He explains double consciousness as a feeling that “Black folk” have, “A Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings.”

down, Ruth would still go to Lagos to visit them, as she had built such good connections. The photos are interesting. Some of the people are dressed in traditional, very flamboyant outfits, and seated on beautiful wooden chairs.



Two of the original filing cabinets.



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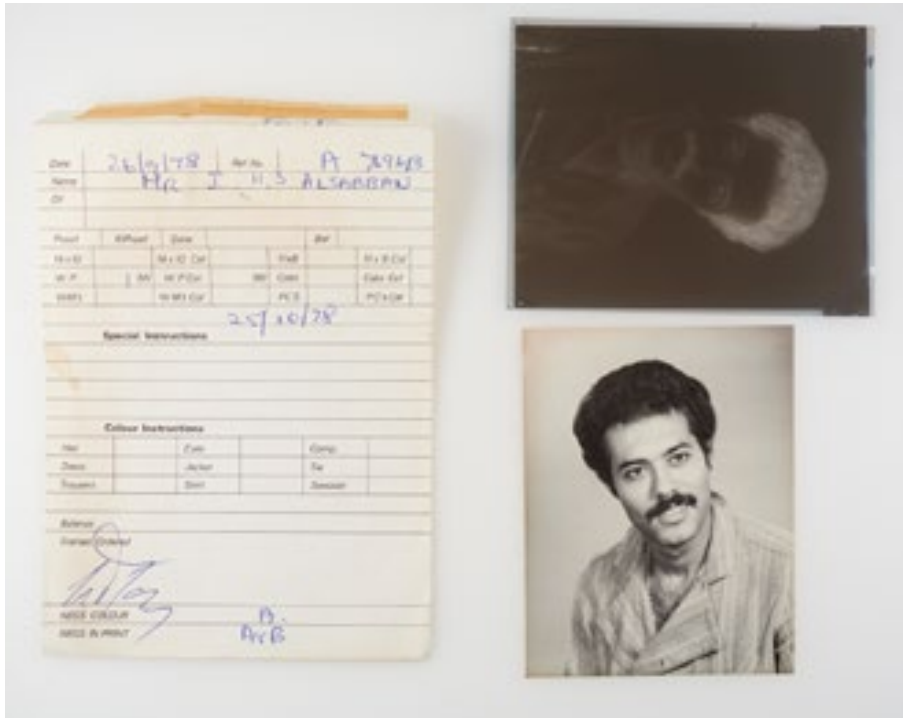


4



5

1. Mr and Mrs Biomah. Dated 14.6. 78.
2. Master Yata.
3. Mr Mohamed Inua, of Lagos.
4. Mr Kuvengese and family. Dated 20.6.78
5. Mrs Okoye. Dated 13.10.80.



When and why did they cease operations at 73 Oxford Street?

– Michael wasn't too sure about the exact date but going by the last dated portraits in the archive, it must have been in the mid-80s. Julia and Ruth were facing a lease renewal, and camera sales had dropped, as the big chains became more dominant. There weren't as many portrait sittings plus, Julia was getting old, so they decided to close.

Did the archive include documentation?

– With each photograph, there's a slip of paper, with the name and address of the sitter, the cost of their photographs, how many prints were required and in what

sizes. Sometimes there are little handwritten notes underneath, stating "nice expression" or "smile more", so evidently second sittings were required in some cases.

What's the next step in your research?

– I want to focus on the people in the photographs. Even though 40, 50 to 60 years have passed, I want to try to track them down, speak to them and/or their families, to find out about their stories and experiences, the routes that led them to sit in front of Ruth's camera. That to me is the power of the archive, the personal aspect. I also hope to join up my research with artists and thinkers who are involved in the same subject. For example, Nigeria's links with Peckham, I think it has potential. I also plan to reach out to Yinka Shonibare, a British artist who may be able to give me some interesting insights into the Nigerian culture and the fashion side of the archive. His work explores cultural identity, colonialism and post-colonialism within the contemporary context of globalisation.

The Archive of Modern Conflict is known for researching its holdings in-depth. Is there a time limit on your research? An end goal?

– There isn't a time limit, and I expect to be working on it for quite a while. A book or an exhibition would be amazing, to create a web of people, stories and images. We'll see where it all takes me.



Top. Mr I H. H. S. Alsabban.

Bottom. Mr Alake of Ogbaland. Dated 28.6.78

Photo Discovery / Bruno Tartarin



Man Ray, 1947

Gallery Photo Discovery – The Place

4 Galerie Vivienne, 75002 Paris
photo-discovery.com

EM



Alain Fleischer, "L'Âme du Couteau", 1982, France

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