

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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## MAJOR PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION PLANNED AT NATIONAL GALLERY

Washington, D.C., August 3, 1988 - To mark the 150th anniversary of photography next year, the National Gallery of Art and The Art Institute of Chicago will organize a major photography exhibition celebrating the artistic achievement of the medium. The show, opening May 7, 1989, in the National Gallery's West Building, will examine the history of photography as art through approximately 400 original black-and-white and color photographs from public and private collections worldwide.

On the Art of Fixing a Shadow: 150 Years of Photography will present the works of more than 200 photographers including William Henry Fox Talbot, David Octavius Hill, Robert Adamson, Roger Fenton, Gustave Le Gray, Julia Margaret Cameron, Timothy O'Sullivan, Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, Eugène Atget, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Edward Weston, André Kertész, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Bill Brandt, László Moholy-Nagy, Walker Evans, Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand, Harry Callahan, Bernd and Hilla Becher, and Cindy Sherman. The photographs will range from famous images to newly discovered material never before exhibited or published. Each photograph will be a vintage print made by the photographer at or about the time the negative was made. This exhibition is made possible by a generous grant from Eastman Kodak Company's Professional Photography Division.

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

On January 31, 1839, in Cambridge, England, William Henry Fox Talbot announced his invention of a negative-positive process of photography. Describing his discovery as "the art of fixing a shadow," Talbot saw great potential for photography as a means of artistic expression. It was his invention that made possible the duplication of prints from a single negative. Talbot's announcement followed close on the heels of an announcement in Paris on January 7, 1839, by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre that he had perfected a single-image process of fixing a photographic likeness on a silver plate. The historical overview of photography provided by On the Art of Fixing a Shadow will demonstrate that some of the earliest photographs have proven to be as competent artistically and technically as any camerawork since.

On the Art of Fixing a Shadow will be organized in a chronological arrangement and will focus on an analysis of major movements in the history of photography. It will be divided into four sections -- The Pencil of Nature (1839-1879), The Hand of Man (1880-1916), Ephemeral Truths (1917-1945), and Beyond the Photographic Frame (1945-present). The work of the majority of the artists will be represented by one photograph; however, in some 40 cases the photographers' work will be shown in greater depth with several examples. Those artists with particularly long careers will be represented in more than one section.

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

On the Art of Fixing A Shadow is organized by the National Gallery of Art and The Art Institute of Chicago. The exhibition has been selected by Sarah Greenough, research curator at the National Gallery, and David Travis, head of the department of photography at The Art Institute of Chicago, with Joel Snyder, professor of humanities at the University of Chicago, and Colin Westerbeck, assistant curator of photography at The Art Institute. The show will be at the National Gallery May 7 - July 30, 1989, before traveling to The Art Institute of Chicago, September 9 - November 26, 1989, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, December 21, 1989 - February 25, 1990. The installation of this exhibition at The Art Institute of Chicago is partially funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. A fully-illustrated catalogue of the exhibition containing scholarly essays by Mr. Travis, Ms. Greenough, Mr. Snyder, and Mr. Westerbeck, a historical/technical narrative and glossary, and a biographical dictionary made up of some 200 entries will be published by the National Gallery of Art.