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Rare and Distinguished 19th-Century British Photographs and Major Work by LÁszlÓ Maholy-Nagy are added to National Gallery of Art's Collection of Photographs



Julia Margaret Cameron

British, 1815–1879

The Sunflower

Albumen print from a collodion negative, 1871

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Paul Mellon Fund

Washington, DC—The National Gallery of Art has just acquired 41 rare and distinguished photographs, many produced during what is often referred to as "the golden age of British photography" (1840s–1860s). The collection of works, by such

major artists as William Henry Fox Talbot, David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, Julia Margaret Cameron, Roger Fenton, and Oscar G. Rejlander, was assembled in the late 1960s and 1970s by Howard and Jane Ricketts. As a director of Sotheby's London, Howard Ricketts initiated the first sales of photographs in that city. The acquisitions were made possible by the Gallery's Paul Mellon Fund.

"Although photography had only been invented in 1839, these new practitioners believed passionately in its potential," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "This group provides an exceptionally strong representation of this period and significantly enhances the National Gallery of Art's collection of British photographs."

Among the 14 photographs by David Octavius Hill (1802–1870) and Robert Adamson (1821–1848) are powerful portraits of the five Scottish men who formed the background of the cultural life of Edinburgh, including the scholar Edward Lance, the artist James Archer, and the botanist William McNab. A portrait of Hill is included, as are exceptionally rare studies of the area, such as the *Colinton Manse and Weir* (c. 1844) and *Lady Glenorchy's Chapel* (c. 1846). More personal views include *At the MinnowPool* (c. 1844), a study of Hill's great nephews and niece, and *Prayer* (c. 1844), a depiction of a young girl. Twelve of the 14 works are from a group of photographs selected and highly prized by Hill himself, which he donated to the Royal Scottish Academy.

The group of nine photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–1879) includes several portraits of the noteworthy Victorians who sat for her, among them the barrister Adolphus Liddell in theatrical dress, the painter William Holman Hunt in Eastern dress, and the scientist Joseph Hooker. There are several allegorical studies, such as the only known print of *The Sunflower* (1871) and *An Angel Unwinged by Your Desire* (c.1867), an example where Cameron's erratic technique has serendipitously created an evocative play of light that hovers above the angel. Her celebrated portraits of women include *Mary Fisher* (1864), *Mrs. Keene* (1866), and *Summer Days* (1865). There are only one or two other known prints of *Mrs. Keene in Head-Dress of Leaves and Flowers* (1866), *An Angel Unwinged by Your Desire*, *Adolphus Liddell* (1867), *Joseph Hooker* (1868), and *Blackberry Gatherers* (*Elizabeth Keown, Kate Keown, Freddy Gould*) (1866–68).

Works by other British photographers are equally important. For example, a glorious study of *Rievaulx Abbey* (1854) by Roger Fenton (1819–1869) is one of a series of works that secured his reputation in the early 1850s. Rejlander's *Ariadne* or *Spring* (1857), modeled after Titian's *Venus and Adonis*, is from a small group of ambitious photographs after paintings that he produced in order to challenge painting and claim legitimacy for photography as a fine art.

Additional Photography Acquisitions

The Gallery also acquired the largest print known of the iconic photograph *Funkturm Berlin* (Berlin Radio Tower) (1928) by László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946), which will be on view in the upcoming National Gallery of Art exhibition, **Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918–1945**, from June 10 through September 3, 2007. *Funkturm Berlin* was purchased with the Gallery's Patrons' Permanent Fund.

The acquisition of *Saint Paul's Cathedral, Valetta, Malta, with Bell Tower* (1846), which is one of only two known prints of this image by The Reverends Calvert Jones (1802–1877) and George Wilson Bridges (1788–1863) of England, was made possible by the Carolyn Brody Fund and the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation through Robert and Joyce Menschel. Jones and Bridges were associates of William Henry Fox Talbot.

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on [Twitter](http://twitter.com/ngadc) at twitter.com/ngadc.

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

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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