



Release Date: April 9, 2015

In Light of the Past at National Gallery of Art Celebrates 25 Years of Collecting Photographs



Edward Steichen, *An Apple, A Boulder, A Mountain*, 1921
platinum print, 19.4 24.5 cm (7 5/8 9 5/8 in.)
Patrons' Permanent Fund, 2014

Washington, DC—*In Light of the Past: Celebrating 25 Years of Photography at the National Gallery of Art*, on view in the West Building from May 3 through July 26, 2015, will commemorate more than two decades of the Gallery's robust photography program. Some 175 of the collection's most exemplary holdings will reveal the evolution of the art of photography, from its birth in 1839 to the late 1970s. *In Light of the Past* is one of three stellar exhibitions that will commemorate the 25th anniversary of the National Gallery of Art's commitment to photography acquisitions, exhibitions, scholarly catalogues, and programs.

"*In Light of the Past* includes some of the rarest and most compelling photographs ever created," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art, Washington. "It also honors the generous support of our donors who have enabled us to achieve this new place of prominence for photography at the Gallery."

About the Collection

In 1949, Georgia O'Keeffe and the Alfred Stieglitz Estate donated to the Gallery the unparalleled Key Set of Stieglitz photographs, including more than 1,600 prints by this seminal artist. Yet it was only in the 1980s that the Gallery began to pay more attention to photography when it mounted a series of exhibitions, including *Photographs by Alfred Stieglitz* (1983), *Ansel Adams: Classic Images* (1985), and *On the Art of Fixing a Shadow: 150 Years of Photography* (1989).

In addition to focusing attention on the art of photography, these exhibitions brought the Gallery important donations, including Virginia Adams' gift of the Museum Set of photographs by her late husband, Ansel Adams (1902–1984), and a large group of pictures by the distinguished American photographer Walker Evans (1903–1975), donated by Kent and Marcia Minichiello.

With these gifts in hand, the Trustees decided to begin actively collecting photographs, and in 1990, founded the Department of Photographs, launching an initiative to acquire the finest examples of the art of photography and to mount photography exhibitions of the highest quality, accompanied by scholarly publications and programs. In the years since, the Gallery's collection of photographs has grown to nearly 15,000 works, encompassing the history of the medium from its beginnings in 1839 to the present, and featuring in-depth holdings of the work of many of the masters of the art form. Its program of exhibitions and publications is now considered among the best in the world.

About the Exhibition

In Light of the Past begins with exceptional 19th-century salted paper prints, daguerreotypes, and albumen prints by acclaimed early practitioners such as William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877), Gustave Le Gray (1820–1884), Roger Fenton (1819–1869), Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–1879), Albert Sands Southworth (1811–1894), and Josiah Johnson Hawes (1808–1901). It also displays works by American expeditionary photographers, including William Bell (1830 – 1910) and Carleton E. Watkins (1829–1916).

The exhibition continues with late 19th- and early 20th-century American pictorialist photographs by Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), Clarence H. White (1871–1925), Gertrude Käsebier (1852–1934), and Alvin Langdon Coburn (1882–1966), among others, as well as European masters such as Eugène Atget

(1857–1927).

The exhibition also examines the international photographic modernism of artists such as Paul Strand (1890–1976), André Kertész (1894–1985), Marianne Brandt (1893–1983), László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946), and Ilse Bing (1899–1998) before turning to the mid-20th century, where exceptional work by Walker Evans (1903–1975), Robert Frank (b. 1924), Harry Callahan (1912–1999), Irving Penn (1917–2009), Lee Friedlander (b. 1934), and Diane Arbus (1923–1971) will be on view.

The exhibition concludes with pictures from the 1960s and 1970s, showcasing works by photographers such as Robert Adams (b. 1937), Lewis Baltz (1945–2014), and William Eggleston (b. 1939), as well as Mel Bochner (b. 1940) and Sol LeWitt (1928 – 2007), which demonstrate the diverse practices that invigorated photography during these decades.

Curators and Related Activities

The curators of *In Light of the Past* are Sarah Greenough, senior curator and head of the department of photographs, and Diane Waggoner, associate curator, department of photographs, National Gallery of Art.

On Sunday, May 3, 2015, at 2:00 p.m. in the West Building Lecture Hall, senior curator Sarah Greenough will present the opening day lecture for the exhibition.

Celebrating 25 Years of Photography

To celebrate 25 years of collecting photographs, the Gallery will present three major exhibitions in 2015 exemplifying the quality, breadth, and history of its photography holdings. Opening on the same day as *In Light of the Past*, the exhibition *The Memory of Time: Contemporary Photographs at the National Gallery of Art, Acquired with the Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund* will explore the complexity of the medium's relationship to time, memory, and history through 76 works by 26 international artists. In the fall, the Gallery will conclude the celebrations with an exhibition that unveils new acquisitions made in 2015 to honor the anniversary.

General Information

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

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

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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Exhibition Press Release

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[Background on the Collection of Photographs](#)

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

May 3—September 13, 2015

CURATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Sarah Greenough

Senior Curator and Head, Department of Photographs
National Gallery of Art, Washington

Diane Waggoner

Associate Curator, Department of Photographs
National Gallery of Art, Washington

ONLINE RESOURCES

[Department of Photographs](#)

[Exhibition Page](#)

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

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