

The Museum of Modern Art

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SELF-PORTRAIT: THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S PERSONA 1840-1985

November 7, 1985 - January 7, 1986

SELF-PORTRAIT: THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S PERSONA 1840-1985, an exhibition of self-portraits taken by major European and American photographers of the last century, opens at The Museum of Modern Art on November 7, 1985. Organized by Susan Kismaric, associate curator in the Department of Photography, this highly selective survey provides a fascinating record of artistic exploration through one of the most intimate and revealing of art forms. André Kertész, Eadweard Muybridge, Felix Nadar, August Sander, Imogen Cunningham, and Alfred Steiglitz are among the masters of photography represented (partial list of artist names attached).

Since photography's origins in the late nineteenth century, artists have expressed the idea that the self-portrait is a form of performance. Kismaric states, "The photographer who attempts an investigation of his physiognomy or personality or who consciously or unconsciously projects an idea about himself enacts a role. The plasticity of photography allows the self-portraitist to experiment, to assume many identities; in self-portraiture the photographer can become the hero, the adventurer, the aesthete--or a neutral ground upon which artistic experiments are played out."

One of the earliest photographs included in the exhibition is a modern print of Hippolyte Bayard's Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man (1840), the artist's amusing response to Daguerre's announcement of the invention of photography. Bayard had perfected a method of making photographs at the same time as Daguerre, but it was Daguerre whose method was first published and who received the acclaim. In

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Bayard's picture he shows himself half-naked, propped against the wall, as though dead.

In 1898 the pictorialist F. Holland Day used the traditional subject of the Crucifixion to emphasize the artistic status of photography. After researching accounts of the event and fasting for several months, Day assumed the persona of Jesus Christ for the camera. More recently, American artist Cindy Sherman has similarly put a psychological distance between herself and her camera by transforming her appearance with clothing, wigs, makeup, and other elements of disguise that evoke traditional female roles.

Another concern represented in SELF-PORTRAIT is that of self-investigation, best exemplified by the photographs of Lee Friedlander made from 1964 to 1970, and by a powerful series by John Coplans that explores the physical process of aging. The role of the photographer is considered in a studio self-portrait by O. Winston Link and his assistant, and in a self-portrait by Edward Steichen, who presents himself as a young esthete. Other highlights include a photograph with drawing by German artist Arnulf Rainer, László Moholy-Nagy's Jealousy (1927), and Berenice Abbott's unusual Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman (c. 1930).

The exhibition includes approximately forty-five photographs in black and white and in color. Many are on loan from public and private collections and have rarely, if ever, been exhibited to the public. Lenders to the exhibition include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House.

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Artists in the Exhibition
partial list

Berenice Abbott (American, b. 1898)
Dr. M. F. Agha (Russian, b. 1896)
Herbert Bayer (American, b. 1900)
Ilse Bing (American, born Germany 1899)
Brassaï (Gyula Halász; French, born Transylvania, 1899-1984)
Chuck Close (American, b. 1940)
John Coplans (American, born Britain 1920)
Imogen Cunningham (American, 1883-1976)
F. Holland Day (American, 1864-1933)
Walker Evans (American, 1903-1975)
Louis Faurer (American, b. 1916)
Lee Friedlander (American, b. 1934)
David Octavius Hill (Scottish, 1802-1870)
 and Robert Adamson (Scottish, 1821-1848)
Lewis Hine (American, 1874-1940)
André Kertész (American, born Austria-Hungary, 1894-1985)
Darius Kinsey (American, 1869-1945)
O. Winston Link (American, b. 1914)
René Magritte (Belgian, 1898-1967)
Robert Mapplethorpe (American, b. 1946)
László Moholy-Nagy (American, born Hungary, 1895-1946)
Eadweard Muybridge (British, 1830-1904)
Felix Nadar (French, 1820-1910)
Paul Outerbridge (American, 1896-1958)
Arnulf Rainer (Austrian, b. 1929)
Man Ray (American, 1890-1976)
Lucas Samaras (American, born Greece 1936)
August Sander (German, 1876-1974)
Sandra Semchuk (Canadian, b. 1948)
Cindy Sherman (American, b. 1954)
W. Eugene Smith (American, 1918-1978)
Albert Sands Southworth (American, 1811-1894)
Edward Steichen (American, 1879-1973)
Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864-1946)
Carol Taback (American, 1941-1980)
Adrien Tournachon (French, 1825-1903)
Jerry Uelsmann (American, b. 1934)
Andy Warhol (American, b. 1928)
William Wegman (American, b. 1942)
Wanda Wulz (Italian, b. 1903)

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SUSAN KISMARIC

Susan Kismaric has been associate curator of the Department of Photography at The Museum of Modern Art since 1979. During this time, she has organized several exhibitions, including LARRY FINK (1979), WILLIAM KLEIN (1981), AMERICAN CHILDREN (1981), and MOUNT ST. HELENS: WORK IN PROGRESS. PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANK GOHLKE (1983). She is the author of American Children, published in 1981 to accompany the exhibition of the same title. Ms. Kismaric served as acting director of the Department of Photography in 1980-81 while its director, John Szarkowski, was on sabbatical.

Before joining the Museum, Ms. Kismaric attended Pennsylvania State University and worked for five years in the Picture Collection at Time & Life Corporation, where she did the picture research for several projects of interest, including the special issue of LIFE, "Remarkable American Women."

Ms. Kismaric and John Szarkowski organized 20TH CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, a survey of 150 photographs which was exhibited at The Seibu Museum of Art in Tokyo in October 1982. Ms. Kismaric installed the exhibition and lectured in Tokyo on trends in contemporary American photography. In May 1984 Ms. Kismaric organized THREE AMERICANS: PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT ADAMS, JIM GOLDBERG, AND JOEL STERNFELD, the first temporary exhibition to open in the Edward Steichen Photography Center following the expansion of The Museum of Modern Art.

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