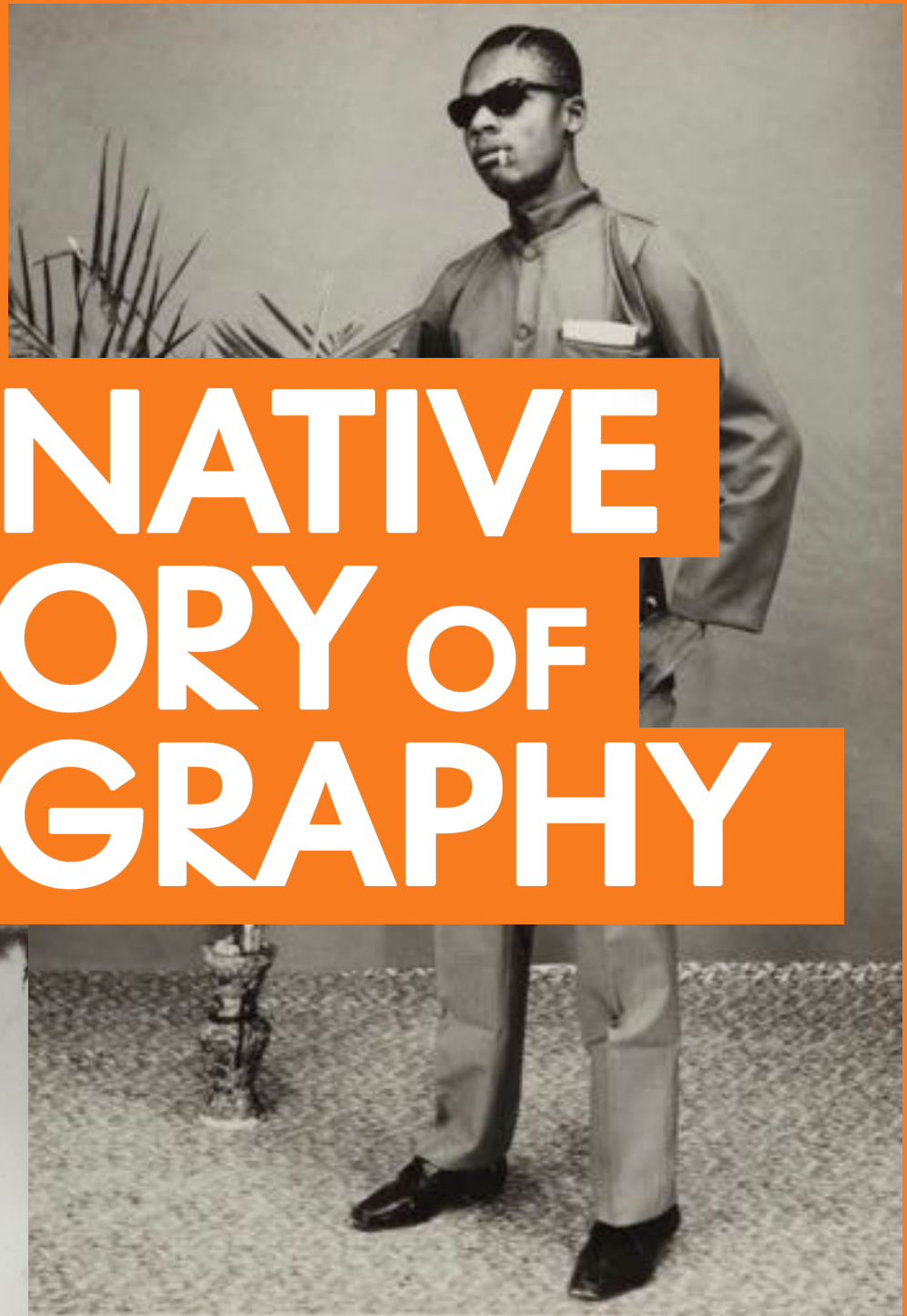


Exhibition Prospectus

# AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY



**Curatorial**  
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# An Alternative History of Photography

## Photographs from the Solander Collection

As it is usually told, the history of photography is a neat chain of relationships connecting one great maker to the next, starting from its invention in the UK and Europe. But the real history is much more complicated. It is a vast web of interconnected stories stretching from East Asia to West Africa, and from New Zealand to Uzbekistan—a complex interplay of fine art, scientific, anthropological, documentary, and amateur traditions forged by women and men alike.

Drawn from the extraordinary Solander Collection, this pioneering exhibition is based on principles of diversity and democracy, allowing famous works to be seen with fresh eyes, and giving more obscure pictures the platform they deserve. It parallels acknowledged greats with forgotten masters, and lesser-known works with regional champions.

Images by legendary figures including Ansel Adams, Diane Arbus, Robert Frank, Man Ray, and Edward Weston are seen alongside those of Helen Stuart and John Lindt, early, self-trained practitioner Lady Augusta Mostyn, and African studio photographers Sanlé Sory, Michel Kameni, and Malick Sidibé.

Highlights include a stunning photographic ‘altarpiece’ by Austrian performance artist Valie Export, shown alongside an extraordinary hand-coloured assisted self-portrait by the Countess of Castiglione. The American West is seen through the eyes of indigenous artist Richard Throssel, while a gender non-conforming individual is shown by Japanese photographer Katsumi Watanabi.

Major early works in Australian photography are shown alongside vintage examples from Chile, China, India, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Singapore, Russia, and others. The exhibition contains many rarities and ‘firsts’, spanning photography’s early decades with linchpin works by Sir John Herschel, William Henry Fox Talbot, Hippolyte Bayard, and Julia Margaret Cameron.

Contemporary in outlook, visually captivating, and with contributions from leading historians, including curators from Autograph, the National Portrait Gallery, Tate, and the V&A, this provocative exhibition is essential viewing for those looking for an introduction to the field, as well as informed viewers looking for new ways of looking at photography.



*An Alternative History of Photography*  
Photographers' Gallery, London  
October 7, 2022 – February 19, 2023

INQUIRIES

# Curatorial

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AUDIENCE

The exhibition is aimed at a diverse, multi-ethnic audience including families. It will appeal to visitors interested in art and photography, and old and new ways of thinking about photo history.

FEE

USD 30,000/ 8 weeks, plus pro-rated shipping

WORKS

Recommended size 80–150 works, but adaptable according to need. Host institutions may add works from their collections to the installation, building resonance with their own collecting activities.

DIMENSIONS

Framed works varying from 12 x 14 in to 60 x 60 in approx. Original Indian portrait studio backdrop (unglazed) 88 x 92 in. A small number of vitrines/library cases may be needed depending on selection.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

250 linear feet (76 linear meters)

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

The exhibition offers many different themes for interpretation and educational programming, including the history, meaning and importance of photography and representation, as well as history as an act of interpretation.

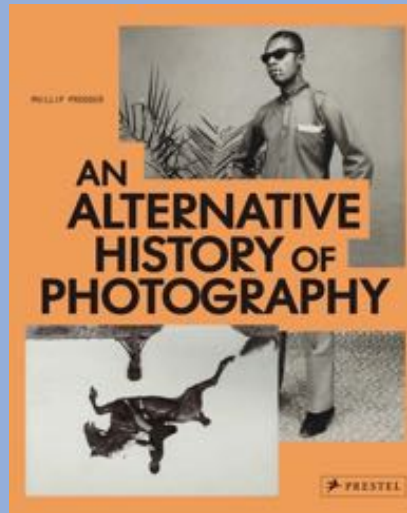
It explores questions of fine art and vernacular practice in photography, including scientific, documentary and anthropological approaches. The show engages with diverse communities and viewpoints, and traditions worldwide.

Curator available for lectures and panel discussions by arrangement. Contributors may be available on request.

PUBLICATION

A major new publication will accompany exhibition, from fall 2022.

“An Alternative History of Photography,”  
Prestel, 256 pp., English, full color, \$55 retail



ABOUT THE CURATOR

Phillip Prodger, Ph.D., is Executive Director of Curatorial Exhibitions and primary author of the catalogue. An award-winning curator and scholar, he has held positions at the National Portrait Gallery, London (where he was Head of Photographs), the Peabody Essex Museum (where he was founding Curator of Photography), the National Gallery of Canada, the Saint Louis Art Museum, and the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University.

CONTRIBUTORS

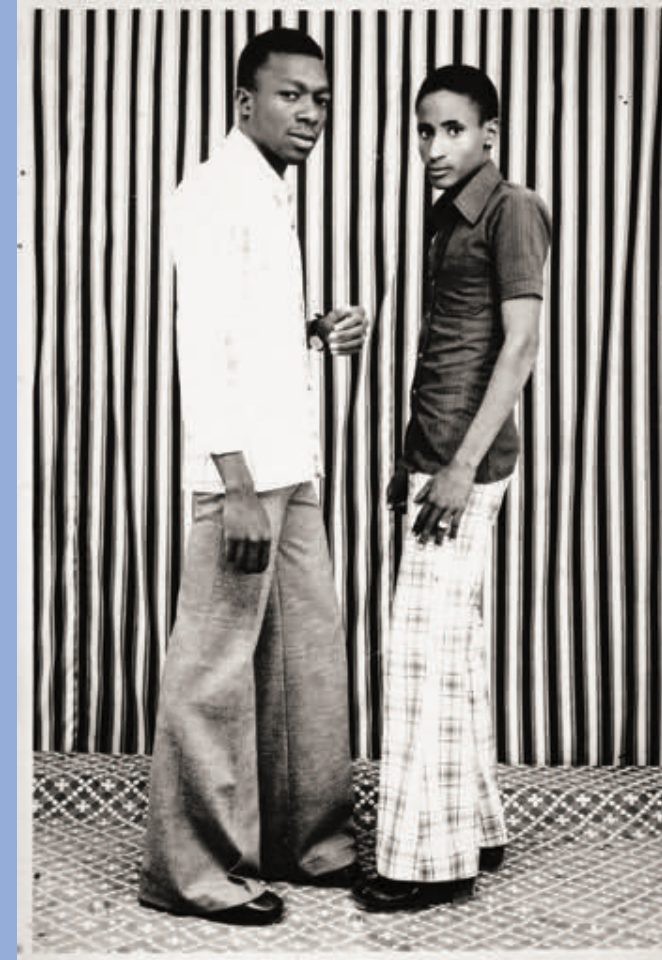
- Michael Aird, University of Queensland
- Georgia Atienza, National Portrait Gallery, London
- Martin Barnes, Victoria & Albert Museum
- Makeda Best, Oakland Museum of California
- Mirjam Brusius, German Historical Institute, London
- Sérgio Burgi, Instituto Moreira Salles
- Jimena Canales, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- Irina Chmyreva, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
- Judith Nangala Crispin, artist and poet
- Julie Crooks, Art Gallery of Ontario
- Keith F. Davis, Hallmark Collection and Nelson-Atkins Museum (former)
- Deepali Dewan, Royal Ontario Museum
- Judy Ditner, Yale University Art Gallery
- Martyn Ewoma, artist and critic
- Lisa Hostetler, George Eastman Museum (former)
- Toby Jurovics, Barry Lopez Foundation for Art & Environment

- Stacey Lambrow, Loewentheil Collection
- Catlin Langford, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne/Naarm
- Ekaterina Lavrentieva, Moscow State Stroganov Academy of Design and Applied Arts
- Kenneth R. Lister, Royal Ontario Museum (former)
- Eric Lutz, Saint Louis Art Museum
- Sophie Lynch, University of Chicago
- Lissa Mitchell, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
- Renée Mussai, The Walther Collection
- Yasufumi Nakamori, Asia Society, New York
- Gael Newton, National Gallery of Australia (former)
- Brett Rogers, The Photographers’ Gallery, London (former)
- Alexander Supartono, Edinburgh Napier University
- Charmaine Toh, National Gallery Singapore
- Urs Stahel, MAST Bologna
- Diane Waggoner, National Gallery of Art, Washington

CREDIT

All works are generously loaned by The Solander Collection

[ SOLANDER ]



Malick Sidibé (Mali, 1936–2016)  
*Untitled (Two Men)*, 1974, Vintage gelatin silver print

Stunning material. It was long overdue to shift the focus of canonized photographic history to lesser known photographs by women and photographers of color.

—Mirjam Brusius, German Historical Institute, London



Emilio Amero (Mexico, 1901–1976)  
*A Bride Dances*, 1937, Vintage gelatin silver print

# Madame Gelot-Sandoz (France, 1803–46)

*Philosophy, after Raphael, around 1843*  
Daguerreotype

The first wave of photographers included a significant number of women, including Paris-based Madame Gelot-Sandoz. Since she died prematurely in 1846, aged forty-three, her work is now exceedingly rare, and little is known about her practice. She was one of, if not the, first female photographer to open her own studio, where she advertised portraits, “reproductions of paintings, engravings and views,” and offered lessons in the daguerreotype process.

This large daguerreotype, exposed directly on silver-plated copper, underscores the intricate relationship between photography and its cousins, printmaking and drawing, around the time of photography’s invention. Early adopters praised photography for its mimetic quality—the ability to produce faithful reproductions without introducing human error. Gelot-Sandoz’s daguerreotype reproduces an engraving by the Italian Renaissance printmaker Marcantonio Raimondi, which itself is most likely an interpretation (not an exact reproduction) of a fresco by Raphael on the ceiling of the Room of the Segnatura in the Vatican, or a related preparatory drawing. Like most daguerreotypes, it is mirror reversed. Given this extraordinary chain of relationships, one might reasonably question whose artistic vision this photograph represents—the original artist, the printmaker, or the photographer herself?

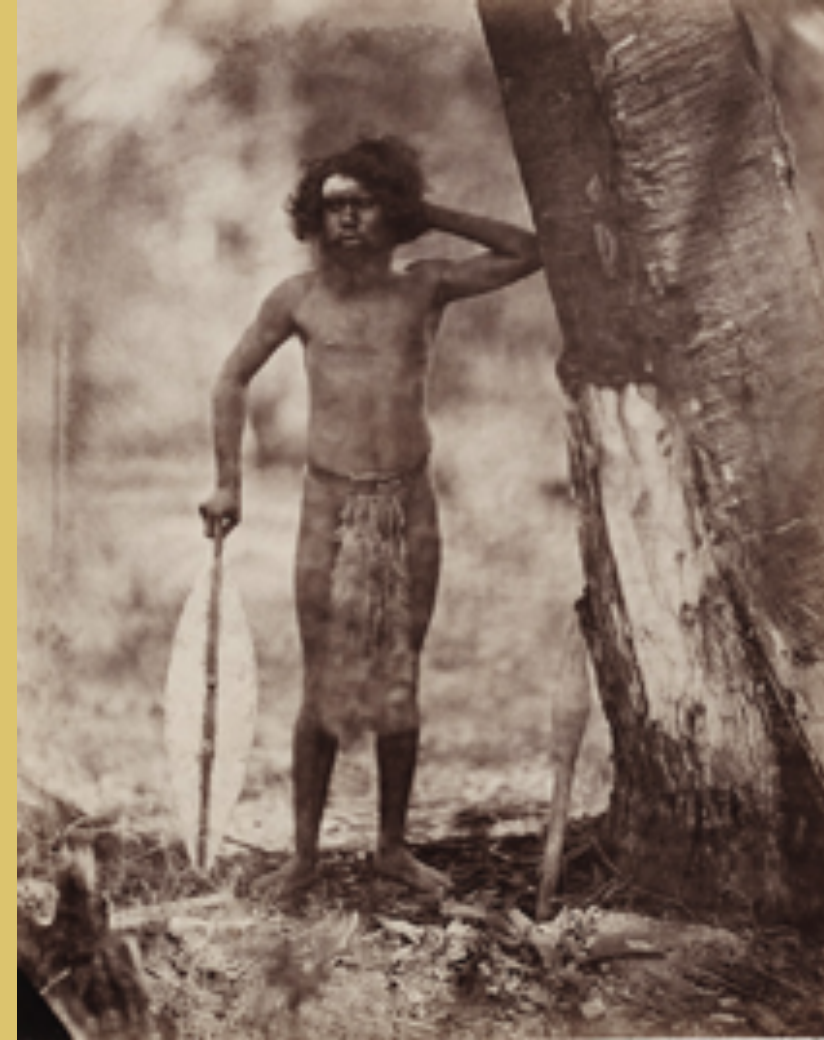
The reason Gelot-Sandoz made this work is unclear, however it may have been a demonstration piece to show potential clients. In offering reproductions of prints and paintings, Gelot-Sandoz was on precarious ground since at the time the expense of producing daguerreotypes, particularly at this scale, would have been prohibitive.



# Antoine Fauchery with Richard Daintree

(Fauchery: France, 1823–61; Daintree: England, 1832–1878)

*Gyps Land Blackfellow, 1858*  
Albumen print



A “Gyps land blackfellow” stands by an estuary of the great Murray River, whose name is Tongarla, our mother river, whose name is Millewa.

And he’s gazing out toward the foothills of the Great Dividing Range, in his lap-lap of possum or wallaby skin, sewn with animal sinew, and cinched with a colonial belt. A Jimbirn of woven root fiber is wrapped over his brow.

I don’t know if he’s Gunaikurnai, Bpangerang, Wurundjeri, if he was married or had children—only that he walked the same riverlands as my ancestors.

In this photograph he poses awkwardly, his hand resting on a Kerreem shield—skin of the red river gum, forged in language, water-softened, curved inside a campfire’s coal. His fighting club rests against a wounded tree. Scar tree. Canoe tree.

And the Gubbah will come back with their cameras. They’ll photograph him in spotted ochre, like a sand goanna dancing. He looks happier in that frame, less apprehensive.

And when they’d gone, perhaps the massacres took him, or he survived, like a caged dingo, into his old age at Coranderrk Aboriginal reserve.

He rests with Byamee now, with Altair in Aquila, the burning wedgetail sun. Only his likeness remains, trapped in emulsion.

No one recorded his name, or perhaps they never asked. So I will call him brother, set the paperbarks on fire and send him aromatic smoke. I will name him Nyahmil, the night’s eyes.

— Judith Nangala Crispin, artist and poet

# Julia Margaret Cameron

(England, b. British India, 1815–1879)

*My Grandchild Archie, Aged 2 Years & 3 Months (Archibald Cameron and Mary Hillier), 1865*  
Albumen print

Julia Margaret Cameron never visited Italy, but she was deeply influenced by Italian art, especially the Baroque art of the Bologna school. This may seem obscure to us now, but in mid-nineteenth-century Britain, Bolognese artists were enormously popular. The most admired was Guido Reni, whose *Madonna Adoring Her Child*, ca. 1640–42, was a featured painting in the Galleria Doria Pamphilj in Rome, where it remains to this day. Cameron's picture is a pastiche of this painting, made 225 years earlier.

Reni's popularity stemmed from his realistic depictions, which showed religious subjects as if they were real people, with dirty and disheveled clothing and convincing facial expressions. The vogue for this kind of art was controversial in some circles, and was one of the factors leading to the creation of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, which favored more idealized depictions. Ironically, Cameron's photography would go on to influence Pre-Raphaelite artists themselves, despite being based on a style of painting they despised.

Cameron most likely encountered the painting in reproduction through her friendship with Henry Cole, founding director of the South Kensington Museum (later the V&A), who gave Cameron her first museum exhibition in 1865, the year this photograph was made. Cole created one of the first photographic picture libraries, collecting reference prints of famous artworks for visitors to consult. He also embraced avant-garde photography like Cameron's, creating one of the first collections of photographic art in the world. Another copy of this print was acquired by the museum in September 1865. A variant, showing only the child in the bottom half of the photograph, was acquired at the same time.

This photograph is a composite made from two negatives. The radicalism of Cameron's approach can be seen in the pronounced horizontal line between the two figures, where no attempt was made to disguise the join. In another version, now at the George Eastman Museum, the join is artfully erased.



# Virginia Oldoini, the Countess of Castiglione

(Italy, 1837–99; Pierre-Louis Pierson, France, 1822–1913)

*The Sultana, 1865*  
Salt print with gouache painting



Virginia Oldoini was not a photographer herself, but she did create, together with French photographer Pierre-Louis Pierson, more than four hundred assisted self-portraits over the course of nearly four decades. Always posed in the studio, and occasionally enlarged and hand-colored as in this luminous example, these pictures showed the countess in playful guises ranging from popular fiction to imaginary royalty. Sent to an inner circle of friends and lovers, they were not widely distributed and instead seem to have been made primarily for her own entertainment and self-promotion. Although she relied on Pierson to handle technical matters, Oldoini acted as performance artist and director, arranging the theme of each picture, the manner of dress, the set, and even the angle of the camera—low, in this case, like an approaching servant.

Oldoini's characters are like guests at a masquerade ball, but there is a more complex side to her pictures. With her head resting in one hand, a downcast expression and eyes raised, her *Sultana* is a study in regal ennui, despite the protagonist's luxurious circumstances. While she appears here like a dancer in an Orientalist fantasy—a sultana is the wife, mother, daughter, or mistress of a sultan—her reality was not so different. Trapped in a loveless marriage at age seventeen, she separated from her husband two years later, and was sent to Paris in 1856 to help advocate and spy for the cause of Italian unification. There she engaged in a string of high-profile romantic liaisons, and became mistress to Napoleon III, the last emperor of France and founder of the Second Empire.

# Unknown (India)

*Maharaja with Tiger*, around 1890  
Gelatin silver print with hand coloring

This interloper into photographic history tricks the eye through its intermedial state and ocular redirection. It is a painted photograph from India but looks like a painting because the entire surface of the photograph has been covered with a thick layer of pigment. The presence of a photograph has been confirmed by the skilled gaze of the conservator who can see the emulsion along the edges and in areas of paint loss.

In India, the transnational practice of painting on photographs was expanded considerably beyond the descriptive to include the corrective, embellished, ritual, and symbolic. In this memorial portrait, the photograph does the work of facilitating the likeness of the standing figure and the tiger, possibly put together from two different negatives. But it also does the work of increasing the image's association with a sense of reality even while the rest of the scene—with its European villa and Hindu temple ghat, swans swimming, and picnic still life—as a setting for the victorious hunt is a fantasy of the artist's imagination. In this way, the work shifts photographic realism from an ontological part of photography, as in Euro- American practice, to a semiotics of photography, one that can be reproduced through paint as well.

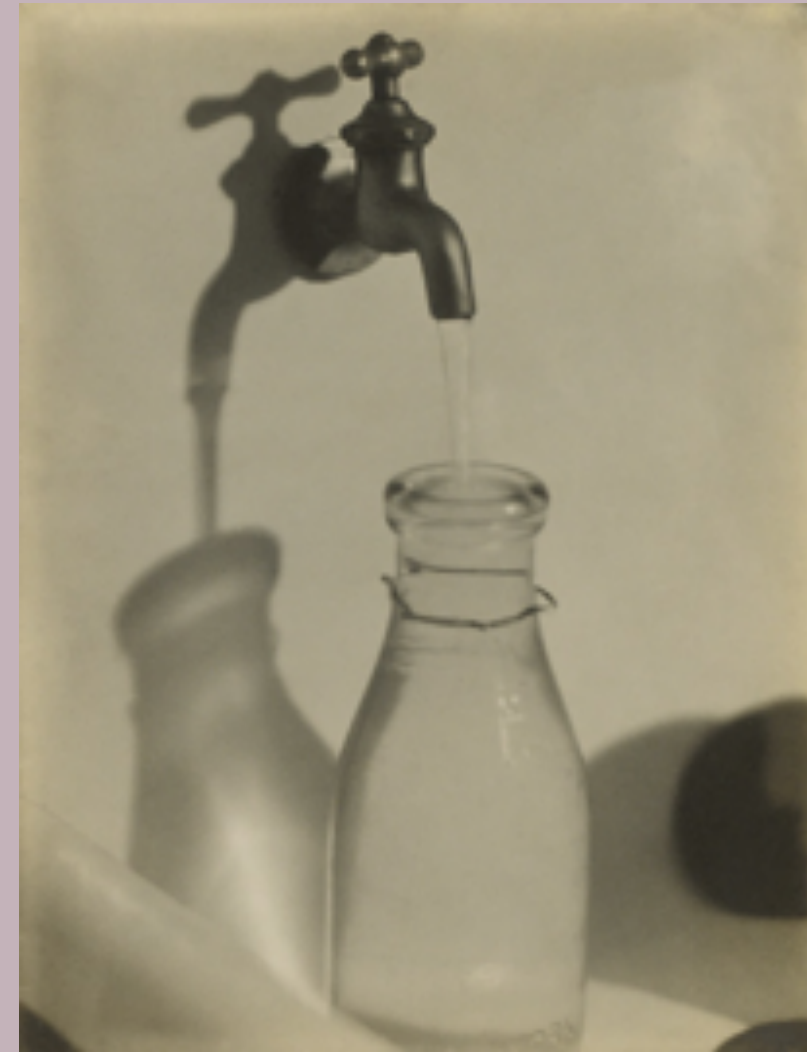
So perhaps the appropriate word here is not interloper but disrupter. This work disrupts received photographic history, not by filling a gap, but by fundamentally shifting our conception of what a photograph is and its expansive conceptual possibilities.

— Deepali Dewan, Royal Ontario Museum



# Margaret Watkins (USA, 1884–1969)

*Untitled (Milk Bottle in Sink)*, 1923  
Vintage platinum-palladium print



A Canadian of Scottish descent, Margaret Watkins was from a successful merchant family. Had family fortunes been otherwise, she may have become one of the genteel women amateur art photographers well known in international pictorial salons by the 1910s. Instead she became a leading figure in a new world of commercial art advertising that developed in the United States in the early twentieth century. She was a star pupil of art photographer Clarence White, whose school in New York encouraged students to earn a living by applying artistic principles to advertising. Watkins went on to teach at White's school and to edit the influential journal *Pictorial Photography* in America. She made a name in salon and advertising circles around 1919 for domestic still-life studies like this one. Not all critics responded positively—in one instance a picture of a sink with unwashed dishes was praised for its form but criticized for its mundane subject matter. Watkins left New York in 1928, spending her later life in Glasgow. Canada Post honored her with a stamp of her best-known image in 2013.

Watkins's famed sink series now seems laden with erotic overtones. Light seems to stroke the outlines of the utilitarian objects. This photograph is a lesser-known variant in which the artist bravely (but with the aid of a retouching pencil) showed water flowing from the tap into the mouth of the milk bottle. Printed using the expensive platinum palladium process, this print was produced for exhibition. Was Watkins also having a laugh? The kitchen sink was meant to be the proper realm of women, the vagina the rightful property of men.

— Gael Newton, National Gallery of Australia (former)

# Mark Neven DuMont

(England, b. Germany, 1892–1959)

*Patricia*, 1930s  
Vintage gelatin silver print



Composite photography—that is, the combination of two or more camera negatives to create a new picture—is nearly as old as photography itself. Artists such as Oscar Rejlander and Julia Margaret Cameron used similar techniques to build their pictures in the 1850s and 1860s (pp. TK, TK), and nineteenth-century landscape photographers routinely “dropped in” clouds and sky effects to enliven their pictures. In the 1910s and 1920s, these techniques found new life among Berlin Dada artists such as Hannah Höch, Raoul Hausmann, and John Heartfield, who used photomontage and collage (cutting and pasting) to build their compositions.

Mark Neven DuMont’s friend, the avant-garde painter and draftsman George Grosz, was among the leading proponents of photomontage. Here Neven DuMont seems to have borrowed and adapted Dada techniques by simply superimposing two images in the darkroom: a portrait head of a woman and a palm tree. It is not clear whether Neven DuMont photographed the figure and the tree himself, or if one or both of the images was appropriated.

The son of noted German émigré painter August Neven DuMont, Mark Neven DuMont was a writer, journalist, and amateur photographer. Since he does not seem to have sold his photographs, his pictures are exceedingly rare. A different image by Neven DuMont, now in the Gernsheim Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, is inscribed, “To a rising star from a fallen comet.”

# Tina Modotti

(Italy, active USA and Mexico, 1896–1942)

*Marionette, René d’Harnoncourt*, 1929  
Gelatin silver print



By removing all sense of scale and photographing head-on and slightly above the subject, Tina Modotti created this ambiguous, surrealistic scene. It shows a moment from a puppet performance arranged for the wife of the American ambassador to Mexico by former Diego Rivera muralist and later stop-motion cinema pioneer Louis Bunin. The central character is René d’Harnoncourt, who would go on to direct New York’s Museum of Modern Art, but at that time worked as a gallerist in Mexico City. Appearing to the viewer in the form of a marionette, d’Harnoncourt bows as he presents paintings and religious antiquities to the viewer. Modotti’s picture destabilizes the scene, making it difficult to separate the artificiality of the puppet theater from the resolute clarity of camera and lens.

Once an aspiring actress herself, Modotti became a photographer after her introduction to Edward Weston, with whom she opened a portrait studio in Mexico City in 1923. Initially, Modotti agreed to work for free in exchange for him teaching her photography. While in Mexico the two immersed themselves in the avant-garde, befriending leading figures including Rivera and Frida Kahlo, José Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Rufino Tamayo, and Lola and Manuel Álvarez Bravo, among others. When Weston returned to California in 1926, Modotti stayed on, drawn increasingly to the revolutionary atmosphere. Expelled as a subversive in 1930, she traveled to Moscow and later joined the Spanish Civil War, only returning to Mexico under an assumed name, nine years after she left. This picture was made during Modotti’s time as a solo artist, shortly before her expulsion.

# Lang Jingshan (China, 1892–1955)

*Majestic Solitude*, 1934  
Vintage gelatin silver print

Lang Jingshan was a central figure in the China Photography Society in Shanghai and was active within the international networks of photography clubs that had emerged in tandem with the Pictorialist movement in the previous decades. The Pictorialists sought to elevate photography to fine art status and Lang interpreted this tenet by drawing upon the aesthetics of Chinese literati painting—the use of blank spaces, the multiple perspectives, and of course, the subject matter, which frequently included misty mountains and scenic rivers.

To achieve the effect he wanted, Lang often created composite photographs, which are images made from two or more negatives. *Majestic Solitude* is precisely such a composite image—the tree on the lower right was combined with the mountain range in the background to evoke the beauty of the Chinese landscape, in this case, of the West Sea canyon of Huangshan.

Lang's photographs were not only well-received—he exhibited 1,061 photographs at 381 international salons between 1931 and 1958—but he had an incredible influence on Chinese photographers all around the world. Lang galvanized many overseas Chinese communities through his travels and exhibitions, and his fantastical landscapes played a significant role in generating a sort of ethnic pride and connection to the motherland.

— Charmaine Toh, National Gallery of Singapore



# Armando Salas Portugal (Mexico, 1916–95)

*Thought Photograph*, 1967–72  
Gelatin silver print



After a highly successful career as a landscape and architectural photographer, in the mid-1960s Armando Salas Portugal began making what he called *Foto Pensiamento*, or Thought Photographs, which he maintained were the chemical manifestation of human mental states. Unlike Alfred Stieglitz, whose series of *Equivalents* was intended to express thought and feeling in metaphorical terms, Salas Portugal said that he was literally able to capture thoughts with his camera. Like an electrode or a sensitometer, he claimed to have turned his camera into a probe, enabling him to see inside the mind of his subject.

Made during the height of the Cold War, Salas Portugal's photographs coincided with an intense interest in parapsychology driven by Soviet research into telepathy, clairvoyance, and telekinesis. After presenting his work at the University of Oxford, in 1967 he was invited by controversial Duke University researcher J. B. Rhine to visit the Houston Space Center as a guest of NASA. Rhine was interested in the concept of extrasensory perception (ESP), which he claimed to be able to measure. The results of Salas Portugal's work at NASA were subsequently classified as state secrets.

Salas Portugal never explained how he made these pictures, so they have an air of mystery about them even now. Trained as a chemist at the University of California, Los Angeles, presumably he would have been capable of manipulating images prior to or during development. The imagery he produced resembles clouds or waves, blurred and stitched together in organic patterns. Ultimately, it is unclear quite what Salas Portugal meant by “thought photographs.” Were they metaphorical pictures after all, or a critique of photographic representation? Or did he consider them real, direct expressions of the mind of the maker, since they were products of his artistic imagination?





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*An Alternative History of Photography*  
Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto  
August 14, 2021 – January 16, 2022



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