

THE DIRECTOR'S CHOICE

MASTERPIECES FROM THE
PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION

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Exhibition Facts

Opening	6 March 2018 18.30 pm
Duration	7 March – 10 June 2018
Venue	Tietze Galleries
Curator	Prof Dr Klaus Albrecht Schröder
Works	120
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The Director's Choice

Masterpieces from the Photographic Collection

March 7 – June 10, 2018

Director General Prof. Dr. Klaus Albrecht Schröder has handpicked a number of exemplary works from the ALBERTINA's extensive photographic holdings for the exhibition *The Director's Choice*. Although the selection is a profoundly subjective matter and cannot but echo personal preferences, it offers fascinating insights into the collection, which comprises about 100,000 items. Assembling 120 masterpieces, the show continues the exhibition format of changing presentations of the ALBERTINA's holdings in this field.

Range and focal points of the collection

The presentation reflects both the wide historical range of the ALBERTINA's holdings with its photo historical treasures and individual characteristic focal points of the collection. Klaus Albrecht Schröder already found himself faced with some of these core themes in the existing historical collection at the time of the foundation of the Photographic Collection in 1999. The holdings of the oldest governmental educational institution in the sphere of photography, Vienna's Höhere Graphische Bundeslehr- und Versuchsanstalt, were incorporated into the ALBERTINA's collection. Intense collecting activities in the last two decades saw the development of further focal points such as street photography, its proponents ranging from Brassai and Lisette Model to Lee Friedlander and Gary Winogrand.

From the invention of photography to the present

The exhibition not only includes samples of the rich holdings of early monumental salt prints from the Austrian Government Printing Establishment but also highlights of Heinrich Kühn's and Rudolf Koppitz's portrait and nude photography. From the late nineteenth century, Pictorialism was concerned with establishing photography as an artistic medium on a par with painting. The reform of portrait photography aimed at making it possible to capture the represented subject's character. Numerous Viennese studios were run by women; Madame d'Ora and Trude Fleischmann, who increasingly relied on avant-garde elements in their work, may be cited as two prominent examples. The interwar years saw photography oscillate between the heritage of Pictorialism like Fleischmann's society portraits and radical advocates of the avant-garde such as Helmar Lerski.

ALBERTINA

The presentation of examples of the ALBERTINA's holdings also encompasses works illustrating elaborate mise-en-scène solutions like those of Winston Link or the way Henri Cartier-Bresson strove to capture the fertile moment in his search for narrative condensation. The inclusion of William Eggleston's, Stephen Shore's, Saul Leiter's and the Austrian Alfred Seiland's achievements finally traces the steps from black-and-white photography to New Color Photography—a field also already taken into account in the ALBERTINA's Photographic Collection

Key genres and important new acquisitions

Arranged in thematic groups, the exhibits provide a survey of various genres such as portrait, architecture and landscape photography and convey an impression of crucial photographic movements. Remarkable new acquisitions of works by Helen Levitt and Alfred Seiland round out the presentation.

Featured Photographers:

Wilhelm Angerer | Franz Antoine | Atelier d'Ora | Alois Beer | Francis Bedford | Erwin Blumenfeld | Brassai (Gyula Halász) | Henri Cartier-Bresson | William Eggleston | Walker Evans | Trude Fleischmann | Robert Frank | Paul Freiberger | Lee Friedlander | David Goldblatt | Alfred Grabner | Lucien Hervé | Austrian Government Printing Establishment | William Klein | Rudolf Koppitz | Heinrich Kühn | Saul Leiter | Helmar Lerski | Helen Levitt | O. Winston Link | Ray K. Metzker | Lisette Model | Felix Moulin | Louis-Antonin Neurdein | Otto Schmidt | Schulz & Suck | Friedrich Seidenstücker | Franz Senkinc | Stephen Shore | Anton Josef Trčka | Garry Winogrand | Carl von Zamboni

Wall Texts

Walker Evans

Walker Evans ranks among the most influential American photographers of the twentieth century. Working for the Farm Security Administration (FSA)—a government project that initiated a photography program aimed at portraying the circumstances of farmers' lives during the worst economic crisis of the United States in the 1930s—Evans travelled through the American South. His uncompromising record of social conditions during the Depression exemplarily combines the purpose of social documentary photography with an artist's point of view.

Alois Beer

Developments in the field of camera technology and photographic accessories made it possible to make snapshots with small instruments from the late nineteenth century on. Amateurs as well as professional photographers used these mobile cameras to explore the urban space photographically. The Imperial and Royal Court Photographer Alois Beer set off on several trips through Europe in the mid-1880s. His straightforward pictures of Parisian streets follow in the tradition of representations portraying certain types of urbanites and itinerant traders.

Neurdein Frères

The Paris studio Neurdein Frères was one of the leading photographic companies of the late nineteenth century. Louis-Antonin Neurdein, who ran the firm together with his brother Étienne, specialized in architectural photography. Relying on bird's-eye views and using a panoramic camera, he succeeded in capturing the vast expanses of the terrain of the Paris World Fairs on the banks of the Seine in all its monumentality.

Carl von Zamboni

Being a professional photographer, Carl von Zamboni catered to the strong demand for views of Vienna and thus satisfied the great tourist interest in pictures of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's capital. He chose an elevated position for his photographs of monuments and public buildings and also captured the hustle and bustle in the city's streets.

The Imperial and Government Printing Establishment

The photography department of the Imperial and Government Printing Establishment under its director Alois Auer devoted itself to architectural pictures among other subjects. Its most comprehensive “campaign” was the documentation of Vienna’s fortification in the years prior to and during its demolition in the late 1850s. The salt prints showing a delicate sepia tone offer unique insights into the city’s structure before its transformation into a metropolis. The extraordinarily large photographs were produced by positioning the negatives directly on light-sensitive salt paper, which is why the format of the prints equals that of the negatives and all motifs are rendered with the utmost sharpness and precision.

Atelier Schulz & Suck

In the 1880s, Schulz & Suck, a studio based in Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, attracted great attention with their unusually large pictures of markets. The unblurred representation of a busy scene in all its details on a large format posed a special challenge for the photographic technology of that time.

Franz Antoine

The landscape draftsman and botanist Franz Antoine pursued photography both as an amateur and as a means to illustrate his scholarly studies of plants. His offices as director of the imperial gardens of the capital and residence city of Vienna were located in a building in the Burggarten that does not exist any longer. Antoine made several brilliant large-format studies of the Burggarten at the foot of the ALBERTINA redesigned by him and of the park’s surroundings.

Francis Bedford

Francis Bedford, who specialized in architectural and landscape pictures, is regarded as one of the most versatile English professional photographers. Bedford animated his picturesque Devon village idylls with staffage figures. Like many photographers in the early days of the medium, Bedford originally worked as an artistic architectural draftsman and not in the profession in which he would be so successful in later years.

Atelier d’Ora

“Atelier d’Ora” was one of the first commercial photo studios in Vienna that adopted both the elaborate style of portraiture and the sophisticated printing techniques of the Pictorialists, who were orientated toward contemporary painting. The studio was frequented by the aristocracy, the well-off middle classes, as well as the cultural scene. When Kallmus, who was responsible for the pictures’ aesthetics, left Vienna for Paris in 1927, Arthur Benda, her partner, kept running the studio under the name “d’Ora Benda.”

Heinrich Kühn

Heinrich Kühn ranks among the most important and influential founders of international photographic Pictorialism around 1900. The amateur photographer combined a strong interest in photographic techniques with aesthetic goals informed by the fine arts of his time. He was mainly concerned with establishing photography as an artistic medium on a par with painting. Techniques like the gum bichromate process and the bromoil transfer method allowed him to realize his ideas through the free choice of formats, colors, and painterly blurriness. Kühn specifically dedicated himself to photographic chiaroscuro effects and focused on only a few subjects such as still lifes, portraits, and pictures of his children.

Trude Fleischmann

Numerous modern portrait studios run by women were established in Vienna after World War I. A particularly outstanding example was Trude Fleischmann, whose psychologizing portraits—in which the modulation of light and the concentration on the subject's head and hands play an essential role—were still informed by Pictorialism. She came to embrace a more moderate modernism in the 1930s, yet always stuck to society portraits despite her increasingly matter-of-fact approach.

Anton Josef Trčka

The human body as a medium expressing the soul's moods was a subject of current interest in the art of the early twentieth century. Especially the poses taken by the protagonists of the modern dance movement sometimes left the prevailing portrait conventions radically behind. Anton Josef Trčka, who had an extraordinary feeling for the ornamental positioning of figures in a picture, became an ideal partner in the dancers' staging. The meaning of the hands, the eloquent gesture, provided a key means of composition for many of Trčka's photographs.

Franz Senkinc

The Austrian amateur photographer Franz Senkinc has been wrongly forgotten for a long time. The painter and commercial artist began to dedicate himself intensely to a wide range of photographic genres around 1930. Senkinc's close-up and narrowly cropped portraits of his artist colleagues and friends are clearly influenced by the contemporary avant-garde. Extraordinarily sophisticated lighting solutions constitute a crucial element of his work.

Helmar Lerski

Helmar Lerski ranks among the most radical proponents of the interwar avant-garde. Influenced by stylistic means of the silent film, he experimented with lighting, cropped image areas, and perspective in his series *Verwandlungen durch Licht* (Transformations through Light). He made around 170 pictures that do not present a man's face as an individual's portrait but as sculptural material formed by light and shadow—an approach aimed at lending his subject an almost heroic pathos.

Rudolf Koppitz

In his later work, Rudolf Koppitz adopted formal criteria of the contemporary photographic avant-garde. Conveying an austere impression, his close-up frontal portraits fit into the ideological context of Heimat photography, however, and thus into that of the Austrofascist ideology of the 1930s that sought its national identity in its deliberate dissociation from the German neighbor nation.

Alfred Grabner

Teaching physics and photographic optics at Vienna's Graphische Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt, Alfred Grabner made a name for himself as an untiring photographer and publisher. Including portrait, landscape, and architectural pictures, his production was characterized by its many-sidedness, though he was mainly interested in nude photography. The composition of Grabner's dancer definitely owes a lot to Rudolf Koppitz's motion studies, but draws less on his teacher's elegance than on the Michelangelesque ideal of the figure that had a number of admirers in Vienna at the time.

Erwin Blumenfeld

Known as a portrait, nude and fashion photographer, Erwin Blumenfeld lived in Paris for some years from 1936. It was in this artistic milieu that he portrayed Carmen, who had posed for Rodin's sculpture *The Kiss* as a young woman. Blumenfeld, who obsessively explored the female body in his work, views its transience and the impermanence of a woman's beauty as uncompromisingly as empathetically.

Otto Schmidt

The photographer and publisher Otto Schmidt was one of the major producers of so-called "academies" around 1900. Because of their erotic repertoire, these series of nudes enjoyed great popularity not only as body and expression studies for artists. Since the depiction of nudes was strictly regulated around the turn of the century, bared bodies were legitimated as anatomical studies or incorporated into mythological and allegorical contexts: thanks to their "cover," they thus escaped the ban of censorship. Leda with swan was one of the most preferred erotic motifs of that time.

Anonymous Nude

In the years around 1900, the authorship and the provenance of erotic and pornographic representations were mostly disguised out of fear of criminal prosecution. Generally, the production and the distribution of nude pictures were considered an offence against public morality. Violations were punished with imprisonment of up to one year. We do not know much about the models; some seem to have posed for painters on a regular basis, some were prostitutes.

Félix-Jacques Antoine Moulin

Next to architectural, landscape and travel pictures, the versatile French photographer Félix-Jacques Antoine Moulin also devoted himself to the genre of nudes. Fine artists' growing demand for such inexpensive, useful and always accessible material already resulted in the development of a profitable market in the early days of the medium, as the photographs saved many of them costly and complicated studies in front of a model. Artists frequently commissioned photographers with certain subjects, providing them with precise instructions for how to portray them. Moulin's photograph of a girl, one of his most beautiful pictures, seems to combine nude and drapery study.

Wilhelm Angerer

Wilhelm Angerer was one of the most prolific proponents of Austrian Heimat photography, whose work extends with unbroken continuity into the 1950s. Despite the backward-looking, idyllic tenor of his pictures of Alpine Tyrolean landscapes, Angerer often employed stylistic elements of New Vision. The field he attained mastery in were snow-covered mountain slopes. Retouching the material, he removed the traces of skis and endowed the scenery with an almost abstract surface as well as a look and feel reminiscent of human skin.

Paul Freiberger

Paul Freiberger, who worked in the photo trade, belonged to the highly active scene of Austrian amateur photographers in the years between the wars. Using blurriness as a means to lend his pictures a painterly appearance, Freiberger was clearly influenced by the Pictorialists. In striving for new perspectives and unusual image areas, his works tie in with the closeness to modernism so typical of that time.

Rudolf Koppitz

Rudolf Koppitz was Austria's most inspiring photographer of the interwar period. As teacher and later director of the photography department of Vienna's Graphische Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt, he determined the dominant aesthetics for almost three decades. The tradition of art photography saw its late culmination in his elegantly ornamental dance studies of the 1920s. Rhythm, the organic flow of movements, and strong chiaroscuro effects were the means of composition he brilliantly employed.

Ray K. Metzker

Ray K. Metzker is regarded as one of the most innovative American photographers. His approach to the subject of the big city is experimental and goes beyond the traditional documentary objectives of street photography. The contrast between brightly lit motifs and dark shadow areas transforms his photographs into almost abstract pictures of an intense dramaturgy reminiscent of stage sets. Metzker achieved strong lighting contrasts by retouching the negative in the darkroom.

Lucien Hervé

Congenially documenting Le Corbusier's buildings, Lucien Hervé set standards in architectural photography. His geometrically abstracting pictures are a result of his unwavering endeavors to simplify the pictorial elements. In his early series *Paris Without Leaving My Window*, Hervé transforms snow-covered streets and anonymous passersby in graphic motifs and lines by strictly defining the image area.

Lisette Model

The photographer Lisette Model, who was born in Vienna, introduced a completely new aspect into international press and documentary photography. Her work presents itself as a combination of socially committed documentation and a flaneur's attitude informed by Surrealism. Formally, her pictures disrupt the prevailing habits of looking at things. Her subjects are frequently rendered in closely cropped low-angle shots. Whether in her representations of rich idlers in Nice, of the underprivileged in New York's poor neighborhoods, or of scenes from the city's nightlife, Model always adheres to a form of critical humanism.

Henri Cartier-Bresson

Henri Cartier-Bresson coined the iconic term "the decisive moment," meaning the utter concentration on the one moment in which the fleeting nature of things and encounters is still tangible and yet solidifying into a universally valid picture. The photo reporter was one of the founders of the legendary photographic agency Magnum. The journalism pursued by this cooperative is committed to a humanist ethos. On numerous travels round the world Cartier-Bresson tried to get to the bottom of human nature and fathom man's weak and strong points, sufferings and little pleasures on a differentiated formal level.

Brassaï

In the milieu of French Surrealism, Brassai dedicated himself to the hidden Parisian nightlife in the 1930s; this was a subject that had not been worth depicting until then. In 1932, Brassai published the book *Paris de nuit*, which helped him to get accepted as an artist. He captured life in the bars, clubs, and brothels in countless pictures. The only seemingly random scenes are the result of a meticulous *mise-en-scène*. Brassai used a tripod, and an assistant operated the magnesium flash required to illuminate the scene adequately; friends frequently posed as models.

Helen Levitt

Helen Levitt has become known as an acute observer and chronicler of New York street life. Spanning several decades, her photographs capture people in the city's poor neighborhoods, African Americans and European immigrants. Dynamic and lively pictures render the transitory moments of children's fantastic games and activities. The photographer often used a right angle viewfinder, a device that allowed her to take pictures without being noticed. Levitt's feeling for the movement, the energy, and the surreal wit of the scenes she happened upon makes her work a unique achievement, particularly when seen against the background of her time.

O. Winston Link

The American O. Winston Link captured the vanishing world of steam locomotives in night photographs. His work depended on a specially developed sophisticated flash technique and a meticulously planned *mise-en-scène* that often required days of preparation. The spotlight-like illumination lends Link's pictures a dramatic cinematographic aesthetic.

William Klein

The way William Klein set his sights on the modern metropolitan scene strikes us as uncompromising and direct. From the 1950s, he captured the atmosphere of urban life in a completely new manner. He worked spontaneously and dynamically, often without looking through the viewfinder. This approach resulted in a rough, grainy, and blurry pictorial language that broke with traditional photography, which defined itself by elaborate compositions and perfect tonal values.

David Goldblatt

David Goldblatt is the founder of independent photojournalism in South Africa. In the years of apartheid, he harshly criticized racial discrimination in his country as a persistent visual chronicler. His series *Particulars* confronts us with close-ups of gestures and poses evocative of cuttings. The partial views of bodies focus our attention on the subjects' body language and specific details that leave no doubt to which class or race they belong.

Robert Frank

The Swiss-American photographer and filmmaker Robert Frank revolutionized traditional reportage and street photography and, with the pictures he took in the United States in the 1950s, ranks among the most influential artists of the postwar era. He established a hitherto unknown expressive pictorial language. In what was an intuitive photographic practice, he lent expression to a decidedly subjective vision emphasizing the personal experience of what he had seen. Frank's ground-breaking group of works entitled *The Americans*, published as an artist book in 1958/59, marks a pinnacle of this development and does away with the Americans' idealizing self-image.

Lee Friedlander

Lee Friedlander's persistent exploration of the pictorial surface expanded street photography by an essential dimension. In his pictures, the manifold metropolitan world refracts on reflecting surfaces. Everyday elements block and divide the pictorial space. Mirrors and frames fitted into each other provide the photographer with picture-in-picture systems into which he integrates anonymous people and self-portraits.

Garry Winogrand

Garry Winogrand was an obsessive photographer who spent his days on the streets of American cities such as New York or Beverly Hills. Relying on a spontaneous snapshot aesthetic and tilted horizon lines, he developed a radical pictorial language that enabled him to capture the hectic urban hustle and bustle in all its dynamics. The famous and controversially received series *Women are Beautiful* assembles photographs from the 1960s and 1970s that decidedly focus on women in public space.

William Eggleston

William Eggleston is one of the key proponents of New Color Photography, which encompasses an extremely heterogeneous group of Americans employing color as a stylistic element of artistic photography from the 1970s. Eggleston's exhibition in New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1976—which was felt to be a scandal in its day as traditional art photography had been black-and-white without exception—proved to be a landmark event for the establishment of color photography. Eggleston works spontaneously, almost casually; his fragmenting image areas suggest an intuitive and dynamic view of the world and emphasize the ephemerality of his pictures.

Stephen Shore

Aside from William Eggleston, Stephen Shore is likewise regarded as one of the most inspiring proponents of New Color Photography. Shore visited the American West several times in the 1970s. In the series *Uncommon Places*, which draws on these trips, Shore focuses on anonymous suburban architecture, shopping centers, and intersections, highlighting a hitherto mostly overlooked aspect of American culture. The photographer uses a large-format plate camera, which ensures a high precision in the reproduction of details and extraordinarily deep colors. Shore's allegedly random and casual pictures are precisely thought through in advance, the perspectives and angles of view carefully planned.

Alfred Seiland

Alfred Seiland is the first Austrian photographer who deliberately follows in the tracks of the founders of New Color Photography such as William Eggleston or Stephen Shore. In his documentary photographs, Seiland always devotes himself to different cultural landscapes over longer periods of time. His earliest series *East Coast—West Coast* (1979–1986) made in the United States assembles precisely composed, atmospherically dense pictures that evidence his overriding interest in each scene's specific lighting and spatial conditions.

Saul Leiter

In his painterly photographs of metropolitan details, Saul Leiter focuses on exploring and composing monochrome areas that often strike us as virtually non-representational. This abstract attitude shows his nearness to the American art movement of Color Field Painting, with whose protagonists he was in close personal contact. Leiter, who made a name for himself as a fashion photographer, has left an important oeuvre of color photographs that has only recently been rediscovered and received recognition.