

CaixaForum Madrid becomes the epicentre of experimental photography

- ”la Caixa” Foundation’s cultural centre in Madrid hosts the premiere of an exhibition that takes visitors on a journey through the history of experimental photography. The show, seen for the first time, was produced in cooperation with the Musée national d’art moderne - Centre national d’art et de culture Georges Pompidou of Paris.
- Featuring 172 works by 107 artists, the exhibition explores a branch of photography that has attracted numerous artists and professionals from different disciplines and places, such as Man Ray, László Moholy-Nagy, Lisa Oppenheim, Florence Henri, William Klein, Brassáï, André Breton, Rudolf Steiner, Barbara Kruger, Constantin Brancusi, Olafur Eliasson, Paul Éluard, Barbara Morgan and Suzanne Muzard, among many others.
- Far from taking a linear, chronological approach, *Extended Visions: Photography and Experimentation* constructs a narrative of experimental photography from the early-twentieth century to the present by establishing dialogues between historic and contemporary works, highlighting affinities and analogies between artists from different periods and movements.
- The show, which will be open to the public at CaixaForum Madrid until 26 March 2023, is structured around six thematic sections: *Light, Movement, Alterations, Recreating Worlds, Putting Vision to the Test* and *Anatomies*.

Extended Visions: Photography and Experimentation. Organisation: Exhibition produced by ”la Caixa” Foundation and Musée national d’art moderne – Centre de création industrielle (Mnam-Cci), Centre Pompidou **Curator:** Julie Jones, Curator of Photography, Mnam-Cci, Centre Pompidou **Dates:** From 1 December 2022 to 26 March 2023. **Place:** CaixaForum Madrid (Paseo del Prado, 36)

 [@FundlaCaixa](#) [@CaixaForum](#) [#CaixaForumExtendedVisions](#)



Madrid, 1 December 2022. On Thursday, **Isabel Salgado**, director of Exhibitions and Collection Area at "la Caixa" Foundation, **Isabel P. Fuentes**, director of CaixaForum Madrid, and the curator **Julie Jones** presented the exhibition *Extended Visions: Photography and Experimentation*.

In its cultural programmes, "la Caixa" Foundation focuses on the photographic art in order to show the influence of images on the contemporary sensibility and to illustrate the role played by the great visual creators of both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries on how we see the world. To this end, the Foundation has organised exhibitions devoted to such great names in photography as Jacques-Henri Lartigue, Eugène Atget, Robert Doisneau, William Klein, Richard Avedon, Diane Arbus, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Willy Ronis, Philippe Halsman and Robert Capa.

On this occasion, "la Caixa" Foundation teams up once more with the Centre Pompidou, a leading institution in the world of modern and contemporary art which conserves one of the finest photography collections in Europe, to present a new exhibition: *Extended Visions: Photography and Experimentation*. This show follows the 2020 exhibition *Camera and City. Urban life in Photography and Film*, which explored the intense relationship between photographers and filmmakers and the modern city in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The show, which premieres at CaixaForum Madrid and will later travel to CaixaForum Barcelona, CaixaForum Sevilla and CaixaForum València, is the third fruit of the partnership that "**la Caixa**" Foundation and the **Centre Pompidou** established in July 2019 for the joint organisation of exhibitions over the coming years. After *Camera and City. Urban life in Photography and Film*, this cooperation between the two institutions brought the exhibition *The Universe of Jean Prouvé. Architecture / Industry / Furniture* to Spain.

The new exhibition constructs a narrative of experimental photography from the early-twentieth century to the present. *Extended Visions: Photography and Experimentation* offers a history of this branch of the photographic art through works from the extraordinary collections of the Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle (Mnam-Cci), Centre Pompidou. Rather than taking a linear, chronological approach, the show, divided into six different sections, establishes dialogues between historic and contemporary works, highlighting technical, formal and thematic affinities between them. The six sections are: **Light, Movement, Alterations, Recreating Worlds, Putting Vision to the Test and Anatomies.**



From its very origins, photography has always been influenced by the many, constant advances in chemical and technical processes that have taken place. In the early-twentieth century, avant-garde artists such as the Dadaists and the Surrealists, as well as modern artists influenced by Constructivism, took particular interest in the photographic medium, then considered the contemporary tool *par excellence*. Photography not only offered new formal possibilities for exploring and expressing the spirit of those modern times, but also – not being tied to a long tradition nor to conventional dissemination networks – became the expression of freedom of action and thought at the service of formal innovation and social and political critique. And so it was that collages, photomontages, photograms and radical perspectives generated a new visual grammar.

In the second half of the century, a new generation of practitioners took these visual experimentations even further, blurring the boundaries between the different artistic disciplines – painting, sculpture and film, as well as performance art. This constant activity of investigation and creation continues even today in the work of numerous artists who question the nature of images and their role in today's world. Now, as a result of the revolution driven by the digital technologies, these creators are driving experimental photography towards unprecedented creative horizons.

The exhibition features 172 works by 107 artists from very different periods and movements, including **Man Ray, László Moholy-Nagy, Dora Maar, Wolfgang Tillmans, Liz Deschenes, Maurice Tabard, Roger Parry, Sara Cwynar, Paolo Gioli, Pol Bury, Ellen Carey, Jeff Guess, Vera Lutter, Bruce Conner, Christian Schad, James Welling, Raoul Ubac, Ilit Azoulay, William Klein, Raymond Hains, Olafur Eliasson, Harold Eugene Edgerton, Barbara Morgan, Heinz Hajek-Halke, Hergo, Nigel Henderson, Florence Henri, Constantin Brancusi, Paul Éluard, Suzanne Muzard, Lisa Oppenheim, André Breton, Barbara Kruger, Rudolf Steiner and Brassai**, among many others.

The creators of these works come from very diverse fields and disciplines – art, science, graphic design, architecture, poetry, illustration, astronomy and writing, among others. In view of all this diversity, and the difficulty of establishing boundaries between the multiple fields of work of these artists engage in, the exhibition curator, Julie Jones, refers to experimental photographers as “inventors”. This alludes to a quotation by the artist and designer Gérard Ifert, to



whom the Centre Pompidou had previously dedicated one section of an exhibition on the relationship between abstract photography and graphic design.

A new visual alphabet for a landscape in transformation

The exhibition opens with the section entitled **Light**, which illustrates the beginnings of experimental photography. Many early-twentieth-century artists used light to create new languages and, according to **László Moholy-Nagy**, the great modern art theorist who was fascinated by the artistic revolution ushered in by photography, investigation into light helped to create a new visual alphabet adapted to a changing environment. More and more avant-garde artists began to use the **photogram technique** to produce images taken without a camera, obtained simply by placing one or more objects directly onto the surface of photosensitive paper. Over the years, other artists expanded experimentation with light by harnessing the evocative power of the negative image. Outstanding examples of this include the photogram *Starfinger Angel*, by the iconic artist and experimental film-maker **Bruce Conner**, which emphasises the spiritual nature of human beings; the photograms of **Peter Miller**; and the unusual, abstract works of **László Moholy-Nagy**, also created without the use of a camera. Notable, too, are the “rayograph” photos of **Man Ray**, who systematised the use of the photogram and elevated the technique’s artistic value. This section also features an example of “futurist” photography by **Tato**, one of the founders of the Italian branch of this movement in the 1920s. Another prominent artist in this field is **Vera Lutter**, whose work represents a leap forward in the use of a technique invented prior to photography: the camera obscura. Using a pinhole camera, Lutter sought to capture signs of the passing of time in places as varied as German industrial estates, the pyramids of Egypt and the skyscrapers of Manhattan. The exhibition includes an impressive negative image by Lutter representing the Hambach open-air mine in Germany.

Fascination with movement

The title of the second section, **Movement**, alludes to the fascination of many experimental photographers with recreating the sensation of movement. Cameras that were easier to handle, and increasingly sensitive emulsions, enabled both avant-garde artists and amateurs to experiment with movement. This section includes the transgressive image of the *Marchesa Luisa Casati*, by **Man Ray**, as well as the unsettling series *15 minutes la nuit au rythme de la respiration, 1, 2, 3* [15 Fifteen Minutes Overnight at Breathing Rhythm, 1, 2, 3], by the French-Canadian photographer and writer **Alix Cléo Roubaud**. Here, too,



are works based on optical art by the graphic designer **Franco Grignani**, "hypnagogic photographs" (referring to the drowsy state of the subject immediately before falling asleep), and images by **Harold Eugene Edgerton**, the American scientist and professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston. The section also features visionary, abstract photographs by **William Klein** and **Lotte Johanna Jacobi**, as well as several striking examples of optical effects in the work of **Gérard Ifert**. Finally, **Movement** includes a series by the contemporary Icelandic-Danish practitioner **Olafur Eliasson** entitled *Pedestrian Vibes Study*, in which the artist uses his own body as a medium for experimentation.

The third section, entitled **Alterations**, illustrates just how malleable photography can be as an artistic medium. Artists employ all kinds of instruments to achieve a vast range of effects, using both analogue and digital photography – analogue thanks to its chemical base. Since the very origins of photography, moreover, the use of colour is considered subversive due to its ability to blur the frontiers between the medium and painting. Although colour photography creates a more faithful image of reality, when manipulated it can also represent an artificial world. Section Three features works by the Canadian artist **Sara Cwynar** which suggest a meditation on the link between power and archive in the contemporary world. Other experiments in photography in this section include crystallisations by **Constantin Brancusi**, abstract compositions by the German artist **Heinz Hajek-Halke**, works by **Man Ray** and **Dora Maar**, photographic alterations by **Hergo** and **Peter Klasen**, the psychedelic and geometric motifs of **Ellen Carey**, and the collages of the Italian visual artist and film-maker **Paolo Gioli**. Also on view are examples of the experimental architectures of **Elizabeth Lennard**, the abstract compositions of **James Welling**, **Sameer Makarius** and **Beatrice Caracciolo**, and works by the renowned German fashion photographer **Wolfgang Tillmans** and the self-taught artist **Pierre Cordier**, illustrating his unusual experiments in photography.

In the fourth section, **Putting Vision to the Test**, the show explores the many possibilities of extending the range of the human eye by using tools such as the microscope, which enables us to record the infinitely small and to discover worlds inaccessible to the naked eye, as well as, for example, X-rays, telescopes, panoramic and 360° images, and infrared shots. Many contemporary photographers have devoted themselves to appropriating and modifying old techniques or those used in other fields, such as architecture, medicine and even the military. Particularly interesting in this section are the light-filled images of **Georges Guilpin**, **Étienne Léopold Trouvelot** and **Alexandre Vitkine**, the work



of **Dennis Oppenheim**, fusing body art and land art, the "performativity" of **Steven Pippin**, the *Illuminations* of **Ian Paterson**, **Lisa Oppenheim**'s negatives, restored and treated, the gesturality of **Rudolf Steiner** and images by the contemporary German photographer **Thomas Ruff**.

A large installation by **Jeff Guess**, entitled *From Hand to Mouth*, occupies a prominent position in this section. The piece consists of one continuous 22m x 1m gelatin silver photographic print with 24 individual exposures. The print is suspended from a 7m diameter circular metallic structure, lit centrally from above. This poet and artist produced the negatives by placing a piece of 35mm film directly into his mouth, which he then used as a camera obscura. Each exposure represents his hand touching an everyday domestic object (a chair, a telephone, a book and so on) printed to scale, 1:1, with the entire negative visible, including sprocket holes. In this attempt by the artist to explore the boundaries of his practice, the photographic surface contains traces left by a corporeal presence.

In Section Five, **Recreating Worlds**, the exhibition delves into photographic creations that have generated new visual universes. Although photography has always been valued as a tool for faithfully representing reality, for many photographers, both professional and amateurs, it can also become a means of deforming visible reality. These images, recomposed by the use of overprints of two or more shots on a single negative, combinations of negatives, cut-outs, collages or digital alterations, become gateways to worlds that suggest infinite interpretations. The works often express political and social critique. This fifth section features a poetic composition by **François Kollar**, narrative collages by the Romanian poet and naturalised French citizen **Ghérasim Luca**, a portrait by the French Surrealist photographer and illustrator **Roger Parry**, a piece embodying critical analysis by the conceptual artist **Barbara Kruger**, a graffiti-based creation by the Hungarian artist **Brassaï**, and portraits by **Alix Cléo Roubaud**. Particularly outstanding is the monumental work by the Israeli artist **Ilit Azoulay**. This piece, which Azoulay describes as a kind of cabinet of curiosities, questions the ability of the mural space to "absorb light, sound, humidity and the superimposed marks that appear over time". In this case, *Room #8* is an original proposal to redesign a house marked for demolition in southern Tel Aviv. The works in this section also include a self-portrait by the British artist duo **Gilbert & George**, famed for their large-scale photographic installations organised in orthogonal grids. In *Praying Garden* they return to one of their most frequent themes: religion. The works in Section Five also include compositions by **Noémie Goudal**, **Giacomo Costa**, **Pierre Boucher** and **Raoul Hausmann**, and a poetic creation by **László Moholy-Nagy**, among others.



Finally, the **Anatomies** section focuses on one of the favourite subjects of experimental photographers: the human body. Since the very origins of photography, the body has always been seen as highly flexible “raw material”, a terrain open to all projections that lends itself particularly well to expressing the complexity of identities. The works in this section enable us to discover the dark romanticism of **Joel-Peter Witkin**, the eroticism of **Lucien Lorelle**, the surrealism of **Raoul Ubac** during the interwar period, the dialogues established between **Man Ray** and **Nathan Lerner** on the one hand and **Pierre Boucher** and **Herbert Bayer** on the others, and the provocations of **Pierre Molinier** and **Georges Hugnet**. Section Six also features striking reconstructions of images of Mounia Orosemame, the first Black haute couture model, made by the illustrator, art director, filmmaker and photographer **Jean-Paul Goude**, and of Grace Jones, Goude’s wife and muse.

The project also includes a “mediation” facility integrated into three points along the exhibition route. Entitled *Fotoexperimenta*, this space invites visitors to discover and try for themselves a selection of techniques, using filters, distortion, reversal of images from positive to negative, chemigrams and overprints. A helpful glossary is provided. On each of the three screens distributed around the exhibition space, visitors will be able to try out different techniques, using a QR code to download their photos.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue which explores various aspects in greater detail. This publication also contains a series of four in-depth interviews of the artists Gottfried Jäger, Jeff Guess, Liz Deschenes and Chen Cohen by the exhibition curator Julie Jones and Florian Ebner, curator and head of the Photography Cabinet service at the Musée national d’art moderne - Centre de création industrielle.

ROOM NOTES

Light

The ground zero of experimental photography is, without doubt, the study and manipulation of light, indisputably the “primary” element of photography, ahead of even the camera or the final print. Many early-twentieth-century artists used light to create new languages and, according to László Moholy-Nagy, the great modern art theorist who was fascinated by the artistic revolution heralded in by photography, investigations into light generated a new visual alphabet that was



adapted to the changing environment. More and more avant-garde artists began to use the photogram technique to take photographs without a camera, obtained simply by placing one or more objects directly onto the surface of photosensitive paper. These “automatic” images were embodied with great poetic potential that appealed particularly to the Dadaists and, later, to the Surrealists, due to the aesthetic value of the photogram technique. In later years, other artists expanded this experimentation with light by harnessing the evocative power of the negative image (with its values reversed) in all its forms.

Movement

In the 1880s, the appearance of cameras that were easier to handle, and the use of increasingly sensitive emulsions, enabled both avant-garde artists and amateur practitioners to experiment with movement. Those early explorations could take many different forms, from recording luminous vibrations to using montage to create rhythmic effects. In any case, these were images that reflected a world in the throes of industrial transformation. Experimentation increased after 1945, as the relations between art and science became closer. These links would become even closer in the 1950s and 1960s due not only to enthusiasm for science but, above all, to the great concern caused by scientific and technological advances. Another factor that encouraged experimentation with photography and movement was the influence of gestural abstraction on painting. This fascination with visually representing the sensation of movement, which would persist over the coming years, demonstrates the photographic medium’s capacity to constantly reinvent itself.

Alterations

Photography is extremely malleable as an artistic medium: both analogue (thanks to its chemical base) and digital photography permit practitioners to make alterations of all kinds. Artists use – and sometimes create for themselves – a whole range of tools to distance themselves from the perfect reproduction of reality: application of light-sensitive gelatin; misuse (voluntary or accidental) of the techniques used to develop the negative or the print or in obtaining the digital image, and so on. All this generates processes of formal dissolution that can create strange and fantastic figures and universes. Moreover, the use of colour has been considered subversive since the very origins of photography due to its ability to blur the frontiers between the photographic medium and painting. And although colour photography creates a more faithful image of reality, when manipulated it can also represent an artificial world.



Putting Vision to the Test

Rather than focusing solely on the final result, experimental photography usually starts with the way the shot is taken, as many different devices can be used to capture an image. The camera, an extension of the human eye, "augments" the possibilities of vision. Used in combination with a microscope, it can record the infinitely small, enabling us to discover worlds inaccessible to the naked eye. X-rays penetrate tissues and solid surfaces to reveal the interior of things. The telescope raises our gaze to the infinitely distant. Panoramic and 360° images can construct "complete" images. Infrared imaging penetrates the dark. Many contemporary photographers have devoted themselves to appropriating and modifying old techniques or those used in other fields, such as architecture, medicine and even the military.

Recreating Worlds

Photography, an imprint of reality, has always been valued as a tool for faithfully representing what is before our eyes. However, for many photographers – both professional and amateur – it is also a means of deforming that visible reality. Overprints of two or more shots on a single negative, combinations of various negatives in the enlarger, cut-outs and collages, digital alterations and so on; there are countless techniques with which to create new visual worlds. And these experimental works enable the construction of an image that is no longer faithful to reality, but a kind of gateway to another place. With their great poetic potential, these recomposed images permit multiple interpretations, becoming the keys to accessing their creators' imaginations. Moreover, they often express political and social critique, including typographic elements to reinforce their subversive message.

Anatomies

One of the favourite motifs of "experimental" photographers is, of course, the human body. Since the very origins of photography, the body has always been seen as highly flexible "raw material", a terrain open to all projections that lends itself particularly well to expressing the complexity of identities. The body's sensuality can be accentuated by using direct printing techniques such as the photogram, in which the skin literally touches the photographic paper. Some photographers have attempted to recreate the movements of the body through a variety of ingenious devices. Others prefer photomontage, cut-outs or collages to

transform the body, fragmenting and recomposing it. And there are those who turn to microphotography, close-ups and even X-rays to explore anatomies and endow them with magic.

ACTIVITIES PARALLEL TO THE EXHIBITION

GUIDED TOURS: EXTENDED VISIONS

FROM 10 DECEMBER 2022 TO 26 MARCH 2023

On this tour, visitors are guided by an educator who presents the key themes of the exhibition according to their interests, contextualising the works and resolving any doubts or questions that may arise.

TIMES

[Check availability](#)

WORKSHOPS

FAMILY VISITS: GET IT WRONG AND YOU’LL BE RIGHT

FROM 10 DECEMBER 2022 TO 26 MARCH 2023

Take a visit specially designed for families that includes a tour of the exhibition as well as participatory activities in the exhibition space and a final workshop. Led by an educator, the visits focus on the main themes of the exhibition through the works featured.

Based on what we have seen and learnt in the exhibition, we then take an experimental approach to photography using our own eyes and hands, testing the expressive capacities of this medium. Trial and error can lead us to make fascinating new discoveries!

* Activity recommended for families with children from 6 years.

EXTENDED VISIONS: PHOTOGRAPHY AND EXPERIMENTATION

CaixaForum Madrid
Paseo del Prado, 36
28014 Madrid

Tel. 913 307 300

icaixaforummadrid@marmacultura.com

Times

Monday to Sunday, including holidays: from 10 am to 8 pm


Booking and information

For booking and information: 917 879 606

"la Caixa" Foundation Communication Department

Cristina Font: 669 61 48 51 / cristina.font@fundacionlacaixa.org

Press Room: <https://prensa.fundacionlacaixa.org/es/>

 [@FundlaCaixa](#) [@CaixaForum](#) [#CaixaForumExtendedVisions](#)