

News Release

The Camera Exposed

23 July 2016 – 5 March 2017

#CameraExposed



Weegee the Famous, Richard Sadler, 1963 (c) Richard Sadler, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

This summer the V&A will present a display of over 120 photographs that explore the camera as subject. People are taking more photographs today than ever before, but as they increasingly rely on smartphones, the traditional device is disappearing from sight.

The Camera Exposed will showcase works by over 57 known artists as well as many unidentified amateur photographers.

From formal portraits to casual snapshots, and from still-lives to cityscapes, each work will feature at least one camera. Portraits of photographers such as Bill Brandt, Paul Strand and Weegee, posed with their cameras, will be on display alongside self-portraits by Eve Arnold, Lee Friedlander and André Kertész, in which the camera appears as a reflection or a shadow. Other works depict cameras without their operators. In the earliest photograph included in the display, from 1853, Charles Thurston Thompson captures himself and his camera reflected in a Venetian mirror. The most recent works are a pair of 2014 photomontages by Simon Moretti, created by placing fragments of images on a scanner.

The display will showcase several new acquisitions, including a recent gift of nine 20th-century photographs. Amongst these are a Christmas card by portrait photographer Philippe Halsman, an image of photojournalist W. Eugene Smith testing cameras and a self-portrait in the mirror by the French photojournalist Pierre Jahan. On display will also be a recently donated collection of 50 20th-century snapshots of people holding cameras or in the act of taking photographs. These anonymous photographs attest to the broad social appeal of the camera.

Many of the photographs in the display highlight the anthropomorphic qualities of the camera. Held up to the face like a mask, as in Richard Sadler's *Weegee the Famous*, the lens becomes an artificial eye. In Lady Hawarden's portrait of her daughter, a mirror reflection of the camera on a tripod takes on a human form, a body supported by legs.

Cameras in photographs can also emphasise the inherent voyeurism of the medium. Judy

Dater explores this theme in her well-known image of the fully clothed photographer Imogen Cunningham posed as if about to snap nude model Twinka Thiebaud. In other photographs on display, the camera confronts the viewer with its mechanical gaze, drawing attention to the experience not only of seeing, but of being seen.

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

- *The Camera Exposed* will be shown at the V&A in gallery 38A (Free Admission)
- More information available via; www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/the-camera-exposed

The V&A's Photographs Collection

The V&A was the first museum to collect and exhibit photography as an art form. It now holds the UK's national collection of art photography, which is one of the largest and most important in the world. The V&A has over 500,000 photographs in its collections, ranging from works created in 1839, when the medium was first invented, to the present.

For further PRESS information please contact the Lily Booth in the V&A press office on 0207 942 2508 or email l.booth@vam.ac.uk.

A selection of high resolution press images is available to download at <http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk>