



Press release

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Tate Modern to exhibit unparalleled modernist photography from the collection of Sir Elton John

Tate Modern today announces a major new exhibition, [*The Radical Eye: Modernist Photography from the Sir Elton John Collection*](#), opening on 10 November 2016. The show will be drawn from one of the world's greatest private collections of photography and will present an unrivalled selection of classic modernist images from the 1920s to the 1950s. Featuring over 150 works from more than 60 artists the exhibition will consist entirely of rare vintage prints, all created by the artists themselves. It will showcase works by seminal figures such as Man Ray, André Kertész, Berenice Abbot, Alexandre Rodchenko and Edward Steichen, offering the public a unique opportunity to see remarkable works up close. The quality and depth of the collection will allow the exhibition to tell the story of modernist photography in this way for the first time in the UK. It also marks the beginning of a long term relationship between Tate and the Sir Elton John Collection.

The exhibition introduces a crucial moment in the history of photography – an exciting rupture often referred to as the 'coming of age' of the medium, when artists used photography as a tool through which they could redefine and transform visions of the modern world. Technological advancements gave artists the freedom to experiment and test the limits of the medium and present the world through a new, distinctly modern visual language. This exhibition will reveal how the timeless genres of the portrait, nude and still life were reimagined through the camera, as well as exploring its unique ability to capture street life and the modern world from a new perspective.

Featuring portraits of great cultural figures of the 20th century, including Georgia O'Keeffe by Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Weston by Tina Modotti, Jean Cocteau by Berenice Abbott and Igor Stravinsky by Edward Weston, the exhibition will give insight into the relationships and inner circles of the avant-garde. An incredible group of Man Ray portraits will be exhibited together for the first time, having been brought together by Sir Elton John over the past twenty-five years, depicting key surrealist figures such as André Breton and Max Ernst alongside artists including Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso and Dora Maar. Ground-breaking experimentation both in the darkroom and on the surface of the print, such as Herbert Bayer's photomontage and Maurice Tabard's solarisation, will examine how artists pushed the accepted conventions of portraiture.

As life underwent rapid changes in the 20th century, photography offered a new means to communicate and represent the world. Alexandre Rodchenko, László Moholy-Nagy and Margaret Bourke-White employed the 'worm's eye' and 'bird's eye' views to create new perspectives of the modern metropolis – techniques associated with constructivism and the Bauhaus. The move towards abstraction will also be charted, from isolated architectural elements to camera-less photography such as Man Ray's rayographs and Harry Callahan's light abstractions.

Further themes explored in the exhibition will include new approaches to capturing the human form, highlighted in rare masterpieces such as André Kertész's *Underwater Swimmer, Hungary* 1917, while Imogen Cunningham's *Magnolia Blossom, Tower of Jewels* 1925 and Tina Modotti's *Bandelier, Corn and Sickle* 1927 will feature in a large presentation dedicated to the Still Life. The important role of documentary photography as a tool of mass communication will be demonstrated in Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother* 1936 and Walker Evans' *Floyd Burroughs, Hale County, Alabama* 1936, from the Farm Security Administration project.

Sir Elton John said: *"It is a great honour for David and I to lend part of our collection to Tate Modern for this groundbreaking exhibition. The modernist era in photography is one of the key moments within the medium and collecting work from this period has brought me great joy over the last 25 years. Each of these photographs serves as inspiration for me in my life; they line the walls of my homes and I consider them precious gems. We are thrilled to be part of this collaboration with Tate Modern and hope that the exhibition audience experiences as much joy in seeing the works as I have had in finding them."*

Nicholas Serota, Director, Tate said: *"This will be a truly unique exhibition. There are few collections of modernist photography in the UK, so we are delighted that Sir Elton John has allowed us to draw on his incredible collection and give everyone a chance to see these iconic works. Coming face-to-face with such masterpieces of photography will be a rare and rewarding experience."*

The Radical Eye: Modernist Photography from the Sir Elton John Collection at Tate Modern will run from 10 November 2016 until 7 May 2017. It is curated by Shoair Mavlian with senior curator Simon Baker and Newell Harbin, Director of the Sir Elton John Photography Collection, assisted by Emma Lewis. It will be accompanied by a major new catalogue from Tate Publishing, featuring an interview with Sir Elton John by Jane Jackson and an essay by Dawn Ades, Professor Emerita at the University of Essex.

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Notes to editors

Sir Elton John Photography Collection:

Sir Elton John began collecting photographs in 1991 and his collection is now regarded as one of the leading private photography collections in the world, distinguished by its exceptional quality and remarkable range and depth. From major vintage 20th century modernist works to cutting-edge contemporary images, the collection now holds over 7,000 fine art photographs. To make this exhibition possible Tate has worked in collaboration with Newell Harbin, Director of the Sir Elton John Photography Collection.