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For Immediate Release

THE FRICK PITTSBURGH PRESENTS

# STREET PHOTOGRAPHY TO SURREALISM

The Golden Age of Photography  
in France, 1900-1945

February 9 – May 5, 2019

PITTSBURGH, PA, December 10, 2018—The Frick Pittsburgh in Point Breeze will present the exhibition *Street Photography to Surrealism: The Golden Age of Photography in France, 1900-1945* from February 9 to May 5, 2019 at The Frick Art Museum. Admission to this exhibition is free.

The Frick invites visitors to visit the flea markets, shops, street fairs, dance halls, and after-hours *demi-monde* of Paris in this exhibition which explores one of the most fascinating and creative periods in photography. Featuring 16 photographers working in and around France before 1945, *Street Photography to Surrealism* includes key artists who were foundational in spurring the rise of photography between the two world wars.

Beginning with the pioneering work of Eugène Atget (1857–1927), who documented a vanishing “old” Paris in street scenes, architectural studies, and views of shop windows, the exhibition continues with evocative images of 1930s Paris by Ilse Bing (1899–1998), Brassai (1899–1984), and Henri Cartier-

Bresson (1908–2004), concluding with the avant-garde work of surrealists like Man Ray (1890–1976). The more than 100 vintage prints included feature significant groups of work by Atget, Man Ray, André Kertész (1894–1985), Bing, Brassai, and Cartier-Bresson—amounting to mini-exhibitions within the context of the larger exhibition. *Street Photography to Surrealism* illustrates how these masters of photography (many working with the miniature Leica) pushed the boundaries of art and visually defined the way we picture European city life in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*Street Photography to Surrealism* illuminates the texture of the times—when 19<sup>th</sup>-century Paris was being supplanted by the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Parisian urban life between the wars was a mix of sophistication and gritty reality. Works from the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by influential photographer Eugène Atget begin the exhibition, grounding the viewer distinctly in Paris, and vividly illustrating Atget's impact on the artists who follow. Atget, whose background was in drama, opened his photography studio sometime before 1891. Atget's aim was to provide photographs as aids to painters, and so he began exploring Paris and photographing anything he found artistic or picturesque. This roving, exploratory, deeply observational approach marks a major shift in photography from a primarily studio-based formal medium to an active method of investigating life.

The invention of dry-plate photographic processes made work a bit easier for photographers of the late-19<sup>th</sup> century like Atget, who no longer needed a portable darkroom when working in the field. He did, however, work with large glass plates (16 x 24 cm) and continued to do so even when small format cameras and roll film became available). Atget's tremendous body of work (as many as 10,000 photographs) has been claimed as the genesis of almost every 20<sup>th</sup>-century approach to photography including surrealism, photojournalism, landscape, and documentary. In 1921, when Man Ray moved to Paris, his studio was located on the same street as Atget, and he found in Atget's images of shop fronts (like *Boulevard de Strasbourg, Corsets*, 1912) a model for a surrealist approach to street photography that allowed the incongruities of the urban environment to operate as a sort of melding of the internal and external, the material and the subconscious.

The camera of choice for many members of the next generation of photographers was the miniature Leica, which used standard 35 mm rolls of film, and was available beginning in 1925. It was much easier for these photographers, many of them immigrants drawn to Paris's legendary artistic milieu, to explore their adopted city with these compact cameras, finding a particular fascination in the everyday and the often unexpectedly meaningful juxtapositions of people, architecture, and objects in the urban environment. Ilse Bing and Brassai are two such immigrants to Paris. Bing, is one of three female photographers included in the exhibition. (The others are Dora Maar and Lisette Model.) Brassai, born Gyula Halasz in Transylvania, came to Paris in 1924. Many of Brassai's images directly confront the

seedier aspects of Parisian night-life—a fringe world of dance halls, brothels, and prostitutes. Although taught by André Kertész (who is also featured in the exhibition), Brassai's interest lay in intimate examination of the characters of the city, rather than the more aesthetically formal, even aloof, approach of Kertész.

Cartier-Bresson, who made use of the miniature Leica, touted capturing the “decisive moment,” which he described as that moment when, “form and content, vision and composition merged into a transcendent whole.” Cartier-Bresson's intuitive ability to anticipate that moment made him one of the most influential photographers of all time. His early work, dating to the first part of the 1930s, is largely in the surrealist mode—bold images that played with spatial ambiguity, and serendipitous collisions of setting and action—as exemplified by one of his most famous photographs, *Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare, Paris, 1932*, which features a leaping man, perfectly reflected in a puddle, with his balletic posture simultaneously echoed in dance posters mounted to a fence at the back of the composition. Cartier-Bresson traveled widely and as the decade progressed, his affinity for society's outcasts led him to adopt a more journalistic approach to photography.

When André Breton wrote the surrealist manifesto in 1924, it became a galvanizing philosophy for many artists who were trying to merge creative expression with an interest in modernism, and new theories of psychology. In Paris, Man Ray became a leading member of the Surrealist circle, using photography to create traditional photographs and cameraless images (photograms that he called Rayographs, made by placing objects directly on light sensitive paper). At Man Ray's suggestion, a selection of Atget's photographs were published in *La Révolution Surréaliste* in 1926. [Surrealist photographers](#) made use of experimental techniques such as double exposure, combination printing, and reversed tonality to evoke the union of dream and reality.

*Exhibition organized by art2art Circulating Exhibitions. Collection of Michael Mattis and Judith Hochberg.*

## **ABOUT THE FRICK PITTSBURGH**

Located on the Pittsburgh estate of late-19th-century industrialist Henry Clay Frick, The Frick Pittsburgh is the steward of collections left as a legacy to the people of Pittsburgh by Frick's daughter, Helen Clay Frick. The permanent collections include fine and decorative arts, cars, carriages, historic objects, and buildings. The Frick experience includes The Frick Art Museum, the Car and Carriage Museum, Clayton, the Frick family Gilded Age mansion, and six acres of beautifully landscaped lawns and gardens. Also included are an Education Center, the Frick children's playhouse (designed by renowned architects

Alden & Harlow), a large working greenhouse (also designed by Alden & Harlow), The Café at the Frick, and the Grable Visitor Center, which houses the Frick Museum Store.

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The Frick Pittsburgh is located at 7227 Reynolds Street in Pittsburgh's Point Breeze neighborhood. Free parking is available in the Frick's off-street lot or along adjacent streets.

The Frick is open 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Tuesday–Sunday; 10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m. Friday; and is closed Mondays and major holidays. The public should call 412-371-0600 for information, or visit the Frick online at [TheFrickPittsburgh.org](http://TheFrickPittsburgh.org).

**For additional information or images, please contact Greg Langel, Media and Marketing Manager, at 412-342-4075 or [GLangel@TheFrickPittsburgh.org](mailto:GLangel@TheFrickPittsburgh.org)**

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