

Photo Exhibitions Grab the Spotlight

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"PHOTOGRAPHY is very hot this year," said Frank Goodyear, photo curator at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery. Galleries and museums are mounting huge shows, luminaries like Annie Leibovitz and Ansel Adams are the subjects of traveling exhibits, two museums are adding sizable photography wings, and the Venice Biennale's highest honor is going to a photographer.

The premier photo event this year is unfolding in the small French town of Arles, at the 38th Rencontres d'Arles (July 3 to Sept. 16, www.rencontres-arles.com). This photography-only festival will feature more than 50 exhibitions, including works from China, India and the globe-trotting photographer-members of Magnum Photos. There will be opening parties, nightly slideshows held in an ancient Roman theater, and a 25,000-euro prize (\$34,250 at \$1.37 to the euro) for a promising new talent chosen by top museum curators.

Also in France is the 11th annual Paris Photo (Nov. 15-18; www.parisphoto.fr), an influential photo art market that draws collectors, galleries and publishers looking for the next big thing in fine-art photography. Featuring 106 exhibitors from 21 countries, it will be held at the Le Carrousel du Louvre, an underground shopping area just west of the Louvre.

The Venice Biennale (www.labiennale.org; June 10 to Nov. 21,) is showcasing several photographers this year, including Rosemary Laing, known for her Australian landscapes, Tomer Ganihar on Israeli youth culture, and Malick Sidibé, who is receiving a lifetime achievement award for his black-and-white portraits of everyday people in Mali.

And in London, the Tate Modern (www.tate.org.uk) is having its first-ever major photography exhibition. The ambitious show, "How We Are: Photographing Britain," covers the entire history of British photography, with more than 500 works and 100-plus photographers, from William Henry Fox Talbot to contemporary artists like Bill Brandt (through Sept. 2).

In the United States, one of the most anticipated shows of the season is at the National Gallery of Art in Washington (www.nga.gov). "Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918-1945," will feature 150 works by pioneering eastern European photographers like László Moholy-Nagy and Hannah Höch. Drawn from dozens of private collections, many of the works have not been seen in this country before (June 10 through Sept. 3).

Also in Washington, the Corcoran Gallery of Art (www.corcoran.org) is mounting two potential blockbusters: a major Ansel Adams exhibit that's traveling from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (opening Sept. 15); and "Annie Leibovitz: A Photographer's Life" (opening Oct. 13), which focuses on her recent work, including touching portraits of her late companion, Susan Sontag.

There are several important shows in New York City this year, including the Museum of Modern Art's "New Photography 2007," an annual show that highlights contemporary artists (www.moma.org; opening Sept. 26). The International Center of Photography (www.icp.org/museum) currently has two noteworthy exhibitions: "Let Your Motto Be Resistance: African American Portraits," a stirring survey of African American achievements told through photographs, and a retrospective of Stephen Shore's biographical landscapes of America (both through Sept. 9).

And in late September, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (www.metmuseum.org) will open its first gallery devoted to contemporary photography, the Joyce and Robert Menschel Hall for Modern Photography. The inaugural installation, "Depth of Field: Contemporary Photography at the Metropolitan," draws from the museum's growing permanent collection, with works by Vito Acconci, On Kawara, Sharon Lockhart and artists from the Düsseldorf School. It will coincide with another show, "Impressed by Light: British Photographs from Paper Negatives, 1840-60," that explores an early technique using paper negatives (Sept. 25 to Dec. 31).

Other notable shows on the East Coast include photographs by the actor Leonard Nimoy of obese women at the R. Michelson Galleries (www.rmichelson.com) in Northampton, Mass. (on going), and Art Basel Miami Beach (www.artbasel.com), the flashy offshoot of the giant European art show, which will feature a large photography component, Photo Miami (Dec. 6 to 9).

A retrospective on Jeff Wall, whose backlit hyper-realistic photographs caused a sensation this spring at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, travels to the West Coast on Oct. 27 and opens at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (www.sfmoma.org; through Jan, 27th). Also on view is "The Brown Sisters" by the Boston photographer Nicholas Nixon, a captivating portrait series of his wife and her three sisters that were shot once every year since 1975.

San Francisco's de Young museum (www.deyoungmuseum.org) is preparing a retrospective on the 30-year career of Hiroshi Sugimoto, known for his hauntingly beautiful large-format landscapes (July 7 to Sept. 23). Farther down the coast, the Getty Museum in Los Angeles (www.getty.edu) is planning two photography exhibits: the recent documentary-style works of Luc Delahaye, and classic Edward Weston nudes (both opening July 31).

But the coasts do not have a monopoly on cutting-edge photography. "Chicago is a great photography city," said Corey Keller, associate curator of photography at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. She points to Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Photography (www.mocp.org), and the Art Institute of Chicago (www.artic.edu), which is currently showing "On the Scene," featuring young contemporary artists (through Sept. 3).

A new and notable photo gallery is the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (www.nelson-atkins.org) in Kansas City, Mo. Last year the Nelson-Atkins landed the Hallmark Collection, a jackpot of 6,500 prints by 900 American photographers. The museum's current 300-piece show, "Developing Greatness: The Origins of American Photography, 1839-1885," features early daguerreotypes, notable portraits and Civil War photos (through 2007).

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