

KIMBELL ART MUSEUM PRESENTS *PHOTOGRAPHY'S FIRST CENTURY: MASTERWORKS FROM THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE*, OCTOBER 4, 2026–JANUARY 17, 2027

The Kimbell's First-Ever Exhibition Celebrating the Art of Photography, In Conjunction with the Medium's Bicentennial

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 13, 2026

FORT WORTH, TX— The Kimbell Art Museum will present the special exhibition *Photography's First Century: Masterworks from the Bibliothèque nationale de France* from October 4, 2026, through January 17, 2027, in the Renzo Piano Pavilion. The Kimbell's first-ever photography exhibition, it will trace the history of photography's first one hundred years of exploration and discovery, from the rise of the daguerreotype and the calotype in the 1840s to the age of modernism between the World Wars. Organized in conjunction with France's national library in Paris in celebration of the bicentennial of photography's invention, this survey of more than 150 images includes work by Henri Le Secq, Gustave le Gray, Félix Tournachon (Nadar), Édouard Baldus, Louis-Émile Durandelle, Eugène Atget, André Kertész, Rogi André, Man Ray, and Brassai.

"The Kimbell's first photography exhibition is drawn entirely from what is arguably the world's most important collection of photographs, one that dates back to the birth of the medium in France in the nineteenth century," said Eric Lee, director of the Kimbell Art Museum. "We are fortunate to partner with the Bibliothèque nationale—one of the world's greatest libraries, where centuries of human thought and creative output are preserved—and to be part of the international celebration of photography's bicentennial."

The exhibition is organized along roughly chronological lines, first introducing visitors to photography's invention and earliest years, showcasing rare historical documents and images, before beginning explorations of the earliest technological innovations: the daguerreotype and the calotype. These two sections include works of historic, artistic, and technological significance, such as Charles Hugo's daguerreotype portrait of his father, the novelist Victor Hugo; archaeologist Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey's daguerreotypes, documenting Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris and the Khayrbak Mosque (also known as the Blue Mosque) in Cairo, palms in Athens, and ancient cedars in Beirut; still lifes by Henri Le Secq, seen in rare paper negatives; and Eugène Cuvelier's poetic calotype landscapes of the Forest of Fontainebleau.

The exhibition also includes several sections that present concentrated explorations of individual photographers, revealing each artist's particular contribution to the medium in depth. Portrait photographs by Félix Tournachon, known as Nadar, for example, demonstrate the artist's pioneering achievements in the use of carefully modulated light to photograph such international notables as Cuban singer María Martínez and Italian composer Gioachino Rossini; Parisian artists Honoré Daumier, Gustave Doré, and Antoine-Augustin Préault; writers Alexandre Dumas and Henri Murger; and celebrated beauties Princess Cantacuzene and actress Marie Laurent. Believing that the photograph could rival painting, the pioneering Gustave le Gray created moody views of the Mediterranean coast that capture the dramatic light of both the sea and the sky—almost impossible to photograph simultaneously in his day—by making sumptuous prints from multiple negatives. His contemporary Édouard Baldus's reputation was built along with the modern infrastructure of France itself, as the artist gained commissions to document architectural and engineering marvels, including the 1860s construction of the Paris–Lyon–Méditerranée railway and the picturesque sites along its length. Equally renowned for his contributions to nineteenth-century architectural photography, Louis-Émile Durandelle is represented in the exhibition through a series of photographs that document the construction of the Paris Opéra (1861–75) commissioned by its architect Charles Garnier.

The photographs of Baldus and Durandelle were bound in albums for presentation or sale. Another section of the exhibition is devoted to albums of photographs assembled for private use, beginning with a collaborative series of pictures by the painter Eugène Delacroix and photographer Eugène Durieu. Created over two days in 1854, these were staged by the famed Delacroix—who had become fascinated by photography, especially studies of the nude figure—and shot by Durieu. The prints of nude models were assembled in an album, and after Delacroix's death came into the possession of a friend who gave them to the Bibliothèque nationale in 1899. Also on view are albums containing works by Henri Le Secq and his friends; by the family of Victor Hugo; and by Edgar Degas and his friends the writer Ludovic Halévy, his wife Louise, and their son Daniel.

As visitors to the exhibition cross the threshold of the twentieth century, they will encounter the renowned works of Eugène Atget, whose evocative Paris street scenes together capture a poignant portrait of a city in transformation, as the remnants of *vieux Paris*—the Paris of old—gave way to modernization. The work of the American-born Man Ray follows, including some of his best-known works, like *Sleeping Woman (Natascha)* (1931); a striking *Rayograph: Revolver and Serpentine*, made by placing objects on a sheet of photo paper and exposing it to light; and portraits of Jacqueline Goddard, Gertrude Stein, and fellow photographer Lee Miller, some incorporating his signature solarization. Similarly iconic images by the Hungarian-born French photographer known as Brassaï include works

from his famous series *Paris de Nuit* (1932), *Madame Bijou at the Bar de la Lune, Montmartre* (1932), and *Sleeping Worker at the Folies Bergères* (1933).

The section *Rogi André and Photography Between the Wars* presents a selection of the disciplined yet nuanced portraits of early twentieth-century intellectuals and artists by the photographer, born Rosza Klein in Hungary in 1900. Among these are likenesses of Peggy Guggenheim, Alberto Giacometti, Piet Mondrian, and Dora Maar, Pablo Picasso's lover and muse, herself a photographer. André's images appear alongside photographs by her husband of approximately four years, André Kertész, and a selection of photographic publications from the inter-war years by artists in their circle.

The exhibition devotes two chapters to the idea of a single personality as explored by many of the most well-known photographers of the early twentieth century. First, exhibition visitors meet visual artist, fashion and textile designer, and color theorist Sonia Delaunay. Born in the Russian Empire, she arrived in France as a twenty-year-old in 1905 and emerged in the Parisian avant-garde with paintings displayed alongside works by Picasso, Georges Braque, and André Derain before marrying the painter Robert Delaunay in 1910. By the 1920s, her focus shifted to couture, which she had documented in photographs by such artists as Germaine Krull and Thérèse Bonney. In posed shots of models and portraits of the artist herself, photographers tackled the problem of representing Delaunay's bold geometry and characteristic juxtaposition of complementary colors through the black-and-white medium of photography.

As the concluding chapter in this sweeping view of the first century of the medium of photography in the country of its birth, the exhibition brings viewers face-to-face with Pablo Picasso through a selection of photographs from the 1930s. Another exploration of a single subject seen through many lenses, the grouping includes photos by Cecil Beaton, Man Ray, Rogi André, and especially Brassai. First introduced in 1932 when Brassai received a commission to photograph Picasso's studio and sculptures, the two artists became friends and continued to work together throughout their careers. As noted in the exhibition catalogue essay on the Picasso photographs, "Brassai knew Kertész, who had introduced Rogi André to the medium; Rogi André frequented the Surrealists, whom Picasso passed through without ever submitting to them . . . All these photographers are practitioners of multiple curiosities—painters, draftsmen, filmmakers, writers—for whom photography is not a specialty but one instrument among others."

"It has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with Sylvie Aubenas and Flora Triebel at the Bibliothèque nationale to select the most intriguing examples for the show from their collection," said George Shackelford, deputy director of the Kimbell Art Museum and organizing curator of the exhibition. "It's a

collection unlike any other, filled with rare and surprising things, from the manuscripts documenting the invention of photography in the 1830s to celebrated photographs by the Parisian masters of the inter-war years. Around every corner in *Photography's First Century*, there will be something unexpected to discover."

ORGANIZATION AND CATALOGUE

This exhibition is organized by the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Kimbell Art Museum in collaboration with Manifesto Expo and in conjunction with France's celebration of the bicentennial of the invention of photography.

The exhibition's curators are Madame Sylvie Aubenas, director of the Department of Prints and Photography emerita, and Madame Flora Triebel, curator of the nineteenth-century photography collection at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Its presentation at the Kimbell is organized by George T. M. Shackelford, deputy director.

The 336-page catalogue reproduces each exhibited work as well as a rich variety of comparative images. It includes a preface by Gilles Pécout, president of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and a foreword by Kimbell director Eric M. Lee, followed by essays by Aubenas and Triebel, who also contributed discussions of each of the sections of plates. An illustrated chronology of the first one hundred years of photography in France is accompanied by a selection of evocative texts written by the artists themselves and later critics; a rich bibliography will be useful for further research.

SUPPORT

Promotional support for the Kimbell Art Museum and its exhibitions is provided by American Airlines, the Fort Worth Report, and NBC 5. Additional support is provided by Arts Fort Worth and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Exhibition tickets are \$18 for adults, \$16 for seniors and students, \$14 for children ages 6–11, and free for children under age 6. Audio guides are available for \$4.

Admission is half-price all day on Tuesday and after 5 p.m. on Friday. Additional discounts are available on-site for K–12 teachers, active-duty military, and SNAP program recipients. Museum members receive unlimited, free access to all special exhibitions and free audio guides. Admission to the museum's permanent collection is always free for everyone.

The Kimbell Art Museum is open Tuesday through Thursday and Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Friday, noon–8 p.m.; and Sunday, noon–5 p.m. It is closed Monday, New Year’s Day, Juneteenth, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. For general information, call 817-332-8451.

ABOUT THE KIMBELL ART MUSEUM

The Kimbell Art Museum, owned and operated by the Kimbell Art Foundation, is internationally renowned for both its collections and its architecture. The Kimbell’s collections range in period from antiquity to the twentieth century and include European paintings and sculptures by artists such as Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Artemisia Gentileschi, Bernini, Velázquez, Gainsborough, Monet, Cézanne, Picasso, and Matisse, as well as important examples of Egyptian and classical antiquities. Also included are significant works of Asian art from China, Japan, the Himalayas, and South and Southeast Asia; notable African sculptures primarily from West and Central Africa; and a wide range of ancient American art representing cultures across Mexico and Central and South America.

The museum’s 1972 building, designed by the American architect Louis I. Kahn, is widely regarded as one of the outstanding architectural achievements of the modern era. A second building, designed by Italian architect Renzo Piano, opened in 2013 and now provides space for special exhibitions, dedicated classrooms, and a 289-seat auditorium with excellent acoustics for music. For more information, visit kimbellart.org.

PRESS IMAGES

[Download the press images here.](#)

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Drew Eubank
Marketing and Communications Manager
Kimbell Art Museum
817-332-8451, ext. 218
pr@kimbellmuseum.org

Nicole Chism Griffin
Head of Marketing and Public Relations
Kimbell Art Museum
817-332-8451, ext. 241
pr@kimbellmuseum.org