



The Gernsheim Collection (Harry Ransom Center Photography)

By Roy Flukinger

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Winner, Alfred H. Barr Jr. Award, College Art Association, 2012

The Gernsheim Collection is one of the most important collections of photography in the world. Amassed by the renowned husband-and-wife team of Helmut and Alison Gernsheim between 1945 and 1963, it contains an unparalleled range of images, beginning with the world's earliest-known photograph from nature, made by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in 1826. The Gernsheim Collection includes some 35,000 major and representative photographs from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; a research library of some 3,600 books, journals, and published articles; about 250 autographed letters and manuscripts; and more than 200 pieces of early photographic equipment. Its encyclopedic scope—as well as the expertise and taste with which the Gernsheims built the collection—makes the Gernsheim Collection one of the world's premier resources for the study and appreciation of the development of photography.

Published to coincide with a landmark exhibition staged by the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin, which owns the collection, this volume presents masterpieces of the Gernsheim Collection, along with lesser-known images of great historical significance. Arranged in chronological order, this selection effectively constitutes a visual history of photography from its beginnings to the mid-twentieth century. Each full-page image is accompanied by an extensive annotation in which Roy Flukinger describes the photograph's place in the evolution of photography and also within the Gernsheim Collection. Flukinger also provides an enlightening introduction in which he traces the Gernsheims' passionate careers as collectors and pioneering historians of photography, showing how their untiring efforts significantly contributed to the acceptance of photography as a fine art and as a field worthy of intellectual inquiry. Appreciations of the Gernsheim Collection by Alison Nordström and Mark Haworth-Booth confirm its singular importance as a collection of outstanding breadth and depth in the history of photography.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

ROY FLUKINGER is Senior Research Curator of Photography at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin. He lectures and publishes extensively in such fields as regional, cultural, and contemporary photography and the history of art and photography. He has produced nearly fifty exhibitions ranging from classical photohistory to contemporary photography, and from photographer's retrospectives to American, regional, and Texas photography.

ALISON NORDSTRÖM is Curator of Photographs at George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film, where she is also the USA director in the MA program in Photographic Preservation and Collections Management with Ryerson University. She is editor of the academic journal *Photography and Culture*, London. She has curated more than one hundred photographic exhibitions and is widely published.

MARK HAWORTH-BOOTH served as a curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) from 1970 to 2004 and helped to build up its great collection of photography. He is now an Honorary Research Fellow at the V&A and a Senior Fellow of the Royal College of Art. His latest book is *Camille Silvy (1834–1910): Photographer of Modern Life*.

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