

The exhibition brings together almost 2,000 vintage photos and other documents dated between 1851 and 2008 by some 250 authors, from Lewis Hine to William Klein

The MACBA presents *Universal Archive. The Condition of the Document and the Modern Photographic Utopia*

Inauguration: 22 October 2008, at 7.30 p.m. **Exhibition dates:** From 23 October 2008 to 6 January 2009. **Direction of the project:** Bartomeu Marí. **Curator:** Jorge Ribalta. **Barcelona 2007 Photographic Mission Concept:** Jorge Ribalta and Joan Roca. **Organisation:** Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA). **Coproduction:** MACBA and Museu Coleção Berardo-Arte Moderna e Contemporânea, Lisbon. **Sponsor:** Caja de Ahorros del Mediterráneo (CAM).

The *survey* or photographic mission came into existence with a specific goal: to build the image of the emerging city in a time of huge but difficult to visualise transformation. It was the writer Prosper Mérimée who, in 1851, sponsored the first major photographic campaign in history: the Mission Héliographique, intended to create a public photographic archive of French historical monuments through the work of leading photographers. This mission constitutes the first formalisation of the photographic utopia in modern culture: the construction of a universal archive. Towards the end of 2006, the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) adopted the model of the photographic survey, historically promoted through government bodies, and initiated a project based on Barcelona, aiming to offer a diagnosis of today's city and its focuses of transformation for the 21st century. Commissioning photographers from various generations and backgrounds, the Museum set out to investigate the notions of photographic document and city.

Thus the creation of *Universal Archive. The Condition of the Document and the Modern Photographic Utopia*, an exhibition that brings together nearly 2,000 documents (of which the almost 1,000 vintage photographs and prints are of particular interest) dating from 1851 to 2008 by some 250 authors, including Lewis Hine, Eugène Atget, El Lissitzky, Herbert Bayer, Edward Steichen, Berenice Abbott, August Sander, Weegee, Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Agustí Centelles, Xavier Miserachs, Franco Pinna, Allan Sekula, Robert Adams, Martha Rosler and William Klein, to name but a few. Going beyond the presentation of a single, linear narration through the history of photography, the display offers an entire constellation of narratives on the genealogy of the document: the historic photographic missions, the reformist document, the workers' photography movement, exhibitions, advertising, projects based around ethnography and the documentation of cities, and so on. The exhibition is brought to a close by the commission that initiated *Universal Archive: the Barcelona 2007 Photographic Mission*, which provides sixteen new looks at the city of the future.

In the early 20th century, Eugène Atget built an exhaustive inventory of Old Paris, with over 8,000 negatives; in the decade of the twenties, August Sander made a collective portrait of German society based on hundreds of photographs divided into archetypes; and in 1947 André Malraux dreamed of an "imaginary museum" which would bring together the universal art of all times by means of photographic reproductions. The construction of a universal visual archive has long been the historical mission of photography. This idea of the image as a bargaining chip, comparable to the function of money in capitalism, is the cultural condition of the emergence of the photographic document as a merchandise in common use and, at the same time, its utopian horizon. Does incorporation of the new Photoshop-era digital technologies signal the liquidation of this utopia?

The Universal Archive. The Condition of the Document and the Modern Photographic Utopia exhibition investigates notions of the photographic document through the study and restaging of some of the debates sparked by the genre at different moments in history. Though the first photograph in the display dates back to 1851 and the last to 2008, making its historical spectrum is as broad as the very history of photography, the exhibition does not attempt to present an exhaustive and chronological encyclopaedic archive of photography, but rather sets out to trace the possible genealogies of the photographic document and their conflicts. The resulting constellation of narratives offers surprises, tensions and overlaps, aimed at bringing about a rethinking of the role of photography today.

While *Universal Archive* is presented as a historical exhibition that adopts museum codes *ad hoc*, it is also a multidisciplinary project of public participation which has received the cooperation of dozens of institutions, as well as that of Catalan civil society as a whole. This involvement is underlined in the MACBA tradition of experimentation and concerns not only the conditions of the Museum in the city, but also the possibilities of a de-territorialised museum, immersed in social dynamics and capable of rewriting the role of the institution as a public space. The display was curated by Jorge Ribalta, with assistance from Margarita Tupitsyn, Vanessa Rocco, Élia Pijollet, Madeleine Bernardin-Zeyen and Jordana Mendelson. The Barcelona 2007 Photographic Mission, which concludes the exhibition, was jointly curated by Ribalta and Joan Roca, director of the Museu d'Història de la Ciutat.

Mounting of the exhibition

The exhibition is mounted throughout two entire levels of the Museum: the second floor, where the display starts, and the first, where it ends. In addition, the ground floor of the MACBA Studies and Documentation Centre (the building adjacent to the Museum) has created a space dedicated to documentation on the Barcelona 2007 Photographic Mission based on publications, audiovisual material and accessible links. The exhibition is sponsored by Caja de Ahorros del Mediterráneo (CAM) and has received the support of Barcelona City Council and the Spanish Ministry of Culture. Following its stage in the MACBA, part of the display may be seen in the Museu Colecção Berardo-Arte Moderna e Contemporânea, in Lisbon (co-producer of the exhibition, along with the MACBA).

Universal Archive. The Condition of the Document and the Modern Photographic Utopia brings together almost 2,000 documents, notable among which are the nearly 1,000 vintage photographs and copies, dating from 1851 to the present time. The exhibition seeks to

highlight how these images really circulated in their day, so in addition to photographs it features 19th-century albums, magazines, publications, films, screenings of historic exhibitions and documentation material. The display installations also include a reconstruction of the Soviet Pavilion from the *Film und Foto* exhibition (Stuttgart, 1929), designed by El Lissitzky, as well as the projection of photographs by Pierre Bourdieu, co-produced by the MACBA, Camera Austria and the Fondation Pierre Bourdieu. The works belong to some 130 collections worldwide from such prestigious institutions as the MoMA, Tate Britain, the Musée d'Orsay, the Biblioteca Nacional de España, the Centre Georges Pompidou, the Washington Library of Congress, the Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya, the Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona, the Museu Nacional d'Història de Catalunya (MNAC), the Architects' Institute of Catalonia (COAC) and the Fundación Foto Colectania

Standing out among the almost 250 authors represented in the exhibition are Lewis Hine, Walter Ballhause, Alexander Rodchenko, Morris Engel, André Kertész, Weegee, Eugène Atget, Paul Strand, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Helen Levitt, Walker Evans, Brassai, Robert Doisneau, Bill Brandt, Dorothea Lange, El Lissitzky, Dziga Vertov, Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Edward Steichen, August Sander, Franco Pinna, Francesc Català-Roca, Ramon Masats, Oriol Maspons, Joan Colom, Xavier Miserachs, Carlos Pérez Siquier, José Ortiz Echagüe, Margaret Mead, Juan Rulfo, Charles Clifford, Jean Laurent, Robert P. Napper, Charles Marville, Robert Frank, Berenice Abbott, William Klein, Bernd andy Hilla Becher, Allan Sekula, Ed Ruscha, Dan Graham, Martha Rosler, Marcel Broodthaers, Garry Winogrand, Adolf Mas, Josep Brangulí, Pere Català Pic, Agustí Centelles, Margaret Michaelis, Otho Lloyd, Humberto Rivas, Manolo Laguillo and Gilbert Fastenaekens.

The photographers who took part in the Barcelona 2007 Photographic Mission include Ahlam Shibli, Marc Patault, David Goldblatt, Allan Sekula, Patrick Faigenbaum, Sandra Balsells, Jean-Louis Schoellkopf, William Klein, Gilles Saussier, Xavier Ribas, Xavier Basiana, Ana Muller, Andrea Robbins and Max Becher, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Lothar Baumgarten and Manolo Laguillo.

The exhibition areas

The exhibition is structured into two large parts. The first traces a historical path through some of the leading general debates on the photographic document in modern times (from 1850 to 1980), divided into four general areas: *Policies of the Victim (1907-1943)*, *Public Photographic Spaces (1928-1955)*, *Compared Photography (1923-1965)* and *Topographies. The Culture of Landscape and Urban Change (1851-1988)*. The second section takes the city of Barcelona and its historical visual evolution as a specific case study. This second part is also subdivided into two areas: *The Photographic Construction of Barcelona in the xxth Century* and *2007. Metropolitan images of the New Barcelona*.

Policies of the Victim (1907-1943)

Strictly speaking, the documentary genre came into being during the transition from the nineteen-twenties to thirties, to represent the working classes and disadvantaged and to establish "the tradition of the victim", in the words of the critic Brian Winston. Winston's

forerunner was Lewis Hine who, in 1907, began a project for the Child Labour Committee. In contrast to the liberal, paternalist model of Hine and the Farm Security Administration (with its photographic campaign carried out from 1935 to 1943 documenting the effects of the economic depression on the farming community of the south-eastern United States), an alternative current developed linked to the international workers' movement (Alexander Rodchenko, Sergei Tretiakov and Boris Kushner). This gave rise to different types of associations that proliferated in the North of Europe and finally reached the US (Photo League). The image of the ordinary man in the street, the rhetoric of the human and of the common people was transformed in the first thirty years of the 20th century into a symbol, a symptom of an age threatened by the potential for revolutionary change and its inherent spectres (Walter Ballhause and Eugen Heilig).

Public Photographic Spaces (1928-1955)

"Innovation lies in the use of a dynamic design of space rather than rigid symmetry, in the non-conventional use of diverse materials and in the application of a new scale, as well as in the use of giant photographs", wrote the painter, graphic artist and photographer Herbert Bayer. He was the precursor of advertising and the "expanded vision" theory of dynamic, non-linear vision whose logic was translated into exhibition productions that employed the size, position and inclination of the photographs to offer spectators total perceptive immersion. His point of reference was El Lissitzky who, between 1928 and 1930, introduced the idea of a "new vision" of the era of the Soviet revolution through a series of photographic propaganda exhibitions. This model spread in western Europe through the Bauhaus (Bayer and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy), became an instrument of persuasion for the new fascist regimes in Italy and Germany, was applied in the Spanish Republic pavilion at the 1937 Paris World Fair under the watchful eye of Josep Renau and was, in turn, reinterpreted by the US in the propaganda context of the Cold War (specifically, through exhibitions organised by Steichen at the MoMA: *Road to Victory*, *Power in the Pacific* and *The Family of Man*).

Compared Photography (1923-1965)

This area explores the notion of the photograph as an instrument for the social sciences. It opens with the reproduction of a visual essay by Aby Warburg, the art historian and father of the iconological study who, following an initiation journey to the land of the Hopi Indians and a period of psychiatric reclusion, initiated the *Mnemosyne* visual archive, a curious method of studying and analysing images based purely on the relationship between them, without the use of text. The next exhibit consists in the presentation of ethnographic projects carried out by Margaret Mead, founder of the field of visual anthropology; this is followed by the *People of the 20th Century* project by August Sander; the works of Mass Observation and the photographs of ordinary people taken clandestinely by Humphrey Spender; the Pedagogical Missions established under the reformist policies of the Spanish Republic, with the aim of taking culture to the rural world, which contrast with the ahistorical, traditional vision of José Ortiz Echagüe; the "progressive folklore" concept developed by Ernesto de Martino and his collaboration with Franco Pinna, who portrayed mourning rituals, agricultural festivities and the therapeutic rhythm of the Tarantella dances in the south of Italy; the documentation of popular culture by Juan Rulfo, W. Eugene Smith, Oriol Maspons and Carlos Pérez Siquier; and the fieldwork that Pierre Bourdieu carried out in Algeria.

Topographies. The Culture of Landscape and Urban Change (1851-1988)

This section brings together a series of photographic campaigns carried out with a view to translating the infinite variety and contingency of the world into a rational order. This is achieved through an archive-based logic in the creation of a collection of universally-accessible classified images, as materialised in the Mission Héliographique, the geological expedition to survey the 40th Parallel (the first in a series of explorations of the Western territories commissioned by the US government), the campaigns that Charles Clifford, Jean Laurent, José Martínez Sánchez and Robert P. Napper carried out in Spain in the mid-19th century and the DATAR project Mission Photographique (which was carried out from 1984 to 1989 in France with the aim of documenting the transformations of landscapes in the post-industrial era). This area also presents a series of photographic documentation projects based on cities in the 19th and 20th centuries: the old Paris, condemned to disappear under Hausmann's urban reforms and captured by Charles Marville; the humble London seen through the lens of the Scotsman John Thomson; the rigorous inventory of Paris made by Eugène Atget and recovered to a large extent by Berenice Abbott who, in turn, applied the *Atget Model* in New York; the mythical books of Brassai, Doisneau, Brandt, Frank and Klein; and the compulsive photographs that Garry Winogrand took in Los Angeles. The section is brought to a close with a series of works which criticise photographic realism and raise the possible redefinition of the documentary (Allan Sekula, Martha Rosler, Ed Ruscha, Hans-Peter Feldmann, and Dan Graham). Consideration is also given to the influence of *New Topographics. Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* (1975), a small, modest exhibition which gave rise to a multiplicity of "topographical" documentary practices in the mid-seventies.

The Photographic Construction of Barcelona in the xxth Century

This area presents a broad but concise analysis of the photographic construction of Barcelona, from the 1888 World Fair up to the Forum of Cultures, held in 2004. The review is punctuated by five historic milestones that coincide with the holding of major events which have been the motor of Barcelona's modern transformation. The first of these corresponds to the first public proliferation of photographs and photograph albums based around the 1888 World Fair (Pau Audouard, Francisco Javier Álvarez, Joan Martí, Antoni Esplugas, Lucien Roisin). The second part addresses the emergence of a modern, official photographic construction of the "Great Barcelona", arising out of the 1929 International Exposition (Josep Brangulí, Carlos Pérez de Rozas, Alexandre Merletti, Josep Maria de Sagarra, Agustí Centelles). The third examines the dominance of the humanist photographic model, from the "new photographic vanguard" of the fifties to the photojournalism of the transition, consistent with the greyness of the city under Franco's dictatorship and a development model lacking in democracy (Joaquim Gomis, Francesc Català-Roca, Xavier Miserachs, Joan Colom, Oriol Maspons, Ramon Masats). The fourth moment corresponds to the surge in the new topographical documentary style of the late seventies and early eighties, linked to the recovery of the city's urban fabric and democratic institutions (Humberto Rivas, Manolo Laguillo, Marta Povo, Jordi Sarrà, Jordi Bernadó, Gilbert Fastenaekens). The fifth and final part reveals the new social struggles in seeking the image of the nineties and first years of the new millennium, between the historic landmarks of the 1992 Olympic Games and the

Forum of Cultures 2004 (Craigie Horsfield, Xavier Ribas, Jean-Marc Bustamante, Patrick Faigenbaum, Jordi Secall, Miguel Trillo, Xavier Basiana, Jaume Orpinell).

2007. Metropolitan Images of the New Barcelona

"When does the city cross the border with that which it no longer is and become something else, a different city?" is the question asked by Joan Ramon Resina in his recent book on the image of Barcelona. The lack of photographs of Barcelona outside the logic of advertising gives rise to the difficulty in understanding the process which broke the banks of the metropolitan framework established in the 20th century. With this in mind, towards the end of 2006 the MACBA commissioned a group of photographers to work on the metropolis. The Barcelona 2007 Photographic Mission takes its inspiration from the acclaimed historic models that precede it, from the 1851 Mission Héliographique to the DATAR Mission of 1980, and includes the hundreds of individual and institutional projects which are reviewed in this exhibition. The method of working was based on a selection of specific urban "Polaroids": territorial confluence, historical processes and emergent subjects.

Photographers from different backgrounds and from the many generations of the second half of the 20th century have played a part in the project: **Ahlam Shibli** (domestic work: carers of the elderly), **Marc Pataut** (industrial work: the production line of the automobile manufacturer SEAT), **David Goldblatt** (economic activity between the port and the airport), **Allan Sekula** (the gas cycle as a metaphor for the globalised economy, taking the Gas Natural company as a point of reference), **Patrick Faigenbaum** (the political and economic elite), **Sandra Balsells** (IESE, a private business school of world renown), **Jean-Louis Schoellkopf** (the Latin Kings), **William Klein** (the "Rambla" case), **Gilles Saussier** (the new Oriental economic networks in Barcelona), **Xavier Ribas** (some of the symbolic industrial estates in their current condition), **Xavier Basiana** and **Ana Muller** (the *urbanisation* in zones of the Vallés and the Collserola mountainside, respectively), **Andrea Robbins** and **Max Becher** (the Gothic Quarter and shopping centres), **Hans-Peter Feldmann** (the Raval), **Lothar Baumgarten** (monuments of industrial architecture in transitions from the 19th to the 21st centuries) and **Manolo Laguillo** (Gran Via, from the Plaza de España to the new Plaza de Europa).

→ In relation to the Barcelona 2007 Photographic Mission, the MACBA has created an archive of images which is freely accessible in the public domain (www.macba.es) with the aim of achieving their maximum dissemination and of experiencing critical forms of exhibition and visibility.

Universal Archive. The Condition of the Document and the Modern Photographic Utopia

From 23 October 2008 to 6 January 2009

Inauguration: Wednesday 22 October, at 7.30 p.m.

■ **MUSEU D'ART CONTEMPORANI DE BARCELONA.** Plaça dels Àngels, 1. 08001 Barcelona.
www.macba.es

■ **STUDY CENTER MACBA** (in front of the main Museum building). Consultation space: *2007. Metropolitan images of the new Barcelona.*

■ **PUBLICATIONS. Book** *Public Photographic Spaces: Propaganda Exhibitions, from 'Pressa' to 'The Family of Man' (1928-1955).* Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2008. 272 pages, 120 illustrations. Editions in Catalan, Spanish and English. Authors: introduction by Jorge Ribalta; text on the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* of 1932 by Vanessa Rocco, in addition to historic texts from the times of such authors as El Lissitzky, Herbert Bayer, Edward Steichen, Roland Barthes and Margaret Mead, among others. / **Magazine** *2007, imágenes metropolitanas de la nueva Barcelona.* Selection of images by the photographers who took part in the Survey 2007. / **Guide** *Metropolitan Routes Through the New Barcelona.* Includes several Barcelona itineraries, drawn up by students on the 2006-07 course of the MACBA's Independent Studies Programme (PEI). / **Guide** to the exhibition, with a text by Jorge Ribalta which covers the content of the display.

■ **MONOGRAPHIC COURSE.** *Imagen de España. Fotografía y turismo, 1939-1977.* Presented by Carmelo Vega. 2, 3 and 4 December.

■ **CINEMA PROGRAMMES.** *Políticas de la víctima. Poéticas del cine documental en los años 30.* from 29 October to 17 December.

■ **SHORT HISTORIES OF CINEMA.** Series of Films for Children. *Illusion of Movement. Photography in Film.* 4 and 18 October, 8 and 22 November.

■ **VISITS-DEBATE AT THE EXHIBITION.** 6, 12, 20 and 27 November, with Enric Jardí, Elisenda Ardèvol, Josep Quetglas and Bernardo Diego.

■ **DAILY GUIDED TOURS** (included in the admission price). Weekdays, at 6 p.m. Saturdays, at 12 midday and 6 p.m. Sundays and bank holidays, at 12 midday. Two visits will be available simultaneously: 1. Historical route. 2. Barcelona route.

■ **OPENING TIMES.** Weekdays (except Tuesday), from 11 a.m. to 7.30 p.m. Saturdays, from 10 a.m. to 7.30 p.m. Sundays and bank holidays, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesdays that are not bank holidays, closed. Open Mondays.

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