

# Forbes

Review : Making the Unseen Known



Installation view of Veronika Kellndorfer, *Succulent Screen*, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2019,  
*Photo: Veronika Kellndorfer*

**Tom Teicholz**

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The Getty Museum is well regarded for their collection of antiquities housed at the Getty Villa in Malibu, for the work of the Getty Research Institute and the Getty Conservation Institute, as well as for their support of far-flung restorations, and their support and leadership in organizing such landmark art initiatives as the epic “Pacific Standard” exhibitions as well as the Getty’s own excellent exhibitions, particularly in recent years as their range and ambition has expanded.

Despite all that, or in addition to all that, Getty has one of the greatest photography collections in the United States, with more than 148,000 prints. The Getty Museum’s Department of Photographs was founded 35 years ago. Like any great museum or great collection, the Getty has more works in its vault than on its walls, and possibly more works than it could ever show on all its walls. This is why The Getty’s current exhibition “Unseen: 35 Years of Collecting Photographs” (on view through March 8, 2020) is such a great treat and a great idea for an exhibition.

“Unseen” brings together 200 never before exhibited photographs from the collection personally chosen by several of the Department of Photography’s Curators. “Rather than showcasing again the best-known highlights of the collection, the time is right to dig deeper into our extraordinary holdings and present a selection of never-before-seen treasures.” Timothy Potts, The Museum’s Director, said.

So, for example, an image by contemporary artist Carrie Mae Weems of a young man shielding his eyes, called “See No Evil” is displayed grouped with an image of from 1969 by Anthony Hernandez of a man shielding his face from the photo, and an image of hands by Horst P. Horst, all resonating with the exhibition title “Unseen.”

The eclectic range of photographs includes works by notable American photographers such as Irving Penn, William Wegman, William Klein, and Weegee, as well as Hungarian photographic luminaries Martin Munkasci, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Andre Kertesz.

The exhibition also highlights the contributions of those at the Getty who are unseen in mounting such exhibitions including “teams of professional conservators, registrars, curators, mount-makers, and many others,” as Jim Ganz, senior curator of photographs at the Getty said in the press release.

As mentioned earlier, the Getty’s Department of Photography began with an extensive collection of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century photography. To expand their holdings, in 2005 The Getty Museum established the Getty Museum Photographs Councils, a group which has

contributed more than \$3 Million to the purchase of more than 500 hundred photographs.

The contributions of the Photographs council is reflected in a room of recent acquisitions that not only expands the collection but makes it more diverse both behind and in front of the camera. The Getty has an expanding interest in the work of Japanese photographers as well as Japanese-American photographers including the Dennis Reed collection. Also among the recent acquisitions are newly acquired works by contemporary LA Artist Laura Aguilar. One of the more striking works on exhibit is Veronika Kellndorfer's architectural silkscreen on glass that while a compelling work on its own, shows the expansion of what a photograph can be.

This well-curated and engaging show is to state the obvious well worth seeing. It just makes one wonder what else in the Getty remains 'Unseen.'

*Unseen: 35 Years of Collecting Photographs*

December 17, 2019 – March 8, 2020

The Getty Center, Los Angeles, California