LATE SHIFT

MAN RAY PORTRAITS

BY TERENCE PEPPER
Photograph of the Month:
Francis Goodman by Winifred Casson
Until 1 April 2013

This booklet has been created in response to the Man Ray Portraits exhibition and Salon de Lumière, a late night event at the Gallery on 15 March 2013. Terence Pepper, curator of Photographs and curator of Man Ray Portraits introduces the exhibition and the solarised portrait of Francis Goodman on display in Room 31.

Man Ray Portraits is the first major museum retrospective of this innovative and influential artist’s photographic portraits. Focusing on his career in America and Paris between 1916 and 1968, the exhibition highlights Man Ray’s central position among the leading artists of the Dada and Surrealist movements and the significant range of contemporaries, celebrities, friends and lovers that he captured: from Marcel Duchamp and Pablo Picasso to Kiki de Montparnasse, Lee Miller and Catherine Deneuve.

Featuring over 150 vintage prints and key works from international museums and private collections, the exhibition also demonstrates Man Ray’s use of revolutionary photographic techniques and early experiments with colour, as well as surveying his published work in magazines such as Vogue, Vanity Fair, Vu and Harper’s Bazaar.
The Philadelphia-born artist Man Ray (né Emmanuel Radnitzky) initially took up photography in 1916 in order to reproduce his art works, including his Dada assemblage of a painted hand-print, two bells and musical clefs, but in 1920 he began to work as a portrait photographer to fund his art. Having met Marcel Duchamp in 1915 at Ridgefield artists’ colony in New Jersey, in 1921 Man Ray followed the French artist to Paris.

For most of his career Man Ray remained in Paris, where, as a contributor to the Dada and Surrealist movements, he was perfectly placed to make defining images of his contemporaries in the avant-garde. As a photographic innovator he is perhaps most celebrated for his photograms, which he titled ‘Rayographs’, and for his use of solarisation, which he developed with his lover and collaborator Lee Miller at the end of the 1920s. The use of solarisation can be seen in the portraits of Elsa Schiaparelli, Irene Zurkinden, Lee Miller, Suzy Solidor and his own Self-Portrait with Camera.

Helen Tamaris
by Man Ray, 1929
Collection du Centre Pompidou, Mnam/Cci, Paris, AM 1994-394 (3200)
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Solarised Portrait of Lee Miller,
by Man Ray circa 1929
The Penrose Collection © Man Ray Trust/ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2012, courtesy The Penrose Collection. Image courtesy the Lee Miller Archives
Highlights of Man Ray’s work from the late 1920s include portraits of the cross-dressing Texan-born aerialist Vander Clyde, who became the toast of Paris performing a highwire act as ‘Barbette’, celebrated by Jean Cocteau. Barbette is represented by two images in the exhibition: the first captures him ‘dressing up’, while the second is a double exposure portrait illustrating Barbette’s remarkable androgyny with a shot of him during his high-wire act in the background.

American jazz artist Henry Crowder is photographed framed by his close friend Nancy Cunard’s bangled arms in an image later to appear on the cover of his book Henry Music (1930).
Man Ray's 1963 book Portraits presented a wide range of works the artist considered worthy of comment, ranging from a photograph of Lee Miller's floating lips to a number of studies, such as Kiki de Montparnasse's back photogrammed with musical clefs to create the Dada work Le Violon d'Ingres. Man Ray's more representational depictions of some of the most significant cultural figures of the twentieth century include Henri Matisse, Joan Miró, Erik Satie, Elsa Schiaparelli, Henry Miller, Ernest Hemingway, Salvador Dalí, Jean Cocteau and Dora Maar.

The Gallery has been able to supplement these photographs with many new discoveries, among them later portraits taken in Hollywood in the 1940s, before Man Ray returned to Paris in 1951, of sitters Dolores Del Rio, Paulette Goddard and Ava Gardner.
This solarised portrait of photographer Francis Goodman shows the influence of Man Ray on British photographers in the 1930s. Self-taught portrait and advertising photographer, Winifred Casson contributed to journals including Photographie and the Photography Year Book. Particularly known for her Surrealist photographs including her double-exposure work Accident, reproduced in Helmut Gernsheim's survey a Creative Photography: Aesthetic Trends 1839-1960.

A retrospective display Francis Goodman: Back in Focus will be shown at the Gallery from 23 April 2013.

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Man Ray Portraits
7 February – 27 May 2013
Supported by the Man Ray Portraits Exhibition Supporters Group
Spring Season supported by Herbert Smith Freehills
Book now www.npg.org.uk/manray or call 020 7766 7331
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