

LES DOUCHES
LA GALERIE

FRANÇOISE MORIN

THE SHAPES OF WATER

CURATOR: ERIC REMY

FROM JUNE 10 TO SEPTEMBER 9, 2023

OPENING ON JUNE 9 FROM 6 TO 9 PM

Berenice Abbott
Pierre Boucher
Roger Catherineau
Harold Edgerton
Emeric Feher
Jean-Claude Gautrand
Joseph Jachna
Pierre Jamet
Sid Kaplan
Peter Keetman
André Kertész
François Kollar

Bogdan Konopka
Rainer Leitzgen
Dora Maar
Daniel Masclet
Ray K. Metzker
Elfriede Stegemeyer
André Steiner
Claude Tolmer
Raoul Ubac
Willy Zielke
René Zuber



Sid Kaplan, *New York City*, 1955

© Estate Sid Kaplan / Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris

Feared for many centuries, water became a symbol of cleanliness in the 19th century, then of health (ocean bathing), and finally, in the 20th century, of pleasure and freedom. Les Douches la galerie, which was once a public shower that closed in 1977, pays homage to the element that adorned its walls prior to photography. Bringing together different artists and trends in 20th-century photography seemed like a return... to the source.

Les Douches la Galerie

5, rue Legouvé 75010 Paris

01 78 94 03 00 | lesdoucheslagalerie.com

The Shapes of Water

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A source of inspiration for poets, at the heart of life itself, water joins bodies and contents; with no fixed form, it escapes unequivocal representation.

Whether it be a sea, a lake, a river, a stream, a pool, the rain, a droplet, a puddle or fountain, or even when it is simply coming out of a tap, water is a part of our daily life, but it is ever-changing, impalpable; it slips over bodies, detaches, evaporates. It is elusive, a water-clock, a symbol of the passage of time. Its ability to capture light, and diffract it, to reflect the world, has made it a favourite subject of study for photographers, complex and rich in possibilities. While 19th-century photographers often limited it to landscapes, 20th-century photographers made it a feature of leisure, cleanliness, still lifes, science, surrealism and figurative abstraction.

It is a substance with a thousand reflections, its appearance constantly changing; there is no single representation of water. It has as many faces as it has reflections. What particularly fascinates photographers is above all its ability to play with light. It was an accompaniment to many compositions, becoming on occasion the principal subject.

In October 1938, the monthly pamphlet *Mieux vivre*, which 'each month brings together the most beautiful photographic documents to have appeared, on a topic selected among the loveliest in our existence', published a work on water. Streams and brooks are flanked by rain and swimming. In his introduction, the novelist Louis Guilloux (1899-1980) remarked that 'no other element is as lively, no other element lends itself better to joy, nor gives as much.... Water, when it becomes an expanse, reveals other secrets, its alliance with the sun's fire, its complicity with the wind, and so many others that perhaps lie only within us.'¹

Among the photographs we have selected, those by André Steiner (1901-1978) stand out: his underwater swimmers, where bodies and water blend to shape a single figure in a formal, yet sensual, osmosis. Often linked to youth – eg the fountain of youth – water is a companion to youth, tied to its games, glorifying the vitality and playfulness of children, as seen in the photographs of François Kollar (1904-1979), Pierre Jamet (1910-1920), Sid Kaplan (1938-) and Jean-Claude Gautrand (1932-2019).

For Dora Maar (1907-1997), Emeric Feher (1904-1966) and Ray Metzker (1931-2014), water is the mirror of the world. In the form of a puddle, water plays with the world's appearances where photos capture the double vision of a single reality, showing us all the more that everything is a question of point of view.

The task of representing water in painting, especially still life, is a challenge. Its glass-like transparency, in other words its visual emptiness, commands all the artist's skill to reveal what cannot be seen. Everything becomes a question of reflections, shadows, composition and controlled light, a challenge skillfully taken up by three eminent photographers in the 1930s, each with his own aesthetic: ebbing pictorialism from François Daniel Masclet (1892-1969), the German Elfriede Stegmeyer's (1908-1988) Bauhaus modernity, and new objectivity from the German Willy Zielke (1902-1989).

Pierre Boucher uses mythology to approach the subject: he brings it to life through the female spirit Undine² in an enigmatic surrealist photo-montage that he handles with great

1 'Mieux Vivre, L'Eau', Introduction by Louis Guilloux, Revue Mensuelle (Bergerac: Société Publires, 1938).

2 According to the Renaissance physician Paracelsus, each of the four classical elements – earth, water, air and fire – is inhabited by different categories of elemental spirits, liminal creatures that share our world: gnomes, undines, sylphs and salamanders respectively. He describes these elemental spirits as the 'invisible, spiritual counterparts of visible Nature ... many resembling human beings in shape, and inhabiting worlds of their own, unknown to man because his undeveloped senses were incapable of functioning beyond the limitations of the grosser elements'.

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deftness. The Surrealist Raoul Ubac (1910-1985), who photographed stone, creates a unique image of the world of waters, trying to 'disintegrate the latent form beneath the calm photographic surface'.³ A few years later, he continues to search for 'the unconscious image', but now uses fire, heating and deforming the negative.

For artists of *Subjektive Fotografie*, faithful representation is less important than the artist's vision. The German Peter Keetman (1916-2005), one of the founders of the avant-garde group *Fotoform*⁴, was one of the eminent photographers of the trend. His emblematic *Spiegelnde Tropfen (Reflected Droplets)* from 1958 is a repeated image of water droplets that act as so many mirrors of the world, as if it were impossible to produce a single representation of it.

In the 1930s, the American photographer Harold Edgerton (1903-1990), a scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), took a scientific approach, penetrating the mysteries of water through devices he developed to capture what the eye could not perceive. His compatriot Berenice Abbott (1898-1991) also worked at MIT, in the 1950s, where she studied wave propagation, producing highly poetic abstract photographs. She shows us calm and gentleness, where her predecessor focused on energy and chaos.

The delicate pinholes that Bogdan Konopka (1953-2019) made around mountain streams transform their appearance. Clear waters shimmer through the pauses that the photographic procedure imposes, turning them into luminous streaks that cut through the darkness of the underbrush and form strange, dreamlike landscapes.

The contemporary work of the German photographer Rainer Leitzgen (1963-) is also clearly of a piece with the others. He does not take water as a subject, but as a filter, a transparent screen, a surface that provides a distorted representation of the real world, allowing us to glimpse another reality. Faces and bodies seem to dissolve on paper like ink. We lose our sense of space and scale in this other world. His photographs show us that beauty does not lie in a clear representation of the real but in a strange, disturbing and fascinating personal vision.

Eric Rémy

Curator

³ *Raoul Ubac, Photographie*, Christian Bouqueret (Paris: Léo Scheer), 169.

⁴ *Fotoform* was an avant-garde photography group founded in 1949 by six young German photographers: Siegfriede Lauterwasser, Peter Keetman, Wolfgang Reisewitz, Toni Schneiders, Ludwig Windstrosser and Otto Steinert. Steinert mounted the three important exhibitions that formed *Subjektive Fotografie* in the 1950s, selecting artists from across Europe who espoused the new approach to photography.

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BIOGRAPHIES

BERENICE ABBOTT (1898—1991)

Berenice Abbott began her artistic career in New York, Berlin and Paris where she worked as Man Ray's assistant. At his side, she discovered photography, then established herself as a freelance photographer in 1926 and produced portraits of famous artists and writers.

Upon her return to New York in 1929, Berenice Abbott initiated her historic project *Changing New York*. Fascinated by the city's rapid metamorphosis, she decided to „do for New York what Atget had done for Paris,“ i.e., meticulously document a city in transformation.

Produced in the 1950s for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, the *Documenting Science* project illustrates the physical principles of mechanics and light.

PIERRE BOUCHER (1908-2000)

From 1922 to 1925, Pierre Boucher attended the School of Applied Arts in Paris, where he met Roger Parry. After his studies at the end of the 1920s, he began working at the printing publisher Draeger Frères, collaborated with the American magazine *The Spur*, for which he made fashion sketches for the biggest designers. He was subsequently hired by the illustration workshop of the department store Printemps, which he left to work with the publisher Claude Tolmer. There he met Louis Caillaud and Jean Moral, who brought him into contact with modern photography. In 1932, he became an intern at Studio Deberny Peignot, where he met Maurice Tabard, Roger Parry, Maurice Cloche and René Zuber. He then joined the studio that Zuber set up and the two men helped to found the agency Alliance Photo with Maria Eisner in 1934. Exploring all the possibilities of photography – reportage, Photographism, nudes, solarisation, photograms, deformation – Pierre Boucher was visible everywhere in the exhibits and publications of the 1930s.

ROGER CATHERINEAU (1925-1962)

Born in 1925 in Tours, Roger Catherineau studied drawing and painting at the École du Louvre and the École des Arts de Paris before initiating his photographic practice. Disappointed by laboratories, he would proceed and print his photographs himself. He soon developed an abstract expressionist style. Since 1948, Roger Catherineau's photographic work has been built as a quest for experimentation. Rejecting any notion of depiction of reality, he elaborates unreferenced, troubled and most often abstract images. Developing the notion of «productive transformation», he wishes to compose from scratch the image he has of an object, and not to reproduce it. In 1955 he was invited to participate in the major exhibition *Subjektive Fotografie 2* in Saarbrücken. His work was also exhibited in France, Belgium and Germany and published in numerous international magazines and compilations. His photographs are in the collections of the French Musée National d'Art Moderne, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the Folkwang Museum in Essen (Otto Steinert collection). Roger Catherineau died in 1962.

HAROLD EDGERTON (1903—1990)

Born in Fremont, Nebraska, Harold Edgerton wrote his thesis in electrical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1931. Based on the work of Eadweard Muybridge and Jules Marey on the photography of movement, he developed stroboscopy in the early 1930s, a process of decomposing movement used for photography. His photographs were exhibited for the first time in 1933 at the Royal Photographic Society of London, and Beaumont Newhall included his work in what would become the first major retrospective on the history of the medium, *Photography 1839-1937*, at the Museum of Modern Art, in New York, in 1937.

Edgerton's technique, known as 'Papa Flash', found several military, scientific and aesthetic outlets. The photographs he made during his scientific experiments were described in the 1930s as being representative of the New Objectivity, the American complement to the German Neue Sachlichkeit.

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EMERIC FEHER (1904-1966)

Born in Hungary, Emeric Feher settled in Paris in 1926. In 1933 he joined René Zuber's photography studio as an operator. From 1936 on, he worked as an independent photographer, taking on reportages and advertising commissions that documented the France of the time: his favourite topic was the daily life of people, which he committed to film with goodwill and poetry using techniques that linked him to realism and humanism. Feher also pursued parallel work that allowed him to refine his command of photography by experimenting with the diverse possibilities the medium afforded. In 1934, the journalist André Lejard, the German photographer Maria Eisner, René Zuber, Pierre Boucher and Feher created the first French photo agency devoted to press photography: Alliance Photo. He also worked with various publishers and collaborated with many magazines (*Art et Médecine*, *Réalités*, *Plaisir de France*, *Ebony*) and occasionally exhibited his personal work in a few galleries as well as at the Salon National de la Photographie.

JEAN-CLAUDE GAUTRAND (1932-2019)

Throughout his life, the French photographer Jean-Claude Gautrand has used his photographs and texts to document what is no longer there, what is destined to disappear. Born in 1932 in the North of France, he seldom travelled. He photographed mostly Paris and its changes, and he became interested in places that bear the stamp of History: the sacrificed village Oradour sur Glane, the Struthof concentration camp, the end of the mining district, the blockhouses on the Atlantic coast... In 1972, *L'Assassinat de Baltard* was published by Formule 13 and won the Prix du Livre at the Rencontres d'Arles the same year. 'Baltard's Murder' immortalised the destruction of the architect Baltard's immense les Halles marketplace in the heart of the capital whose glass and iron structures disappeared in the dust and light of the summer. Gautrand is the only photographer who followed the entire process of destruction.

As a journalist, critic or photographer, he has collaborated since 1965 to numerous French and international magazines such as *Photo Ciné Revue*, *Nouveau Photo Cinéma*, *Photojournal*, *Le Photographe* and *Réponses-Photo*.

JOSEPH JACHNA (1935 – 2016)

Born in Chicago in 1935, Joseph Jachna received a scholarship in 1953 to study at the Institute of Design where he stayed on for one year before beginning work at Eastman Kodak, in Rochester. After being sacked, he returned to school in 1955 where he earned a degree in artistic education in 1958. His classmates at the time were Harry Callahan, Aaron Siskin and Frederick Sommer. Jachna longed to devote himself entirely to photography, and spent three years writing his thesis, a deep photographic study of water. He earned his masters in 1961, the same year the magazine *Aperture* presented his photographs in a special issue dedicated to five graduates of the Institute of Design. After Callahan left the school in 1961, Jachna taught there alongside Siskind until 1969, when he joined the photography department at the University of Illinois, in Chicago, where he remained until his retirement in 2001. Jachna also photographed Midwestern and Icelandic landscapes and his work has been part of numerous exhibitions in the United States.

PIERRE JAMET (1910-2000)

Pierre Jamet was born in 1910 in the Department of Aisne. Diligently self-taught, in the very early 1930s he used books to learn photography techniques and developed his first works in his bathroom. After a stint in the marines in 1930, and while also leading a holiday camp in Belle-Île-en-mer (from 1930 to 1939), he established himself as a professional photographer in 1935, in particular producing reportages for the weekly magazine *Regards*. Subsequently, he moved to a larger workshop in Montparnasse. As a close friend of Doisneau and Willy Ronis, he holds a special place in humanist photography with his photographs expressing the happiness of summers by the seaside, the enthusiasm the Front Populaire elicited from the young, the Liberation of Paris and the golden years of post-war France.

SID KAPLAN (1938—)

Sid Kaplan was born in 1938 in New York City. He lives, works and exhibits in New York City. After graduating from The School of Industrial Arts, Sid worked from 1956 until 1962 at a series of nondescript minimum-wage jobs in the photography industry. As Sid describes, "It was a perfect way to learn, to sharpen up and practice my craft and skills at someone else's expense." These years eventually led to a black-and-white printer's position at Compo, the premiere custom lab in Manhattan.

At Compo, Sid printed for some of the greatest photographers of the last 50 years, including Philippe Halsmann, Robert Capa, Weegee, and most of the members of Magnum. In 1968 Sid left Compo to become an independent printer. "My life had become too much darkroom and not enough photography," he decided. At 10 East 23 Street Sid built a darkroom and set up shop, printing "any and everything that came through the door." W. Eugene Smith occupied an adjacent loft for several years, and Ralston Crawford was a neighbor. Ralph Gibson introduced Sid to Robert Frank in 1969 and Sid became Frank's printer, a relationship that lasted thirty-five years. Sid's clientele grew to include Allen Ginsberg, who also became a neighbor when Sid relocated his darkroom to Avenue A in the East Village. Since 1972, Sid has been a faculty member of the School of Visual Arts in New York City, where he teaches black-and-white darkroom courses.

He has made more than 91,000 images, not counting the bad rolls of film he decided not to keep. The Rose Library at Emory University, Atlanta, GA recently purchased Sid Kaplan's negatives, contact sheets, and two copies of all of the images.

PETER KEETMAN (1916—2005)

Born in Elberfeld in 1916, Keetman studied at Munich's Bavarian State Institute of Photography from 1935 to 1937. After completing his degree, he first worked at Gertrud Hesse's photography workshop in Duisbourg, then as an industrial photographer in Aix-la-Chapelle. In 1940, he was called up for military service. He returned, four long years later, gravely wounded. From 1947 to 1948, he returned to the State Institute in Munich and, a year later, helped Adolf Lazi stage the exhibition *Die Photographie 1948* at Stuttgart's Landesgewerbemuseum, an event that contributed to reawakening German photography in the after-war period.

Subsequently, Keetman began working as an independent photographer. In the late-1940s he and Otto Steinert founded the group Fotoform which took inspiration from avant-garde experimentation to lay the groundwork for what would become Subjektive Fotografie (subjective photography). The group participated in Cologne's first photokina in 1950.

In the 1950s and 60s, Keetman worked on various advertising and industry commissions. At the same time, his work appeared in the main German and international photography magazines. The series he made at the Wolfsburg Volkswagen factory in 1953, as well as his series of Schwingungen (waves) mark him as a central figure in the history of German experimental photography.

ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ (1894-1985)

Born in Budapest in 1894, André Kertész began his career as a photographer in his native Hungary. Known for the humanism and visual lyricism that characterises his work, he lived in Paris from 1925 to 1936. This period brought him deep into the world of emigré art where he photographed artists such as Brassai, Piet Mondrian, Marc Chagall, Alexander Calder and Constantin Brancusi. His approach to the medium contributed to defining the nature and role of photojournalism and contemporary art in Europe. In conjunction with this work, he experimented with and photographed deformed nude bodies against reflective surfaces.

Between 1929 and 1936, his work was increasingly exhibited and published in reviews such as VU, Art et Médecine and Voilà. He settled in New York in 1936 where he worked at the Keystone press agency for a year. In 1964 his work was garnered recognition in the United States when John Szarkowski dedicated a large personal exhibition to him at the Museum of Modern Art entitled André Kertész, Photographer. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, Kertész had regular exhibitions in the biggest international museums, with personal exhibitions in Paris, Tokyo, London, Stockholm, Budapest and Helsinki. In 1983, France awarded him the Légion d'honneur.

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FRANÇOIS KOLLAR (1904—1979)

François Kollar was born in Szenc, Hungary in 1904 (now the Slovakian town of Senec) and died in Créteil, France in 1979. He was first employed on the railways in his native country and then worked as a lathe operator at Renault's Boulogne-Billancourt factory, before becoming a professional photographer at the age of 24 after gaining solid experience as a studio manager at the Parisian printer's, Draeger.

François Kollar worked with several fashion magazines, notably *Harper's Bazaar* for which, over the course of more than fifteen years, he produced many photographic series, particularly images shot on location. Whether he was photographing the period's fashion celebrities or models and adverts for the major fashion houses, he experimented with a wide variety of modern photographic techniques, freely creating original compositions using backlighting, double exposures, overprinting and solarisation...

In 1930, after exhibiting at *Das Lichtbild*, an international photography exhibition in Munich alongside Florence Henri, André Kertész, Germaine Krull and Ergy Landau, François Kollar received a major commission from a publishing company, Horizons de France entitled *La France travail* (1931-1934) that would establish his reputation as one of the period's greatest industrial reporters.

During the war he refused to collaborate with the powers that be during the German occupation and left the public eye, moving with his wife and three children to the Poitou-Charentes region and only returning to photography in 1945 on his return to Paris. In the 1950s and 1960s, Kollar covered numerous industrial subjects in France and abroad.

BOGDAN KONOPKA (1953-2019)

After training as a photochemist, Bogdan Konopka – born in 1953 in Wrocław (Poland) – first turned his attention to photographing the apocalyptic atmosphere of his native city which had been reduced to a state of near-total destruction. After relocating to France in late-1988, he continued his work on the future of the metropolis and also extended it to include other European cities (Warsaw, Prague, Geneva, Venice, Zurich, Budapest), and even some Chinese cities, where he immortalised decaying everyday life. He minutely and patiently selected his locations, photographing the hidden face of urban settings that are both diverse and unique. Devoid of any human face, his photographic miniatures clearly show Konopka's attentive eye to the world and give off an ineffable breath of life. With his solid mastery of technique, his images affirm a physical and formal world that goes against the grain of prevailing trends: his black and white photos – contact prints that were developed in the dark room – are relatively small and display the spectrum of greys that characterises his work.

RAINER LEITZGEN (1961—)

Rainer Leitzgen was born in Cologne in 1961. After studying photography in Munich, he began a career as an independent photographer, which took him to Hamburg, London, Munich and New York. He worked exclusively in his studio until 1991, when he took several trips around the world. His work has been published in major magazines and advertising agencies in Germany and abroad. His photographs have appeared in three monographs, several anthologies and numerous solo and collective exhibitions in Germany and abroad. In 1998, he was awarded the Ernst Barlach award for his lifetime's work up to now. The work *Bimini* (1994) is made up of three series (*Bimini*, *Nacht*, *Organe des Menschen*), each imagined in the Bahamas. In 1992, Leitzgen created a series of under-water photographs: armed with his camera and black and white negatives, he developed the shots the same day in the apartment he was renting on the island, and then enlarged them once he returned to Munich. In the clear Caribbean waters, he photographed faces and bodies using low-angle shots. Water becomes a medium unto itself, with its surface a lens, a filter, a mirror through which silhouettes are shaped by its regular eddies.

DORA MAAR (1907-1997)

Henriette Th  odora Markovitch, whose mother was French, grew up in Argentina where her Croatian father worked as an architect. When her family returned to Paris in 1926, she took courses in painting at the Julian academy and studied at the   cole de photographie.

In the late 1920s, she shortened her name to Dora Maar and concentrated on her work as a photographer. In 1930, she shared a workspace with Brassai; later, Emmanuel Sougez, the spokesperson for the New Objectivity, became her mentor. At that time, her work fit with the standards of the moment: wide shots of objects and photograms. She also made portraits, original advertisements and fashion photos. In the 1930s, she began to frequent the surrealist group, making many portraits of them. At the height of her creativity, in 1935-36, she created her most famous photomontages by reusing urban shots she had taken during her travels. Her intense and turbulent relationship with Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), which began in 1936, sometimes overshadowed her work. The Spanish artist spurred her to paint and made her give up photography for a time. After they separated, Maar distanced herself from Paris' artistic and literary scene, but continued to create on her own. She kept an apartment in Paris where she passed away in 1997. Her photographs have been the subject of several major international exhibitions and her pictorial work is held in high regard.

DANIEL MASCKET (1892-1969)

Born in Blois in 1892, Daniel Masclet won a gold medal at a competition held by *Revue Fran  aise de Photographie* and began training with the famous photographer, Baron Adolf de Meyer (1868-1946).

He excelled in the new photography's style of portraits and still lifes in the 1930s, making portraits of famous people. In the 1950s, he turned to the trend of subjective photography – he participated in the major *Subjektive Fotografie* exhibitions I, II and III. He again took up portraits and produced surprising, unadorned faces. He also returned to urban landscapes that he approached from a constructed, abstract angle. Between the 1930s and 1950s, Masclet, along with Emmanuel Sougez and Lucien Lorelle, was a central figure in photography in France and was included in exhibitions across the country and abroad, beginning in 1925 and up until his death in 1969. He was also a theoretician whose published works include *Le Paysage en photographie [Landscapes in Photography]* (1948) and *R  flexions sur le portrait en photographie [Reflections on Portraits in Photography]* (1971). As a critic, he corresponded with Edward Weston and Otto Steiner and wrote and published numerous articles on all of the major photographers of the period while also guiding young photographers (Club des 30x40). Finally, he was the curator for the first retrospectives of the works of Berenice Abbot and Edward Weston.

RAY K. METZKER (1931-2014)

Ray K. Metzker was born in 1931 in Milwaukee. Photography became his passion after his mother gave him his first camera when he was 12. He earned a Master's degree in 1959 at the Institute of Design, Chicago (New Bauhaus), where he studied with Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind.

He was thus an heir to the avant-garde photography that had developed in Europe in the 1920's. Early in his career, his work was marked by unusual intensity. Composites, multiple-exposure, superimposition of negatives, juxtapositions of two images, solarization and other formal means were part and parcel of his vocabulary. He was committed to discovering the potential of black and white photography during the shooting and the printing, and has shown consummate skill in each stage of the photographic process.

He taught for many years at the Philadelphia College of Art and also at the University of New Mexico. The Museum of Modern Art in New York gave him his first solo exhibition in 1967.

In his over-60-year career, Metzker had more than 50 solo exhibitions at major museums around the world and was the recipient of numerous awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship, two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, and a Royal Photographic Society's Centenary Medal and Honorary Fellowship.

ANDRÉ STEINER (1901-1978)

André Steiner earned a degree in electrical engineering in Vienna where he emigrated from his native Hungary. He began taking amateur photos in 1924.

He came to Paris in 1928 where he worked as an engineer at Alsthom until 1932. Steiner also began publishing his photographs in French reviews (Paris Magazine, Voilà, VU), and in 1933 he set up his first Photography studio. Steiner approached his first years of photographic experimentation almost like a scientist, exploiting photography's technical potential. He was an avid sportsman and photographed the world of sports.

He became a French citizen in 1945, after the war, when he dedicated himself to photography as applied to technology and the sciences.

ELFRIEDE STEGEMEYER (1908-1988)

Elfriede Stegemeyer came from a wealthy family, studying at Berlin's Staatliche Kunstschule before following the painter Otto Coenen to Cologne in 1932. She took a course in photography at the Kölner Werkschulen where she met the photographer Raoul Ubac. Strongly influenced by the Bauhaus school and, in particular, the work of Herbert Bayer, Stegemeyer used photograms and photomontages to explore the limits and possibilities that photography offered her. The series of glasses she produced between 1934 and 1938 represent an important development in her work: everyday objects are given a sculptural and often abstract aesthetic by a specific play with light, shadow and perspective.

In 1935, during a trip to Paris, she met Raoul Hausmann, with whom she stayed for several months on Ibiza. On the island, she photographed the architecture and landscapes. Her return to Berlin, and the beginning of WWII, marked the end of her independent artistic work. A large portion of her work was destroyed during a bombing raid in 1943. As a result, Stegemeyer began a second artistic career as a painter under the pseudonym Elde Steeg.

CLAUDE TOLMER (1911-1991)

Claude Tolmer first trained as a painter with André Lhote before working as a commercial artist and then as an artistic director in his family's famous publishing firm, Maison Tolmer. He was equally attracted by the world of photography, and introduced modernist photography into the visual language of commercial images at a time when the production of prints was at its height. He created his own studio and experimented with different techniques such as photograms, glass prints and photomontage, a technique he liked to combine with painting and drawing. In 1931 in London, his father Alfred Tolmer published the book *Mise en pages: The Theory and Practice of Lay-Out* which became the authority on graphic design and featured numerous works by Claude and Jean Moral, among others. In different but complementary ways, his photographs of Paris streets (barges on the Seine, flea markets and so on) are formal exercises that play with abstract form and unexpected angles. His work echoes the urban excitement of the work of his contemporaries Brassai, Germaine Krull and André Kertész.

RAOUL UBAC (1910-1985)

The painter and sculptor Raoul Ubac was born in Malmédy (Belgium). In 1930, he moved to Paris and abandoned his studies in literature to attend the Montparnasse Art Academies. He got closer to the Surrealists and regularly took part in the exhibitions of this group between 1934 and 1940. Ubac trained in burin engraving, which he combined with photography.

From 1951, he exhibited with great regularity at the Galerie Maeght. The famous art magazine "Minotaure" publishes his photo reliefs (solarization). His "brûlages" make his art evolve towards lyrical abstraction. In 1945, Ubac discovers slate, with which he creates imprints where sculpture and engraving seem to combine.

RENÉ ZUBER (1902-1979)

The son of a stationer, René Zuber was born in Boussières, in the Doubs. In 1924, as soon as he'd received his Arts and Manufacturing engineering degree, he left to pursue studies at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig where one of his professors was the painter and photographer László Moholy-Nagy. Upon returning to Paris, he met Emmanuel Sougez and worked with him at the newspaper *L'illustration*. Zuber was a major artist of the 1920s and was one of the photographers who renewed the language of the medium, introducing a machine aesthetic and street scenes, which were a treasured theme of the period and even a symbol of the modern revolution. In 1931, well before the first cooperative photo agencies and groups of photographers emerged in France, he created Studio Zuber in Paris, a space and place for gathering, a laboratory that he created within the rooms of the Damour advertising agency. Four of his photographer friends, Pierre Boucher, Denise Bellon, Emeric Feher and Pierre Verger worked together at his studio, where he was the leader and mentor. The images they made there did not remain private for long: they were immediately reproduced in magazines such as *Vu*, *Voilà*, *Regards* and *Paris Magazine*. Pierre Boucher even went so far as to include the photos he took of his friend, the athlete Robert Pontabry, an ideal model – nudes where the athlete's body is proudly displayed – in advertising competitions. In 1939, the start of the Second World War signalled the end of Studio Zuber, which faded from memory. It was not until much later, in 2007, at the Rencontres d'Arles, that there was an exhibition of the group's work, which had had an important influence on French photography for eight years.

WILLY ZIELKE (1902-1989)

Born in Łódź (Poland) in 1902, Willy Otto Zielke emigrated to Germany in 1921 where he dabbled in photography first as a student then, from 1928, as a professor at the Bayerische Staatslehranstalt für Photographie. In the 1930s, he became interested in the trend of the New Objectivity: his photographs transcribed unadorned reality, focusing on everyday objects. Like his contemporaries, Zielke combined his artistic and paid work. He did advertising photography for several companies. His works were also presented in international exhibitions, such as *Film und Foto* in Stuttgart in 1929, and published in magazines such as *Art et Métiers Graphiques*. At the same time, Zielke became interested in cinema and made films in the German trend that combined expressionism with a new vision (*Arbeitlos*, 1933; *The Steel Animal*, 1935) and demonstrated remarkable control of the images.

The Shapes of Water

PRESS IMAGES

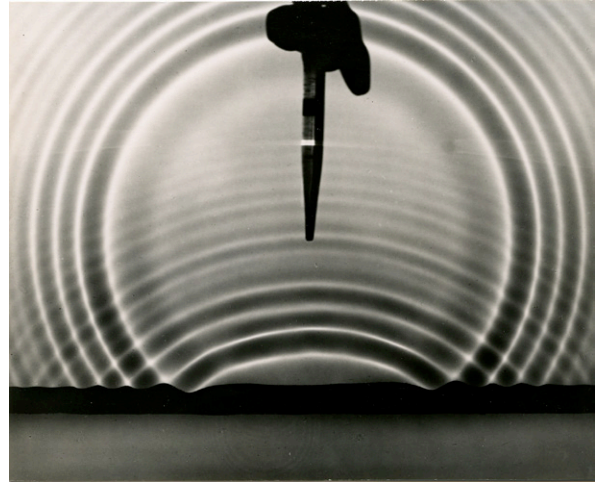
Berenice Abbott

Expanding Circular Waves, 1958-61

Vintage gelatin silver print, mounted on cardboard

© Berenice Abbott

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris & Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York



Elfriede Stegemeyer

Untitled, 1934

Vintage gelatin silver print

Collection Gerd Sander

© Estate Elfriede Stegemeyer

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



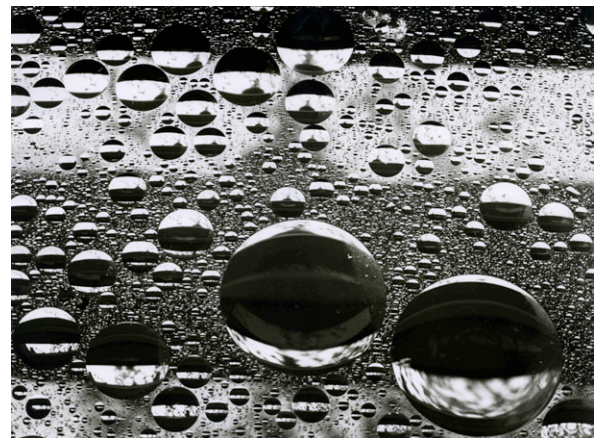
Peter Keetman

«*Spiegelnde Tropfen*», 1988

Vintage gelatin silver print on Agfa baryta paper

© Estate Peter Keetman

Courtesy Stiftung F.C. Gundlach, Hamburg / Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



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5, rue Legouvé 75010 Paris

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The Shapes of Water

PRESS IMAGES

Rainer Leitzgen

Sans titre (#1), série *Bimini*, 1992

Pigment print on Canson Infinity Platinum Rag 310g paper, printed by the Grieger laboratory in Düsseldorf in 2023

© Rainer Leitzgen

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



Raoul Ubac

Spirale, 1930

Vintage gelatin silver print

© Anne Ubac Delfieu, ADAGP

Courtesy Les Douches La Galerie, Paris



Pierre Boucher

Nu vague, 1935

Gelatin-silver print, printed later in 1960

© Jean-Louis Boucher

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



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PRESS IMAGES

Sid Kaplan

New York City, 1955

Gelatin silver print, printed later by the artist

© Estate Sid Kaplan

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



Dora Maar

Untitled (chair in flooded field), ca.1920

Vintage gelatin silver print on velox paper

© Estate Dora Maar

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



René Zuber

La photo révélée, Marseille, 1930

Gelatin silver print, vintage

© Estate René Zuber

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



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The Shapes of Water

PRESS IMAGES

Bogdan Konopka

Ardennes, 07.04.1994

Contact print on Foma matte baryta paper, printed
by the artist

© Bogdan Konopka

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



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Wednesday to Saturday, from 2 to 7 pm

The gallery will be closed from July 30rd to August 21st, 2023

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