

THE NEW MASTERS

## ABSTRACT MASTERS

"Photography, as a powerful medium ... offers an infinite variety of perception, interpretation and execution" - Ansel Adams

## TOWARDS A DEFINITION

- "Abstract Photography" is an ambiguous term without a commonly accepted definition

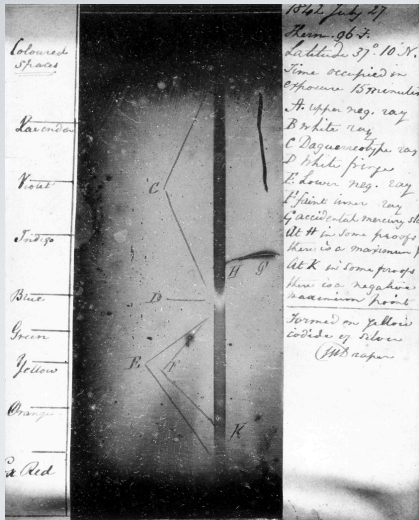
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- Like abstract art in general, photographic abstraction looks to express a certain feeling, an idea or an aesthetic impression and to do so, it relies on our visual perception - the primal sense of form, colour and line. These elements help form interesting compositions, in which we can sometimes recognise the subject or the object and sometimes we can't

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- **For our competition:** Abstract photography should express ideas and emotions with photographed image elements intentionally avoiding a traditional or representational image. By avoiding and going beyond the usual representations of an object, scene, or any particular element, such images reveal details often ignored and which trigger the viewer's imagination. Images may be partially or wholly out of focus, and techniques could include multiple exposure, ICM (Intentional Camera Movement) or Zoom burst/twist as well as other techniques





One of Draper's photographs, capturing the solar spectrum.



The earliest surviving daguerreotype of the Moon by Draper (1840)

## JOHN WILLIAM DRAPER

(1811 - 1882)

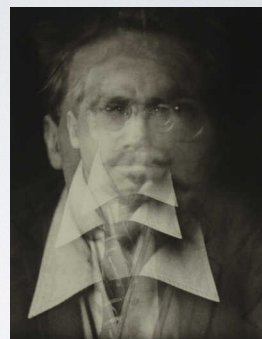


## ANNA ATKINS

(1799 - 1871)



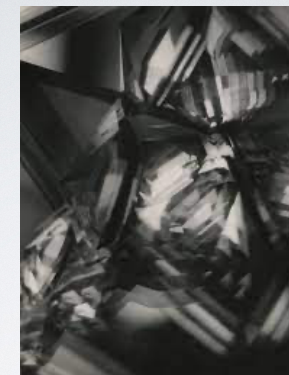
The Octopus 1912



Vortograph of Ezra Pound

## ALVIN LANGDON COBURN

(1882-1966)



Coburn's series of 18 **Vortographs** gained him critical acclaim worldwide, and cemented his place as one of the fathers of Modern photography. This was the first body of artistic photographs in history to embrace total abstraction





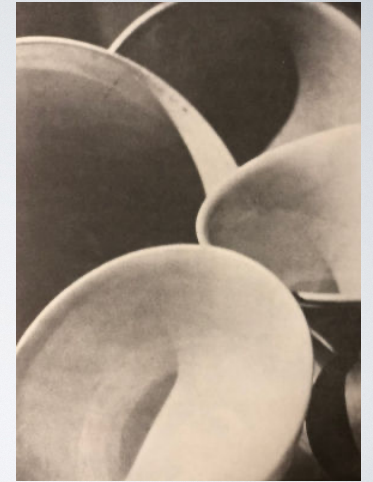
Porch Shadows (1916)

## PAUL STRAND

(1890 - 1976)

"All good art is abstract in its structure"

- Strand brought a new vision to photography. His pictures broke new ground both in subject matter and presentation. Whatever his image, he sought to bring out their abstract components"
- Taking inspiration from the formalist, or cubist, paintings of [Cézanne](#), [Braque](#), and [Picasso](#), Strand became fixated on the idea that the photographic image could also be broken up compositionally
- Strand's worldview accommodated the idea that art should be able to engage the spectator spiritually and socially. He is thus associated with the idea that high art can accommodate abstraction and realism simultaneously i.e. in the same photograph



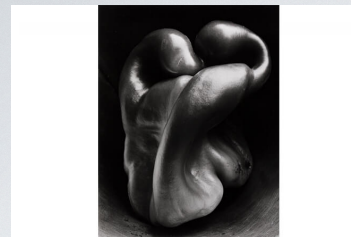
Bowls 1917



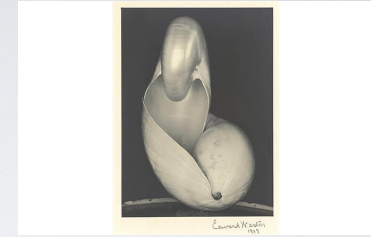
## EDWARD WESTON

(1886 - 1958)

"To consult the rules of composition before making a picture is a little like consulting the law of gravitation before going for a walk."



[Pepper No. 30](#) sold for an estimated \$5,000 (October, 2017)



[Two Shells](#) realized an estimated \$4600,000(April, 2013)

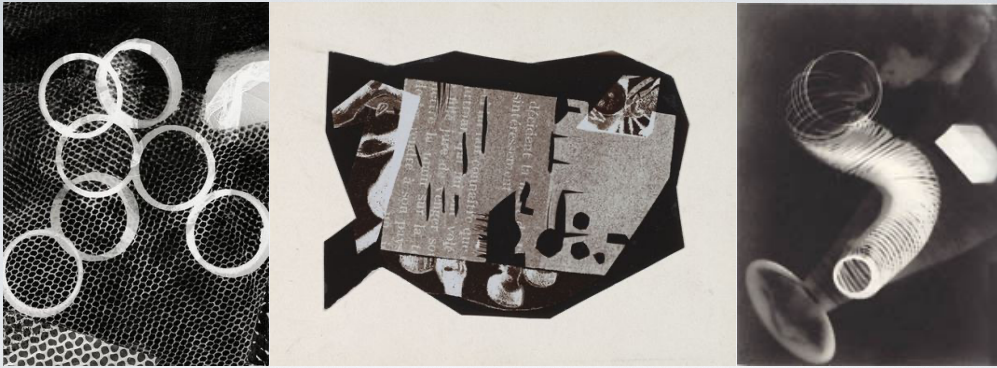


[Dunes Oceano](#) realized \$18,750



[Another image from the Dunes series](#) sold for \$300,000(April, 2017)





## CHRISTIAN SCHAD

(1894 - 1982)

- Schad was the first interwar [avant-garde](#) artist to make use of the photogram process. His photographic experiments held most closely to [Dadaist](#) tenets. His abstract compositions have a mysterious, dream-like quality to them that connects them to [Surrealism](#) as well
- While Schad was influenced by the abstractions of [Cubism](#) and [Futurism](#), he found his greatest influences in the Italian [Old Masters](#), such as [Raphael](#)



27. Christian Schad: *Schadografija*, 1918, fotogram na aristotipskem papirju, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



## ALFRED STIEGLITZ

(1864-1946)

"In photography there is a reality so subtle that it becomes more real than reality"



- In 1922 Stieglitz began to take photographs of clouds, to produce dizzying and abstract images of their ethereal forms. "Through clouds I wanted to put down my philosophy of life, to show that my photographs were not due to subject matter; not to special trees or faces or interiors, to special privileges, clouds were there for everyone - free." Over the next eight years, he made some 350 cloud studies
- Stieglitz called these photographs Equivalents. More than describing the visible surfaces of things, the works could express pure emotion, paralleling the artist's own inner state

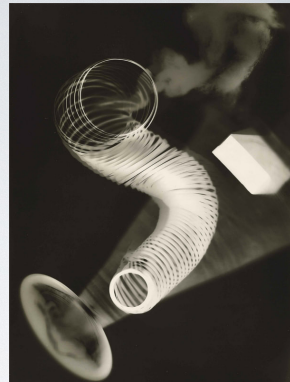


- In 1902 Stieglitz founded an organisation called the Photo-Secession, a group whose name was an [allusion](#) to the [secessionist](#) artist groups formed in Germany and in Austria in the 1890s. Photo-Secession was dedicated to promoting photography as an art form
- In 1903 Stieglitz introduced a quarterly publication called [Camera Work](#). The magazine would largely define the artistic ambitions of amateur photographers in the first quarter of the 20th century



## FRANCIS BRUGUIÈRE

(1879–1945)



## MAN RAY

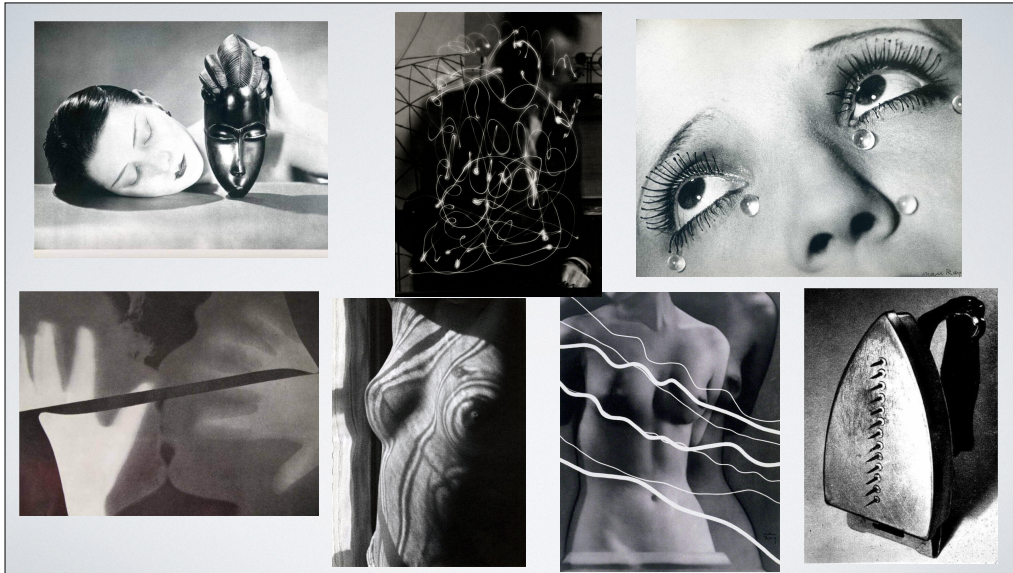
(1890 - 1976)

"Nature does not create works of art. It is we, and the faculty of interpretation peculiar to the human mind, that see art."

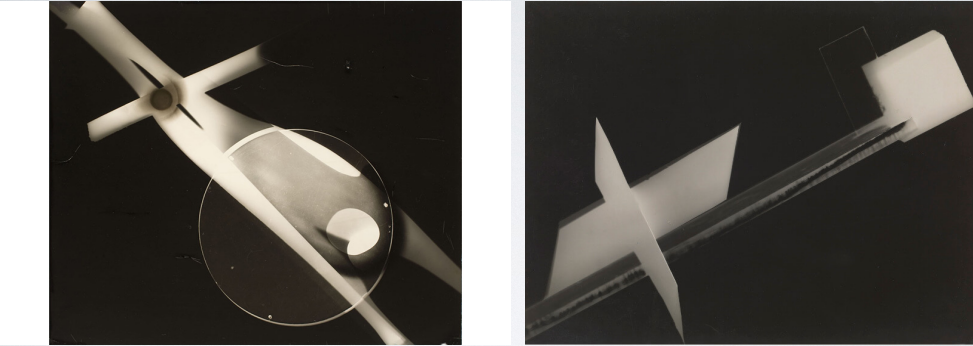
- Man Ray's prolific portfolio as a photographer extends across both abstraction and portraiture. He was also a notable sculptor and painter, with ties to the Dada and Surrealist movements
- His preferred props for the Rayographs were mass-produced consumer items, giving his work a found-object feel typical of the Dada movement, and a proto-Pop Art energy
- The striking graphic effects of the Rayographs led to their use in commercial fashion magazines such as *Vanity Fair*, and for advertising purposes in *Harper's Weekly*








LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY  
(1895 - 1946)



László Moholy-Nagy - Untitled (Photogram), c. 1939-1941

László Moholy-Nagy - Photogram, c. 1925

Taken from the top of the 450 foot high Berlin Radio Tower, Moholy-Nagy's famous photograph appears more like a complex interplay of geometric forms than a city-scene. It can be read with reference to the development of Straight Photography during the 1920s, but also as a work which pushes at the conceptual boundaries of Constructivist principles, readmitting content and theme into the geometric composition.



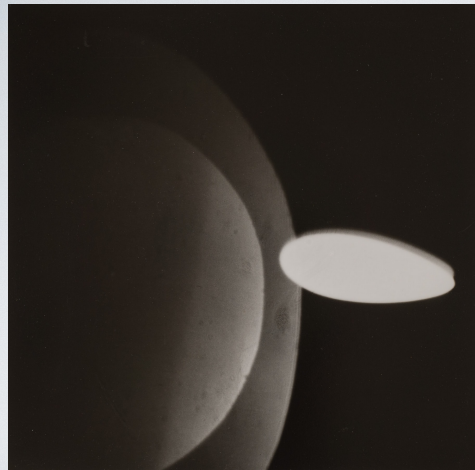
Funkturm Berlin (Berlin Radio Tower) 1928-29





FRANTISEK DRTIKOL

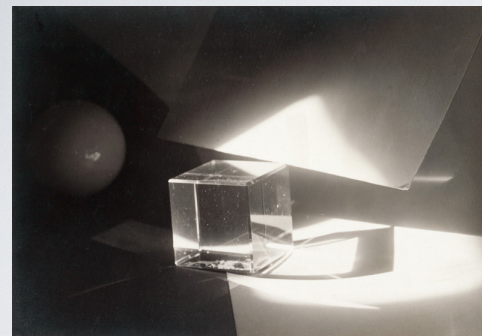
(1883 - 1961)



JAROSLAV RÖSSLER

(1902 - 1990)

Untitled, Light abstraction, 1923



Sold for \$62,500 (April 2013)





JOSEF SUDEK

(1896 -1976)



JAROMÍR FUNKE

(1896-1945)



MAURICE TABARD

(1897 -1984)



The Walking Tree - 1947



Eye and beach montage - 1949

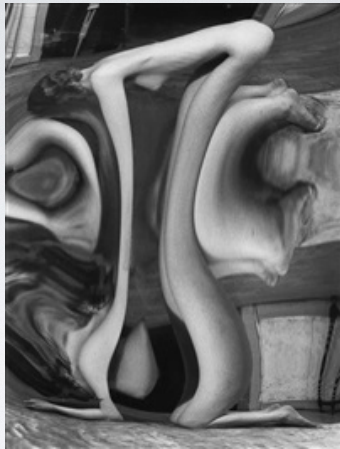


ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ

(1894–1985)



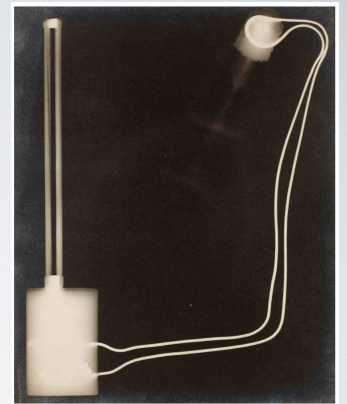
Washington Square Day, 1954



Distortion #128, 1933



Meudon, 1928



CURTIS MOFFAT

(1887 – 1949)





Masoero was a post-war Futurist who used to enjoy hanging from aeroplanes photographing cities.



FILIPPO MASOERO  
(1892 - 1972)



Descending over Saint Peter, circa 1927-1937



Before the Parachute Opens, Tullio Crali, 1939



HENRY HOLMES SMITH  
(1909 - 1986)



- Smith believed in photography's capacity to provoke emotional and psychological responses through variations in light and colour
- He set his camera aside and focused on alternative materials and processes, including photomontage, photograms, solarisation, and multiple exposure prints
- In parallel to Moholy's work, Smith began projecting light through materials like glass, mirrors, prisms, and mesh screens, as exemplified in his Light Studies. As early as 1936, Smith added vibrant, colourful hues through dye-transfer, a photographic process used to prepare colour prints







Untitled c.1965

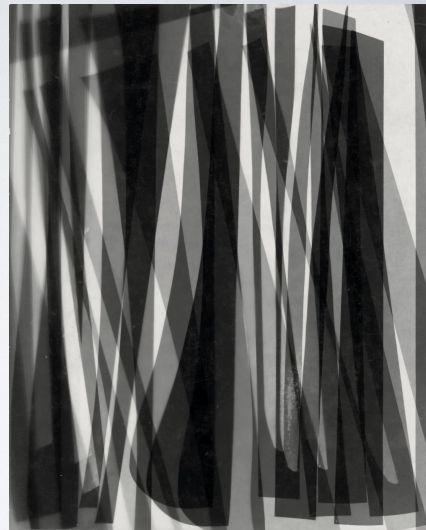
# ARTHUR SIDNEY SIEGEL

(1913 - 1978)



# LOIS FIELD

Born 1923

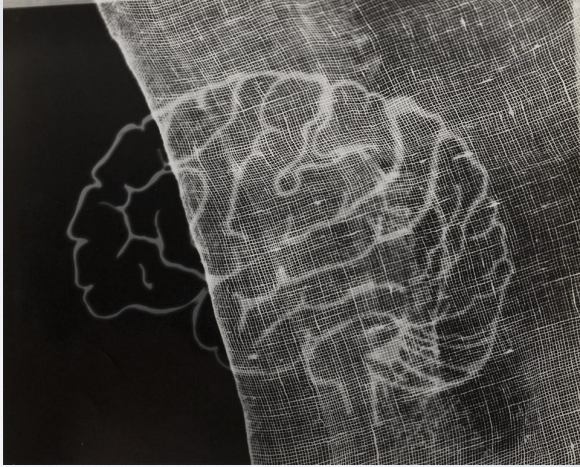


# GYÖRGY KEPES

(1906-2001)

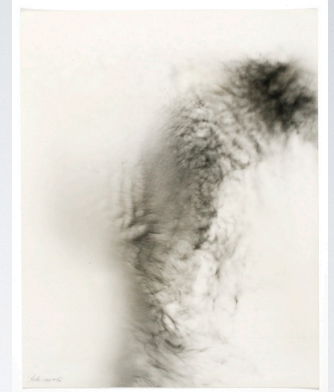
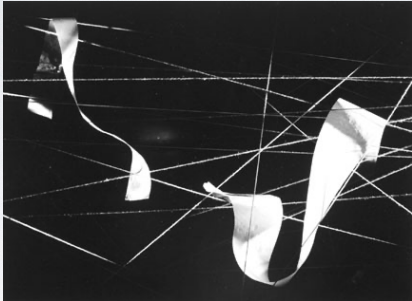






NATHAN LERNER

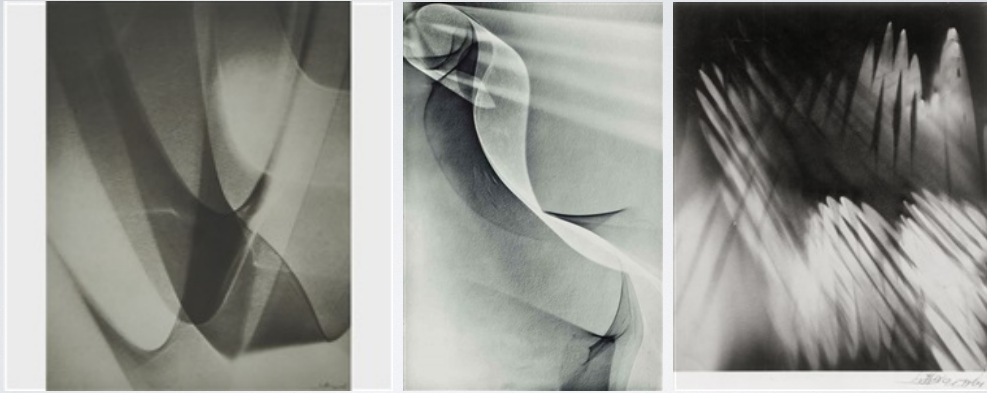
(1913 - 1997)



LOTTE JACOBI

(1896 - 1990)





## MINOR MARTIN WHITE

(1908–1976)

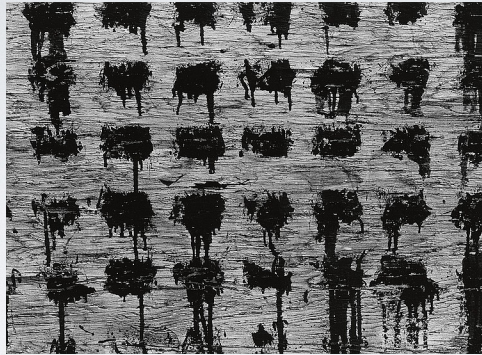
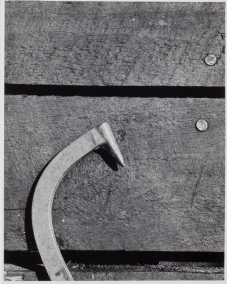


## AARON SISKIND

(1903 -1991)

"It is no longer a matter of expressing reality,  
but of expressing what one feels about reality"





"Chicago 42," 1952. Sold for \$3,000(December 2013).



Dürer Variation, 1966

## FREDERICK SOMMER

(1905-1999)

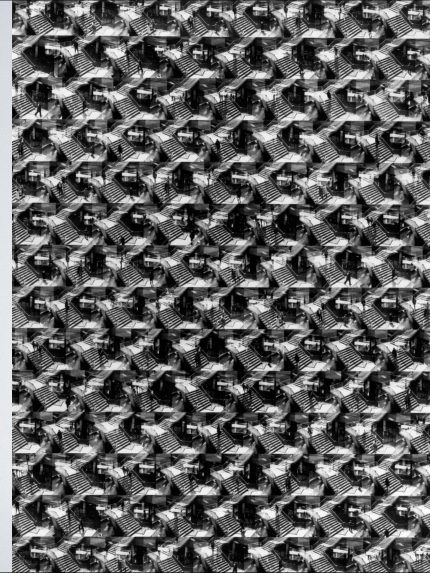
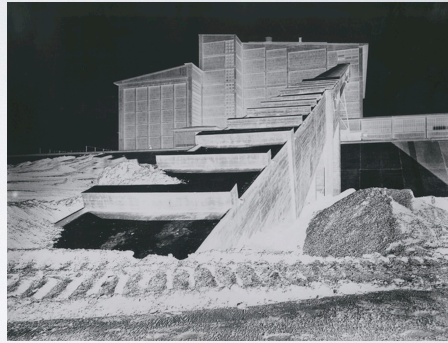
- Sommer's most extravagant, subtle, majestic, and impressive photographs were seemingly infinite desert landscapes, some of which he referred to as 'constellations'
- In 1957 he began making abstract camera-less negatives with materials such as paint on cellophane and then smoke on glass. He formed new images by appropriating, deconstructing, and re-configuring other artists' works and scientific book illustrations long before the term "postmodernism" was coined



## OTTO STEINERT

(1915-1978)





RAY K. METZKER  
(1931–2014)



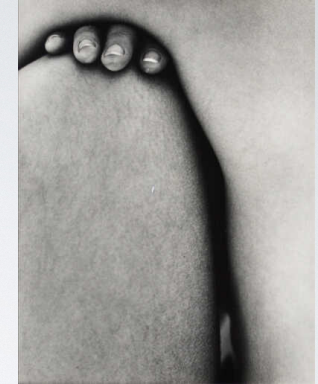
Periodical #1, 2004

ROBERT HEINECKEN  
(1931–2006)



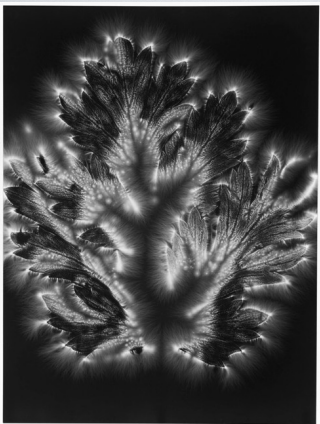
Overlapped Faces, 1991



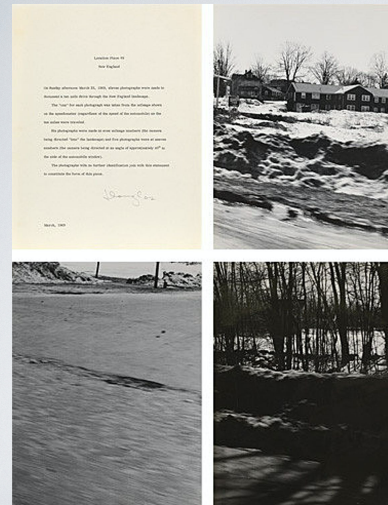


## WALTER CHAPPELL

(1925–2000)



"Metaflora" is subtitled "A series of electron images of plant life realised without a camera in total darkness." The technique of electron photography (high voltage/high frequency electron imagery) shows the life energy of these freshly cut plants shining out with star-like intensity



## DOUGLAS HUEBLER

(1924–1997)

Location Piece #9, New England, March 1969

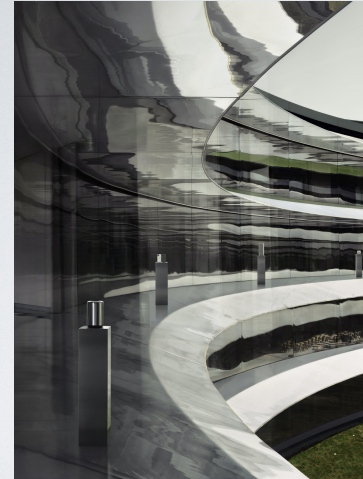




[Bahrain I](#) - 2005

## ANDREAS GURSKY

(Born 1955)



"My photographs are 'not abstract.' Ultimately, they are always identifiable.  
Photography in general simply cannot disengage from the object"



## CINDY SHERMAN

(Born 1954)



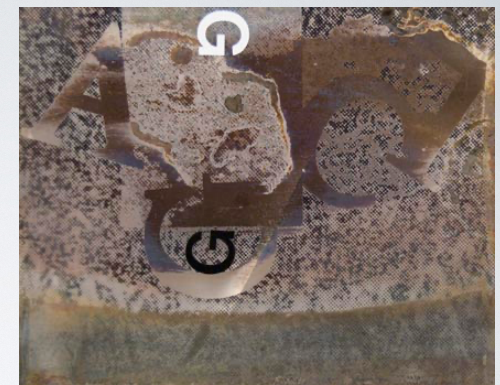
## JOSEF H. NEUMANN

(Born 1953)



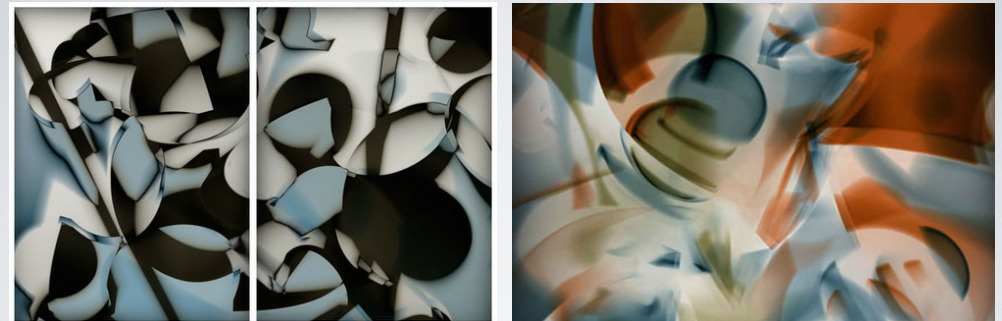


The term "chemogram" was coined by Neumann 1976



SUSAN RANKAITIS

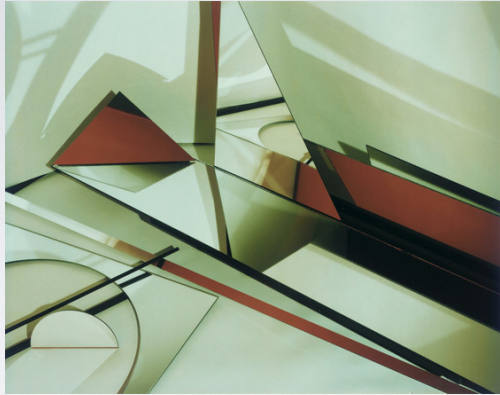
(Born 1949)



THOMAS RUFF

Born 1958

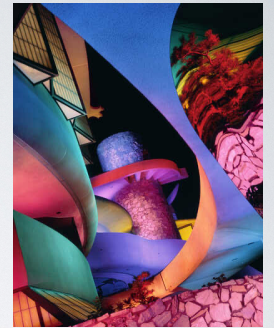
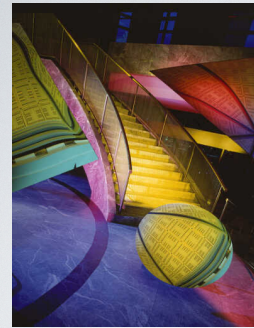




# BARBARA KASTEN

Born 1936

'Abstraction is not just about moving around forms and colour and shapes and geometry. It's about creating the conditions to be open and receptive to ideas'.



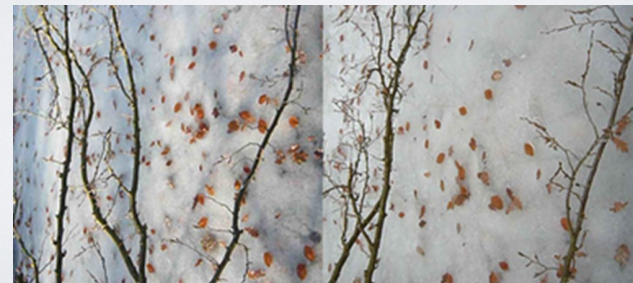
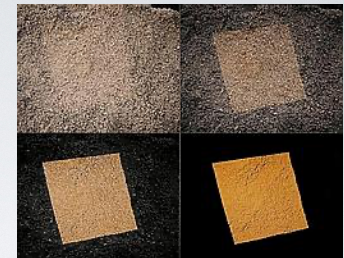
From her early cyanotype and mixed-media photographic works to later photographs depicting abstract architectural spaces, Kasten examines the spatial relationships between light, abstraction, and form.



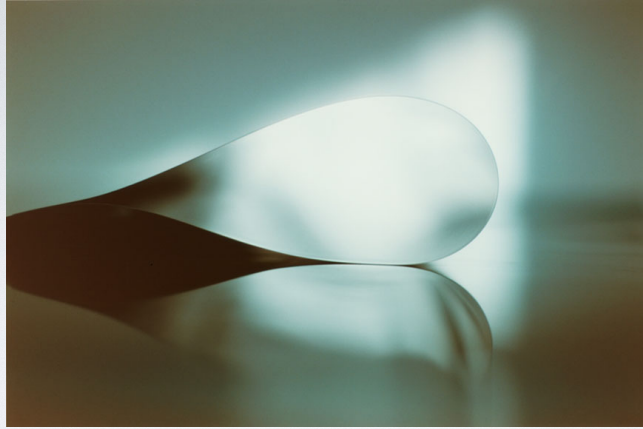
Open End 1, 2013

# CAREL BALTH

Born 1939



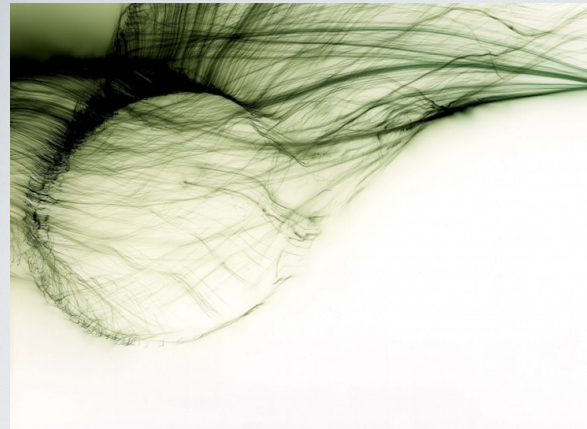




Paper drop (window), 2006

# WOLFGANG TILLMANS

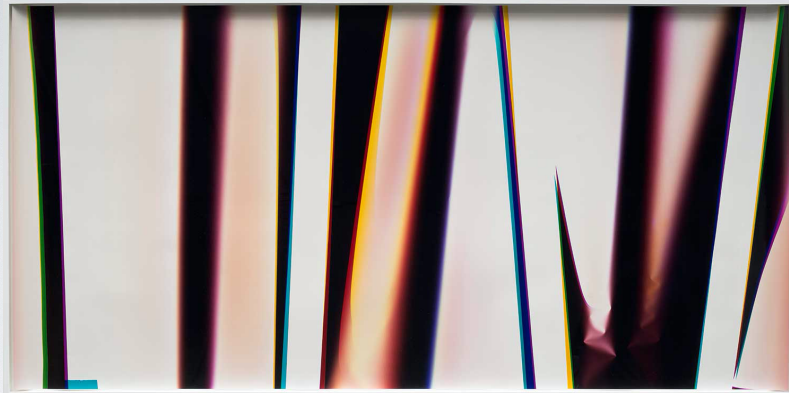
Born 1968



Freischwimmer 55, 2004.



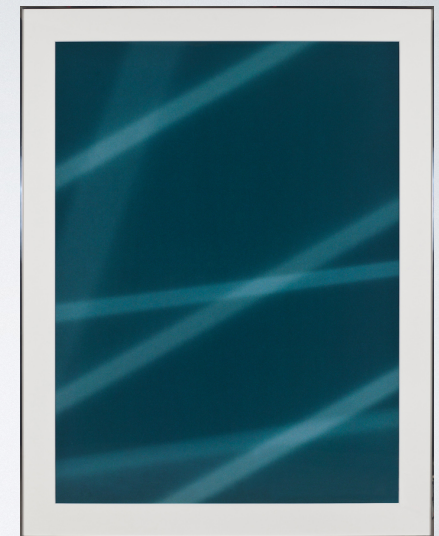
In 2000, Tillmans became the first photographer and the first non-Brit to win the prestigious Turner Prize.



# WALEAD BESHTY

Born 1976

"Everyone makes judgements. Just because artists have the ability to broadcast theirs doesn't mean they're interesting"



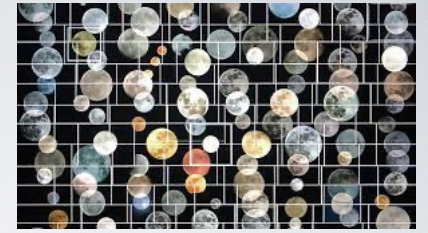




An artist best known for her work that [appropriates](#) images found using search engines and picture sharing websites

## PENELOPE UMBRICO

Born 1957



*Still Still #2, #1, #21, 2006*  
color photograph, 16" x 20"

## GASTON BERTIN

Born 1965

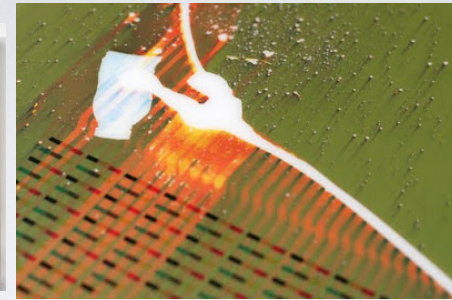
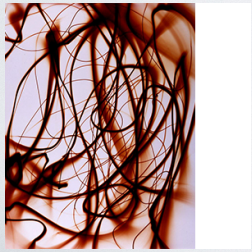
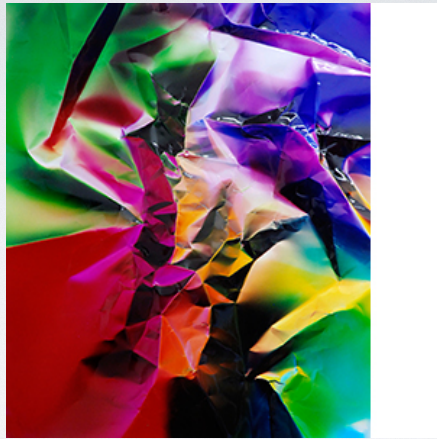
"My pictures are sensations I perceive but cannot describe. I translate them through the emotional strength of colour. I intend to say nothing. I know it is impossible."



## ELLEN CAREY

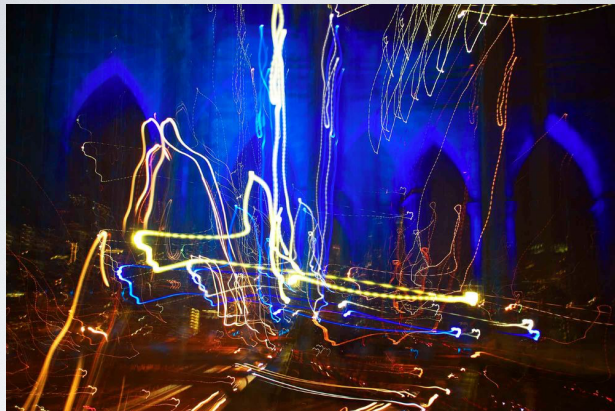
Born 1952





NICKI STAGER

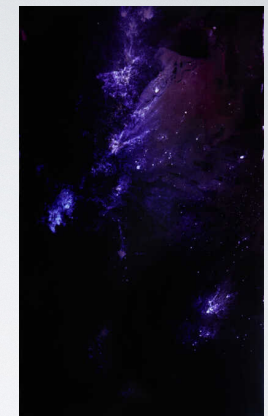
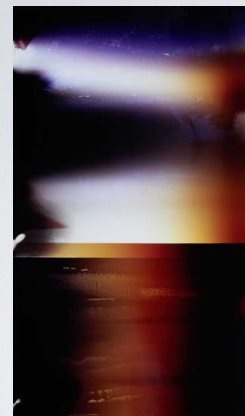
Born 1978



Lloyd is the leading figure in the "Breaking the Light" abstract expressionist photographic movement. Each image is made during a single exposure in Lloyd's digital camera

HARVEY LLOYD

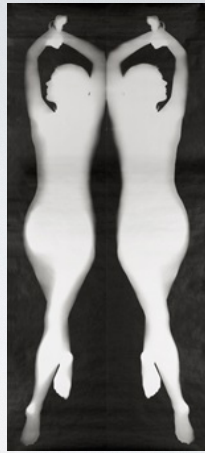
(Born 1926)



RAPHAEL HEFTI

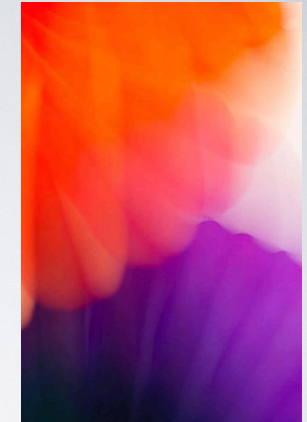
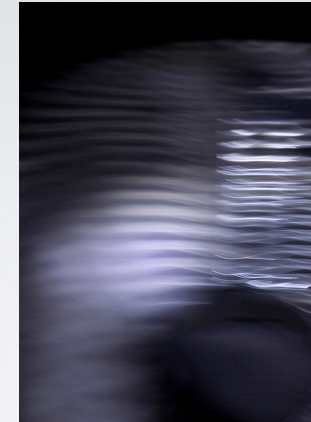
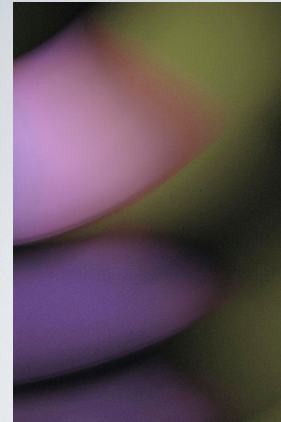
Born 1978





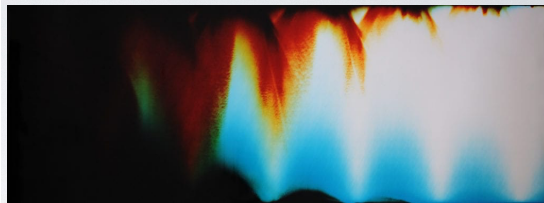
FLORIS NEUSÜSS  
(1937–2020)

Neusüss is a contemporary experimental photographer known for his photograms. His most famous works are the Nudogramms from the late 1960s, in which he exposed a nude figure directly onto photographic paper

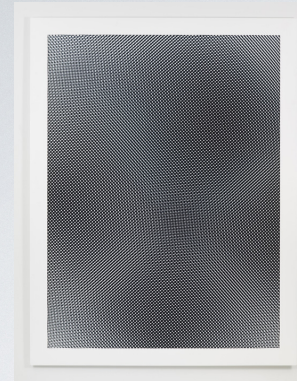


SHIRINE GILL

"The majority of my abstract work is about form, colour and line, most of which are independent from visual references to the outside world. My process is Intentional Camera Movement. Movement and an open shutter allow me to create painterly and impressionistic images. Camera movement makes colours bleed into each other and create dynamic lines and patterns from rather simple light sources"



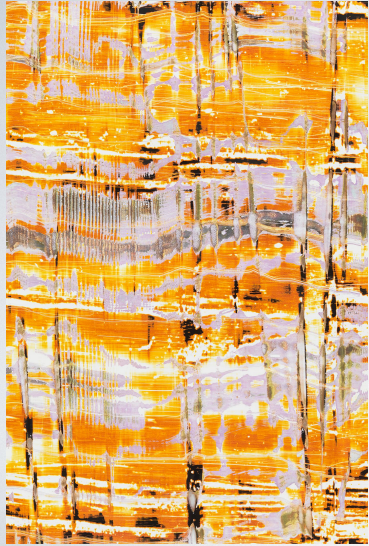
ADAM BROOMBERG AND  
OLIVER CHANARIN



LIZ DESCHENES  
Born 1966

"Photography has always been a hybrid. I'm really defiant about the idea that photography is this or that. Black-and-white, colour - I'm not interested in that. Narrative, non-narrative - those are ways of oversimplifying the discipline, so that you can just dismiss it. If you put something in a category, then you don't have to think about it anymore."





MARCO BREUER

Born 1966

## HOW TO GET STARTED?

- One way to remove any immediate meanings or associations an object might normally possess is to get in so close to that object that it becomes unrecognisable. Through looking at an object very closely, you may be able to find unseen patterns or details

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- One way to remove any immediate meanings or associations an object might normally possess is to get in so close to that object that it becomes unrecognisable. Through looking at an object very closely, you may be able to find unseen patterns or details
- Another way to find an abstract expression of your subject is to add dramatic or unconventional lighting to it. The light can illuminate your subject or cast shadows that reshape and redefine it
- As to your approach to abstract photography, there isn't much you can do wrong. Even if you do something not considered abstract in the traditional sense, you may still find some inspiration in places and practices you have never considered before



NEXT TIME - 07 DECEMBER

LIGHT PAINTING

