

# The Frick Pittsburgh showcases Alfred Stieglitz and his circle of photographers

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Frick Art & Historical Center

"Untitled (Billiard Game)" c. 1909, platinum print by Gertrude Kasebier.

By Marylynne Pitz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Alfred Stieglitz changed America's cultural landscape as he elevated the technique of seeing the world through a camera into an art form.

At his gallery in New York, Mr. Stieglitz was the first to exhibit the work of artists Auguste Rodin and Henri Matisse in 1908. Soon afterward, he showcased Paul Cezanne and Pablo Picasso. The photographer also exhibited the work of his circle of influential contemporaries, which included Edward Steichen, Gertrude Kasebier, Clarence White and Paul Strand.

An exhibition on view at The Frick Pittsburgh focuses on these photography pioneers, all of whom contributed to developing the art form during the late 19th and early 20th century. "Impressionist to Modernist: Masterworks of Early Photography" features more than 70 black-and-white images at the Point Breeze museum through April 19.

At the turn of the 20th century, many photographers were making soft, unfocused pictures. The goal of this approach, called Pictorialism, was to make the public equate photography with Impressionism, a painting style that originated in France. Two examples of photographs that resembles paintings are portraits of women called "The Mirror" by Clarence H. White and "Edeltrude" by Heinrich Kuhn. The latter print was made with a complicated development technique called gum-bichromate.

"Kuhn wanted people to walk up and say, 'I can't believe that's a photograph'" said Frick curator Sarah Hall.

The public responded enthusiastically to George Eastman's 1888 invention of the first point-and-shoot camera. With a Kodak Brownie, almost anyone could be

**'Impressionist to Modernist:  
Masterworks of Early  
Photography'**

**Where:** The Frick Pittsburgh,  
7227 Reynolds St., Point Breeze  
15208.

**When:** Through April 19. 10  
a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through  
Sundays; closed Mondays.

**Admission:** Free. Docent-led  
tours of this show are free at 2  
p.m. Wednesdays, Saturdays  
and Sundays. To learn about  
education programs based on  
this exhibition, visit  
[www.thefrickpittsburgh.org](http://www.thefrickpittsburgh.org) or  
412-371-0600.

a “shutterbug,” just as people today use mobile phones to record their lives and post pictures on Facebook.

Mr. Stieglitz, a perfectionist, wrote an essay in 1897 titled “The Hand Camera — Its Present Importance,” bemoaning the fact that photography had become a sport and expressing relief that the bicycle fad had drawn some people away from their cameras.

Gradually, Mr. Stieglitz and his contemporaries adopted a more modern way of making photographs. Instead of artificially manipulating the image through the use of lenses, tinting or special processes, the silver gelatin print became the standard of quality. Composition, the use of light and shadow and the choice of subject varied greatly among these early photographers.

To add a local dimension to this show, Ms. Hall invited 13 local photographers to write concise, personal responses to specific images. Leslie Golomb, a Point Breeze printmaker and photographer, wrote this about “The Bubble” by Clarence H. White:

“It depicts a woman’s private moment brought to the viewer in a sensuous wistfulness. The bubble blown from her own breath is her reminiscence that she was once, and will always be, that child by the window, with the late afternoon sun on her back.”

The exhibition includes only two Stieglitz images. One is of artist Georgia O’Keeffe doing her hair; the other is a full frontal nude of the strong singular woman who made her reputation by documenting the New Mexico landscape. Mr. Stieglitz and Ms. O’Keefe married in 1924.

Gertrude Kasebier’s early subjects were women and children, and her portrayal of them shows the influence of Impressionist Mary Cassatt, who often painted mothers and daughters. But Ms. Kasebier was daring, too, and her picture of a woman playing pool shows a lady being rather forward in 1909.

“It’s a little bit racy. This woman is clearly going beyond the norm, but so was Kasebier,” said Linda Benedict-Jones, curator of photography at the Carnegie Museum of Art.

Ms. Kasebier “was an incredibly accomplished member of Stieglitz’s circle. He included her work in the first issues of Camera Work. He championed her work. She was definitely one of the inner circle.”

*Marylynn Pitz at 412-263-1648 or mpitz@post-gazette.com*