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Romantic: Photos of Paris in Night & Day from the Early & Mid 20th Century on Display at the Taft

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The title is *Paris Night & Day*, but the photos on view at the Taft Museum of Art move from day to night, more than one hundred images of the City of Light “touching on a certain moment,” explained Deborah Scott, the Taft’s Director/CEO.

That moment is the 1900s to the 1940s, when photography is burgeoning as an art form, from street photography to surrealism. The moment when, as assistant curator Tamera Muenta noted, “Photography became less about subject and more about the vision of the photographer. “

One of the anchor exhibits of the region’s FotoFocus 2014, the subtitle is “Masterworks of Photography from Atget to Man Ray.” [FotoFocus continues through October](#), “Paris Night & Day” continues through Jan. 11.

The images are black & white, many of them iconic: A fabulous woman, face shaded by an extravagant black hat, covered in black furs almost to the street, strolling the Bois de Boulogne with her two terriers, shot by Jacques-Henri Lartigue, who photographed “things that made him happy,” said Muenta.

The photos exude all things Parisian, primarily in the period between world wars.

The show opens with Eugene Atget, who documents the city early in the century with street

scenes of people and places.

There are common elements that capture the eyes of the photographers over the decades – geometric shapes, shadow and light, reflections. The female form.

Atget establishes the pattern, clearly intrigued by shop windows, both with uniformity of displays and the reflections they caught, and what was being displayed – like a collection of ladies' lacy corsets. In his day, his artistic choices were avant garde -- the corsets made the cover of a surrealist magazine.

The rest of the exhibit is organized by theme: life on the street, urban amusements, portraits and nudes, art-for-art's-sake formal experiments, and Paris by night.

Ise Bing gives us a singular look at the Eiffel Tower; Andre Kertesz' finds light and shadow in evocative "The Stairs of Montmartre."

Henri Cartier-Bressons coined the phrase "Decisive Moment," what Muelle called a "perfect intersection" of light, shadow, color, action, expression and emotion. He illustrates it perfectly with "Behind the Gare St. Lazare," in which a man is leaping, both feet off the ground, across a wide puddle.

He and everything around him is reflected in the water, including a poster on a nearby wall that features a dancer – leaping in the opposite direction.

Beautiful women, their faces, their forms, ever enticing. Man Ray's nudes are striking, but no more so than the tightly framed "Portrait of Dora Maar" – those lips, those eyes. Those painted fingernails, those eyebrows. That tres mysterieux toy-sized hand, rising from the bottom of the frame, also with painted fingernails, brushing her jaw.

Surrealists manipulated negatives in the darkroom, scratching, painting, even moving it ever so slightly during the development process to create the woozy "Street of the Drunks" by Pal Funk Angelo.

The final gallery showcases Brassai, fascinated by the Paris nightlife we don't know – cafes and brothels, streetwalkers, thugs, sewage workers. You will be fascinated with his subjects and his work.

There is a filled calendar of special events, including: Book Talk: The Bones of Paris Nov. 14, 2:30 p.m. The Taft partners with the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County for a community-wide read-along. The Bones of Paris by Laurie R. King takes place against the backdrop of the glittering lights of Paris in 1929. David Sider, popular library manager, and Stephanie Cooper, fiction librarian, will lead a discussion. FREE. Reservations required: (513) 684-4515 or www.taftmuseum.org

During "Paris Night & Day," everyone who shows their library card at the Taft admission desk will receive free admission to the special exhibition and the museum.

Artist talks, gallery talks with Tamera Muelle and exhibition tours are scheduled. Find details at the museum website.

"Paris Night & Day," Taft Museum of Art, 316 Pike Street, downtown Cincinnati. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The museum will be open 11 .m.-4 p.m. Tuesdays during November and December. Admission \$10 adults; \$8 seniors, students, and teachers; \$4 for youth 12-17; and free for children 11 and under. The Museum is free to all on Sundays. Call 513-

17, and free for children 17 and under. The museum is free to enter on Sundays. Call 610-241-0343 or visit the website at www.taftmuseum.org for additional information.

Written by Jackie Demaline, RCN Arts

Photo provided: A leading American fashion model who moved to Paris in 1929, Lee Miller appears in several works by Man Ray. This photograph, on view in *Paris Night & Day*, is one of two extant prints, the other belonging to Madonna!

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