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**MEDIA CONTACT**

Alexandria Sivak  
Getty Communications  
(310) 440-6473  
asivak@getty.edu

**J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM PRESENTS PHOTOGRAPHS FROM  
THE COLLECTION OF SAMUEL J. WAGSTAFF Jr.**

*The Thrill of the Chase: The Wagstaff Collection of Photographs* will be exhibited  
Alongside *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Medium*



*Valley of the Shadow of Death*, April 23, 1855. Roger Fenton (English, 1819 - 1869), Salted paper print. 27.6 x 34.9 cm (10 7/8 x 13 3/4 in.) The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

LOS ANGELES – From 1973 to 1984, Samuel J. Wagstaff Jr. (American, 1921-1987) assembled one of the most important private collections of photographs in the world. With more than 26,000 objects, the collection spans the experimental beginnings of photography in the nineteenth-century to the works of artists active in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1984 Wagstaff sold his collection to the J. Paul Getty Museum, and thirty-two years later it remains the Museum's single largest holding of art from one source. *The Thrill of the Chase: The Wagstaff Collection of Photographs*, on view March 15-July 31, 2016 at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center, features a selection of works from Wagstaff's collection, offering a look at how his broad and idiosyncratic tastes helped to expand the photographic canon.

"The acquisition of Samuel Wagstaff's collection of photographs in 1984 was a landmark event in the Museum's short history," explains Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "In one move, the Getty became the custodian of one of the most important private collections of photographs in the world, thus setting the stage for the Museum to become, as

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Mrs. Herbert Duckworth, 1867. Julia Margaret Cameron (British, born India, 1815 - 1879). Albumen silver print. 34 x 24.9 cm (13 3/8 x 9 13/16 in.) The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

it since has, one of the preeminent public photographic collections of the world. Wagstaff's eye for quality and voracious appetite for collecting, ranging from Fox Talbot, Nadar and Man Ray to Lange, Arbus and Hujar, set him apart from his peers and fueled his reputation as a connoisseur and taste-maker in photography as a art form—a status that was still not yet universally acknowledged. This exhibition is the first to give Wagstaff's critical role in photographic history its due."

Born into a socially prominent New York City family, Wagstaff attended Yale University and the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University before working as a curator at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, and the Detroit Institute of the Arts. While he was a champion of contemporary art and organized numerous innovative exhibitions, it was not until he met the artist Robert Mapplethorpe (American, 1946-1989) that he developed an interest in collecting photographs. The two met in 1972 and became lovers, with Wagstaff supporting Mapplethorpe's fledging career and

Mapplethorpe helping Wagstaff understand the value of photography as art. Within a few short years, Wagstaff became a preeminent collector in a still young market.

Wagstaff promoted photography as an art form by exhibiting, publishing, and lecturing on his collection. In 1978 he organized the exhibition *Photographs from the Collection of Sam Wagstaff*, which opened at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. before beginning a seventeen-venue tour. His reputation as an arbiter of taste provided an impetus for museums to collect photographs and for scholars to devote their studies to photography.

"In addition to frequenting auctions in New York, London, and Paris, Wagstaff would often troll secondhand shops and flea markets during his travels, and come back with shopping bags full of prints," says Paul Martineau, associate curator of photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum and curator of the exhibition. "Wagstaff had a knack for discovering photographs by unknown makers that were deserving of attention and was bold enough to hang these works next to those by the established masters."

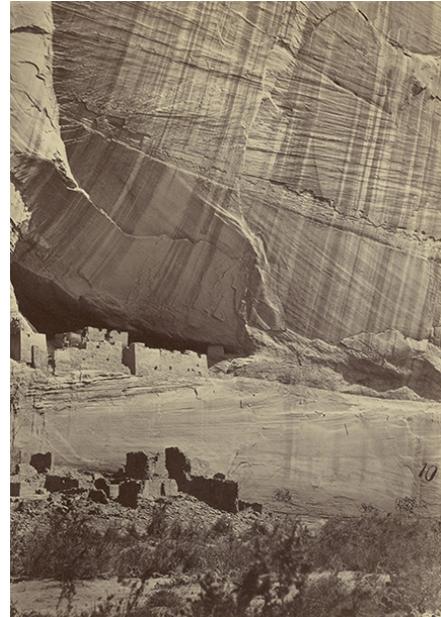
The Wagstaff Collection is known for its quality and breadth, and the exhibition will include photographs by the medium's pioneers, including William Henry Fox Talbot, Hill & Adamson, Gustave Le Gray, Nadar, and Julia Margaret Cameron. Wagstaff also had an eye for early twentieth-century photography, purchasing prints by Adolf de Meyer, Edward Steichen, Man Ray, August Sander, Edward Weston, and Dorothea Lange. Contemporary photographs are represented in the collection with works by William Eggleston, Diane Arbus, William Garnett, Larry Clark, Jo Ann Callis, and Peter Hujar.

After Wagstaff sold his collection of photographs to the Getty Museum in 1984, he turned to nineteenth-century American silver, and quickly amassed one of the finest collections in the field. On view in the exhibition is a Gorham sterling ice bowl and spoon fashioned in the shape of blocks of ice with cast icicles and polar bear handles. Wagstaff pestered Mapplethorpe to photograph the ice bowl, so it could be reproduced in a catalogue for an exhibition of Wagstaff's collection of silver at the New York Historical society (that photograph is on view in *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Medium*). Sadly, the catalogue

was never published and Wagstaff died from AIDS-related complications, just two months before the exhibition opened.

"The story of Wagstaff's late-in-life interest in silver underscores the core values that made him successful as a collector of photographs," adds Martineau. "He began with a medium that he thought was remarkable and undervalued, and put all of his resources into building a world-class collection."

*The Thrill of the Chase: The Wagstaff Collection of Photographs* is on view March 15-July 31, 2016 at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center. The exhibition is curated by Paul Martineau, associate curator of photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum. The exhibition will be displayed in galleries adjacent to *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Medium*, also on view March 15-July 31, 2015 at the Getty and March 20-July 31, 2015 at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). The Wagstaff exhibition will then travel to the Wadsworth Atheneum September 10-December 11, 2016 and the Portland Art Museum in Maine February 1-April 30, 2017.



*Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle, New Mexico, In a Niche Fifty Feet Above Present Cañon Bed, 1873.* Timothy H. O'Sullivan (American, about 1840 - 1882). Albumen silver print. 27.6 x 19.2 cm (10 7/8 x 7 9/16 in.) The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

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**The J. Paul Getty Museum** collects Greek and Roman antiquities, European paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculpture and decorative arts to 1900, as well as photographs from around the world to the present day. The Museum's mission is to display and interpret its collections, and present important loan exhibitions and publications for the enjoyment and education of visitors locally and internationally. This is supported by an active program of research, conservation, and public programs that seek to deepen our knowledge of and connection to works of art.

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