LOS ANGELES—In many respects, the window was where photography began. As early as 1826, the sill of an upstairs window in the home of the French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce served as a platform for his photographic experiments. His View from the Window at Le Gras is today considered to be the first photograph. Since then, the window motif in photographs has functioned formally as a framing device and conceptually as a tool for artistic expression. It is also tied metaphorically to the camera itself which is, at its most rudimentary, a “room” (the word camera means “chamber”) and its lens a “window” through which images are projected and fixed. The photographs in At the Window: A Photographer’s View, on view October 1, 2013–January 5, 2014 at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center, explore varying aspects of the window as frame or mirror—formally or metaphorically—for photographic vision.

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"The Getty Museum's extensive collection allows us to explore themes and subjects within the history of photography that highlight not only the most famous masters and iconic images they produced, but also less obvious subjects, methods and practitioners of the medium whose contributions have not yet been fully acknowledged. At the Window is one such an exhibition, and holds in store many surprises, even for those who know the field well," explains Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "The exhibition also allows us to celebrate a substantial body of work that was recently added to the collection with funds provided by the Museum's Photographs Council, whose mission it is to help us support the growth of the collection, and a number of highly important loans from private collections."

**Shop Windows and Architecture**

Featured in the exhibition is an exceedingly rare early photograph, William Henry Fox Talbot's *The Milliner’s Window* (before January 1844) which depicts not an actual window but a carefully constructed one: shelves were placed outdoors and propped in front of black cloth, while various ladies' hats were arranged to simulate the look of a shop display. Throughout the history of photography, actual shop fronts have been a popular subject and reflections in their windows a source for unexpected juxtapositions. This motif is well represented in the exhibition with photographs by William Eggleston, Eugène Atget, and Walker Evans.

Photographers have also taken an interest in the distinctive formal arrangements made possible by the architectural facades found in a cityscape. André Kertész's *Rue Vavin, Paris* (1925), a view from his apartment window, is one of the first photographs he took upon arriving in Paris from Budapest. Photographers like Alfred Stieglitz carefully framed their views of urban exteriors, using the window as a unifying device within the composition.
The Window as Social Documentary

While windows provide an opportunity to observe life beyond a single room, the camera’s lens opens a window to the world at large. Arthur Rothstein believed in photography’s ability to enact social change—his Girl at Gee’s Bend (1937) features a young girl framed in the window of her log-and-earth home in Alabama, highlighting the schism between magazine images and the actual lives of most Americans at the time. Similarly, Robert Frank’s Trolley—New Orleans (1955) frames racial segregation through windows in a trolley, while Sebastião Salgado’s Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (negative 1995; print 2009) uses the barely separated windows of a housing structure to evoke the cramped quarters and dire economic situation of its inhabitants.

The Window as a Conceptual Tool

Artists have used the window in other novel ways, whether to create an enigmatic mood or suggest a suspenseful scene. In Gregory Crewdson’s Untitled (2002) from the series Twilight, the image of a woman standing in a room and turned toward a window creates a suspended, unsettling moment of anticipation that is never resolved. In her Stranger series (2000), Shizuka Yokomizo actively engages subjects by sending letters to randomly selected apartment residents, asking them to stand in front of a window at a particular date and time in order to be photographed. Uta Barth’s diptych ...and of time (2000), where the path of a window’s light and shadow is followed across the wall of the artist’s living room, illustrates something the artist phrased as “ambient vision.”

“The window has been a recurrent and powerful theme for photographers from the beginning of the medium,” explains Karen Hellman, assistant curator of photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum and curator of the exhibition. “In a collection such as the Getty’s that is particularly rich in work by important photographers from the beginnings of the medium to the present day, the motif provides a unique way to travel through the history of photography.”
At the Window: A Photographer’s View, is on view October 1, 2013–January 5, 2014 at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center. The exhibition is curated by Karen Hellman, assistant curator of photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum. The exhibition will be on view concurrently with Abelardo Morell: The Universe Next Door. A full list of related events to be announced.

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The J. Paul Getty Trust is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that includes the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Getty Foundation. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs serve a varied audience from two locations: the Getty Center in Los Angeles and the Getty Villa in Malibu.

The J. Paul Getty Museum collects in seven distinct areas, including Greek and Roman antiquities, European paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculpture and decorative arts, and photographs gathered internationally. The Museum’s mission is to make the collection meaningful and attractive to a broad audience by presenting and interpreting the works of art through educational programs, special exhibitions, publications, conservation, and research.

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