

Released: April 2008

Press View: Thursday 5 June 2008, 11.30am-1pm



Willi RUGE, 1892-1961

Arno Boettcher, 1927

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kunstbibliothek

Photo by Jürgen Liepe

FOTO: MODERNITY IN CENTRAL EUROPE, 1918-1945

7 June – 31 August 2008

DEAN GALLERY, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, 73 Belford Road, Edinburgh

Admission £6.00 (concessions £4.00)

Launching the 2008 Summer Season at the National Galleries of Scotland, *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe 1918-1945* is a thought-provoking and beautiful exhibition that explores the breathtaking success of modernist photography in Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Austria, during a time of tremendous social and political upheaval. Organised by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, this will be the only European showing of *Foto*, and it will include many stunning works on display in Britain for the first time.

The first survey to explore this fascinating period in the history of photography, *Foto* will be unprecedented in scope, comprising around 150 photographs, books, and illustrated magazines, and will feature the work of more than 100 photographers. Images by internationally recognised masters such as László Moholy-Nagy, Hannah Höch, André Kertész, and El Lissitzky will be shown alongside those of historically important contemporaries such as Karel Teige, Edith Tudor Hart, František Drtikol, Martin Munkacsí and Trude Fleischmann.

Foto will demonstrate how photography caught the imagination of hundreds of progressive artists in central Europe, provided a creative outlet for thousands of dedicated amateurs, and became a symbol of modernity for millions through its use in magazines, newspapers, advertising, and books. The show will be divided into thematic sections, each bringing together

work from across central Europe, to explore in depth eight key strands such as photomontage and war, gender identity, life and leisure in the modern metropolis, and the spread of Surrealism.

Commenting on the Dean Gallery exhibition, Matthew Witkovsky, Curator of *Foto* and Associate Curator of Photographs at NGA, Washington, said: “Presenting *Foto* in Scotland, home to many great talents of early photography and especially the team of David O. Hill and Robert Adamson, has a special meaning. The first art historical studies of photography were written in central Europe during the time period of this exhibition, and the very first such study was on Hill and Adamson. Past and present, regional and international came together in central Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, as they do in Edinburgh today.”

Simon Groom, Director of Modern & Contemporary Art at the National Galleries of Scotland, said: “*Foto* is one of the most important and intelligent photography exhibitions of recent years. The works are radical politically as well as aesthetically, and the exhibition contains many of the ideas and iconic images that were to establish photography's status as the avant-garde medium of the 20th century.”

The first of four major summer exhibitions at the NGS, *Foto* will present a collection of stimulating and varied works of international significance, which will allow viewers to appreciate some of the most challenging, yet beautiful, experimental photography of the twentieth century.

-Ends-

**For further information and images please contact the National Galleries of Scotland Press
Office on 0131 624 6332/325/314. pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org**

Notes to Editors:

Foto is divided into eight thematic sections:

- **The Cut-and-Paste World: Recovering from War**
An exploration of the significance of photomontage, a technique that epitomized the era and found broad acceptance among avant-garde artists and mass-media outlets.

- **Laboratories and Classrooms**
Consideration of the adoption by modernist photographers of experimental camera work and dark room techniques.
- **Modern Living**
Examination of how image-making helped popularize modernity in a region filled with anxieties over sudden and massive urban changes.
- **New Women—New Men**
Analysis of the way in which the changing role of men and women in European society was not only reflected in, but also shaped by modernist photography.
- **The Spread of Surrealism**
Discussion of the role of photography in the spread of Surrealism across Europe.
- **Activist Documents**
Consideration of the development of photojournalism and the photo-illustrated press, and the use of photography by political activists.
- **Land without a Name**
Examination of the modernist approach to photographing the urban landscape; and the use of modernist landscape photography in constructing myths of national identity.
- **The Cut-and-Paste World: War Returns**
Discussion of how, as the political ramifications of surrealism gained primary importance, so too did the potential of photomontage to comment on the state of the world.

The exhibition catalogue, *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918–1945*, written by Matthew S. Witkovsky, Associate Curator of Photographs, National Gallery of Art, is published by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in association with Thames & Hudson, London and New York. It includes an introduction by Peter Demetz, professor emeritus at Yale University; biographies of the artists; an extensive bibliography; and maps of the region showing the geopolitical shifts of the early 20th century. The exhibition catalogue is published with the assistance of The Getty Foundation.

The exhibition was curated by Matthew Witkovsky, Associate Curator of Photographs at the National Gallery of Art, Washington. It travelled to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (October 12, 2007 – January 13, 2008) and the Milwaukee Art Museum (February 9 – May 4, 2008) before its only European showing at the Dean Gallery, Edinburgh (June 7 – August 31, 2008).

Foto is complemented by a specially curated *Filmprogram*, highlighting the prolific correspondences of lens-based media in interwar Central Europe. The *Filmprogram* will be screened jointly at the National Galleries of Scotland and the Edinburgh Filmhouse.