



International
Center of
Photography

The International Center of Photography Presents
Eugène Atget: The Making of a Reputation

The International Center of Photography | 84 Ludlow Street, New York
On View January 29, 2026–May 4, 2026 | Public Opening January 29, 5–8PM



Eugène Atget, *Hôtel du Marquis de Lagrange*, 4 et 6 Rue de Braque, 1901 International Center of Photography, Gift of Caryl and Israel Englander, 2008 (2008.11.20)

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is proud to present *Eugène Atget: The Making of a Reputation*, an exhibition that examines how Eugène Atget (1857–1927) came to be regarded as one of the forefathers of modern photography through the timely and tireless advocacy of Berenice Abbott. Featuring historic prints from ICP's collection alongside landmark publications

and other printed ephemera, the exhibition reconsiders the role that Abbott played in establishing Atget's now-canonical status, sometimes to the detriment of her own remarkable career as a photographer. Though Atget didn't live to see it, Abbott became the ideal steward, proving that every photographer needs a champion.

Over the last three decades of his life, Atget undertook an intensive documentation of Paris and its surrounding districts, assembling a vast archive of a time and place under acute pressure from the forces of 20th century modernization. Major monuments and humble buildings; storefronts, staircases, ironwork and street traders; parks, trees and the undefined edges of the city—all were among the litany of subjects he photographed, both preserving and transfiguring their inherent formal and historical qualities.

In 1923, Bernice Abbott, then a young sculptor, was introduced to the artist Man Ray and became his studio assistant. She soon took to photography and met Atget—whose studio was on the same street as Man Ray's—in 1926. The following year, she made three portraits of Atget, but he died shortly before she could show them to him. Though a portion of Atget's prints were sold to the city archives of Paris, Abbott managed to acquire what remained and then, with little prospect of financial gain, immediately began promoting his work, convinced it was a major artistic achievement. Decades later, in 1968, her role as Atget's champion would come to its natural close, as the 1,415 glass negatives and around 8,000 vintage prints in her collection were acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, which took up the task of advocating for Atget and his work.

Curated by David Campany, Creative Director at ICP, *Eugène Atget: The Making of a Reputation* focuses on the years between the publication of Atget's images (uncredited) in the journal *La Révolution Surréaliste* in 1926 and the appearance four years later of *ATGET: Photographe de Paris*, the first book of his work, overseen by Abbott. It presents three related expressions of Atget's work: the magazines that published it, the prints (drawn primarily from ICP's collection) and the images chosen for the book. Each provides distinct insights into how the meaning and significance of his photographs was formed, claimed and positioned.

"Every photographer needs a champion," said Campany. "Eugène Atget had Berenice Abbott and without her, his work would have been all but lost."

About Eugène Atget

Eugène Atget (1857-1927) was a French photographer best known for his photographs of Paris and its environs. He supplied studies for painters, architects and stage designers, while also making formally complex pictures. Atget's subjects included everything from grand buildings to typical street scenes, storefronts and workers. His photographs, often taken in the early hours, are notable for their diffuse light and wide views that give a sense of enigma and mystery. They also document Paris and its rapid changes; many of the areas Atget photographed were soon to be razed as part of widespread modernization projects.

Atget drew the admiration of a variety of artists, most notably Man Ray who even used one of Atget's photographs on the cover of the magazine *La Révolution Surréaliste*. The photographer Berenice Abbott preserved many of Atget's prints and negatives. She exhibited his work, wrote about it and for decades championed Atget as a forerunner of modern photography.

Exhibition Support

Exhibition support is generously provided by ICP Collections Committee members: Jane Corkin, Constance Jaeggi, George Krupp, Monika Parekh, Douglas Pugh, Elizabeth Walton, Simon Zafrany and Alice Sachs Zimet.

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About The International Center of Photography

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is the world's leading institution dedicated to photography and visual culture. Cornell Capa founded ICP in 1974 to champion "concerned photography"—socially and politically minded images that can educate and change the world. Through exhibitions, education programs, community outreach, and public programs, ICP offers an open forum for dialogue about the power of the image. Since its inception, ICP has presented more than 700 exhibitions, provided thousands of classes, and hosted a wide variety of public programs. ICP launched its new integrated center at 84 Ludlow Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side in January 2020. ICP pays respect to the original stewards of this land, the Lenape people, and other Indigenous communities. Visit icp.org to learn more about the museum and its programs

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