

Press Release
New Exhibition
From 15 June to 4 September 2017

Philippe Halsman

Astonish Me!



Parc des Champs-de-Bataille
Québec (Québec) G1R 5H3

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Québec City, Wednesday 14 June 2017 ✕ After Paris, Lausanne, Rotterdam, Barcelona and Madrid... Québec City From June 15 to September 4, 2017, the Musée national des Beaux-Arts du Québec (MNBAQ) is pleased to host the North American premiere of the exhibition *Philippe Halsman: Astonish Me!* mounted by the Musée de l'Élysée from Halsman family archives in New York. The retrospective showcases for the first time the celebrated American photographer's entire career, from his beginnings in Paris in the 1930s to the immense success of his New York studio between 1940 and 1970.

From Paris to New York

Philippe Halsman (1906-1979) arrived in Paris with the support of French government minister Paul Painlevé and stayed there for 10 years, until 1940. During the decade, he collaborated with *Vogue*, *Vu* and *Voilà* magazines and produced portraits of numerous celebrities such as

Marc Chagall, Le Corbusier and André Malraux. He exhibited his work several times at the avant-gardist Galerie de la Pléiade along with photographers such as Laure Albin Guillot, whose work was exhibited in 2013 at the Musée de l’Elysée. In 1940, the German invasion forced him to flee to New York with his family. There, he worked for many American magazines, including *Life*, for which he produced 101 covers, and met the century’s celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe, Rita Hayworth, Duke Ellington, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Richard Nixon and Albert Einstein, to name but a few.

A passion for exploration



In 1921, Philippe Halsman found his father’s old camera and described developing his first glass plates in the family’s bathroom sink as a “miracle.” He was 15 years old and this was his first contact with photography: he would go on to become one of the 20th century’s most creative photographers.

Halsman’s photography is characterized by a direct approach, perfect technical mastery and careful attention to details. His work also reveals a broad diversity driven by constant exploration of the medium. Philippe Halsman always proclaimed the still unexplored creative potential of photography and summarized his aim with Serge de Diaghilev’s response to Jean Cocteau when the latter asked him what he could do to collaborate with him: “Astonish me!”



Philippe Halsman was far from being exclusively a celebrity photographer. In fact, he experimented his whole life long, pushing back the boundaries of his chosen medium. He is noteworthy for the scope of his field of activity: portraits, fashion, news reporting, advertising, personal projects, and private and institutional commissions. For more than 30 years he worked, in particular, with Salvador Dalí and invented “jumpology,” which consisted in photographing his models jumping, thereby developing a genuine psychological approach to the portrait.

An exhibition in four stages

The exhibition comprises four sections. The introduction is devoted to the artist's Parisian period since his early work already portends the interests and trends that Halsman developed throughout his career. The three other sections focus on his American period. Each one presents a characteristic theme of Halsman's work: his success in the realm of the portraits of key figures, especially Marilyn Monroe; his interest in staging, including collaborations with artists, and his personal projects such as "jumpology." Lastly, the fourth section presents the important catalogue of "Photography Ideas" that he designed with Salvador Dalí for over 30 years, including the book *Dalí's Mustache*.

More than 230 works await visitors, along with numerous previously unreleased items (plates and contact prints, preliminary prints, original photomontages and mock-ups) that reveal the photographer's creative process and confirm his conception of and approach to photography: a means of expression to be explored. His career is, indeed, astonishing

Philippe Halsman, time line

2 May 1906

Philippe Halsman is born Filips Halsmann in Riga, Latvia. He drops the final "n" from his last name in 1937 and becomes Philippe Halsman.

1924

Halsman enrolls at the University of Dresden in Germany to study electrical engineering.

10 September 1928

Halsman's father dies accidentally while on a hiking trip in the Austrian Tyrol. Anti-Semitism is rife in the area and Philippe Halsman, who accompanied his father, is falsely accused of his murder. He is sentenced to ten years in prison. His sister, Liouba, works for his release, getting support from prominent European intellectuals including Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann and Sigmund Freud.

26 January 1931

Halsman arrives in Paris after gaining asylum thanks to the intervention of the French Minister, Paul Painlevé. Halsman becomes friends with his son, the scientific filmmaker, Jean Painlevé, who plays an important role in Halsman's career: he offers him his first instant camera (a 9 x 12 Kodak) and introduces him to the local artistic scene.

1932

Halsman opens a portrait studio at 22 rue Delambre, in Montparnasse.

1934

He makes his first celebrity portrait of André Gide, followed by portraits of Paul Valéry, André Malraux, Marc Chagall, Claude Simon, Jean Giraudoux and Le Corbusier.

15 February 1935

Philippe Halsman is officially registered in the French Trade Registry as an “artisan photographer”. He works in advertising and for magazines (*Journal des Modes*, *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Voilà*, *Le Monde Illustré*, *Vu*, *Visages du Monde* and the daily *Le Journal*).

1936

Halsman designs a 9 x 12 cm twin-lens camera for his portraits. His work is shown at the Exposition Internationale de la Photographie Contemporaine, at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (Paris). He photographs the gala of the Club des Scaphandres et de la Vie sous l'Eau (Club of Divers and Life under Water), the first amateur diving club, founded by Jean Painlevé and Commander Yves Le Prieur. La Pléiade gallery organizes his first solo show, *Portraits et Nus*. The following year, his work is exhibited at two themed exhibitions, *Portraits d'Ecrivains* and *La Parisienne de 1900... à 1937*.

1st April 1937

Halsman marries Yvonne Moser, a children's photographer, with whom he will work during his whole life. The couple moves to a larger studio located at 350 rue Saint-Honoré. They will have two children, Irene (born in 1939 in Paris) and Jane (born in 1941 in New York).

1940

Just before the fall of France, the members of his family, who all hold French passports, flee for New York in May. Halsman, who holds a



Latvian passport, joins them in November thanks to the intervention of Albert Einstein and the Emergency Rescue Committee, with nothing but a single suitcase containing his camera and a dozen photographs.

1941

Halsman meets Salvador Dalí at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York, where the painter is having a show. This marks the beginning of their collaboration, which will continue until 1978.

5 October 1941

Halsman produces his first cover picture for *LIFE* Magazine (“Eye Catcher”). He will do a total of 101 covers, earning him the distinction of being the photographer who produced the greatest number of covers for *LIFE*.

1943

Halsman moves to an artist’s studio at West 67th street. He will live and work there until the end of his life.

1944

Halsman gets his first commissions from *LIFE* to photograph Hollywood stars. He photographs Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Frank Sinatra, Ingrid Bergman, Bette Davis, Judy Garland, Shirley Temple, Paulette Goddard and Charles Boyer.

28 February 1945

Halsman is elected first president of the American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP).

1946

Dalí uses a photograph by Halsman for a cover (“Beauty and the Beast”) of *Et Cetera Magazine*.

1947

Halsman creates an improved 4 x 5 cm version of his twin-lens camera, produced by the Fairchild Corporation.

1948

Halsman becomes an American citizen.

1949

Publication of *The Frenchman*.

Autumn 1949

Halsman meets Marilyn Monroe for the first time when he is sent to Hollywood by *LIFE* Magazine to cover a story about eight young models who are setting out on careers as actresses.

1950

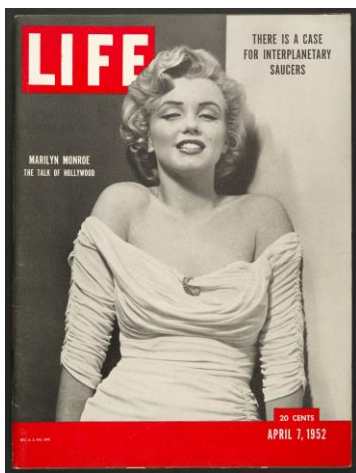
Halsman is commissioned by NBC to photograph a number of popular comedians, including Milton Berle, Ed Wynn, Sid Caesar, Groucho Marx, Bob Hope, Red Skelton and Lucille Ball. These portraits give him the idea for ‘jumpology’.

1951

Halsman returns to Europe for the first time since 1940. He photographs Winston Churchill, Henri Matisse, Giorgio De Chirico, Jean-Paul Sartre, Brigitte Bardot, Jean Genet, Anna Magnani, Marc Chagall and Pablo Picasso. At the invitation of the photographer David “Chim” Seymour, Halsman becomes a full member of Magnum Photos.

7 April 1952

Marilyn Monroe appears for the first time on the cover of *LIFE* with a photograph by Philippe Halsman.



1954

Publication of *Dali's Mustache*.

Halsman starts working with new magazines: *Sports Illustrated* (from 1954 to 1959), *TV Guide* (from 1954 to 1972), *Look* (between 1956 and 1957) and the *Saturday Evening Post* (from 1958 to 1967).

1958

Halsman is named one of the World's Ten Greatest Photographers in an international poll conducted by *Popular Photography* magazine. He takes part in the exhibition, *Photographs from the Museum Collection*, put on by Edward Steichen at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York.

1959

Publication of *Philippe Halsman's Jump Book*.

1961

Halsman joins the faculty of the Famous Photographers School and remains there until 1972. Publication of *Halsman on the Creation of Photographic Ideas*.

1962

Halsman goes to Hollywood to take promotional photographs of Alfred Hitchcock's feature film *The Birds* while it is being shot. The photographs appear in *LIFE* and *Look* magazines.

1963

The National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., organizes *Philippe Halsman*, the first major exhibition devoted to the photographer.

1965

Halsman takes part in an exhibition entitled *12 International Photographers*, held at the Gallery of Modern Art in New York. His portrait of Churchill is used on a United States postage stamp to commemorate the statesman, who dies the same year. His portrait of Einstein will have the same fate a year later, and his portrait of André Gide will be used on a French postage stamp in 1969.

1967

Halsman receives the Golden Plate Award of the American Academy of Achievement.

1969

Halsman produces the official portrait of President Richard Nixon.

1971

Until 1976, Halsman holds seminars on psychological portraiture at the New School for Social Research in New York.

1972

Publication of *Halsman: Sight and Insight*. The next year, an exhibition with the same name opens in Tokyo before touring the rest of Japan.

1975

Halsman receives the Life Achievement in Photography Award of the American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP) in recognition of his life's work.

1976

Halsman sells his entire work to collector George R. Reinhart. The Halsman family buys it back in 1987.

1978

Halsman takes part in the exhibition *Art about Art* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

17 April 1978

He photographs Dalí for the last time.

8 November 1978

The *Dalí & Halsman* exhibition opens at the Salvador Dalí Museum in Beachwood, Ohio.

7 June 1979

The *Halsman Retrospective* exhibition opens at the International Center of Photography (ICP) in New York. The exhibition subsequently tours the United States until 1988.

25 June 1979

Philippe Halsman dies in New York.

Credits

The exhibition *Philippe Halsman. Astonish me!* is produced by the Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne, in collaboration with the Archives Philippe Halsman, New York.

Curatorship
Anne Lacoste
Curator, Musée de l'Elysée

Lydia Dorner
Assistant Curator
Musée de l'Elysée

Sam Stourdzé
Curator

Coordinator
André Gilbert
Exhibition Curator, MNBAQ

Chief Operator
Yasmée Faucher
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Marie-Renée Bourget Harvey

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Québec 

Philippe Halsman. Astonish me!
Pierre Lassonde Pavilion, MNBAQ
From 15 June to 4 September 2017

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Page 1 - Philippe Halsman, *Marilyn Monroe*, 1959. Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne. Photo: © 2016 Archives Philippe Halsman / Magnum Photos // Philippe Halsman, *Alfred Hitchcock for the Promotion of the Film The Birds*, 1962. Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne. Photo: © 2016 Archives Philippe Halsman / Magnum Photos

Page 2 - Philippe Halsman, *The Duke and Duchess of Windsor*, 1956 © 2016 Archives Philippe Halsman / Magnum Photos // Philippe Halsman and Salvador Dalí, «*Surréalisme, is myself*,» *Dalí's Mustache*, 1954 © 2016 Archives Philippe Halsman / Magnum Photos. Exclusive rights for the images of Salvador Dalí: Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres, 2016

Page 5 - Philippe Halsman and Salvador Dalí, *Dalí Atomicus*, 1948 © 2016 Archives Philippe Halsman / Magnum Photos. Exclusive rights for the images of Salvador Dalí: Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres, 2016

Page 6 - *Cover of the LIFE Magazine with a Portrait of Marilyn Monroe by Philippe Halsman, April 7, 1952* © 2016 Archives Philippe Halsman / Magnum Photos

Page 10 - Philippe Halsman, *The Versatile Jean Cocteau*, 1949 © 2016 Archives Philippe Halsman / Magnum Photos

Page 11 - Philippe Halsman, *Albert Einstein*, 1947 © 2016 Archives Philippe Halsman / Magnum Photos

Page 12 - *Cover of the LIFE Magazine with the "Jump" Portrait of Marilyn Monroe by Philippe Halsman, November 9, 1959* © 2016 Archives Philippe Halsman / Magnum Photos

Page 13 - Yvonne Halsman, *Marilyn Monroe and Philippe Halsman*, 1954 © 2016 Archives Philippe Halsman / Magnum Photos

Page 14 - Philippe Halsman and Salvador Dalí, *Salvador Dalí Performing for The Morning Show on CBS-TV*, 1956 © 2016 Archives Philippe Halsman / Magnum Photos. Exclusive rights for the images of Salvador Dalí: Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres, 2016

Complements: the exhibition themes

“Photography has long since stopped imitating the other arts. It has come into its own form through its daily use in the press and technical advances. Its purpose is to document in its own essential way, with clarity and precision, yet in the end to be more than a record, to be a work of art precisely because of the truth and beauty both of the image and the vision.”

– Philippe Halsman

Paris in the 1930s



Philippe Halsman specialized in portraits from the beginning. He photographed a great many celebrities, particularly in the art world, and seems to have benefitted from the support or influence of André Gide, the first famous person he photographed. Halsman rapidly expanded the scope of his work, taking advantage of two rapidly growing markets: magazines and advertising. He covered a wide range of subjects (fashion, beauty, specializing in hairstyles, objects, news stories focused on entertainment) and worked for the most illustrious magazines of his day: *Journal des Modes*, *Vogue*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Voilà*, *Le Monde Illustré*, *Vu*, *Visages du Monde*, and the daily *Le Journal*.

A self-taught photographer, Halsman developed an extensive visual culture and was inspired by the different techniques and esthetics characteristic of his day such as the New Vision (*Nouvelle Vision*). His studio was where he explored his art. He played with electric lighting and tight framing to create effects. Halsman also developed a rich and varied range of images heavily borrowed from the Surrealist movement.

“I do a lot of portraits and I take them very seriously. I try to capture the very essence of my subjects truthfully and without any artifice. My aim is to produce a photograph that will go down in history as the defining image of that person, so that when people come to conjure up a picture to themselves of a great figure in the past, what they will see will be an image created by my camera and with my eye.”

– Philippe Halsman

La Pléiade Galerie

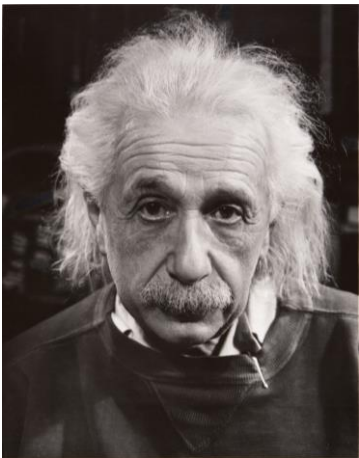
In the spring of 1931, the publisher Jacques Schiffrin opened La Pléiade gallery in Paris, exhibiting Philippe Halsman's photographs on three occasions. Located in the heart of the Latin Quarter, the gallery was one of the first to mount photographic exhibitions and rapidly became one of the most important venues for the promotion of contemporary photography.

It was probably through his friend Jean Painlevé, who had a photo exhibition there in 1933, that Halsman initially made contact with La Pléiade gallery. Halsman first had a solo show, *Portraits et Nus* in 1936, and the following year his name was linked to the New Vision (*Nouvelle Vision*) movement within the framework of two themed shows: *Portraits d'Ecrivains* and *La Parisienne de 1900... à 1937*.

“Photography is the youngest art form. All attempts to enlarge its frontiers are important and should be encouraged.”

– Philippe Halsman

Portraits



Aware of the effect that having a lens trained on them had on his subjects, Halsman preferred an intimate setting and a short session in order to put his subjects at ease. His portraits are characterized by his attention to detail and his quest for “naturalness” in his subjects' expressions. In New York, Halsman's reputation rapidly spread and he was commissioned to make numerous portraits of celebrities for magazines such as *LIFE*, the *TV Guide* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, as well as promotional photographs for book covers, films and electoral campaigns.

Even though Halsman was a staunch defender of the “psychological” approach, his repertoire was extremely varied. He was interested in technical innovations and owned an impressive range of equipment, including a stroboscope. As of the 1960s, he began to use the literal and ideographic vocabulary of advertising, and developed a wide range of effects to create portraits that were instantly readable by the viewer.

Marilyn Monroe

Philippe Halsman photographed Marilyn Monroe on a number of occasions between 1949 and 1959. In the autumn of 1949, Halsman was sent to Hollywood by *LIFE* Magazine to produce an article about eight young models who were setting out on careers as actresses. The photographer rapidly singled out Marilyn Monroe, and his opinion was confirmed when *LIFE* Magazine commissioned him to produce an article about her three years later. Halsman produced a number of iconic shots of the actress and shot her first cover picture for *LIFE* Magazine in 1952.



Marilyn Monroe was already a star when Philippe Halsman welcomed her to his studio in 1954. He made a very spontaneous portrait of her jumping in the air, but when he explained his idea of ‘jumpology’ to her, the actress was horrified at the idea of revealing her personality and refused to repeat the experiment. It was five years before she agreed to take part again. Marilyn Monroe jumped more than 200 times over three hours before producing the “perfect jump” for the photograph of the cover of *LIFE* Magazine.

This was the last time they worked together, but Halsman continued to create new images of the actress: variations of pictures he had taken in the past and more extreme transformations at Salvador Dalí’s request. This sizeable body of work charts the actress’s career and demonstrates the variety of approaches adopted by the photographer during this period.

“For me, photography can be dead serious or great fun. Trying to capture the elusive truth with a camera is often a frustrating toil. Trying to create an image that does not exist, except in one’s imagination, is often an elating game. I particularly enjoy this game when I play it with Salvador Dalí.”

– Philippe Halsman

Mises en scène

Philippe Halsman always considered photography as an extraordinary tool to give free rein to his imagination. Throughout his career, he aspired to creating “more striking and original” photographs. At the beginning of

the 1950s, the spread of a new mass medium, television, threatened photography and the press. Halsman thus adopted a creative approach, specific to photography, to defend the profession. In 1961, he published one of his lectures devoted to the subject under the title, *Halsman on the Creation of Photographic Ideas*.

As a photographer working in the world of the arts and entertainment, he benefitted from the ideal framework in which to develop this approach. His commissioned works such as his series with Jean Cocteau and his reportages of artistic performances provided him the opportunity to develop true mises en scènes. Halsman played a role in the design of the images and chose original sets and camera angles to create amazing images.

It was his personal work in particular that enabled him to pursue his constant experimentation of the medium. It was there that he was able to express his penchant for humor, like in his series of scenes with actors. Two of Halsman's projects were particularly innovative and influenced contemporary photography. In 1949, he created a new type of editorial, the 'picture book', together with the French actor Fernandel, and in the 1950s, he created the 'jumpology', combining his love of mise en scène and entertainment with his talents as a portraitist.

Jumpology



In the 1950s, Philippe Halsman developed a new approach to the “psychological portrait” with the ‘jumpology’. Halsman regarded ‘jumpology’ in a scientific light as a psychological tool. According to him, the action of jumping would make subjects uninhibited as they concentrated on their jump, allowing their “mask to fall”. In the course of his experiment, Halsman observed the huge variety of body languages and interpreted these gestures as outward manifestations of each person’s individual character, unwittingly revealed as they jumped.

Taken over a period of ten years, the series includes several hundred influential figures (politicians, industrialists, scientists, etc.), as well as artists and entertainers (actors, singers, dancers, etc.). Producing these shots was simple and easily adaptable: all he needed was his Rolleiflex camera and an electronic flash, and the only limit was - the height of the

ceiling! Whenever he was commissioned to produce a portrait, Halsman would ask the subject at the end of the session if he or she would take part in his personal project. The project was finalized in 1959 with the publication of *Philippe Halsman's Jump Book*, including more than 170 playful and unexpected portraits of celebrities.

"In my serious work, I am striving for the essence of things and for goals which are possibly unobtainable. On the other hand, everything humorous has a great attraction for me, and a childish streak leads me into all kinds of frivolous endeavors."

– Philippe Halsman

Halsman / Dalí



For almost 40 years, Philippe Halsman and Salvador Dalí each benefitted from the other's talents. Halsman was a professional photographer who specialized in portraiture and advertising, and Dalí was an artist who used photographs of himself as a key form of self-promotion. Halsman became one of the most popular photographers in the United States, and Dalí distinguished himself with the hugely successful sale of his works.

Their collaboration stemmed from an intellectual empathy between the two but was cemented by their many similarities: they were both born and brought up in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century in the same social and cultural environment, were drawn to Paris by its art and elegance, loved reading, had a deep interest in the discoveries of psychoanalysis and were extremely sensitive to the importance of symbolic detail. They both fled Europe when war broke out and left for the United States in 1940, slipped in and out of several different languages and had a schoolboy sense of humor and a biting sense of irony.

The Philippe Halsman Archives contain over 500 photographs taken during the 47 sittings with Salvador Dalí, revealing their deep understanding of the possibilities offered by the photographic image in the 20th century. The series of photographs that Halsman and Dalí created together draws on the visual culture in which they grew up and incorporates popular archetypes of American society, reflecting the growing links between both art and consumerism and fantasy and reality.

Dali's Mustache

In 1953, Philippe Halsman realized that Salvador Dalí's mustache would give him the "chance to fulfill one his most ambitious dreams yet and create an extraordinarily eccentric work". The Catalan painter, enormously fond of his own person and of his mustache in particular, which he saw as a symbol of the power of his imagination, was immediately enamored with the idea. Halsman adopted the same basic format he had used four years earlier with the French actor Fernandel to create a 'picture book' (a question asked to the artist was printed on one page, and his response appeared on the following page in the form of a captioned photograph). With his Rolleiflex, 4 × 5 camera, and an electronic flash, Halsman photographed Dalí playing with his mustache in different poses over a two-year period. The different scenes combine the theatrical nature of Salvador Dalí and Halsman's impressive inventiveness. Giving concrete expression to their ideas was a true technical challenge for the photographer. The post-production phase was particularly laborious, often requiring work on the print or negative, as well as a montage that he could then photograph anew in order to obtain a negative of the picture as a whole.

General Information

OPENING
HOURS OF THE
MUSEUM COMPLEX

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Monday to Sunday,
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
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15 June to 1st September, the
Pierre Lassonde Pavilion is open
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ADMISSION

Adults: **20 \$**
Seniors (65 and Over): **18 \$**
Ages 18 to 30: **11 \$**
Ages 13 to 17: **6 \$**
Families (2 adults and 3 children
13 to 17): **44 \$**
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13 to 17): **22 \$**
Children 12 and under: **free**
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