

Galerie Gmurzynska Presents a Luminous Group of Photographs by Constantin Brancusi

Photography, Exhibition Reviews



November 21, 2022

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The development of modern sculpture is practically unimaginable without the contributions of the grand master himself, Constantin Brancusi. The extent of his talent is not only measurable by the sculptural body of work but also by the accompanying photographs he has been producing throughout the decades.

After his death, the artist bequeathed his studio and all the accompanying artifacts and items, including 700 negatives and just over 1600 prints, to the French state. Besides those photographs in the Pompidou collection in Paris, approximately 200 Brancusi prints are held in leading collections worldwide, and no more than 200 in private collections.

The artist's works have been showcased on several occasions in the past few decades. Nevertheless, the current show at Galerie Gmurzynska in Zürich casts a new light on a group of Constantin Brancusi's original photography. The installment consists of 18 vintage silver gelatin prints showcasing some of his most iconic sculptures, still lifes, and a portrait.



Left: Constantin Brancusi – Mlle Pogany II, vue de profil, 1920. Vintage silver gelatin print, 26.2 x 19.7 cm (10.31 x 7.76 inches). Number 21 of 21 recorded prints. / **Right:** Constantin Brancusi – Golden Bird, 1919. Vintage silver gelatin print, 24.8 x 17.8 cm (9.76 x 7.01 inches)

Surveying Brancusi's Photography

Photography had an important role in the work of Constantin Brancusi since the artist used this media throughout his practice as a tool for creating and refining his sculptures. Initially, he used photography as means of recording and selling his work. By carefully adjusting framing, lighting, and coloration, Brancusi was able to showcase the radical perception of sculpture.

The artist was closely affiliated with Edward Steichen, who organized his first exhibition in New York with Alfred Stieglitz in 1914. Here is interesting to add that in 1921, Stieglitz sent Brancusi a photograph of his sculpture installed in New York. The artist felt frustrated since the picture needed to represent his work accurately. Around 1922, thanks to the help of Man Ray, Brancusi bought photography equipment and installed a darkroom; he exhibited his photographs for the first time in Romania in 1925.

Apart from his studio practice, the artist photographed his friends and lovers and has produced dozens of self-portraits and still lifes of flowers. Brancusi often gifted his lovers with his images, accompanied by inscriptions such as "Tonight during the dress rehearsal, I will be amongst these flowers celebrating your triumph."

Interestingly, from 1921 until he died in 1957, all exhibition catalogs, magazines, and monographs used Brancusi's photographs and had to be authorized by the artist.



Left: Constantin Brancusi - Self-Portrait with Polarie, 1925. Vintage silver gelatin print, 23.5 x 17.5 cm (9.25 x 6.89 inches) / **Right:** Constantin Brancusi - Mlle Pogany, vie de trois-quarts, 1920. Vintage silver gelatin print, 23.8 x 17.8 cm (9.37 x 7.01 inches)

Brancusi at Galerie Gmurzynska

This is the first exhibition showcasing Brancusi's photography in the Swiss context in almost four decades since the landmark solo shows of his photography at Kunsthaus Zürich in 1977 and Fotostiftung Schweiz in 1987.

Brancusi Photographie will be on view at Galerie Gmurzynska in Zürich until January 2023.