

**February 15th
– May 12th 2024**

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The domestic camera

Amateur photography in Catalonia
ca. 1880-1936





Hermenter Serra de Budallés. *Grupo de estudiantes de la Escuela Superior de Ingenieros Industriales de Barcelona visitando el interior de una cantera*, 1916. Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya (ANC), Fons Hermenter Serra de Budallés, Sant Cugat del Vallès

The domestic camera. Amateur photography in Catalonia (ca. 1880-1936), an exhibition organised by Fundación MAPFRE, presents a key moment in the history of Catalan photography: the emergence of a non-professional practice of the discipline in the 1880s and its evolution up to the outbreak of the Civil War in the summer of 1936.

The expression “domestic camera” refers to the amateur use of the device and to the images obtained from it; in other words, images created outside the logics of professional production. This does not mean that such photography was not the subject of trade, nor that it did not occasionally participate in other markets such as that of art.

For decades, amateur or domestic photography remained on the margins of the canonical art-historical account due to its mass, self-produced nature, in addition to which it was often considered unimportant or poorly executed.



Josep Maria Reigt [?]. *Retrato de Cosme Reigt, Josep Maria Reigt y un amigo*, ca. 1905-1910
Ajuntament de Girona, Centre de Recerca i Difusió de la Imatge (CRDI), Fons Josep Maria Reigt Martí, Girona

Nonetheless, the images taken with the home or domestic camera, far from reflecting a mere pastime or conveying an unsophisticated gaze, condensed social imaginaries, aesthetic traits and discourses of a commercial and even political nature. As such, they help us to understand different social and cultural realities at a specific moment in history.

Throughout the 20th century photography was the most common visual means of representing people and their surroundings, although mass access to the medium only dates from the late 19th century. During that period technical improvements to cameras and the invention of the new gelatin silver emulsion, which was more stable, faster and cheaper, facilitated access to this discipline. At the same time, photography abandoned the hand-crafted paradigm and entered into the dynamics of industrial production and consumption. No longer requiring a tripod, the camera became one more accessory of modern life, generating its own visual culture around the self, the family, social groups based on shared interests and the different imaginaries prevailing at this time.

In Catalonia the new interest in photography took firm hold from the 1880s, generating enormous public interest until the outbreak of the Civil War in the summer of 1936. Businesses, the press and cultural entities, as well as individuals of different social classes, genders and ages, all avidly applied themselves to it, either as mere enthusiasts or as what were known at the time as “amateurs”, whose photographic practice was more ambitious. The camera



Antoni Rosal Grelon. *Grupo de hombres alrededor de un pequeño estanque*, décadas de 1910-1920. Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya (ANC), Fons Antoni Rosal Grelon, Sant Cugat del Vallès

entered the domestic realm of thousands of people and from then on contributed to moulding ways of apprehending reality and to expressing the social and cultural aspirations of the day.

The exhibition now presented by Fundació MAPFRE offers a thematic survey of the history of amateur photography in Catalonia between 1880 and 1936. The nearly 300 exhibits (photographs, objects and documents of the period) have been assembled thanks to the collaboration of seventeen public institutions (archives, museums, libraries and research centres) and nine private collections.

KEY THEMES

Enthusiasts and amateurs: Photography taken by amateurs is the type created outside the production logics of the professional market and encompasses a wide range of users. Among them, a distinction should be made between the “enthusiast” and the “amateur”, to employ the terminology of the time. The average enthusiast tended to use a camera sporadically and seasonally, for example when on holiday, while the amateur, also known as the “serious amateur”, proceeded like a professional but without actually becoming one. He dedicated time and effort to photography, projecting a certain interest in progressing and improving and occasionally participating in activities that imply a degree of recognition, such as competitions and exhibitions.

Amateur photography and surrounding reality: Amateur photography not only reflects reality but also



Autoría desconocida. Autorretrato de una joven con cámara y trípode frente a un espejo, ca. 1929-1935. Colección Jordi Baron Rubí

participates in it and has an influence on events, particularly with regard to photographing people as it relates them to the space in which they are located. As such, it is an active type of photography that can modify the subject's attitude.

The popularity of home photography: Home photography was extremely popular (just as it is today, when almost everyone owns a mobile phone with a built-in camera) as it was practised not just by the different social classes but also crossed genders to encompass both men and women and was enjoyed by people of all ages (children, teenagers and adults).

Visual and cultural influences: Home photography evolved in Spain alongside visual culture. While at the start it revealed the influence of painting, particularly landscape painting, the mass media such as the cinema and the press exercised a growing influence on amateur photographers, whose gaze would become conditioned by them.

Dates

From February 15th
to May 12th 2024

Opening hours

Mondays: Closed
(except public holidays)
Tuesdays – Sundays
(and public holidays): 11 am-7 pm
Last entry: 6.30 pm

From April 1

Tuesdays – Sundays
(and public holidays): 11 am-8 pm
Last entry: 7.30 pm

Visitors must leave the galleries
10 minutes before closing time

Admissions

Standard ticket: 5 €
Ticket with reduction: 3 €
Free standard ticket: Tuesdays
(except public holidays)
Groups: 3 € / per person

Guided tour

(cultural mediation service)

Wednesdays & Thursdays: 4-7 pm
Fridays & Saturdays: 12-2 pm, 4-7 pm
Sundays & public holidays: 12-2 pm

From April 1

Wednesdays & Thursdays: 5-8 pm
Fridays & Saturdays: 12-2 pm, 5-8 pm
Sundays & public holidays: 12-2 pm
Information at the reception

Audio guide

English, Spanish and Catalan: 4 €

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Tell us what you think about the
exhibition: #KBrTheDomesticCamera

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Cover: Autoria desconocida. *Maria Josepa Izard Llonch*
columpiándose en la playa de Sant Feliu de Guixols, Girona,
1923. Arxiu Històric de Sabadell (AHS), Fons Maria Josepa
Izard Llonch, Sabadell

