

Edward Weston

The Matter of Forms

19.09.25 – 18.01.26





Clouds, Death Valley, 1939.

Center for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona. Edward Weston Archive

Fundación MAPFRE presents *Edward Weston. The Matter of Forms*, an exhibition devoted to over five decades of work by this American artist, one of the most influential figures in modern photography.

Weston's work, deeply rooted in the American landscape and cultural history, offers—through its extreme simplicity and originality—a unique perspective on the consolidation of photography as an art form and its prominent role in the context of modern visual culture. The exhibition is conceived as a retrospective spanning the different phases of the artist's photographic production. From his early pictorialist influences to his establishment as a central figure in the affirmation of photography's poetic and intellectual potential through the lens of straight photography. A pioneer of modern photographic style, Weston is known for his use of a large-format camera, creating richly detailed, sharply focused black-and-white images.



Floating Nude, 1939.

Center for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona. Edward Weston Archive

His mastery of technique, coupled with a deep reverence for nature and form, led to a body of work that includes iconic still lifes, nudes, landscapes, and portraits. A cofounder of Group f/64, Weston's photographs are key to understanding the emerging aesthetic and lifestyle of interwar America.

Edward Weston was born on March 24, 1886, in Highland Park, Illinois. At the age of 20, he moved to California and published his first photograph. By 1911, he had opened his own studio in Tropic and soon began exhibiting his work in various national and international photography salons, winning numerous awards. He helped found the Camera Pictorialists of Los Angeles. A few years later, he began experimenting with abstract angles and lighting variations. In 1923, Weston traveled to Mexico City with his son Chandler and photographer Tina Modotti, where he also opened a studio. In 1927, he produced an important series of nudes, and excerpts of his diaries were published in *Creative Art* magazine. Two years later, he established his photography studio in Carmel. In 1934, he photographed



Dunes, Oceano, 1936

The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens

the Oceano Dunes in California for the first time, and the following year, he took what is perhaps his most famous photograph: a nude of his second wife, Charis Wilson. In 1937, Edward Weston became the first photographer ever to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship.

In 1941, he was commissioned to illustrate Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, a project that took him on a journey across the United States until it was interrupted on December 7 by the attack on Pearl Harbor. Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1945, Weston had a major retrospective of his work at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York the following year, featuring a total of 250 photographs. His son Cole moved to Carmel to assist him and print his work. In 1948, as his illness progressed, Weston took his final photograph at Point Lobos. In the years that followed, several books of his work were published, and a retrospective exhibition opened at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris. He died on January 1, 1958, at Wildcat Hill, and his ashes were scattered at what is now Weston Beach in Point Lobos.

Key Themes

The emancipation of photography

Edward Weston was a pioneer—alongside Alfred Stieglitz and Paul Strand—in advocating photography’s emancipation from other artistic disciplines. His work is therefore essential to understanding the aesthetic and perceptual power of photography in its early days. This allows photography to express aesthetic qualities such as beauty, pain, and ugliness on the same level as painting or sculpture.



Excusado, Mexico. October 1925.

Center for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona. Edward Weston Archive

Figuration and abstraction

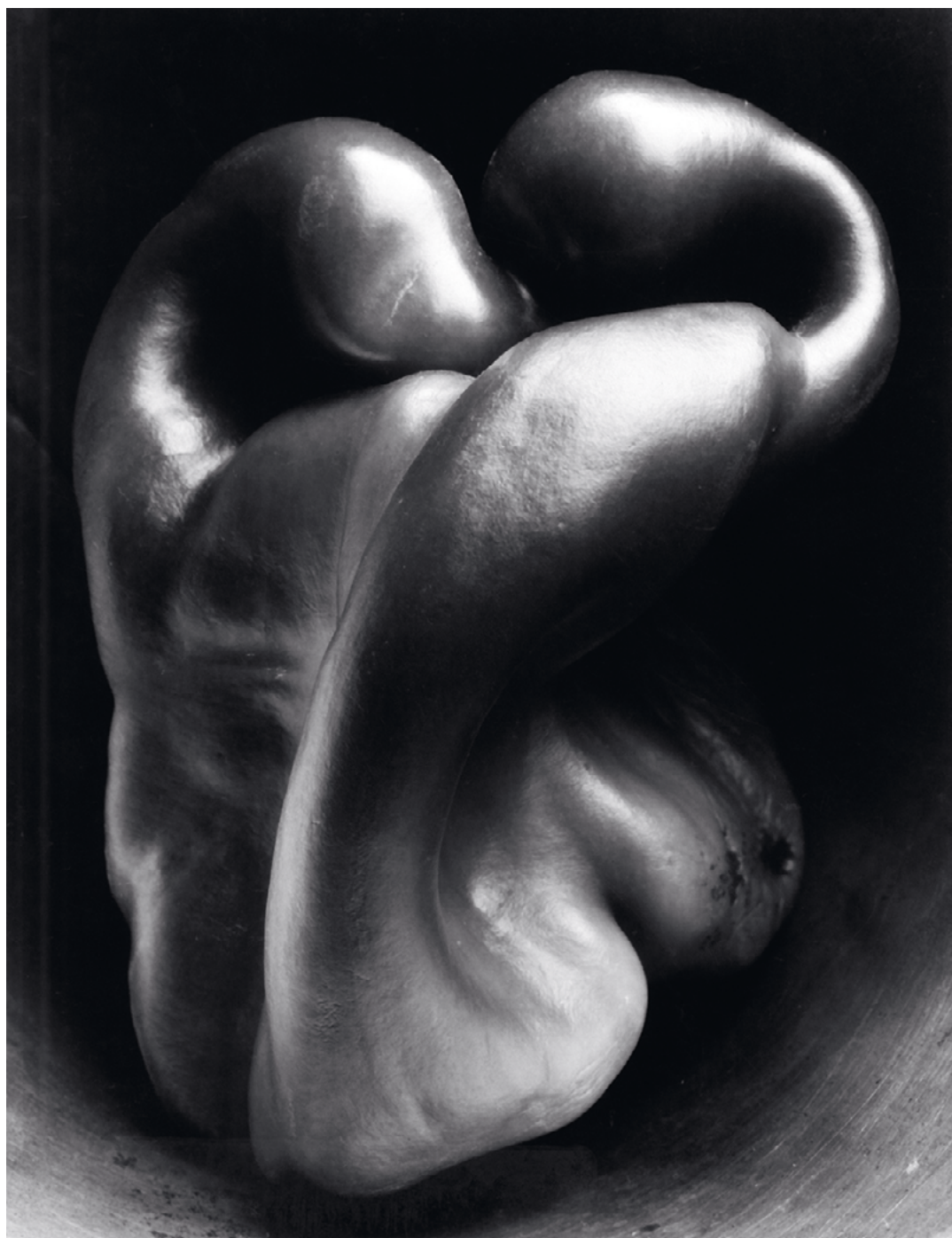
Weston's technical mastery of the photographic medium led him to a formalist approach in which composition became a central element of his practice. He stripped away anecdotal details to focus on his subject with such realism—and with such exaltation of photography's inherent two-dimensionality—that the resulting image often verged on abstraction. In doing so, the artist reveals that figuration and abstraction are not mutually exclusive, but rather perfectly compatible.



Two Shells, 1927, print about 1933
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

Pepper No. 30

This picture, one of Edward Weston's most iconic photographs, was taken in early August 1930. It wasn't the first time he had photographed a vegetable—or a pepper. The artist himself said of this image: "It is a classic, completely satisfying, —a pepper—but more than a pepper; abstract, in that it is completely outside subject matter. It has no psychological attributes, no human emotions are aroused: this new pepper takes one beyond the world we know in the conscious mind." This photograph, and Weston's own words, highlight the innovative nature of his work, which would transcend not only modern American photography but also its European counterpart.



Pepper No. 30, 1930. Courtesy by Trockmorton Fine Art

Edward Weston

The Matter of Forms

CURATOR

Sèrgio Mah

FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE

Paseo de Recoletos, 23

28004 Madrid

Tel: 915 816 100

cultura@fundacionmapfre.org

DATES

19 September 2025 to 18 January 2026

OPENING TIMES

Mondays (except public holidays):

2 pm to 8 pm

Tuesdays to Saturdays: 11 am to 8 pm

Sundays and public holidays: 11 am to 7 pm

Closures: 25 December, 1, 5 and 6 January

Special opening times: 24 and 31 December:

11 am – 3 pm

(Last admission: 30 minutes before closing time. Visitors must leave the gallery 10 minutes before closing time.)

TICKET PRICES

Standard: 5 €

Reduced: 3 €

Free: Mondays (not public holidays)

GUIDED TOURS

7 €

Times and booking: [on this website](#)

EDUCATIONAL TOURS

FOR SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

Times and booking: [on this website](#)

AUDIO GUIDE

Spanish and English (included with admission)

BOOKSHOP

LAIE

Tel: 911 703 851

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<https://exposiciones.fundacionmapfre.org/ExpoWestonFM>

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