



NICHOLAS NIXON
THE BROWN SISTERS (1975-2022)



NICHOLAS NIXON (born Detroit, Michigan, 1947) has occupied a prominent place in the history of photography of recent decades. Primarily focused on portraiture and with a clear interest in the descriptive possibilities of the camera, his work reveals a tension between the visible – the content (of a remarkable clarity and compositional skill) – and the invisible – the thoughts and concerns that emerge in his images. Nixon's principal virtue is to make us think; due to its ability to transmit emotions, his work acquires a universal value that moves away from stereotypical discourses and delves into the depths of the human soul.

Nixon's work in the form of series explores singular worlds from the standpoint of pronounced social concern: he reveals unnoticed aspects of reality which although related to his private experience can be shared by the viewer due to their everyday nature, for which reason they easily arouse in us the echo of our own memories and emotions. Slowness, the lengthy periods that lapse between images in the same series, the absence of dramatic elements and a simple but impeccable technique - now almost obsolete due to the artist's use of large-format cameras that demand the proximity and cooperation of those portrayed to show the familiar worlds on which Nicolas Nixon focuses his attention (the elderly, the sick, the intimacy of couples and the family) - define a body of work that unfolds over five decades of continuous dedication.



1976



1986



2000



2016

The Brown Sisters is without doubt both the artist's best-known series and the fullest expression of nostalgia, one of the qualities inherent to photography due to its ability to pause time. Every year Nixon photographed his wife Bebe and her three sisters using a large-format camera, outdoors and in natural light. The order of his subjects is always the same, established by chance in the first photograph: from left to right, Heather, Mimi, Bebe and Laurie, all of them almost invariably looking at the camera.

Nixon took the first photograph in the series in 1975. Bebe was twenty-five and her sisters Heather, Laurie and Mimi were twenty-three, twenty-one and fifteen respectively. A year later, on the occasion of a family reunion, he took the second photograph and after realising the successful nature of the shot, he decided to take a new one every year. Nixon would take several shots of which only one, which the sisters participated in selecting, became part of the series. The photographs have something of the feel of a family album that takes us back to past moments and emotions.

In 2007 Fundación MAPFRE acquired a set of this series - which is also present in the holdings of some of the world's leading museums and collections - initiated by Nixon in 1975 and the work that provided the starting point for the Fundación's own photography collection. In 2022 the photographer and the sisters jointly decided to bring an end to the series with what would be its forty-eighth image. This fact seems of sufficient significance to once again share with the public one of the most convincing reflections on portraiture and the passing of time in contemporary photography. The volume that accompanies this exhibition is the first publication worldwide to reproduce the complete and definitive series.

Fundación MAPFRE
Paseo de Recoletos, 23
28004 Madrid
Tel. 915 816 100
cultura@fundacionmapfre.org

Curator
Carlos Gollonet

Dates
June 5 to August 24, 2025

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
(Last access: 30 minutes before closing time.
Visitors must leave the galleries 10 minutes
before closing time)




Ticket prices
Standard: 5 €
Reduced: 3 €
Free entry: Mondays
(except public holidays)

Commented tour
Brief explanation of the main artistic aspects
of the exhibition and its most outstanding works.
Hours:
Wednesdays and Thursdays: 5 pm to 8 pm
Fridays and Saturdays: 12 am to 2 pm
and 5 pm to 8 pm
Sundays and holidays: 12 am to 2 pm
No additional cost upon entry.
Information at reception desk. Not available in August.

Audio guide
Spanish and English (Included in the entry)

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

