

**February 26th –
May 24th 2026**

Eng

Walker Evans

Now and Then





Shadow Self-portrait, Juan-les-Pins, France, 1927. Vintage gelatin silver print.
Private Collection, San Francisco.

The photographer Walker Evans (St. Louis, Missouri, 1903–New Haven, Connecticut, 1975) is an essential figure of modern photography and one of the great visual chroniclers of the United States during the twentieth-century. His images, seemingly simple yet profoundly complex, lucidly portray everyday life, urban landscapes, and the anonymous faces of a country in transformation. Rooted in the documentary style, Evans combined a direct, austere gaze with an inexhaustible curiosity for the signs of popular culture, which led him to define an era even as he questioned it.



*Penny Picture Display, Savannah, Georgia, 1936. Vintage gelatin silver print.
Private Collection, San Francisco.*

Walker Evans began his work in photography in the 1920s, after a stay in Paris; and over the course of his extensive career, which spanned more than fifty years, he produced some of the most recognized photographs in the medium. He explored a wide range of subjects, from street snapshots taken surreptitiously to meticulous and precise architectural studies, although his best-known photographs remain those he made in the American South beginning in the 1930s. Evans also embraced new artistic and technical developments, and toward the end of his life he explored the possibilities offered by the Polaroid camera. What unified his entire body of work was a deep interest in and affection for the appearance and essence of everyday life in a society increasingly obsessed with the new and the immediate.



42nd Street, 1929. Vintage gelatin silver print. Private Collection, San Francisco.

Evans remains, even today, one of the most important and influential photographers of the twentieth century. With a style that is both simple and analytical, his deeply careful way of photographing, resulting in elegant compositions that are free of rigidity, has attracted countless followers. In addition to being an extraordinary photographer, Evans was also an editor, writer, and designer, and he took great care in how his work reached the public through magazines, books, and exhibitions, personally involving himself in the process.

In 2009 Fundación Mapfre launched its photography program with a retrospective dedicated to Walker Evans. Seventeen years later, the institution is pleased to present a new exhibition curated by David Company, creative director of the International Center of Photography in New York. The show offers an extensive review of his work and of his lasting influence on generations of artists. It brings together key photographs and projects spanning his entire career – from his self-portraits of the 1920s to his Polaroid experiments in the 1970s – alongside books and publications that reflect his inexhaustible capacity for observation. Through these works, the exhibition reveals a creator who not only documented the world around him, but also invited viewers to question the role of photography.



West Virginia Living Room, 1935. Vintage gelatin silver print. Private Collection, San Francisco.

KEY THEMES

Signs of the city

Walker Evans stood out for deliberately and systematically incorporating all kinds of urban signage into his photographs – from sophisticated commercial signs to handmade notices, billboards, and shop windows – unlike other photographers of his generation, who often excluded them in pursuit of a supposed aesthetic purity. Evans believed these signs were reflections of society and its values; in this sense, his work resonates with artistic movements such as Pop Art and Postmodernism. His images of signs not only explore the relationship between word and image, but also question the role of photography as art, document, and commercial tool, underscoring the need for dialogue between photography and popular culture.

Anonymous people, anonymous places

Walker Evans showed no interest in portraying celebrities; on the contrary, he was always drawn to the anonymous individuals he encountered on the street or in the subway. He created portraits with a lightweight camera, privileging the spontaneity of isolated figures, crowds, beach scenes, or laborers at work. In this way, the simplicity of what he believed photography should be was reflected in the subjects he chose: a detached, direct, and unadorned kind of photography with carefully composed images that were nonetheless profoundly lyrical.



Chain-nose Pliers, 1955. Vintage gelatin silver print. Private Collection, San Francisco.

Tradition and the urban

One of Walker Evans's core convictions was that the true character of any society was revealed more clearly in small towns than in large cities, which tended to blur individual particularities and traits. This emphasis on the popular and the vernacular set against the standardization produced by major industries in big cities and metropolitan centers lies at the heart of American culture. Some of Evans's finest and most celebrated photographs emerged from this belief, resulting in images of small-town train stations and railcars, wooden buildings, traditional grocery stores and gas stations, as well as quintessential objects such as old pliers, rocking chairs, and fire hydrants.

Dates

From February 26th
to May 24th, 2026

Curator

David Campany

Opening hours

Until March 31st

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

From April 1st

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

Visitors must leave the galleries
10 minutes before closing time

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Admissions

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

Guided tour

(cultural mediation service)

Until March 31st

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

From April 1st

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

Included with the individual ticket.
Accessible via mobile.
More information on the website
(section “Tickets”).

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the exhibition: #KBrWalkerEvans

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Cover: *Alabama Tenant Farmer Wife*
(Allie Mae Burroughs, Hale County,
Alabama), 1936. Vintage gelatin silver
print. Private Collection, San Francisco.

All images: © Walker Evans Archive,
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