

## MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG FEATURES STELLAR PHOTOGRAPHS BY HAROLD EDGERTON FROM THE COLLECTION, OPENS SATURDAY, MAY 7

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St. Petersburg, Fla.--This exhibition spotlights some of the Museum's most compelling photographs by Harold "Doc" Edgerton (American, 1903–1990). Robin O'Dell, Manager of Photographic Collections, developed this choice selection of 25 photographs from an impressive collection of 95.

Many are now recognized as his most important. They range from rarely seen gelatin silver prints from as early as 1932 to his colorful dye transfer photographs. The high-speed stroboscopic short film about Edgerton, *Quicker'n a Wink*, which won an Oscar in 1940, will also play in the gallery.

*Harold Edgerton: What the Eye Can't See* opens Saturday, May 7, and continues through Sunday, July 31 in the second-floor Works on Paper Gallery. **Ms. O'Dell will present a Gallery Talk on Sunday, May 8, at 3 p.m., during opening weekend, and a reception will follow in the Membership Garden.** The *Tampa Bay Times* is the Media Sponsor.

Known affectionately as "Papa Flash," Edgerton used photography to extend the capabilities of the human eye and in the process created some of the most memorable photographs ever made. In 1931, he designed a high-speed stroboscope and began experimenting with strobe-flash technology. That device allowed him to overcome the restrictions of a normal camera's fastest shutter-speed and to capture phenomena previously invisible to the naked eye.

The shape of a falling drop of liquid, a balloon bursting, or a bullet shot from a gun appear to stand still. These photographs not only document the science of the exact instant, but also help us see and understand the world around us as never before.

Edgerton was a beloved professor of electrical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for most of his life. He earned his master's and doctorate at that renowned school and even passed away at 86 in the MIT Faculty Club. He could not have selected a more appropriate place than the university where he conducted his research, made his discoveries, and influenced generations of students. His legacy lives on at the Edgerton Center, "the place where mind and hand come together" and where students can "explore madcap ideas."

He was always first and foremost a scientist. He invented the electronic flash still in use today. His Rapatronic camera recorded nuclear tests for the Atomic Energy Commission in the 1950s and 1960s, and he was instrumental in advancing sonar and deep-sea photography. That led to a rewarding collaboration and friendship with famous marine explorer Jacques Cousteau, who nicknamed him "Doc."

Though he denied artistic talent and goals, his images began to attract the attention of curators and collectors, as well as the general public. His color prints are not only technically innovative, but also flat-out beautiful. Many appeared in *LIFE* magazine. Toward the end of his life, *National Geographic* paid tribute to his accomplishments in a profile titled “Doc Edgerton: the man who made time stand still.”

British curator Colin Harding has written that “Edgerton’s photographs, with their unusual subject matter, sharp detail, strong use of color, and formal composition, appeal to a very broad audience. They confirm the extraordinary power of photography and create a sense of wonder from ordinary, everyday events such as a falling drop of milk.” (His well-known *Milk Drop Coronet*, 1957, is part of the MFA exhibition. So, too, are rare gelatin silver prints of *Birth of the Milk Drop* from as early as 1933.)

Edgerton won many awards throughout his life. He received a bronze medal from the Royal Photographic Society in 1934 and the National Medal of Science in 1973. He was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1956.

His photography is now part of the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; the National Gallery of Art and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, among many others. The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg is fortunate to have so many Edgerton photographs due to the generosity of Lee Arnold and Dr. Robert L. and Chitrane Drapkin.

### **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

Please visit [www.mfastpete.org](http://www.mfastpete.org) for updates on public programs.

**Sunday, May 8, 3 p.m.: Gallery Talk by Robin O’Dell, Manager of Photographic Collections and curator of the exhibition.** Free with MFA admission. Reception, open to everyone, follows in the Membership Garden.

Ms. O’Dell returned to the MFA in 2014 after earning her MA in photographic preservation and collections management in the joint program offered by Ryerson University in Toronto and the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film in Rochester.

During her previous seven-year tenure at the MFA, Ms. O’Dell was a go-to person in the curatorial department. She was involved with more than 50 exhibitions and curated four, including *Changing Identities: The Len Prince Photographs of Jessie Mann* and *On the Road: Photographs Across America*. She now adds the Harold Edgerton show to her list of credits.

**Sunday, May 22, 3-5 p.m.: Gus Kayafas, More for the Eye to See, presented by the Friends of Photography**, \$10 for Friends of Photography members, \$20 for nonmembers

A masterful storyteller, Mr. Kayafas studied with such legendary photographers as Edgerton, Minor White, Aaron Siskind, and Harry Callahan. He was the founding chair of the photography program at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt) in Boston, one of the

country's oldest and most respected art schools. He later established Palm Press, also in Boston, which is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As one of Edgerton's assistants at MIT, he has special insight into the photographer's technique and approach.

**Saturday, June 4 and 18, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.: MFA: Make and Take Saturday**, for ages five and older, but entire families are encouraged to participate. Free with Museum admission. No registration is necessary.

Check out the stop-motion-like photographs of Harold Edgerton and try freezing and starting movement in your own flipbook.

**Wednesday, June 8, 10 a.m.: Coffee Talk with Nan Colton**, sponsored by Westminster Communities of St. Petersburg, Free with MFA admission.

Popular actor/writer Nan Colton portrays another pioneer, Julia Margaret Cameron, who advanced photography as an art form in nineteenth-century Britain. Mainly known for her portraits, Cameron was one of the first women photographers to earn recognition. Enjoy refreshments at 10 a.m., Ms. Colton's performance at 10:30, and a general docent tour at 11:15.

**Saturday, July 30, 2-4 p.m.: Flash/Splash Workshop**, presented by the Friends of Photography and the Morean Arts Center. Fee to be determined. Check [www.mfastpete.org](http://www.mfastpete.org) for updates.

All people interested in photography can bring their cameras for this hands-on session. Three stations will allow participants to experiment with high-speed images. Beth Reynolds, Director of Photography at the Morean, will be the instructor. Not a photographer? No problem! For a reduced price, you can come and observe.

## **MORE EXHIBITIONS AT THE MFA**

*Christian Marclay: Telephones and Sound Holes*  
FINAL DAYS, through Sunday, May 1

*Contemplating Character: Drawings & Oil Sketches from Jacques-Louis David to Lucian Freud*  
and  
*The Art of the Classical Guitar*  
FINAL WEEKS, through Sunday, May 29

*Measured Life: Works by Vicky Colombet, Babs Reingold, and Tip Toland*  
Through Sunday, June 26

*Vanessa Diaz: Beginning at the Cornice, Not the Foundation*  
Through Sunday, July 10

*Shana Moulton: Journeys Out of the Body*  
Opening Saturday, June 18

## **ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA**

The MFA at 255 Beach Drive N.E. has a world-class collection, with works by Monet, Gauguin, Renoir, Morisot, Cézanne, Rodin, O'Keeffe, Willem de Kooning, and many other great artists. Also displayed are ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, and Native American art. The photography collection is one of the largest and finest in the Southeast.

Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, until 8 p.m. on Thursday, and noon-5 p.m. Sunday. **Admission is only \$5 after 5 p.m. on Thursday.** Regular admission is \$17 for adults, \$15 for those 65 and older, and \$10 for students seven and older, including college students with current I.D. Children under seven and Museum members are admitted free. Groups of 10 or more adults pay only \$12 per person and children \$4 each with prior reservations. The MFA Café is open from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday. For more information, please call 727.896.2667 or visit [www.mfastpete.org](http://www.mfastpete.org).