

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

Press Release | For Immediate Release

**The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg Announces
Powerful New Exhibition Exploring Art and Conflict:
*A Terrible Beauty | Photographers Amid Chaos***



**Drawing from the Museum's Permanent Collection, the Exhibition Examines
the Thin Line Between Documentary and Artistry in Times of Crisis.**

***"All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born."
W.B. Yeats, Easter, 1916***

[For images related to the exhibition, click here.](#)

ST. PETERSBURG, FL (July 6, 2026) – The Museum of Fine Arts is pleased to announce the opening of upcoming exhibition, ***A Terrible Beauty | Photographers Amid Chaos***. Taking its title from William Butler Yeats' poem *Easter, 1916*, the exhibition explores how artists across time have confronted trauma, strife, and destruction to make sense of a chaotic world.

Spanning the history of the photographic medium, the works on display stretch from harrowing images of the American Civil War to modern collective traumas, including the devastating 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center. *A Terrible Beauty* forces viewers to confront a profound question: can a photographer ever truly record history without bias, or does the lens inherently transform tragedy into art?

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"It is always fascinating to think about what inspired an artist to pick up a camera," notes Hazel and William Hough Chief Curator Dr. Stanton Thomas. "These artists were compelled to confront horrors—some natural disasters, some human-made—and find a way to not only record what they saw, but approach painful subjects with understanding and composure."

The exhibition draws heavily upon the Museum of Fine Arts' extraordinarily rich permanent holdings of photography, alongside significant loans from the remarkable collection of long-time museum donors Drs. Robert and Chitrane Drapkin. Among the highlights are iconic historical moments frozen in time, including the stunning 1937 gelatin silver print of the *Hindenburg Disaster* by Joe Rosenthal and Steve McCurry's striking 1993 *Dust Storm, Rajasthan, India*. By negotiating the tense boundary between raw documentary purpose and deliberate artistic expression, the featured photographers capture the ultimate gravity of unsettling and complex subjects.

A Terrible Beauty | Photographers Amid Chaos will be on view from July 11, 2026.

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About the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg

As the first art museum in St. Petersburg, the Museum of Fine Arts serves as the cultural anchor of a vibrant arts city, uniting a diverse community of artists, residents, and international visitors. The Museum's global collection, spanning nearly 5,000 years, acts as a catalyst for connection and conversation. By bridging historical perspectives with contemporary discourse, the Museum broadens the artistic canon while elevating the voices and stories of historically marginalized artists. Within the Museum's holdings are exemplary works by Georgia O'Keeffe, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, Auguste Rodin, Kehinde Wiley, and Élisabeth Vigée-LeBrun. The Museum also houses one of the largest and most well-respected photography collections in the Southeast, featuring iconic visionaries such as Ansel Adams, Edward Steichen, Julia Margaret Cameron, Carrie Mae Weems, James Van Der Zee, and Aaron Siskind. Through dynamic exhibitions and inclusive programming, the Museum engages with more than 100,000 people annually, including thousands of students through a dedicated partnership with Pinellas County Schools. Committed to fearless creativity, the Museum fosters a welcoming environment where all are empowered to explore untold stories and challenge conventions.

Images:

Joe/Wide World Photo Rosenthal, American, *LZ 129 HINDENBURG DISASTER LAKEHURST, N.J.*, c. 1937, Gelatin silver print, Gift of Ludmila and Bruce Dandrew from The Ludmila Dandrew and Chitrane Drapkin Collection, 2012.28.386

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Steve McCurry, (American b. 1950), *Dust Storm, Rajasthan, India, 1993*, Archival pigment print, Gift of the Artist, 2017.5.2

International News Photo, *Non-Striker Jailed "For Own Good,"* c. 1937, Gelatin silver print, Drapkin Collection, L8.2026.9

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