



IN FOCUS

EXPRESSIONS

Since the earliest years of photography in the mid-nineteenth century, the camera has been used to capture the human face. The recording of facial expression was initially constrained by technology and portrait conventions, and the now-customary smile had to wait until film was fast enough to catch its fleeting qualities. With technological advances, photographers were able to evoke a sitter's personality through countenance and pose, while artists and scientists enlisted the camera to explore their interest in physiognomy—the study of facial features to understand a subject's state of mind. In the twentieth century, candid photography outside the controlled environment of the studio revealed the diversity of the smile as well as the deadpan look. Some photographers have shown how the camera can stereotype individuals, or encourage them to assume a persona. Drawn from the Getty Museum's collection, this exhibition presents photography's continued engagement with human expression and invites viewers to make their own associations when encountering the works on display.



Non-flash photography and video permitted.

Mary, Milwaukee, WI (detail), 2014, Alex Soth, inkjet print. The J. Paul Getty Museum, gift of Richard Lovett. © Alex Soth/Magnum Photos. Text and design © 2018 J. Paul Getty Trust



The J. Paul Getty Museum

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