MAJOR GETTY EXHIBITION EXPLORES AUGUST SANDER’S COLLECTIVE PORTRAIT OF PRE-WORLD WAR II GERMAN SOCIETY

August Sander: People of the Twentieth Century
At the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Center
May 6–September 14, 2008

LOS ANGELES—A collective portrait of the German people during the first half of the twentieth century will be on view in August Sander: People of the Twentieth Century, at the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Center, May 6–September 14, 2008. A pioneering photographer, August Sander (German, 1876–1964), worked throughout his life to create an “atlas” of his fellow citizens, arranging his portraits in groupings according to their classes and professions, as well as their association with the country or the city.

Sander’s project remained unfinished, despite his dedication to it over five decades. Organized into seven groupings (farmers, skilled tradesmen, women, classes and professions, artists, the city, and the so-called “last people” or the disabled and disenfranchised) and 45 portfolios, about 700 photographs have been identified as belonging to this “cultural work in photographic pictures.”

“Sander’s images have an appeal that is timeless and universal,” says Virginia Heckert, associate curator for the Getty Museum’s Department of Photographs. “By striving for straightforward, objective depictions, Sander hoped to tell the truth about his generation. By classifying his sitters by profession or social class rather than identifying them by name, he created portraits of types that remain relevant today, rather than individuals who are forgotten with the passing of history.”
Forty years after his death, Sander remains one of the most compelling – and enigmatic – photographers of the twentieth century. His long and prolific career spanned one of the most turbulent times in his country's history. The Great War of 1914, the Weimar Republic, the reign of National Socialism, and the horrors of World War II left an indelible imprint on Sander and his work.

Following training as a commercial photographer throughout Germany and ten years with a photographic studio in Austria, Sander set up a portrait studio in Lindenthal, a suburb of Cologne, in 1910. There, he renewed his contacts with the rural families of the neighboring Westerwald region where he had grown up, while also concentrating on a growing clientele of skilled tradespeople and professionals.

The exhibition includes 125 portraits from the Getty Museum's collection of over 1200 Sander photographs, second in size only to the August Sander Archiv in Cologne, which houses his estate. The Getty Museum’s strong holding enables a broad view of Sander's work, with both signed exhibition prints and postcards that Sander produced in his daily commercial practice. Among these are iconic photographs such as Young Farmers (1914), in which Sander focused his lens on three young farmers, creating a cinematographic quality as their heads turn to face the camera, and Tenor (1928), in which Leonardo Aramesco literally performs before Sander’s lens as seen by the exaggerated position of his hands, lively shock of hair and melodramatic gaze.

The exhibition was co-curated by Virginia Heckert, associate curator, Getty Museum’s Department of Photographs, and Judy Annear, senior curator of photography, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, where the presentation was on view this winter.

*August Sander: People of the Twentieth Century* will be shown alongside the exhibition *Bernd and Hilla Becher: Basic Forms*. The Bechers, a husband and wife team, collaborated to photograph industrial architecture in Western Europe and the United States beginning in 1959. Their approach is directly indebted to August Sander’s categorization of basic social types by profession and class and many of the Bechers early images were taken in the Siegen district, where Sander’s subjects had lived or worked half a century before.

# # #

**MEDIA CONTACT:**
Beth Brett
Getty Communications
310-440-6473
bbrett@getty.edu
The J. Paul Getty Trust is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that features the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Getty Foundation. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs serve a varied audience from two locations: the Getty Center in Los Angeles and the Getty Villa in Malibu.

Visiting the Getty Center:
The Getty Center is open Tuesday through Thursday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. It is closed Monday and major holidays. Admission to the Getty Center is always free. Parking is $8. No reservation required. Reservations are required for event seating and groups of 15 or more. For more information, call 310-440-7300 (English or Spanish); 310-440-7305 (TTY line for the deaf or hearing impaired).

Additional information is available at www.getty.edu.

Sign up for e-Getty at www.getty.edu/subscribe to receive free monthly highlights of events at the Getty Center and the Getty Villa via e-mail, or visit www.getty.edu for a complete calendar of public programs.