



Swiss Camera Museum – Vevey  
*Flash!*  
*A brief history of photography*

## Flash!

### A brief history of photography

Exhibition from 18 September 2025 to 22 February 2026

Press kit

Downloadable from the website [www.cameramuseum.ch](http://www.cameramuseum.ch)



© Raymond Meier, Pedestrians 70, from the Portfolio Twelve Photographs, 1975–1992.



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© Fabian Hugo, Retired Swiss rescue dog, 2008



## Flash!

### A brief history of photography

18 September 2025 – 22 February 2026

What does flash do to images and our perception of the world? This exhibition explores some of the major visual transformations produced by flash in a unique way, highlighting its role in the representation, perception and understanding of the world. Since the 19th century, photographers have sought to illuminate reality, both literally and figuratively. Throughout history, flash and artificial lighting have shed light on what cannot be seen, or cannot be seen clearly, and have played a major role in the visual construction of new worlds that were previously unknown. From the first experimental magnesium flashes to electronic flashes, successive technical inventions have made it possible to create new representations, opening up a different experience of the world.

Thanks to significant loans from the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Société française de photographie, among others, the exhibition presents numerous major pieces, from the first flash experiments by photography pioneers such as Félix Nadar to contemporary works by artists such as British photographer Martin Parr, as well as the iconic work of American photographer Weegee.

Whether it is used to illuminate and immortalise underground worlds for the first time – Félix Nadar's catacombs of Paris – or nocturnal worlds, particularly polar ones, or to shed light on other obscurities, particularly political and social ones, the flash goes beyond its technical use alone. Producing powerful, often theatrical light, the flash is also an essential tool for staging the world, notably for the American photographer Weegee, who created the first scandalous images of murders in New York, or for paparazzi in pursuit of scoops and movie stars. But the flash is also used to control the image, in the quest for the instantaneous – scientist Harold Edgerton managed to stop time at a millionth of a second – or in studio portraiture. Now automated on amateur cameras, the flash is, conversely, responsible for many errors – overexposure, red-eye, reflections. Finally, in contemporary photography, it allows for exaggeration and the accentuation of certain colours, playing, as Martin Parr does, with the limits of vulgarity. The exhibition is a visual exploration of these different issues surrounding the flash throughout history.

The exhibition has been designed in collaboration with Photographica magazine, whose 11th issue is entitled 'Blinding to see: flashes and revelations'.

Curators: Daniel Foliard (Paris Cité University), Eliane de Larminat (Paris Cité University), Pauline Martin (Swiss Camera Museum)

Scientific advisors: Eléonore Challine (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University), Paul-Louis Roubert (Paris 8 University)



**Course text, approx. 1,000 characters**

What does flash do to images and our perception of the world? With numerous major pieces – from Félix Nadar's early experiments with flash to the contemporary work of British photographer Martin Parr, via the iconic work of American photographer Weegee – this exhibition explores in a unique way some of the significant visual transformations produced by flash. Throughout history, flash and artificial lighting have shed light on what cannot be seen, or cannot be seen clearly, and have played a major role in the visual construction of new worlds that were previously unknown. In the catacombs of 19th-century Paris, on the scene of night-time murders in New York, or among paparazzi scrutinising movie stars, the flash plays a central role. From the first experimental magnesium flashes to the electronic flash, successive technical inventions have made it possible to create new representations, opening up a different experience of reality.



Anonymous, Grace Kelly in Rome, 1957, © Keystone / Everett Collection / Str, No. 46812135.





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**'Flash and Artificial Light': a new tour of the permanent exhibition**

To coincide with the Flash! exhibition, a new tour invites you to rediscover the permanent exhibition from the perspective of technical innovations related to flash and artificial light. In a free booklet, available at the museum reception desk, this unique tour focuses on a selection of iconic objects – magnesium powder lamps, photographic revolvers, and cameras with built-in flashes – and highlights the inventions that have transformed the way we photograph the world, both day and night. It provides a better understanding of how these devices have broadened the field of vision and reshaped photographic practices and aesthetics.

The booklet is suitable for children aged 10 and above.



Collection Société française de photographie (coll. SFP)

Théodose Sardnal, Session at the S.F.P., obtained with the author's smoke-free flash powder (magnesium powder) camera, 1888, Collection Société française de photographie (coll. SFP), Paris.



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## Agenda

Family day at the museum: 'Are you faster than the flash?'

Saturday 1 November and Sunday 2 November 2025

Come and enjoy a unique experience with the flash! See your face moving and frozen in the same photograph; you will leave with a print.

*All ages / CHF 10 per workshop / registration:*

[www.montreuxriviera.com/fr/Z30973/en-famille-aux-musees-inscription-aux-ateliers](http://www.montreuxriviera.com/fr/Z30973/en-famille-aux-musees-inscription-aux-ateliers)

**Have your portrait taken by a traditional travelling photographer!**

Saturday, 1 November 2025

10 a.m. to 12 p.m. / 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Galerie du Rivage, main entrance

During the Saint-Martin Fair, the Swiss Camera Museum offers you a unique experience. Whether you come alone or with your family, have your portrait taken with a fascinating camera: a Camera Minutera! This traditional camera is also a darkroom: it takes a film photograph and develops it on the spot. In just a few minutes, this magical box will offer you an extraordinary experience and an original souvenir of the Saint-Martin Fair

*Open to all / CHF 5 per portrait / Registration on site, subject to availability.*

## 'Flash photography and stories in photography'

Round table discussion with Daniel Foliard (Paris Cité University), Eliane de Larminat (Paris Cité University), Colette Morel (Grenoble-Alpes University) and Lauren Pankin (Paris Cité University)

Thursday, 20 November 2025 at 6:30 p.m., followed by drinks

To mark the release of issue no. 11 of *Photographica* magazine, entitled 'Blinding to see: flashes and revelations', this round table discussion will explore how flash photography has shed new light on the history of photography.

In collaboration with *Photographica* magazine

Open to all / free / no reservation required

## Workshop: 'Three lights, three different portraits!'

Sundays 28 September 2025 / 16 November 2025 / 14 December 2025 / 25 January 2026 / 8 February 2026

2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Come discover how light can transform your face. During this workshop, you will take three photographs with three different lights, from a B-movie-worthy image to a simple passport photograph to a portrait taken by a professional photographer. Three styles of light, three different photographs, but one and the same person!

*All ages / 10CHF per person or 20 CHF per family / reservation required*



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**Guided tours of the permanent and temporary exhibitions**

Sundays 5 October 2025 / 2 November 2025 /  
7 December 2025 / 4 January 2026 / 8  
February 2026 at 2pm

Come and discover the history of photography and the Flash! exhibition with explanations from a museum guide!

*Open to all / free / 1 hour / no reservation required.*

*For groups, guided tours are available from Tuesday to Friday by reservation only.*

**Photogram workshop**

Develop your own photograph in the form of a photogram, which you can take home with you as a souvenir of this workshop.

Open to everyone aged 7 and above, individually or in groups of up to 5 people.

By reservation / CHF 7 + admission

**Black and white printing workshop**

Bring your developed black and white negatives (NB 135 or 120) and learn how to make your own prints.

Open to everyone aged 10 and over, individually or in groups of up to 5 people.

Reservation required / 7 CHF + admission

**The Club**

Wednesday afternoons

This course alternates between practical workshops and assignments to be completed using photographic equipment loaned by the museum. It continues with image processing, both

film and digital, as well as discussions and advice. The Club offers authentic access to contemporary photographic creation.

Ages 10–16 / CHF 200 for 11 classes / reservation required

**Birthdays**

The museum offers two activities to choose from to celebrate birthdays: 'The Photographic Laboratory' or 'The Magic Lantern.'

Informations :  
[www.cameramuseum.ch/en/visit/](http://www.cameramuseum.ch/en/visit/)

Activities for schoolchildren

All activities are available for schoolchildren:  
[www.cameramuseum.ch/en/visit/school/](http://www.cameramuseum.ch/en/visit/school/)

**Laterna magica**

For younger children, 'Laterna magica' brings back all the magic of projections from a time when cinema did not exist, thanks to a large magic lantern that has been restored to working order.

From 1P / by reservation

**Children are the guides!**

For one hour, children discover the history of photography and its techniques and learn how to become museum guides for their own families. At the end of the tour, they receive a guide certificate that allows them to show their families and friends around the permanent exhibition – with a reduced rate for the group.

5 to 8P / by reservation



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**Photography excursion to Lavaux**

Become a photojournalist in an idyllic setting with this discovery day at the Swiss Camera Museum and in the heart of the terraced vineyards of Lavaux.

From 5P / by reservation



Collection Société française de photographie (coll. SFP)

Anonymous, [Self-portrait]. Collection One Book – One Image / Donation Hélène Mignaval / Collection French Photographic Society, Paris.





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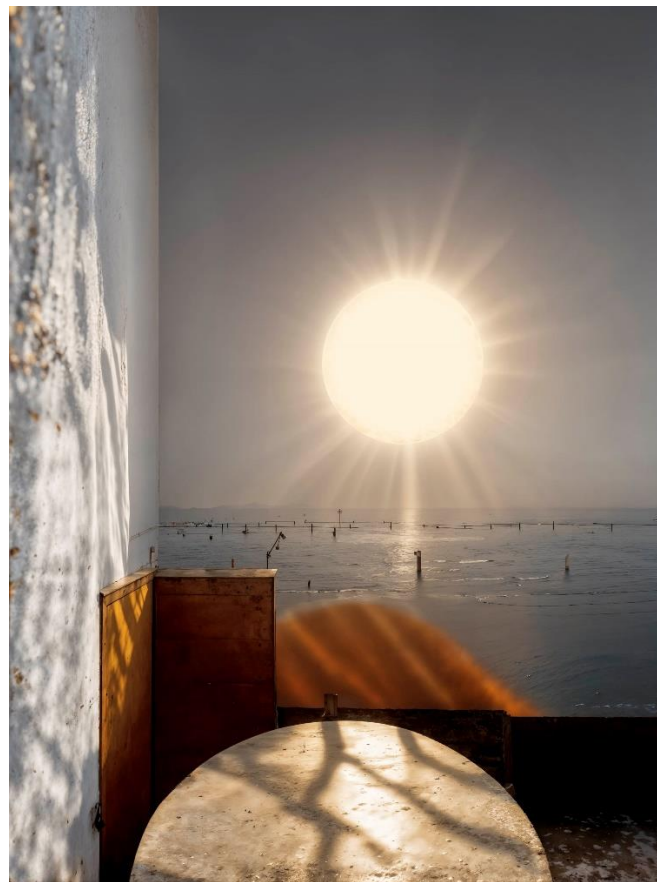
Upcoming exhibition

*Les Murmures (Whispers)*

*A machine to see, with and against AI*

*By Mathieu Bernard-Reymond*

17 March – 16 August 2026



© Mathieu Bernard-Reymond, Bright sunshine, 2025

Are artificial intelligence and photography complementary or contradictory fields of creation? In this exhibition, French-Swiss photographer and artist Mathieu Bernard-Reymond explores their relationship by developing a unique camera model especially for the Swiss Camera Museum. By integrating an AI capable of modifying shots based on data and words collected at the time of capture, it allows the artist to photograph, but also to 'whisper' images. A new link between the camera and the photographer is created, reshaping the intimate gesture of the photographic act and questioning the dehumanisation of AI. The object, its design, its technology and the images it produces invite us to think of AI not as a purely dematerialised technology, but rather as something already embedded in the concrete history of technology and photographic creation.



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## Press images

Downloadable from the website [www.cameramuseum.ch](http://www.cameramuseum.ch)

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Anonymous, Grace Kelly in Rome, 1957, © Keystone / Everett Collection / Str, No. 46812135



Milou Steiner, Six-Day Race Zurich 1956: Pfenninger-Roth, 1956, © StAAG/RBA16-703\_6



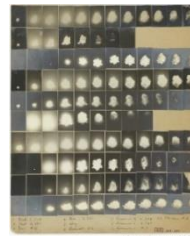
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© Raymond Meier, Pedestrians #70, from the Portfolio Twelve Photographs, 1975–1992



Switzerland, 1990 © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos



Albert Londe, Series of magnesium powder explosions, circa 1905, Collection Société française de photographie (coll. SFP), Paris. Contact [admin@sfp.asso.fr](mailto:admin@sfp.asso.fr) for rights and HD file.



Théodore Sardnal, Session at the S.F.P., obtained with the author's smoke-free flash powder (magnesium powder) camera, 1888, Collection Société française de photographie (coll. SFP), Paris.

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Anonymous, [Self-portrait]. Collection One Book - One Image / Donation Hélène Mignaval / Collection French Photographic Society (coll. SFP), Paris.

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#### **Press contact**

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#### **Practical information**

The museum is open Tuesday to Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. and on public holidays.

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[www.cameramuseum.ch](http://www.cameramuseum.ch)