Gustave Eiffel: Artist, Architect, Engineer
Gordon Watkinson

Foto+Synthesis organizes traveling exhibitions, accompanying publications and educational programming encompassing a wide array of topics, bringing together different ideas and influences through the unique perspective of the photographic image.

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Exhibition

324 meters (1,063 feet) tall, 7,300 tons of metallic framework, 18,000 metallic parts joined by 2.5 million rivets, 1,665 steps – built for the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris the Eiffel Tower instantly became a sensational public attraction. Originally meant to last 20 years the remarkable structure continues to fascinate and remains one of the most iconic buildings in the world.

Only three years prior, in October 1886, the Statue of Liberty had been officially inaugurated in New York. Conceived by French architect Bartholdi with the collaboration of Eiffel who designed its internal iron structure, the Statue – 46 meters (111 feet and 6 inches) from her heel to the top of her head, 225 tons, 154 steps – became an unbroken symbol of freedom and an exceptional destination for visitors.

Nearly a century after Eiffel’s death these two unique landmarks still dominate an extraordinary career. A groundbreaking engineer who pioneered new prefabrication techniques, Gustave Eiffel (1832–1923) was a master of metallic design. His numerous achievements in the field of architecture and engineering can still be seen in countries all over the world: from France to Romania, from Chile to Hungary, from Peru to Vietnam, from Portugal to Mozambique, from Brazil to Turkey. Train and bus stations, bridges and viaducts, churches and theaters, markets and schools, banks and monuments: Eiffel’s appeal was universal, his technical knowledge and precision as well as his management skills highly sought after.

Created by US artist Gordon Watkinson, with contributions from major experts in the field, the exhibition Gustave Eiffel: Artist, Architect, Engineer will take the visitors on a journey through the work of Eiffel, emphasizing the role and presence of his enduring legacy in 21st century life. The exhibition will feature a selection of Eiffel’s buildings and structures as they stand today; series of contemporary images by Gordon Watkinson presented alongside facsimiles of plans and drawings of the buildings will demonstrate the unique versatility and skills of a man whose work has had a major impact on the way his contemporaries as well as later generations live, work, and move around – not to mention travel to two of the most visited cities in the world.
Gordon Watkinson was born in 1964 in Charlottesville, Virginia (USA). Watkinson borrowed a camera for a photography class he took at the age of 24 while attending Virginia Commonwealth University (USA). Although he had never previously thought of photography in a serious way, after completing the course his professor saw enough in his work that he encouraged Watkinson to reconsider his career choice and arranged for him to begin working as a photographic assistant. Watkinson’s subsequent work as a commercial photographer spanned a broad range of clients from the fields of advertising, architecture, design, and fashion. In conjunction with his photographic work he has directed commercials, made industrial videos, and worked directly with major corporations as well as specialized brands, helping them to develop visual strategies for targeted markets.

Over the years he developed a strong sensitivity for both forms and materials, which has shaped his visual language and strengthened his fascination for holistic minimalist design.

During a trip to the Bauhaus School in Dessau/Germany in the late 1990s Watkinson was introduced to the role of design as a solution to social issues. This became the catalyst for an intense and ongoing interaction with architecture, design, and urbanism, leading to a series of projects that visually and conceptually explore major architectural shifts and their relevance in today’s society.

Watkinson’s work has been exhibited and published internationally. In addition to his exhibitions Watkinson regularly lectures and teaches workshops in major museums and educational institutions in the USA and Europe (most notably at the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo/Norway, and at the Bauhaus-University in Weimar/Germany). His work is in the permanent collection of the German Architecture Museum, Frankfurt/Germany and in various private collections.
Contributors

Edward Berenson
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Professor of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University, New York

Richard Seth Hayden
Architect, Partner of Swanke Hayden Connell Architects, New York

Bertrand Lemoine
Architect, engineer, director of research at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris

Bernard Marrey
Author, founder and director of the Éditions du Linteau, Paris

Caroline Mathieu
Chief Curator and Curator of the Architecture Department at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Anne Vermès
Founder and director of Traits d'Unions, Nangis

Preliminary Specifications

Original photographs by Gordon Watkinson (inkjets prints mounted on aluminum):
   A total of approx. 80 – 100 photographs
   Three different sizes: 26” x 34” / 66.04 x 86.36 cm
   34” x 46” / 86.36 x 116.84 cm
   42” x 58” / 106.68 x 147.32 cm

Facsimiles of plans and drawings: approx. 15 to 20
Space Requirements: 4000 – 6000 square feet / 400 – 600 square meter
Security: Limited
Participation Fee: Upon Request
Educational Program

Foto+Synthesis offers the following educational opportunities with artist Gordon Watkinson:

**Telling a Story: Photography & Architecture**
*2 day-workshop for middle and high school students as well as college and graduate students*
Participants will learn how to use a series of photographs to illustrate a personal vision while developing an awareness of the local built environment.

**Anatomy of a Photo Project**
*1 day-seminar for university photography & art students, or/and general audience*
Participants will learn how to develop a photographic project, from conception through planning for its realization in book or/and exhibition form.

**Guided tours of the exhibition with Gordon Watkinson**
*Guided tours of the exhibition with artist Gordon Watkinson for targeted audiences (general, children, high school students, art/photography/architecture/design students, architects, etc.)*

**Schedule**
Available from Fall 2016 in Europe
Available from Fall 2017 in North America

**Publication**
Alongside the exhibition Foto+Synthesis will produce a companion publication for the museums and for the trade.

*Specifications to be announced.*
The Press about Gordon Watkinson’s previous project “Bauhaus twenty-21: An Ongoing Legacy”

“The most original exhibition and publication on the topic of the Bauhaus came 2009 from New York photographer Gordon Watkinson: […] a project at the intersection between conceptual art and architecture theory, that one can only recommend.”

_Hans-Michael Koetzle, PHOTO International (Germany)_

“It is not raw functionalism that inspire the photographs of Gordon Watkinson. Using light and shadow, the photographer represents the beauty of the geometrical forms, thus underlining the abstract roots of the aesthetic we know from the work of both Kandinsky and Mondrian.”

_Maja Mozga-Gorecka, Rzeczpospolita (Poland)_

“Watkinson succeeds not only in unveiling traces of the Bauhaus in contemporary architecture; his photographs bring buildings to life as real tangible experiences.”

_Sarah Elsing, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (Germany)_

“In recent months a number of exhibitions have shown that the Bauhaus was not a doctrine but a cradle for different ideas and concepts. Just how vibrant and fundamental these concepts still are for contemporary architectural projects can be seen in a magnificent solo exhibition by the New York and Paris based photographer Gordon Watkinson. […] Watkinson has skillfully chosen aesthetically timeless motifs that portray the living environments of the past as a model for a way of life today.”

_Sandra Hofmeister, Baumeister (Germany)_

“A true revelation.”

_Sylvie Beal, Nice Matin (France)_

“For the American photographer Gordon Watkinson, the architecture of the Bauhaus masters Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Hannes Meyer, Georg Muche and Richard Paulick are works of art, which he has portrayed with discerning reverence. […] In the DAM in Frankfurt, this photographic dialogue is played out in a landscape of room-high planes that evoke the modernist ideal of flowing space. The exhibition illustrates just how much the appearance and inventiveness of architecture is linked to developments in society.”

_Rudolf Schmitz, Radio Bayern 2 (Germany)_
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