

Robert Lehman Art Center Permanent Collection



In Focus:
Manuel Álvarez Bravo and Walker Evans

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The Robert Lehman Art Center proudly presents a historic reassembly of *Documentary and Anti-Graphic Photographs* by Walker Evans and Manuel Álvarez Bravo—a collection of our permanent collection not shared in over 15 years. Originally brought together in 1935 by visionary collector Julien Levy, these two photographers would go on to shape the course of modern art and documentary photography.

This exhibition features original period prints from both artists, capturing striking scenes from Mexico and the United States. Through both iconic and lesser-known images, Álvarez Bravo and Evans explore truth, form, and human presence—laying the groundwork for a new visual language of the 20th century. Revisiting this pivotal moment, the Robert Lehman Art Center invites viewers to reflect on how these images continue to shape our understanding of the world—and how history, through them, echoes still.

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In the early 21st century, the work of photographers like Manuel Álvarez Bravo and Walker Evans feels more vital than ever. Often described as *Anti-graphic photographers*, they challenged traditional ideas of what makes a photograph “good”—breaking away from rules around classic composition, darkroom perfection, and even the industry’s own advice. Their images embraced imperfection and honesty, offering something far deeper than technical skill: truth.

In today’s world—where censorship, cancel culture, and the pressure to conform often silence bold voices—their work is a powerful reminder of why artist vision matters. These images hold space for nuance, for questioning, for discomfort. They don’t aim to please; they aim to reveal.

Now is the time to revisit and share this work. Not just for what it shows us about the past, but for what it demands of us today: to stay open, to keep looking closely, and to protect the creative freedom that lets real stories rise.

Curated by Director of the Robert Lehman Art Center Director, Babs Wheelden April 2025