

Exhibition: *Vera Lutter: Museum in the Camera*

On View: April 1–September 12, 2021

Location: Resnick Pavilion



Image captions on page 3

(Los Angeles—February 13, 2020) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Vera Lutter: Museum in the Camera*, featuring 44 photographs made by New York-based artist Vera Lutter while in residence at LACMA from February 2017 to January 2019. Using her camera obscura technique, Lutter created a new body of work that examines LACMA’s architecture, galleries, and collection holdings.

“We are pleased to showcase Lutter’s unique works made over the course of her multi-year residency at the museum, most of which are being exhibited publicly for the first time,” said LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director Michael Govan. “Vera’s striking photographs offer longtime LACMA visitors an opportunity to see the museum in images that are simultaneously familiar yet strange.”

“Often, when an artist makes technically complex work, the final artwork gives little indication of the enormous degree of preparation required by the artist’s process,” said exhibition curator Jennifer King, associate curator of contemporary projects at LACMA. “This is certainly the case with Lutter, whose analog practice of using a camera obscura requires considerable planning, as well as time and patience for exposures that can take anywhere from hours to months.”

The camera obscura is one of the oldest optical technologies still in use. Before the invention of photography, it was known that if light traveled through a tiny hole into a darkened room, light rays reflected off objects present outside would reform as an image, upside down and reversed on the wall opposite the pinhole opening. To create her photographs, Lutter constructs her own camera obscura devices by building enormous cameras out of plywood, or by adapting rooms or portable structures. She hangs photo paper inside each camera, allowing the light that passes through the

pinhole to inscribe itself onto the light-sensitive paper surface. Because Lutter's photographs are made without the use of a film negative, these direct exposures yield images in which positive and negative tones are reversed. Lutter began using a camera obscura in the early-1990s after moving to New York City. Living at the time in an apartment in midtown Manhattan, she transformed one room into a room-sized camera obscura to document the city outside her window. Since then, Lutter has adopted the camera obscura as her primary working method.

About the Exhibition

Vera Lutter: Museum in the Camera presents 44 works from the artist's two-year residency (February 2017–January 2019) at LACMA, with photographs organized in three categories: the museum's campus, its interior galleries, and select individual artworks from the collection. Using a custom-built mobile camera, she captured exterior views of LACMA's buildings and grounds. In addition, working with LACMA curators, Lutter photographed the interiors of two galleries, including a view of the museum's European painting and sculpture gallery that follows in the tradition of 17th- and 18th-century "picture gallery" paintings. Lutter also used her camera obscura method to photograph artworks in LACMA's permanent collection, including Georges de La Tour's *Magdalen with the Smoking Flame* (1635–37) and Jackson Pollock's *No. 15* (1950). Although Lutter has previously photographed classical and modern sculptures, this was her first time using her camera obscura to capture two-dimensional works of art.

About Vera Lutter

Born in Germany in 1960, Lutter was educated at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich, Germany, and received an MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York. In 2015–16 her work was the subject of a mid-career retrospective, *Inverted Worlds*, organized by The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (which traveled to New Orleans Museum of Art). Other solo exhibitions of her work have been mounted by Carré d'Art - Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes, France; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; Kunsthaus Graz, Austria; Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland; and Dia: Beacon in Beacon, New York. Her work is included in the collections of numerous museums including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Dia Art Foundation, New York; The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; The Art Institute of Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; and the Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Exhibition Catalogue

Vera Lutter: Museum in the Camera

Edited by Jennifer King, with artist interview by Michael Govan and essays by Noam M. Elcott and Jennifer King.

Hardcover, 136 pages, 10.1 x 11.2 x 0.7 in., 18 color illustrations, 58 b/w illustrations

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Vera Lutter's residency at LACMA was supported by Sotheby's.

About LACMA

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of more than 142,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. lacma.org

Image captions: (Left): Vera Lutter, *Rodin Garden, I: February 22, 2017*, 2017, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of Sharyn and Bruce Charnas, © Vera Lutter, photo courtesy of the artist; (Right): Vera Lutter, *European Old Masters: December 7, 2018–January 9, 2019*, 2018–19, courtesy of the artist and Gagosian Gallery, © Vera Lutter, photo courtesy of the artist

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