

CHROMOTHERAPIA

The Feel-Good Color Photography

Exhibition from February 28 to June 9, 2025 at Villa Medici

Artists: Miles Aldridge, Erwin Blumenfeld, Guy Bourdin, Juno Calypso, Walter Chandoha, Harold Edgerton, Hassan Hajjaj, Hiro, Ouka Leele, Yevonde Middleton, Arnold Odermatt, Ruth Ossai, Martin Parr, Pierre et Gilles, Alex Prager, Adrienne Raquel, Sandy Skoglund, Toiletpaper, William Wegman.

Curators: Maurizio Cattelan and Sam Stourdzé



Walter Chandoha, New Jersey, 1962 © Walter Chandoha Archive

VILLA MEDICI

Lemon yellow, electric blue, bright red, and sunny orange: color as therapy. That's the vitamin-rich program of the new exhibition at the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici, **CHROMOTHERAPIA: The Feel-Good Color Photography**.

The show, presented from February 28 to June 9, 2025 and curated by **Maurizio Cattelan** and **Sam Stourdzé**, invites us to explore the history of color photography over the whole course of the twentieth century, through the zestful gaze of 20 artists. The tour, in seven chapters, leads us into vibrant, saturated worlds where colour strikes the retina and engages the mind.

Often disparaged and rarely taken seriously, color photography has nevertheless allowed photographers to let their hair down, take out their palettes, and repaint the world. Many have freed themselves from the documentary function of the photographic medium to explore the common roots of the image and the imaginary, flirting with pop art, surrealism, bling, kitsch, and the baroque.

The conquest of color in photography closely followed the invention of the medium, with the first scientific experiments taking place in the mid-19th century. In 1907, the first industrial color photographic emerged with the autochrome, created by the Lumière brothers. This ushered in a century of chromatic experimentation: from ordinary scenes to philosophical and political reflections, color transcended the status of a mere tool and became a central narrative element.



Martin Parr, *Common Sense* © Magnum Photos

All these innovations in everyday practice reveal a surreal, hyperreal image that reinvents genres — from still life to the portrait — providing a joyful, colorful image of the world. Among the artists in the exhibition, **William Wegman** (Holyoke, MA, 1943) tenderly immortalizes his dogs, transforming his four-legged companions into artistic icons, **Juno Calypso** (London, 1989) subverts the visual conventions of film and advertising to question injunctions on femininity,

while police photographer **Arnold Odermatt** (Oberdorf, 1925–Stans, CH, 2021) documents road accidents in meticulous compositions where poetry replaces drama. **Walter Chandoha** (1920, Bayonne – 2019, Annandale, USA), nicknamed "The Cat Photographer," captures a human-like quality in the cats he photographs against saturated backgrounds, turning these pets into photographic icons. **Ouka Leele** (1957–2022, Madrid), for her part, uses vibrant tones to capture the liberation of bodies in a context of the cultural and societal revolution of the Movida, and **Martin Parr** (Epsom, UK, 1952), a great observer of our contemporary paradoxes, points his lens at baskets of fries, ironically suggesting the indigestion of the modern world. In the 2010s, *Toiletpaper*, the magazine co-founded by **Maurizio Cattelan** (Padua, 1960) and **Pierpaolo Ferrari** (Milan, 1971), both heir and precursor, a worthy and utterly transgressive descendant of these artists, interacts with and parasitizes this flamboyant, colorful little story.

Whether magnifying the details of an everyday scene, redefining codes of beauty in magazines, or capturing committed subjects, color photography offers an intensely chromatic vision of the

world. This diversity of gazes and practices bears witness to a common thread: the desire to make us see things differently, by infusing images with the life and emotion that only color can convey.



Maurizio Cattelan & Pierpaolo Ferrari, TOILETPAPER. Courtesy of TOILETPAPER

The curators

Maurizio Cattelan is one of the foremost Italian artists on the contemporary art scene. For more than thirty years, his works have been highlighting the paradoxes of society and putting forward an incisive reflection on political and cultural scenarios. Using iconic images and caustic visual language, his creations arouse lively public debate, encouraging the spirit of collective participation.

Sam Stourdzé specializes in contemporary images and the relationship between art, photography, and film. He has curated numerous exhibitions and is the author of several seminal books. Since 2020 he has been the Director of the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici, of which he is a former fellow. Previously, he directed the Rencontres d'Arles and the Musée de l'Élysée in Lausanne, and was editor-in-chief of the photography magazine *ELSE*.

The book

The exhibition is accompanied by a photographic book published by Damiani Books and Villa Medici.

Chromotherapia

The Feel-Good Color Photography

Edited by Maurizio Cattelan and Sam Stourdzé

€55

Available in UK bookstores in March at £50; US bookstores in May at \$60

208 pages, 24 x 28 cm

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Cover of the book. Image: Walter Chandoha, New Jersey, 1962 © Walter Chandoha Archive

The exhibition in 7 chapters

EARLY BIRDS

Erwin Blumenfeld, Harold Edgerton, Yevonde Middleton and Toiletpaper

RAINING CATS AND DOGS

Walter Chandoha, William Wegman and Toiletpaper

GLOSSY

Guy Bourdin, Hiro and Toiletpaper

FEMME FATALE

Raquel Adrienne, Miles Aldridge, Juno Calypso, Alex Prager and Toiletpaper

STRANGER THINGS

Arnold Odermatt, Sandy Skoglund

FOODORAMA

Martin Parr and Toiletpaper

MAKE A FACE

Hassan Hajjaj, Ouka Leele, Pierre et Gilles, Ruth Ossai and Toiletpaper



Juno Calypso, *Chicken Dogs* (2015), Archival Pigment. © Courtesy the artist and TJ Boulting



William Wegman, *Ski patrol*, 2017, Courtesy Galerie George-Philippe et Nathalie Vallois

The French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici



Founded in 1666 by King Louis XIV, it is a French institution that has been housed since 1803 at Villa Medici, a 16th-century building surrounded by a seven-hectare park on Mount Pincio in the heart of Rome.

A national public institution under the authority of the French Ministry of Culture, it fulfills three complementary missions: to welcome artists, creators, researchers of the highest level in residence for long stays of one year or less; to set up a cultural and artistic program that integrates all fields of the arts and creation aimed at a broad public; to conserve, restore, study, and make its built and landscape heritage, as well as its collections, known to the public.

The French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici is directed by Sam Stourdzé.

The French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici is an establishment of the French Ministry of Culture.



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