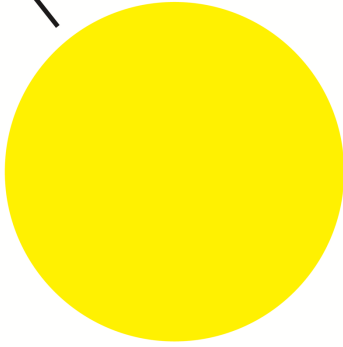


Utrecht, 29 January 2024



‘IN FOCUS: A CLOSER LOOK AT PHOTOREALISM’ OPENS 10 FEBRUARY IN CENTRAAL MUSEUM UTRECHT

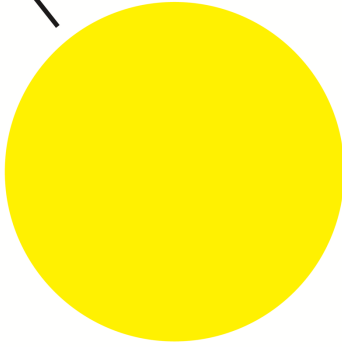
The American Photorealist canon supplemented with works by lesser-known, socially critical artists from the 1960s and 1970s and artists working in the Photorealist style today

In Focus: A Closer Look at Photorealism, on view at the Centraal Museum from 10 February to 9 June 2024, zooms in on the museum’s extensive collection of American Photorealism. The hyperrealistic works from the 1960s and 1970s are being shown together in the museum for the first time in thirty-five years. *In Focus* also features contemporary Photorealist works, several of which have been created especially for the exhibition.



Don Eddy, *Blue Caddy*, 1971

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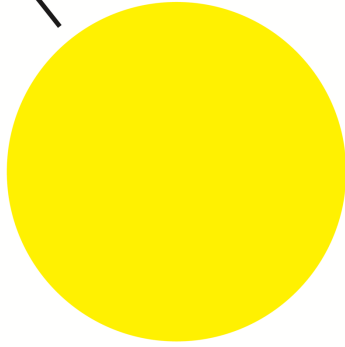
The museum's artistic director, Bart Rutten: 'The Centraal Museum has the largest collection of American Photorealism in a single location in Europe, with works by iconic artists such as Don Eddy, Malcolm Morley and Chuck Close. We are showing a large selection of these works together in the museum for the first time since 1988, supplemented with special international loans. *In Focus* promises to be a visually overwhelming exhibition, not least because of the enormous size of many of the works on display.'

Esmee Postma, curator of *In Focus*: 'The core of the exhibition is the Centraal Museum's unique collection of American Photorealism, but we are taking a critical look at the canon and expanding it with hyperrealistic works by women and artists of colour. The much sought-after artists Allison Katz and Esiri Erheriene-Essi have created new works specially for the exhibition that reflect on the position of Photorealism today.'

American Photorealism

Photorealism, also known as Hyperrealism, emerged in the United States in the late 1960s. Photorealist artists depicted everyday scenes in minute detail, often working on extremely large canvases. As source material for their enormous paintings, they used photographs of typically American streetscapes: cars, shop windows and neon signs. With this style of painting, the artists rebelled against abstract art and posed questions about the growing influence of visual culture on society.

The first two rooms in the exhibition focus on American Photorealism from the early days of the movement, featuring more than fifty works – many of them enormous – by pioneers such as Richard Estes, Howard Kanovitz and John Salt. More than thirty of the paintings come from the Centraal Museum's own collection. One highlight is the more than two-metre-high work *Ship's Dinner Party* (1966) by Malcolm Morley. The painting emphasizes in a number of ways that it was based on a photograph: the glass of champagne in the foreground is out of focus because the focus is on the background and the canvas has a photographic frame, like a Polaroid.



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Other iconic works from the museum's collection, such as *Blue Caddy* (1971) by Don Eddy and *Torso (Marsha)* (1972) by John Kacere, are supplemented with loans from other museums. *Wrecking Yard* (1971) by the British artist John Salt and one of many loans from Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, depicts a car junkyard, delivering a critique of American car worship as capitalist excess. *Secret Spaces* (1972) by Joan Semmel, on loan from Tate, is a hyperrealistic self-portrait from a clearly female perspective, providing a counterbalance to the male gaze evident in the works of John Kacere and other male Photorealists.

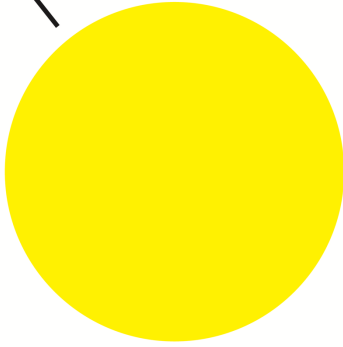
Contemporary Photorealism

In Focus takes a critical look at our own collection of Photorealism and questions both the makers and their imagery. It expands the canon of mostly white men with Photorealist works by women artists such as Vija Celmins, Audrey Flack and Marilyn Minter. The second part of the exhibition explores the legacy of Photorealism in the work of contemporary artists.

The current generation of Photorealists – most of whom do not use that term to describe themselves – reflect on the works from the early period. Like Don Eddy and John Salt, Issy Wood has painted the interior of a blue car but has added 'happy onions' in her work *Convertible with Happy Onions* (2023), while *Main Lounge Drinks on the Queen Mary (Cunard Lines)* (2023), which Esiri Erheriene-Essi has made specially for the exhibition, responds to Malcolm Morley's *Ship's Dinner Party*. But the passengers on Erheriene-Essi's cruise ship are Black, a social group that was rarely depicted in Photorealist works of the 1960s and 1970s. The exhibition also features new works by University of the Arts Utrecht alumni Bobbi Essers and Jhonie van Boeijen.

In the exhibition's final space, the Bangladeshi artists' collective, the Britto Arts Trust shows that consumption is a political choice. Their large-scale installation *Rasad* is a life-size recreation of a market stall in Bangladesh filled with invasive Western products. This work demonstrates that contemporary Hyperrealism encourages viewers to take a closer look and to think critically.

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Artists

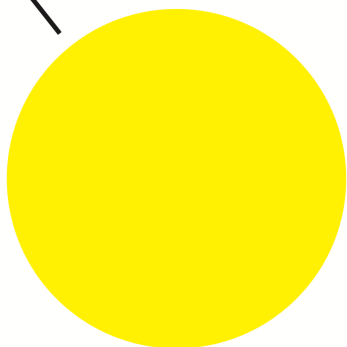
In Focus features works by John De Andrea, Richard Artschwager, Robert Bechtle, Frank Benson, Thomas Blackwell, Jhonie van Boeijen, Britto Arts Trust, Vija Celmins, Chuck Close, Susan Collis, Robert Cottingham, Don Eddy, Esiri Erheriene-Essi, Bobbi Essers, Richard Estes, Audrey Flack, Ryan Gander, Franz Gertsch, Louise Giovanelli, Duane Hanson, Barkley L. Hendricks, Lieven Hendriks, Jean-Olivier Hucleux, John Kacere, Howard Kanovitz, Allison Katz, Edward Kienholz, Peter Klasen, Ron Kleemann, László Lakner, Lucy McKenzie, Richard McLean, Marilyn Minter, Jacques Monory, Malcolm Morley, Sylvia Plimack Mangold, Kaz Oshiro, Gerhard Richter, John Salt, Fernando Sánchez Castillo, Ben Schonzeit, Joan Semmel, Idelle Weber, Kehinde Wiley, Issy Wood and Alida Ymele.

Annex

The Annex, the last room of *In Focus*, presents a contemporary work that offers a surprising perspective on the themes explored in the main exhibition. *Backwards Growing Tree* (2023) is the first museum presentation of a new work by David Claerbout, the highly acclaimed Belgian artist known for his time-based multimedia installations. *Backwards Growing Tree* is a digital representation of a tree that Claerbout observed for a period of five years. Shown in reverse, the tree grows backwards and eventually disappears back into the earth. Claerbout defies the laws of nature, using digital technologies to reflect on the meaning of time and the human experience of it.

Publication

In Focus: A Closer Look at Photorealism is accompanied by a publication in Dutch and English with two essays, an interview, a reprint of an important essay by the feminist art historian Linda Nochlin and three statements by contemporary artists. The 128-page book is published by Wbooks and can be purchased from the museum shop and through distribution channels.



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Activities

During the exhibition, visitors can take part in creative workshops with artist Jhonie van Boeijen, engage in conversation with a 'living book' during the Living Library sessions and attend a series of talks organised in partnership with FOTODOK.