

# Lee Miller

10 avril - 2 août 2026

MUSÉE  
D'ART MODERNE  
DE PARIS

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Lee Miller. Modèle avec compagne. Studio Vogue, Londres, 1943. © Lee Miller Archives, England 2025. All rights reserved.



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## Lee Miller

April 10 - August 2, 2026



From April 10 to August 2, 2026, the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris is featuring the largest retrospective devoted to Lee Miller in France in twenty years.

Initiated by the Tate Britain and in collaboration with the Art Institute of Chicago, the exhibition brings together roughly 250 vintage and modern prints, some of which have never been exhibited, offering a fresh perspective on her oeuvre.

A key figure of the international avant-garde, Lee Miller (1907, Poughkeepsie, United States - 1977, Chiddingfold, United Kingdom) was by turns a fashion model, surrealist artist, portraitist, fashion photographer, and war correspondent accredited by the U.S. army. Long relegated to the role of muse, she is now recognized as one of the major twentieth-century photographers.

The exhibition follows her entire career, from her beginnings in New York to the war years in Europe, including her stint in Egypt and her life in London. It showcases the breadth of a body of work in which formal experimentation, visual boldness, and political engagement coexist.

Eighteen years after the last French retrospective at the Jeu de Paume, the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris proposes an exhibition in six sections, combining both chronological and thematic approaches.

## PRESS RELEASE

### Director

Fabrice Hergott

### Curators

Hilary Floe, senior curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at Tate Britain, assisted by Saskia Flower

Fanny Schulmann, curator at Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, in charge of photography collection, assisted by Adélaïde Lacotte and Paul-Emile Pacheco

### Follow the MAM



#expoLeeMiller

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Lee Miller  
*Model with Lightbulb*  
Vogue studio, London  
c1943  
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### Practical information

Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris  
11 Avenue du Président Wilson  
75116 Paris  
Tél. 01 53 67 40 00  
www.mam.paris.fr

Open Tuesday through Sunday 10am to 6pm

Late hours on Thursday until 9:30 p.m.

### Cultural activities Information and bookings

Tel. 01 53 67 40 80

### Ticketing

Regular admission : €17  
Reduced admission : €15  
Combined ticket including the *Brion Gysin* exhibition: €20 / €18

### Head of Press Relations

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## The exhibition

The exhibition opens with a group of portraits of Lee Miller taken by some of the greatest photographers and filmmakers of the 1920s and 1930s. Lee Miller emerged as a prominent figure in late-1920s New York, first through her work as a fashion model. She became one of the most sought-after models for magazines, embodying the archetypal modern, emancipated and active woman. During her stay in Paris, her connections with the surrealists led her to play one of the leading roles in Jean Cocteau's first film, *The Blood of a Poet* (1930-1932).

The exhibition continues by examining the significance of her Parisian stay from 1929 to 1932. That period was marked by her encounter with Man Ray, with whom she became both apprentice and companion. Their intense collaboration explored the erotic power of the photographic medium and resulted in their joint discovery of solarization. What Lee Miller called "solarization," also known as the Sabatier effect, is a technique in which a print or a negative is briefly re-exposed to light during processing. This produces a partial inversion of tones in the photograph, creating a dreamlike halo effect. Although the phenomenon was first observed in the 1840s, Man Ray and Lee Miller are often regarded as the first artists to use the technique creatively.

Lee Miller opened her own studio and worked as a photographer for *Vogue*, thereby asserting her desire for artistic independence. Her photographs, distinctive in their taste for oblique angles and unexpected juxtapositions, were exhibited in Parisian galleries alongside the major photographers of the time (Germaine Krull, Brassai, and others).

This eventful period ended with her departure in 1932 for New York, where she opened a new studio. Her first solo exhibition was organized by the Julien Levy Gallery. There would not be any others during her lifetime. Her activity as a portraitist, the subject of one section, flourished and would continue throughout her long life, reflecting her numerous ties to artistic and literary circles.

In 1934, Lee Miller married the Egyptian businessman Aziz Eloui Bey and moved with him to Cairo. The photographs from this period are striking for the strength of the motifs, textures, and framing that structure the images. Far from exploring exotic themes, Miller focused instead on contrasting materials and forms, and on the perceptual shifts created by unusual camera angles.

In 1937, Miller's encounter with the surrealist painter and poet Roland Penrose gradually distanced her from Egypt. She began spending more time in Europe in the company of her surrealist friends. In 1939, when the war broke out, she chose to stay in London and became increasingly involved in the British edition of *Vogue* as a fashion photographer. This section shows how she incorporated the ruins and bombings in London into her images. She also contributed to the publication *Grim Glory: Pictures of Britain Under Fire* in May 1941, which documented daily life during the Blitz, blending patriotic celebration with dark humor.

In the winter of 1942, Miller became one of the few women photographers to receive war correspondent accreditation from the United States. From then on, she covered the conflict directly and devoted numerous features to the women involved in the war: nurses, members of the anti-aircraft defense, aviators, which were published in both the British and American editions of *Vogue*.

Several weeks after the D-Day landings in June 1944, she traveled across the Channel to follow the advance of Allied troops, and found herself on the front lines, notably during the liberation of Saint-Malo. Her photographs and articles exposed the violence of the conflict. The exhibition highlights the ways in which she set herself apart from conventional war reporting, through the tone she employed and her deeply personal commitment. Her eye and sensibility focused more on meaningful details than the broader theater of military operations.

In April 1945, alongside *Life* photographer David E. Scherman, Lee Miller traveled to Dachau and Buchenwald right after the liberation of the camps. Accompanied by an article ("*Believe it—June 1945*"), some of her shots published in *Vogue* convey her outrage. Lee Miller's photographs were among the first to reveal the Nazi program of mass extermination to the general public.

On April 30, 1945, having just photographed the Dachau camp, Lee Miller set off to Munich and went inside Adolf Hitler's apartment. In a fully staged photograph laden with symbolism, she posed in the dictator's bathtub. Little circulated at the time, the image is now considered one of the most iconic photographs marking the end of the world conflict. Lee Miller photographed Europe and the Liberation until January 1946. These images reflect the pain and deprivation but also those left behind, such as women and children, at the Liberation. Miller confided to her editor: "I prefer to describe the devastation of ruined cities and wounded people rather than face the broken morale and shattered faith of those who thought that "things would go back to the way they had been."

In the following years, Miller struggled to recover from her experience of the war. The last section of the exhibition focuses on her settling down at Farley Farm House (Sussex) with Roland Penrose and their son Antony. Lee Miller first continued to make her reporting and fashion photographs for *Vogue*, but gradually stopped doing commercial work. In a more personal context, she kept making portraits of her family and friends, which reflect her ongoing involvement in the international avant-garde. Farley's House, a reflection of the Miller-Penrose couple, became an important meeting place for artistic exchange where Lee Miller devoted herself to culinary experiments that pay tribute to the inventiveness of her friends.

### **The catalogue**

The exhibition catalogue, published by Tate Britain for the occasion, has been adapted, translated, and reissued by Paris Musées. It has been conceived as a new authoritative work about the artist's oeuvre. It features three essays expanding upon the themes addressed in the exhibition, written by Damarice Amao, curator in the photography department at the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Hilary Floe, chief curator at Tate Britain and curator of the Lee Miller exhibition, and Fanny Schulmann, chief curator at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris and co-curator of the Lee Miller exhibition. It also includes a text by the British author Deborah Levy.

**The exhibition Lee Miller is organized by the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris from April 10 to August 2, 2026, in collaboration with Tate Britain and the Art Institute of Chicago.**

**The exhibition is on view at Tate Britain from October 2, 2025 to February 15, 2026 and will be held at the Art Institute of Chicago from August 29 to December 7, 2026.**

**With the participation of Lee Miller Archives.**

Supported by Sfil



# Biography

## 1907

Born on April 23 in Poughkeepsie, New York, Elizabeth Miller was Florence and Theodore Miller's second child. Her father, an engineer, worked for the DeLaval Separator Company, a manufacturer of agricultural and dairy machines.

## 1912

Theodore, an amateur photographer, turned a bathroom into a darkroom and taught his children how to develop photographs. Elizabeth was one of his favorite models; he had her pose, occasionally also nude, from 1914 until she reached her twenties.

## 1917

She received her first camera, a Kodak Brownie no. 2.

## 1924

Expelled from various schools because of her rebellious spirit, Miller showed an interest in theater, dance, and film.

## 1925

Her parents sent her to Paris for six months. She visited the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs and began studying set design in the fall at the Medgyès School of scenic design.

## 1926

Back in New York, she took classes at the Art Students League.

## 1927

She met Condé Nast, the founder of the press empire, who hired her as a model. She adopted the androgynous first name "Lee" during this period.

## 1928

An Edward Steichen photograph of Miller was used by the Kotex brand to promote its feminine hygiene products, a first in the world of advertising.

## 1929

Miller returned to Paris in June, determined to become a photographer. On Steichen's advice, she introduced herself to Man Ray. He took her on board as an apprentice, and they quickly became involved in a more intimate relationship.

She continued her modeling activity for *Vogue*, notably with the photographer George Hoyningen-Huene, who taught her his techniques.

## 1930

Miller moved to 12 rue Victor-Considérant in the Montparnasse area, where she set up her own photography studio.

She played one of the main roles in Jean Cocteau's film *Le Sang d'un poète* (The Blood of a Poet).

Her first credited photographs were published in *Vogue*.

In December, she exhibited her photographs in a show organized by Amateurs Photographes Ouvriers (APO), at the Maison des syndicats, avenue Mathurin-Moreau, Paris.

## 1931

Miller's work was shown in several group shows of photography at galleries and bookshops in Paris.

She helped Man Ray create the *Électricité* portfolio, commissioned by the Parisian Electrical Company.

She met the art dealer Julien Levy, who exhibited her prints at his New York gallery that same year.

Miller traveled to Saint Moritz, Switzerland, where she grew closer to Aziz Elouï Bey, an Egyptian businessman she had met in Paris.

### 1932

Her work gained significant recognition and her photographs were exhibited at major institutions in New York (Brooklyn Museum), Brussels (Palais des Beaux-Arts), and San Francisco (De Young Museum).

Tensions between Miller and Man Ray led to the end of their relationship. She returned to New York in October.

Miller was welcomed as a celebrity in New York. She opened her studio with her brother Erik as her assistant. On December 30, Miller's solo exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery opened in New York.

### 1933

In the context of the Great Depression, Miller managed to build up a clientele of celebrities and luxury brands. She was hired to photograph the exclusively African-American cast of Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein's opera *Four Saints in Three Acts*.

### 1934

In May, Miller was reunited with Aziz Eloui Bey. On July 19, they got married in New York.

Miller closed her studio and left for Cairo. The couple lived in a lavish villa in the Dokki neighborhood.

### 1935

Miller took Arabic and chemistry classes at the University of Cairo. In July, during a trip to Jerusalem, she took up photography again after having stopped all work for nearly a year.

### 1937

Miller organized many expeditions in the desert.

During the summer, she traveled to Paris and reconnected with the surrealists. At a costume ball, she met the English artist and collector Roland Penrose, who became her lover and invited her to vacation with some members of the surrealist group, first in Cornwall, England and then in Mougins along with Picasso.

### 1938

In June, Miller met up with Penrose in Athens. They spent the summer exploring Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania. In the fall, Miller traveled around Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey.

### 1939

The Second World War broke out when Miller and Penrose were in the South of France. They returned immediately to England. Against the advice of the American Embassy, she decided to stay in London.

In November, she started volunteering as a photographer for British *Vogue*.

### 1940

London endured eight months of massive air raids, the Blitz. Between two assignments for *Vogue*, Miller took photographs of the wreckage and ruins in the city. Many of them were published the following year in the book *Grim Glory: Pictures of Britain under Fire*, which sought to raise awareness of the war's devastation for an American readership.

### 1941

In April, one of *Vogue's* offices was destroyed by bombs.

In October, Miller was the object of a report drafted by British secret services, who were investigating her "communist sympathies." In December, Miller met David E. Scherman, an American photojournalist working for *Life*, who moved in with Penrose and Miller.

### 1942

Encouraged by Scherman, Miller applied for accreditation as an American forces war correspondent for *Vogue*, which she obtained on December 30.

### 1943

In May, British *Vogue* published "American Army Nurses," Miller's first article as a photojournalist. In the magazine *Illustrated*, Miller appeared alongside twelve women lauded for their courage.

### 1944

Miller was commissioned to do a book of photographs on the Women's Royal Naval Service (known as the Wrens).

In July, following the D-Day landings of the allied forces, Miller arrived in Normandy to do a feature on the evacuation hospitals. She was one of the first women correspondents with access to the war zones.

In August, she covered the fall of Saint Malo. In late August, Miller arrived in Paris two days after the Liberation of the city.

### 1945

Miller and Scherman reached the front in Alsace.

In mid-March, Miller followed the advance of the Allies in Germany.

On April 16: Miller entered Buchenwald concentration camp mere days after its liberation.

On April 30: Miller and Scherman were among the first press photographers to go inside Dachau concentration camp after its liberation. They then traveled to Munich, where they gained access to Hitler's apartment, which had been seized by the American Army.

On May 8, following Germany's surrender, the allied forces proclaimed the end of the Second World War in Europe.

In June, *Vogue* published her reporting on Buchenwald and Dachau. During the summer, Lee Miller attended Marechal Petain's trial in Paris. She then left for Vienna and Hungary.

### 1946

On January 10, Lee Miller photographed the execution of the former Hungarian Prime Minister László Bárdossy in Budapest. After a long assignment in Romania, she finally returned to London in February and was reunited with Penrose.

### 1947

In September, Lee Miller gave birth to her son Antony Penrose.

She became involved in the creation of the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), launched by Penrose, among others, in London.

### 1949

Miller and Penrose purchased Farleys Farm, a 200-acre farm in Chiddingly, East Sussex. Deeply affected by her experience of the war, Miller suffered from post-traumatic stress and addiction.

### 1953

Miller and Penrose curated the exhibition "Wonder and Horror of the Human Head" at the ICA.

British *Vogue* published "Working Guests" in July. Concerned about the health of his companion, Penrose asked the magazine not to give her any more assignments.

### 1955

Miller's photograph *Antony Penrose and Mrs. de Valera* (1949) was featured in the exhibition "The Family of Man" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

### 1956

Her photographs of Picasso were featured in the exhibition "Picasso Himself" at the ICA.

### 1957

Miller took classes at the Cordon Bleu, a prestigious Parisian gastronomy school, for six months. She went on to become a renowned Gourmet cook whose inventiveness was celebrated in the press, and won numerous competitions.

### 1972

One of the photographs Lee Miller took at Buchenwald appeared in the revised edition of the catalogue *The Painter and the Photograph*, initially published in 1964.

### 1975

Penrose published a biography of Man Ray; Miller is described in it as "the beautiful inevitably provocative assistant."

The Julien Levy donation to the Art Institute of Chicago included an important group of Miller's photographs.

### July 21, 1977

Miller died of pancreatic cancer at Farleys Farm. Her obituary appeared in several international newspapers, such as the *Times*, the *New York Times*, and the *Los Angeles Times*.

# Exhibition texts

## Introduction

Lee Miller (1907-1977) was alternately a model, a surrealist artist, a portraitist, a fashion photographer, and a war correspondent. Long relegated to the role of muse, she is now recognized as one of the leading photographers of the twentieth century. Fearless, she lived through her era in an endless pursuit of new visions and emotions.

This exhibition traces her entire career, from her beginnings in New York to her life at Farley Farm in England, including her time in Egypt and her war reporting. It reveals the breadth of a body of work in which formal experimentation, visual boldness, and political engagement coexist. Presented in fall 2025 at the Tate Britain in London, the exhibition now hosted in Paris features several additional loans highlighting to her strong ties to the French capital.

From her initial stay in 1925, the young artist was drawn to the effervescence of Paris. Determined to prove herself as an artist, she moved to Paris in 1929 to train with Man Ray before opening her own studio. Long after her departure, the city remained for her a symbol of the creative freedom championed by the surrealists. Furthermore, her arrival in Paris in August 1944 to cover the Liberation offered her the opportunity to rediscover the city abuzz once again, while reconnecting with the artistic community that had always regarded her as one of their own.

Combining both chronological and thematic approaches, the exhibition aims to move beyond Lee Miller's legendary life in order to reveal her powerful artistic vision.

The curators have opted to present vintage prints whenever preservation conditions and availability have made it possible. Modern gelatin silver prints and digital prints are also on view in order to enhance the exhibition narrative.

## 1. BEFORE THE CAMERA

"[I was] practically born and brought up in a dark room."

Lee Miller's first exposure to photography was as a model. Her father, a keen amateur photographer, introduced her to the technique, having her pose frequently from early childhood. She began modelling professionally in New York City in 1926 while studying painting at the Art Students League. At that time, fashion magazines, notably those published by Conde Nast, were gradually shifting from drawing to photography. In March 1927, her portrait drawn by George Lepape for the covers of British and American *Vogue* reflected the new aspirations of the period when femininity was being reimagined.

An androgynous, youthful style was fashionable, associated with greater freedoms for women. Tall and slender, with cropped hair, Miller renamed herself "Lee" around this time: snappy, modern, and unisex, it better expressed her persona.

With professional modelling in its infancy, she became one of its first stars. Her collaborations with some of the greatest photographers of the 1920s and 1930s inspired her to become a photographer herself, declaring she would "rather take a picture than be one." Moving to Paris in 1929, she apprenticed herself simultaneously to two of the city's leading photographers, Man Ray and George Hoyningen-Huene. Performing for their cameras while also working as a studio assistant and trainee, she co-created some of the most iconic fashion images of her era. After establishing her own studio in 1930, she readily modelled for herself to fulfill commissions.

## 2. DREAMING OF EROS

When Miller moved to Paris in the summer of 1929, she was determined to be an artist. On the advice of New York photographer Edward Steichen, she contacted Man Ray, the American painter and photographer who had been living in the French capital since 1921 and was at the heart of the city's avant-garde circles. She presented herself to him unannounced: "I told him boldly I was his new student. He said he didn't take students and anyway he was leaving Paris for his holiday. I said, I know, I'm going with you — and I did." An explosive period of romantic connection and creative collaboration followed, as Miller and Man Ray took each other as subject and inspiration.

Miller soon outgrew her apprentice role, establishing her own studio in 1930, but the pair continued to work intimately in the studio and darkroom until 1932. This section brings together works attributed to both Miller and Man Ray, exploring their fluid artistic dialogue.

Each performed for the other's lens, while experimenting together with new processes such as solarisation. They also shared studios, models, props and even cameras. Fascinated by the erotics of the body, they pushed the frontiers of photography to explore love, power and desire. With such closely entwined practices, it can be difficult to establish clear authorship. Miller later noted that some of her work was published as Man Ray's, adding, "it doesn't matter: I can't claim anything: we were like one person when we were working."

## 3. A SURREAL GAZE

"Some of them are pictures I saw in my imagination, just as I would a painting, and I assembled the material for them."

The years 1929-32 were some of the most creatively fertile of Miller's life. Establishing a studio in her Montparnasse apartment, she lived and worked at the centre of the Parisian avant-garde. Miller met and befriended surrealist artists, whose works and writings challenged convention, embraced chance and asserted the power of the unexpected and the uncanny. Miller drew on these ideas as she developed her own independent artistic voice.

Turning her lens on the streets of Paris, Miller exploited the camera's ability to free images from their familiar contexts, giving them new meanings. Crops, reflections, unusual juxtapositions and disorientating angles reveal a world of strange beauty. Statues spring to life and forms seem to be always shifting. Enigmatic hands recur as a motif—gasping, reaching, penetrating and exploding. Light and shadow dance rhythmically across the paper.

In the early 1930s, photography was still not widely recognized as an art form, championed only by a small international network of galleries and journals. Alongside modernist and surrealist peers, Miller's work was published and exhibited in Paris, Marseille, Brussels, London, Milan, New York, and San Francisco. In late 1932, aged only 25, she moved back to New York and opened her first solo exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery. One of the most important art dealers in the United States, Levy hailed her as "the new light on the horizon of photography."

## 4. NEW VISIONS

"I saw the Sinai Mountains Sunday dawn --- the most incredible burst of surrealist painting imagined --- Max Ernst in Turner's colors... I was filled with awe and relief --- and irreality."

Miller arrived in Cairo in September 1934, ready to begin a new chapter. She had spent the previous two years running a commercial studio in Depression-era New York, leaving her burnt out by the repetitive demands of high-profile clients and brands.

At first, Miller renounced photography entirely. Newly married to an Egyptian businessman, she no longer needed to earn a living. But a trip to Jerusalem in 1935 reignited her creative spark, and she returned to the camera as a tool of experimentation, fostered by her exploration of the Middle East. Over the next four years, Miller made regular expeditions across remote Egyptian deserts, as well as through Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Cyprus, Romania and Greece. These trips fed her adventurous spirit and renewed her photographic practice. Alongside her own work, she became involved in Cairo's radical art scene and helped establish the left-wing surrealist group Art et Liberté.

Miller photographed Egypt's industrial modernity alongside its expansive landscapes and ancient ruins. Her eye picked up on ambiguous images, fantastic silhouettes and erotic allusions. Torn screens, shrouded statues and fleshy rock formations evoke a world of shifting possibilities.



Lee Miller  
*Portrait de l'espace*  
*Portrait of Space*  
Al Bulwayeb, près de Siwa, Egypte  
1937  
© Lee Miller Archives England 2026  
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## 5. ARTISTS AND FRIENDS I

Lee Miller befriended the leading artists and intellectuals of her day. Throughout her life, she collaborated with members of this international community to create portraits revealing both the model's character and their relationship with the artist. Some were commissioned, while others were made for personal pleasure. Informed by her own experiences in front of the camera, she was adept at setting her subjects at ease. She explained: "It takes time to do a good portrait... [and] find out what idea of himself or herself he has in mind." Miller's previous experience in theatrical lighting, avant-garde painting, and film provided her with an array of technical and creative means for her compositions.

This section begins in the early 1930s when Miller ran studios in Paris and then New York, specialising in portraiture. Produced and often circulated in multiple contexts, these photographs did not share the same fate. Miller's images of Charlie Chaplin, for example, appeared in a popular French cinema magazine (*Pour Vous*) as well as in modernist photography exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic.

When Miller renewed contact with surrealist circles in the late 1930s, as a result of her intimate relationship with Roland Penrose, she devoted a series of portraits to her artist friends, produced during group holidays in Cornwall (England) and the South of France. Eileen Agar merges with her own camera silhouette, while Pablo Picasso meets our gaze through the dark plane of a sun visor. A final group of images in this room was produced during the Second World War, as part of Miller's work for *Vogue*. In London and later in post-liberation Europe, she immortalized artists confronted with the world in upheaval.



Lee Miller,  
*Charlie Chaplin au lustre*  
*Charlie Chaplin with light fixture*  
Saint-Moritz  
1932  
© Lee Miller Archives England 2026  
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## 6. HERE IS *VOGUE*, IN SPITE OF ALL !

Leaving behind her life in Egypt, Miller joined the surrealist artist Roland Penrose in London in September 1939, just before the outbreak of war. As a U.S. citizen, Miller was ineligible for war work in the U.K., and she offered her services to British *Vogue*. Before long, with more established figures tied up, she was the magazine's leading photographer.

Working with increasingly restricted resources and clothes under rationing, Miller's creative imagination kicked in. Many of her fashion photographs draw on surrealist strategies. Shadows, solarisation and double exposure (exposing the same negative several times) bring a strange beauty to plain clothing and backgrounds. Unexpected props—from an inflatable fish to a fire protection mask—enliven even the dullest wartime fashions. Hats, which were not rationed, featured prominently in her compositions.

The British government viewed women's magazines as crucial to morale, and as a potent tool of state persuasion. Under editor Audrey Withers, *Vogue* encouraged women to fill men's roles in the workforce and to embrace clothing restrictions as part of the war effort. Miller's photographs put a stylish spin on this messaging. Her work even helped bring back the trend for short haircuts, after the Ministry of Labour appealed for help with headlice among factory workers.

When its Bond Street offices were bombed in September 1940, *Vogue* struck an upbeat tone: "Here is *Vogue*, in spite of all!" declared the magazine above Miller's photographs of the damage. In private, Miller expressed her frustration at not being closer to the front lines. "It seems pretty silly to go on working on a frivolous paper like *Vogue*," she wrote to her parents, "though it may be good for the country's morale it's hell on mine."

## 7. GRIM GLORY: BRITAIN AT WAR

"Years ago I fought and struggled to live in Europe—chose my friends in these countries—and their way of living—so I can't leave now just because there isn't enough butter to go round."

German bombs fell heavily on London between September 1940 and May 1941, killing almost 30,000 people and leaving one in six homeless. Amid the tragedy of the Blitz, a surreal atmosphere emanated from the city in ruins. Miller, who had refused to retreat to the relative safety of the United States, photographed the rapidly changing world around her. On the grounds of taste and morale, British censors discouraged graphic images of violence on the home front. Miller created poetic images that explored the absurdity and incongruity of the bomb sites. Dark, funny titles evoke the defiant spirit of Londoners faced with hardship. Irony offered a powerful means of coping with horror.

Many of Miller's Blitz photographs were published as a book, *Grim Glory: Pictures of Britain Under Fire* (1941). Although intended primarily for a U.S. audience in order to get them involved in the conflict, it proved highly popular on both sides of the Atlantic. At least ten of her photographs were also included in *Britain at War*, an influential exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which then toured the American continent to raise international awareness about the devastating effects of the Blitz.

Another group of works documents women's lives in a time of rapid change. British women, conscripted for the first time from 1941, poured into the workplace. In roles such as mechanics, pilots, journalists and searchlight operators, they made vital contributions to the war effort. Miller's formally daring portraits celebrate their strength and knowhow.

## 8. IN THE FIELD

Miller became an accredited war correspondent with the U.S. Army in late 1942, but like other women journalists, she faced barriers to accessing the war zone. It was only in summer 1944—after D-Day, the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied France—that she was finally allowed close to battle.

Once in Europe, she finally got the chance to experience reality on the battlefield. Driven by a fierce opposition to Nazi politics and her dogged curiosity about unfolding events and their consequences, she stayed on the continent until early 1946. Her reports covered France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Denmark, Austria, Hungary and Romania. In the words of David E. Scherman, the photojournalist she lived and worked with for much of this period, Miller “became a G.I. .”

Miller produced an avalanche of Vogue stories which combined powerful photography with blisteringly vivid first-person essays. With almost no experience as a writer, she found herself a fearless and natural journalist with a knack for being first on the scene. Her editors in London and New York featured her proposals even though her subjects often went beyond the editorial scope of the magazines. Yet as she followed Allied forces through wave after wave of combat and liberation, bearing witness proved a profound challenge. Working rapidly and intuitively, she created images that condemn the ravages of violent conflict.



Lee Miller  
*Le photographe David E. Scherman habillé pour la guerre*  
*David E. Scherman, dressed for war*  
Dean House, 4 Dean Street, Londres  
1942  
© Lee Miller Archives England 2026  
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## 9. BELIEVE IT

"I don't take pictures of these [horrors] usually as I know you won't use them. Don't think for that reason that every town and every area isn't rich with them... I would be very proud of Vogue if it would run a picture of some of the ghastliness."

Miller entered Buchenwald, a Nazi concentration camp near the city of Weimar, on April 16, 1945, soon after it had been liberated. Two weeks later, on April 30, she visited Dachau, a concentration camp near Munich whose survivors had been freed the previous day. These sites still bore the marks of forced labour, systematic persecution and mass murder. Those imprisoned within Buchenwald and Dachau included Jews, political dissidents, gay men, Sinti and Roma people, Jehovah's Witnesses and prisoners of war. By April 1945, it was clear that these camps had also become entwined with the history of the Holocaust—the continental genocide of six million Jewish men, women, and children.

By this point in the war, Miller had encountered many profoundly distressing scenes, but her experiences in the concentration camps marked her forever. Her Rolleiflex camera, which had no zoom lens, brought her as intimately close to her subjects as we are to her images. Distraught by what she saw, yet working with sharp precision, Miller documented even the most harrowing aspects of the two sites. These images clearly capture the photographer's complex stance, showing the horror without falling into sensationalism. By photographing starving prisoners, but also U.S. troops or Germans looking at the atrocities committed, Miller bore witness to the period in its entirety.

Rumors were already circulating that the atrocities found at the concentration camps were a hoax. Miller was determined to help prove otherwise. In a cable to her editor in London, she wrote: "I IMPLORE YOU TO BELIEVE THAT THIS IS TRUE."

## 10. AFTERMATH

The Second World War left unthinkable devastation in its wake. Following the Allied forces across Europe, Miller recorded the euphoria of liberation giving way to disillusionment. Her images and articles describe people facing forced displacement, starvation and death. For many, the atrocities of war forever changed their sense of human nature. Miller shared her struggles with her editor in October 1944: "If I could find faith in the performance of liberation I might be able to whip something into a shape which would curl a streamer and wave a flag... I, myself, prefer describing the physical damage of destroyed towns and injured people to facing the shattered morale and blasted faith of those who thought 'Things are going to be like they were.'" With humane curiosity, she did both.

Miller's photographs of war's immediate aftermath raise questions about the nature of complicity, justice and revenge. They also invite us to consider the power dynamics of the camera—the photographer's influence over those she immortalizes by assigning them to a role in the narrative she constructs. The artist paid close attention to individuals on both sides of the conflict, especially women and children. Aware that desperate hardship could sow the seeds of a future war, she wrote: "I'm taking a lot of kid pictures, because they are the only ones for whom there is any hope... And also we might as well have a look at who we're going to fight twenty years from now."

## 11. ARTISTS AND FRIENDS II

In February 1946, Miller returned to London an internationally celebrated photojournalist, but physically and emotionally scarred by her wartime experiences. She continued her work at Vogue until 1953, but now found little inspiration in fashion shoots. Miller's most profound works, in these years and afterwards, were portraits of her fellow artist friends. From Isamu Noguchi in New York to Dorothea Tanning in Arizona, these images reflect her vibrant gift for friendship and her ongoing engagement with the international art world.

Miller married Roland Penrose in 1947 and gave birth to their son, Antony. She was closely involved in the beginnings of the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, soon one of the U.K.'s most important centers for new art. The family began dividing their time between London and Farleys House in Sussex, which became a legendary art world meeting point. With weekend parties fueled by Miller's experimental meals, Farleys was a staging ground for new portraits.

She rarely spoke about it, but Miller's mental health was permanently affected by what she had witnessed in the war. Over time, her interest in photography waned, although she kept doing interviews about her activities with the surrealists into her final years. She developed a new passion for gourmet cooking, which she pursued with her typical creative flair. Sometimes, she even claimed that her photographic archive had been destroyed. The true extent of her work was only discovered after her death in 1977. The roughly 60,000 negatives, prints, journals and ephemera uncovered in the family attic now form the basis of the Lee Miller Archives, still housed at Farleys House today.

# Events

**Friday, April 10 – 4:00 pm**

**Discussion – *Exhibiting Lee Miller Today***

With Antony Penrose and Ami Bouhassane, son and granddaughter of Lee Miller; Hilary Floe, Senior Curator at Tate Britain and curator of the Lee Miller exhibition; and Matthew Witkovsky, exhibition curator, photography historian, and curator specializing in the history of photography and modern art.

Moderated by Fanny Schulmann, curator and Head of the Photography Department at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris.

*Salle Matisse*

*Free admission, subject to availability*

*The talk will be held in English.*

# Sponsor

## Sfil, sponsor of the exhibition

**Sfil** is the public development bank serving local territories, public healthcare, and France's international competitiveness. Founded in 2013 and a subsidiary of the Caisse des Dépôts Group, Sfil mobilizes long-term investors to offer local public authorities, healthcare institutions, and exporters financing solutions that are tailored, sustainable, and secure.

Every day, Sfil finances essential projects that concretely transform citizens' lives: schools, public hospitals, wastewater treatment plants, transport infrastructure, satellites, wind farms, and sports facilities. Through its work, it actively contributes to the development of local territories and to France's economic sovereignty.

Since 2022, Sfil has supported the cultural programming of the City of Paris museums. In 2026, it is supporting a major retrospective dedicated to the photographer Lee Miller, a central figure of the international avant-garde and one of the first female war photojournalists. The museum is committed to showcasing the work of remarkable artists through their careers and their contributions to the history of art, and to offering a platform that amplifies the diversity of artists' voices and their commitments—values that are also shared by Sfil and its teams.



# Visitor information

## MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE PARIS

### Postal address

11, avenue du Président Wilson, 75116 Paris  
Tel. +33 (0)1 53 67 40 00  
[www.mam.paris.fr](http://www.mam.paris.fr)

### Getting there

- Metro: Alma-Marceau or Léna (Line 9)
- Bus: 32/42/63/72/80/92
- Vélib' stations: 4 rue de Longchamp; 4 avenue Marceau; place de la Reine Astrid; 45 avenue Marceau; or 3 avenue Bosquet
- Bicycle: Bicycle parking spaces are available in front of the museum entrance.
- RER C: Pont de l'Alma (Line C)

### Opening hours

- Tuesday to Sunday, 10:00 am – 6:00 pm
- (last ticket sales at 5:15 pm)
- Closed on Mondays and certain public holidays
- Late openings: Thursdays until 9:30 pm and Saturdays until 8:00 pm

### Admission

Full price: €17  
Reduced price: €15  
Free for under 18s

Combined ticket with the exhibition *Brion Gysin: The Last Museum*  
Full price: €20  
Reduced price: €18

Reduced admission to the exhibition *Robert Capa. War Photographer* (18 February – 20 December 2026) at the Musée de la Libération de Paris – Leclerc – Moulin upon presentation of a ticket for the Lee Miller exhibition, and vice versa.

The exhibition is accessible to visitors with motor disabilities and reduced mobility.

Booking a ticket in advance is strongly recommended at: [www.billetterie-parismusees.paris.fr](http://www.billetterie-parismusees.paris.fr)

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# Paris Musées

**Paris Musées is a public institution that incorporates the 12 City of Paris museums and 2 heritage sites. It is the leading museum network in Europe and, in 2025 received more than 5.1 million visitors.**

Paris Musées is a public institution that incorporates the 12 City of Paris museums and 2 heritage sites. It is the leading museum network in Europe and, in 2024 received more than 4.8 million visitors. The Paris Musées network includes art museums (Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, Petit Palais - Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris); history museums (Musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris, Musée de la Libération de Paris- Musée du Général Leclerc- Musée Jean Moulin); former artists' studios (Musée Bourdelle, Musée Zadkine, Musée de la Vie romantique); writers' houses (Maison de Balzac, Maison de Victor Hugo in Paris and in Guernsey); the Palais Galliera -the City of Paris fashion museum; museums bequeathed by major donors (Cernuschi Museum of Asian Art, Cognacq-Jay Museum); as well as heritage sites: the Paris Catacombs and the Archaeological Crypt of the Ile de la Cité.

Paris Musées was founded in 2013. Its mission is to promote, curate and present the collections of the City of Paris museums, which contain over a million works of art, and are open to the public free of charge. Constant attention is paid to research and the conservation of the collections as well as to their enlargement through donations, bequests and acquisitions. Every year, the museums and sites administered by Paris Musées run an ambitious exhibition programme, accompanied by cultural and mediation services for all, especially those who are not often exposed to cultural activities. We also publish catalogues to accompany the exhibitions.

Furthermore, since its creation, Paris Musées has been committed to a deliberate strategy of adapting its working practices and procedures towards a reduction and an improvement in the environmental impact of all its activities (exhibition production, publishing, the transport of artworks, and energy consumption generally) at all the fourteen sites and museums in the network. As part of its commitment to sharing art and culture with the greatest possible number of people, Paris Musées has also put in place an innovative digital strategy that provides free online access to more than 400,000 high-definition images of works from its collections, as well as a wealth of other content (virtual tours, podcasts, etc.). They can be accessed on the Paris Musées Collections and Paris Musées Explore websites. Paris Musées also organises a course of art history lectures given by Specialist advisors from the City of Paris Museums; this can be subscribed to online.



## Paris Museum Pass

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Paris Musées offers a one-year pass giving unlimited access to temporary exhibitions, as well as special rates on activities (guided tours, talks, workshops, shows, art history courses, etc.), discounts in the museum network's bookshops, cafés and restaurants, and priority access to museum news.