

## HAUSER & WIRTH

### Press Release

## Cindy Sherman. The Women

Hauser & Wirth Menorca

23 June – 26 October 2025

Opening reception: Sunday 22 June 2025



Cindy Sherman is globally renowned for her exploration of identity and gender through the performance of meticulously observed personas for the camera. For her first solo exhibition in Spain in over two decades, 'Cindy Sherman. The Women' will feature a selection of the artist's most iconic bodies of work, dating from the 1970s to 2010s, emphasising how Sherman revolutionized the role of the camera in artistic practice.

The exhibition will include the groundbreaking Untitled Films Stills (1977 – 1980), through which Sherman came to widespread attention as one of the 'Pictures Generation' artists who gained prominence in the 1970s and '80s responding to the age of mass media and celebrity. This pivotal series will be juxtaposed with Sherman's large-format portrayals of film stars, starlets, society women and fashionistas from various series made over subsequent decades, addressing the layered presentation and public perception of femininity. One of the central galleries will be dedicated to the Bus Riders and Murder Mystery series, and other early works that pre-date the Film Stills, not publicly displayed until 2000, illustrating Sherman's detailed observations of American society and the starting point for themes and methods that were to develop throughout her career. The range of works on view offer a rare presentation of Sherman's enduring concern with the interaction between female roles and images, and the gaze(s) to which women are relentlessly subjected. Through her work she points to the way women exist in society as an image of themselves.

'Cindy Sherman. The Women' takes its title from the 1936 all-female hit play by Clare Boothe Luce, a merciless ensemble piece about women's interactions with women, of their own and different classes, and of different appearances. Twice made into feature films (1939 and 2008), it is exemplary of the genre of classical Hollywood 'women's film' around which feminist film theory was formed. Moreover, not only the characters in her play but Boothe Luce herself is representative of the multifarious kinds of femininities explored by Sherman. As the 20th-century cult of fame and celebrity has transitioned into the 21st-century context of influencers and social media stars, Sherman's deconstructions of gender, wealth and privilege remain of acute relevance. Sherman's work reveals to us the degree to which we all construct and perform

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our identities; each iteration of her performance is a new and unique character. Through these images she has become the leading exponent of the subgenre which combines performance with photography, drawing our attention to the fact that identity is complex, constructed and performed.

The layers of media are important in this picture of complexity; the role of film, fashion, magazines and classical portrait photography is part of the subject matter. In the Ominous Landscape images from 2010, elaborately dressed female figures stand against vast and inhospitable landscapes. The figures seem eerily displaced, digitally superimposed on island landscapes shot on Capri, Stromboli, Iceland and Shelter Island, New York; now they will be shown on an island within an island, Illa del Rei in Menorca. This series of photographs evolved from an editorial project for Pop magazine, featuring clothes and accessories chosen by Sherman from the Chanel archives. The garments range from 1920s haute couture designed by Coco Chanel herself to contemporary creations by Karl Lagerfeld. The sumptuous costumes create a striking contrast with the bleak intensity of the surrounding landscapes, whilst the female figures loom larger than the surrounding natural world in a reversal of the Romantic hierarchy.



It was from this project that the Flappers series developed from 2016 to 2018, focusing on the young women who challenged social norms and fashions in the 1920s as a form of empowerment, emancipation and radical modernity, some emulating Hollywood stars, who pose in glamorous attire with heavy and stylised makeup. The series also addresses aging; however, the protagonists are shown decades from their heyday seemingly unaware they are past their prime. Nevertheless, Sherman's depictions seem more nuanced and sympathetic than the harsh image of Norma Desmond, the archetypal deluded silent-era actress in *Sunset Boulevard*.

Sherman had previously worked on series addressing women of social standing and the aging process, works from which will feature in the exhibition. These will include one of the exceptionally grandiose *Society Portraits* from 2008, in which Sherman introduced ornate frames and experimented with a green screen to create fantasy environments for women of the upper echelons of society. Such backdrops heighten the isolation of the characters Sherman portrays and focus attention on the heavily made-up women absorbed by their wealth and status. She later adopted the personas of socialites and fashionistas in a commission for *Harper's Bazaar* in 2016, making a series of images of women in designer clothes and accessories, within various landscape settings. In these works, she experimented with multiple exposures to duplicate the women depicted, suggesting a fractured and unstable sense of identity.

A selection of the iconic *Untitled Film Stills* sits at the centre of the exhibition, a series of black-and-white photographs originally conceived as a group of imaginary film stills from a single actress's career. Inspired by 1950s and '60s Hollywood, film noir, B movies and European art-house films, Sherman's plethora of invented characters and scenarios imitated the style of production shots used by movie studios to publicize their films. The images are evocative of certain character types and genres, but always intentionally ambiguous, leaving room for the viewer to imagine their own narratives, and even insert themselves into the work.

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Pre-dating the Film Stills, are works from Sherman's Bus Riders and Murder Mystery series, both created in 1976, and a selection of the Line Up images, made in 1977, all while she was still a student at Buffalo State College in upstate New York. Highlighting the foundations of Sherman's conceptual thinking, the 'Bus Riders' embody a range of cultural stereotypes and everyday personalities across American society, harnessing poses, clothes and facial expressions that bring familiar characters to life. In contrast, the 'Murder Mystery' and 'Line Up' series have a decided staginess and overt theatricality, and even a deliberate melodrama, to the characters and poses. In some, the act of photographing is made visible through the capturing of the cable-release and the marks on the studio floor; here, Sherman is pointing to her medium and exposing her process as part of the act of creation. In these very early series Sherman was working through the process of adopting different personas and merging the role of photographer, model and storyteller.

Throughout her career, Sherman's relentless focus on the diversity of womanhood emphasises the play of difference rather than sameness within gender categories, making the idea of womanhood expansive rather than restrictive.



### About the artist

Born in 1954 in Glen Ridge NJ, Cindy Sherman lives and works in New York NY. Her groundbreaking work has interrogated themes around representation and identity in contemporary media for over four decades. Coming to prominence in the late 1970s with the Pictures Generation group—alongside artists such as Sherrie Levine, Richard Prince and Louise Lawler—Sherman first turned her attention to photography at Buffalo State College where she studied art in the early 1970s. Utilising prosthetics, theatrical effects, photographic techniques and digital technologies, she has channelled and reconstructed familiar personas known to the collective psyche, often in unsettling ways, and has explored the more grotesque aspects of humanity through the lens of horror and the abject.

Recent solo exhibitions include FOMU Fotomuseum Antwerp, 'Cindy Sherman. Anti-Fashion', Antwerp, Belgium (2024); Museum of Cycladic Art, 'Cindy Sherman at Cycladic: Early Works', Athens, Greece (2024); Photo Elysée, 'Cindy Sherman', Lausanne, Switzerland (2024); Espace Louis Vuitton Seoul, 'Cindy Sherman. On Stage – Part II', Seoul, Korea (2024); The Serralves Foundation, 'Cindy Sherman. Metamorphosis', Porto, Portugal (2022); National Portrait Gallery, 'Cindy Sherman', London, UK (2010), Fondation Louis Vuitton, 'Cindy Sherman', Paris, France (2010).

### Education Lab at Hauser & Wirth Menorca

'Education Lab: Play your Part' is an interactive space that takes its starting point from 'Cindy Sherman. The Women' and 'Mika Rottenberg. Vibrant Matter.' In collaboration with ESADIB, Escola Superior d'Art Dramàtic de les Illes Balears, we invited professor, Irene Pascual as producer and choreographer of the Lab. Inspired by the concept of 'plasticity of identity', visitors are invited to take part in a self-directed theatre. In the space visitors will become part of an immersive experience, blurring boundaries between creator and spectator in the here and now.

The Education Lab is part of Hauser & Wirth's commitment to inclusive learning programs that instigate a dialogue between art, artists and diverse audiences. Located at our galleries in Menorca, Somerset and Downtown Los Angeles, as well as at Chillida Leku, each Education Lab is a collaboration with a local community group, school or university.

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### Opening times

10 May — 19 June  
Wednesday - Sunday, 10 am - 4 pm  
Cantina open until 4.30 pm

23 June - 6 September  
Monday - Sunday, 11 am - 10 pm  
Cantina open until 11.30 pm

7 September - 26 October  
Wednesday - Sunday, 10 am - 4 pm  
Cantina open until 4.30 pm

### Shuttle boat ticket

10 € for adults  
5 € for children under 12 years old  
Free for children under 3 years old  
Both ways (open return)

fifteen-minute journey from Mahon port,  
running hourly. Tickets can be bought  
online and on-site

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Cindy Sherman  
Untitled #566  
2016  
Dye sublimation metal print  
121.9 x 128.3 cm / 48 x 50 1/2 in

Cindy Sherman  
Untitled Film Still #6  
1977  
Gelatin silver print  
25.4 x 20.3 cm / 10 x 8 in

Cindy Sherman  
Untitled #550  
2010/2012  
Chromogenic color print  
153 x 302.3 cm / 60 1/4 x 119 in

Cindy Sherman  
Untitled Film Still #24  
1978  
Gelatin silver print  
20.3 x 25.4 cm / 8 x 10 in

Cindy Sherman  
Untitled (the actress at the murder scene)  
1976/2000  
Gelatin silver print  
25.4 x 20.3 cm / 10 x 8 in