

Call for Memories of 'The Family of Man' photo exhibition (1955–2025)

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In the framework of a new research and transmedia project called FoMLEG (The Legacy of 'The Family of Man') the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C2DH) and the Centre National de l'Audiovisuel (CNA) launched a Crowdsourcing Campaign seeking photos, stories, and memories connected to the seminal photography exhibition 'The Family of Man.'

Curated by Edward Steichen at MoMA in 1955, the exhibition is now on permanent view in Clervaux Castle, Luxembourg and is commemorating its 70th anniversary this year. If you visited the exhibition during its original World Tour (1955–1963) or saw it in Luxembourg City, Esch-sur-Alzette, or Clervaux since 1975, or if you have a personal or academic connection to its themes, your contributions can enrich this collective archive.

We invite you to share:

- Personal recollections of visiting the exhibition
- Photographs, letters, or memorabilia related to the exhibition
- Reflections on how the exhibition shaped your view of photography, humanity, or cultural identity

Your contributions will help us better understand the many ways in which The Family of Man has resonated with individuals and communities over time. Selected stories may be featured in future publications, exhibitions, or in a digital archive, contributing to a more inclusive and diverse collective memory.

To share your story or learn more about the project, please contact:

- emilia.sanchez@uni.lu for the international tour
- claudewert@uni.lu for anything related to The Family of Man in Luxembourg

Thank you for being part of this collective legacy of The Family of Man's legacy.

Details on the Crowdsourcing Campaign:
<https://www.uni.lu/c2dh-en/news/contribute-to-the-legacy-of-the-family-of-man-research-project/>

About the Project 'Tracing the legacy of Edward Steichen: A glocal approach to the international reception and national heritagisation of the "Family of Man" exhibition':

The photographic heritage linked to Edward Steichen has by now a permanent place in the cultural landscape of Luxembourg. Composed of public and private collections, this heritage is anchored in the history of photography internationally, in Luxembourg's collective memory and in various cultural institutions and collections in the Grand Duchy. This multilayered and transdisciplinary research project aims to shed light on hitherto underexposed subjects of these collections

and to direct its attention towards a twofold exploration: the international reception of the exhibition *The Family of Man* (FoM) during its world tour between 1955 and 1964 at selected locations and the heritagisation of Edward Steichen's oeuvre and legacy in the specific cultural and political contexts of Luxembourg and its evolution up until today.

This research project aims at problematizing the audience response to the travelling exhibition using a glocal history approach: The multilayered and transdisciplinary approach is aimed at enriching the existing scholarship on FoM by combining global, national, and local processes of circulation, translation, and appropriation of photographs in order to retrace and understand the itinerancy of the exhibition and its audience responses. While building on the rich scholarship from the field of the history of photography, visual studies, and exhibition / museum studies, the project shifts the analytical focus to a more comparative perspective, aiming at historicizing processes of "encoding" and "decoding" of meaning at different spaces and places. In framing the FoM as a global media event, we aim to analyse the local performances of the exhibition as ritualised moments of thickened media communication, revealing specific strategies of territorial appropriation of globally circulating messages. The project emphasises the need for a critical reflection on the colonial and post-colonial dimension of FoM by paying more attention to the question of how the exhibition has been received in the Global South.

Through an interdisciplinary approach, combining visual studies, decolonial studies, intergenerational memory production, translation and reception studies, and transnational media history, the emphasis lies on the analysis of the historical reception as traced through official documents, surveys, press articles as well as installation images. By means of a participatory digital public history approach, first-hand accounts and memories of visitors will be collected and analysed, aiming at a comparative in-depth analysis of the exhibition's contemporary reception within its respective geographical, cultural, and political contexts. In addition, the heritagisation of Edward Steichen in his native country Luxembourg will be explored. The presence, the composition and development, the reception and the history of private and public collections linked to the artist will be traced. With a special focus on the FoM, the complex socio-cultural and political process of heritagisation and national branding of FoM as UNESCO-listed collection are analysed and contextualised in the framework of Luxembourgish cultural policy.

Next to academic publications and a PhD dissertation, the project will produce innovative forms and formats of transmedia storytelling, e.g. through the development of a deep mapping visualisation of the global circulation of FoM, combining a traceable itinerary of the exhibition around the world with virtual exhibits of those places of display studied as historical case studies in the project. In addition, a graphic novel will offer a research-based narrative about Steichen and the emergence of FoM as one of the most iconic photograph exhibitions of the 20th century.

Organisation and Partners

Contemporary History of Luxembourg

Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C2DH)

Centre national de l'audiovisuel (CNA).

Funded by the Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR).

<https://www.uni.lu/c2dh-en/research-projects/fomleg/>

Reference:

Q: Call for Memories of 'The Family of Man' photo exhibition (1955-2025). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 25, 2025 (accessed Dec 28, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/50955>>.