

**PRESS RELEASE**

**STEPHEN SHORE**

**SEPTEMBER 19—NOVEMBER 23, 2014**

**FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE presents the first retrospective exhibition on the work of Stephen Shore, an acclaimed contemporary photographer who has inspired several generations of artists and remains a constant and undisputable reference for upcoming young photographers. His solid body of work as well as the theoretical aspects of the medium conveyed through his teaching have made a pivotal contribution to the evolution of the photographic language.**

**Throughout his extensive career, which began with a show at the Metropolitan Art Museum of New York when he was just 23 years old, Shore has received prestigious awards, published numerous monographs – some of them now cult objects – and held more than 50 individual exhibits at major venues around the world.**

**This show features over 300 photographs and explores the core concepts of his photographic work: reflections on the language of photography, the analysis of landscape, and the meaningful use of both color and black and white. The selection includes famous projects like *Uncommon Places* and *American Surfaces*, as well as some of his most important subsequent work which has either not been published extensively or has not been published at all.**

**In addition to its display at the FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE gallery at Bárbara de Braganza 13, the exhibit will travel to the following international events and/or venues: Les Recontres d'Arles in France, the C/O Berlin in Germany, CAMERA, Centro Italiano per la Fotografia in Turin, and Huis Marseille in Amsterdam.**

## EXHIBIT OVERVIEW

The Stephen Shore exhibit adopts the form of a chronological journey through each of the series that make up his oeuvre, featuring a selection of 320 photographs.

In the mid 1960s photography made its debut as an art form with an esthetic that transgressed the dominant principles of the day. The emergence of neutrality, the absence of the habitual distinctions in artistic photography and the treatment of the subject from a seemingly disinterested or remote viewpoint were the characteristics which, paradoxically, led to the definitive acceptance of photography as an art form. Shore's work, indebted to the legacy of Walker Evans and influenced by his early collaboration in Andy Warhol's Factory, partakes significantly in this novel approach to photography that represented a distinct generational shift.



22nd July, 1969. ©Stephen Shore.  
Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York

In the late 1960s Shore created several series of experimental photographs, some of which he exhibited at his solo show at New York's Metropolitan Museum. In **July 22, 1969** he photographed his friend Michael Marsh every 30 minutes over a 24-hour period. In **Circle No. 1**, another series from the same year, he had him pose in eight different positions in the middle of a desert landscape. In **Avenue of The Americas**, he photographed every street intersection along the avenue..

The reiterative, systematic and sequential nature of the photographs, coupled with an emphasis on the precise geographical position or time, link **these early experiments by Shore** to the work of other conceptual artists of the day, such as Douglas Huebler.

During the same period, Shore embarked on several projects featuring images that appear to eschew formal treatment yet actually reveal calculated visual and technical operations that explore the characteristics of amateur photography esthetics. In fact, these experiments are inspired by the photographic work *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* by Ed Ruscha, whom Shore discovered around this time, in which the author imitated the tactics of an imaginary reporter. They converge in the genesis of his **Greetings**

*from Amarillo. Tall in Texas (1972)* series, in which Shore plays the role of a professional photographer commissioned to immortalize the local monuments of the city of Amarillo. The results were published as a series of postcards that he personally distributed in kiosks and tourist stores during his subsequent travels.

These projects, which gradually shaped the esthetic and theoretical essence of his photographic approach, were also the seed for his first important project, ***American***



U.S. 89, Arizona, June 1972. From the serie *American Surfaces* ©Stephen Shore. Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York

***Surfaces***, which he created during his travels across the United States between **1972 and 1973**. Shore was fascinated by the things he came across and decided to keep a visual journal of the trip. The journal is quite special in that it does not reveal any culminating moments or his passage

through memorable locations, but simply reflects the things traditionally regarded at the time as dull or trivial:

roads, street intersections, restaurants, hotels, home exteriors and interiors, bathrooms, kitchens, refrigerators, decoration, food and people (relatives, friends and strangers). All of these are photographed in a style that is seemingly neutral and devoid of emotion, absorbing the features of utilitarian and amateur esthetics. Such are some of the formal and thematic features that are powerfully highlighted in *American Surfaces*.

In 1973 Stephen Shore decided to use a camera with a larger format and focus on presenting his photographs as snapshots. His choice of a 4 x 5-inch camera, followed one year later by an 8 x 10-inch camera, continued to counter the conventional wisdom of the day which dictated 35 mm. He continued to travel the length and breadth of the United States, covering the same

themes as in *American Surfaces*, although the technical requirements of long exposures and a tripod gradually altered his work, resulting in ever more complex compositions of urban and suburban photographs. These pictures were taken more carefully and the portraits are deliberately staged, but he dedicated the most time and thought to images of landscapes taken from the road. Some of these photographs were included in the famous *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape*

exhibition, and the project culminated in 1982 with the publication of a book titled ***Uncommon Places***.



U.S. 97, South of Klamath Falls, Oregon, July 21, 1973. From the serie *Uncommon Places*.  
©Stephen Shore. Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York

From the 1980s onward, Shore continued to photograph urban and suburban locations, but once again ignoring the trends of the day he began to be interested in **natural landscapes**. In line with his investigative streak, he searched for new challenges and limits to confront and deepen his knowledge, this time choosing to explore one of the essential elements of the landscape genre: the picturesque. His principal approach reveals a new focus: exploring

the possibilities of perspective and depth of field in places where there were no architectural or urban references to influence the composition of the image. The **Essex County** series and **the large-format landscapes** that he composed in the middle of the decade date from this period.



Hazor, Israel, 1994. ©Stephen Shore. Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York

At the beginning of the 1990s, just when the use of color was consolidated as the dominant trend, Shore decided to continue exploring other less frequented paths and over the next few years worked exclusively in black and white. Another aspect of his work that he developed from the 1990s onward was a focus on archeological excavations. In

In **Hazor (Israel)**, for example, his observation of excavations is as meticulously technical as it is open to multiple interpretations. By suppressing the narrative elements, Shore's sophisticated work poses questions to his viewers regarding the register and the image of that register, the mold and how it is represented.

The exhibit also includes a selection of panoramic views taken from the streets of **New York** between 2000 and 2002. These photographs are accompanied by two recent series of color photographs: **Ukraine and Winslow, Arizona**



New York, 2000-2002. ©Stephen Shore.  
Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York

En los últimos años Shore ha vuelto a retomar algunas de las cuestiones siempre presentes en su obra a través de las nuevas posibilidades de las tecnologías digitales a través de una serie de ibooks que viene realizando desde el 2003: **Los POD books**. Cada uno de estos libros digitales está organizado temáticamente e incluye fotografías realizadas a lo largo de un solo día. Como en sus primeras series de influencia conceptual, aquí se plantea de nuevo el juego con los límites autoimpuestos de un marco estructural limitado, a la vez que con la idea de imitación de fotoreportaje.

## CATALOG

Produced by FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE, the catalog is retrospective in nature and includes insightful essays by Marta Dahó, David Company, Sandra Phillips and Horacio Fernández which shed a much more meaningful light on the work of Stephen Shore. These are accompanied by reproductions of works on display and a complete biography and bibliography on the author.

On this occasion, FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE has co-published the catalog in five languages in collaboration with several international publishers: Aperture for the English version, Xavier Barral for the French version, Kehrer for the German version and Contrasto for the Italian version.

A discussion between the author and the curator has been programmed for the presentation of the exhibition and will take place on September 17 at 6:30 pm in the FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE Auditorium at Recoletos 23.