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BLUE SKIES, RED PANIC

A photographic perspective on the 1950s in Europe

“The fifties – they seem to have taken place on a sunny afternoon that asked nothing of you except a drifting belief in the moment and its power to satisfy”. American novelist Elisabeth Hardwick masterfully worded the view on the iconic age of the baby-boom, the Vespa, the poodle skirt and the laminated kitchen that has settled obstinately in collective memory. In the decades that followed, the very real threats posed by the Cold War and the atomic bomb, have seemed to recede significantly. Yet time elapsed also creates a unique opportunity to revisit history with a fresh pair of eyes and more subtle shades of meaning. **BLUE SKIES, RED PANIC** looks through the lenses of some of the most outstanding photographers of the 1950s to an emerging Europe, hovering between east and west, liberty and repression, terror and euphoria.



BLUE SKIES, RED PANIC

KALEIDOSCOPE



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BLUE SKIES, RED PANIC

A photographic perspective on the 1950s in Europe



*Birthday party in the allotment garden, 1957
Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz. CC-BY-SA*

Introduction

The visual image of the fifties

To enjoy, interpret and appreciate this exhibition it is important to understand the project in which it came to fruition. Fifties in Europe Kaleidoscope is not an effort in writing the complex and dramatic history of the fifties. Sufficient sources have been published on major themes relating to that era, such as the reconstruction of Europe, the decolonization, technological developments, and the east-west divide. Neither is it an effort to write the history of photography of the fifties, although it is our hope and conviction that this project will contribute to a partial rewriting of the canonized history of photography of that period, which was almost entirely written from a Western perspective and highly influenced by e.g. Magnum Photos. Our archives, on the other hand, contain rich collections from Eastern and Central Europe as well.

What the project does aim at, is - starting from privileged access to photographic heritage from both east and west - to create a visual image of the fifties on different levels. Building on the drive to give open access to archive content through digitization and

online publishing - a main goal shared with Europeana, the digital cultural heritage initiative with which we've been partnering for years - and helped by the expertise network of Photoconsortium, we went on to investigate photographic remnants of the fifties with a triple objective in mind: to explore the self-perception of people in the fifties as captured in photographs, the reception of these images as an iconic representation of the era and how we perceive and engage with them today - their venture into our collective memory. This could be understood as a typical exponent of cultural studies research influenced by the possibilities of digital humanities.

Photography is an amazing and powerful medium. The photograph, whether made by an artist, professional, amateur or tourist alike, never just shows the "reality" as it is for grasp. First of all, it captures the incoming light through the lens; the machine frames it. Secondly, there is the selective eye of the photographer, who wants to frame part of the visual experience. So there is the human control but also the control of technology. It is a very specific

rendering of a visual experience. Contrary to film, where the director controls duration and forces the experience of the viewer into the next frame, the photograph, as a still object, leaves a lot of liberty to the viewer to time their experience. The viewer has control. The photographer wanted to see something and share it with others - it needs to be recognizable and transferable. The viewer wants to see something in the photograph. He needs to relate. The photographic image is in a way closer to imagination than it is to reality and fantasy.

People in the fifties all around Europe wanted to capture who they were and an idea of who they might become. They shared a common vision for postwar recovery - of how life after the war could be so much better than before - even though ideas on how to realize that vision differed across Europe. The photograph of the airplane is exemplary in this respect: the destructive technology of the war, which brought fear, desperation and utter devastation and created a dystopian environment, also held a promise to transform into an emancipatory, enabling force.

Fifties in Europe Kaleidoscope

Fifties in Europe Kaleidoscope is based on a comprehensive and articulated program of activities, ranging from content selection, user participation, development of educational tools, and testing of advanced machine learning algorithms to simplify metadata creation. The project is focused on photographic content dated from 1950s and it provides enhanced instruments to discover and access the visual heritage of that period in Europe, leveraging and stimulating the engagement of citizens.

Fifties in Europe Kaleidoscope is a project funded by the EU in the framework of the Connecting European Facility programme, to create attractive cultural experiences and to develop new technology services for the use and re-use of Europeana, the digital library of European cultural heritage. Merging photography and digital technology with curation and storytelling, the project aims to encourage students, researchers, citizens

and amateurs to discover, to re-build and to tell stories, through a kaleidoscope of photographic images of a world in change. Digital content can be discovered and re-used through the digital tools developed in the project, and made available on the Europeana portal.

The project unites ten partners from seven Member States. They are institutions with a public mission as well as private photo agencies. This blended consortium serves as an innovative model of cooperation, demonstrating how both sectors can benefit from participating in Europeana.

Photography captured the world of the fifties from its most beautiful angles and from its darkest sides. The collections of Fifties in Europe Kaleidoscope is a document of historical moments of European life in the fifties - landscapes and people, social and economic changes, architecture and design -, a crucial time in the process of construction of a collective

identity to be shared among the European citizens and beyond. A curated selection of these collections has been meticulously undertaken to exhibit the outstanding photography presented in this catalogue.

From September 2019 onwards, Fifties in Europe Kaleidoscope proudly presents the exhibition BLUE SKIES, RED PANIC. The exhibition opens in Pisa and then travels throughout Europe, displayed in different historical settings, complemented by a contemporary multimedia and online display, offering a virtual extension to the on-site experience.

‘Kaleidoscope’ is a perfect metaphor for the meaning of the project that has inspired this exhibition. It communicates the idea of many different experiences that can transform as long as we look at them from different perspectives, and that bring together contradictory feelings and beliefs, fears and joys that characterized the decade of the fifties in Europe.



A party of 30 British teenage boys sets out from Tilbury to Australia to take up farming, June 1959, TopFoto.co.uk. In Copyright

The exhibition

The Fabulous Fifties ?

Bouffants, polka dots, Balenciaga, Vespa, Rockabilly, Stepford chic: the list of iconic fifties-phenomena is nearly endless, as is the number of fifties-tropes that permeate our culture and media.

Which 1950s image is etched in your memory?

A family gathered around a Sunday roast? A Volkswagen Microbus or a pink Cadillac? Buddy Holly's horn rimmed glasses or Sophia Loren's hourglass figure? Your first television set and washing machine? Or Barbie and Scrabble entering

your toy collection?

What most of us share with contemporary accounts, is the view of the fifties as a time of intrinsic happiness: a modern-age, bright-coloured paradise. Horrors from the past were gone forever; a wrinkled tie or collapsed soufflé the only worries left. This rosy outlook, frozen in our collective memory, has been fed by the nostalgia of the baby-boom. Yet in recent years, a more holistic view has taken root.

This is the perspective we adopted when setting out to create an exhibition about the emergence of modern-day Europe. Because

political situations and living standards were very different across the continent. And while rock 'n' roll and strawberry milkshakes brought about a sweet taste of America, another superpower was causing 'red panic'. Profusion and stress, rebellion and repression, aspiration and anxiety made for an explosive mix that, in the end, would bring about a wind of change.

We warmly invite you to explore our photographs and stories, hand-picked and carefully curated to trigger your memory, challenge your perception and leave you longing for more.

Kaleidoscope

Much like scents, flavours and music, photographs are powerful triggers of memory. So what better medium to recall a past as recent and as visually recognizable as early postwar Europe...?

For about a year, the consortium involved in the EU-funded project Fifties in Europe Kaleidoscope has been diving into collections of libraries, archives and commercial agencies across Europe, to trace the tracks of the fifties in photography.

As the expected imagery surfaced

quite quickly, we soon started to question its veracity. With project partners from both sides of the Cold War divide, our perspective was 'bifocal' from the outset. The fifties were indeed the breeding ground for Europe as we know it today, but at the time political regimes, economic circumstances, societal developments, levels of prosperity and consumer trends were very different in the east and west, north and south.

This exhibition could have easily

turned into a simple game of contrasts and opposites. Yet while the pictures we selected are very much black and white, the stories they convey boast an endless range of greys. Through these shades, the reflection of the 1950s gains nuance, color and depth. Instead of a lens or a looking glass, we ended up using a kaleidoscope: a compound eye on differences and similarities, parallels and resonances, making the most of the 'beautiful forms' (kalos/eidos) of an iconic age.



German actor Viktor de Kowa marvels at a small Telefunken TV in Hamburg, 1956
United Archives / Siegfried Pilz. In Copyright

Postwar politics

In the 1950s, Europe was focused on recovering from the devastation and economic losses wrought by World War II. But the new geo-political situation left the continent divided between two very different approaches. The US and the USSR took up new defensive positions, opposite one another, and the onset of the Cold

War, represented by the ‘Iron Curtain’, divided Eastern bloc countries from the Western allies. In the east, countries became satellites of the Soviet Union, aiming at reconstructing society along communist lines; in the west, both democratic and fascist states were influenced by the United States and sought to bolster the capitalist

system. In the same spirit, Germany was split into two republics. Europe now found itself overshadowed by two superpowers. The process of decolonization added further to its precarious position: the end of the European empires gave way to 50 new sovereign states and induced a global wave of migration.

Between crisis and boom

A global economic crisis added to the pressure mounting in postwar Europe. Immediately after the war, even its strongest economies were struggling with debts, forcing citizens to sustain a frugal lifestyle. Support from the US, both in funds and goods, saved Europe from ruin and planted the seeds of growth. By 1950, trade in the west had regained its strength, to significantly surpass its prewar output just one year later!

In contrast to Eastern Europe’s struggle with sluggish growth, rising debts, high interest rates and spiraling inflation, several Western countries experienced a truly

miraculous recovery - a phenomenon known as ‘Wirtschaftswunder’. As a consequence, technology was advancing at such a speed, that products became obsolete by the time prototypes reached the mass market.

A wide range of new consumer goods was launched, from transistor radios, synthesizers and hula hoops to microwave ovens, blenders, and air conditioned lawn mowers. The television made its way into the living room, the nylon stocking into the wardrobe, the scooter into the driveway. Teenagers became a subculture, children a consumer market. Travel, entertainment,

sports, fashion, cuisine: all boasted new products and larger quantities of them to enjoy. The sky was no longer the limit, as Europe too came to realize when the Soviets launched Sputnik.

In the words of British prime minister Macmillan: “Most of our people have never had it so good”. But the other side of the coin was starting to show: the environment suffered under traffic and waste, crime and hooliganism were on the rise, and substance abuse became more widespread. None of that made it into the propaganda for the ‘Free World’, leaving its eastern counterpart with a bitter taste in the mouth.

*Little Conny Froboess sings "Pack die Badehose ein" ("Pack up your trunks"), a song composed by her father, into the RIAS broadcasting microphone, Berlin, May 1951
United Archives / kpa / Grimm. In Copyright*



Exhibition

Crowds for giants - The rise and fall of dictators	22	Living apart together - Collectivism versus individualism	34
Stalin flooded in Budapest, October 1956 The giants of Salt, October 1952		Garden with radio, Germany, 1950s Paul Anka performs at Linnanmäellä, August 1959	
Form & function - Ingenious design	24	Climate of fear - Countercultures and contingency plans	36
A German novelty in Girona, July 1954 Ready to fly with BEA, 1952		Policemen break the protest of the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War, December 1958 Journalist Matti Jämsä tests an asbestos suit, 1957 Smog mask made from an old war time gas cape, November 1953	
The show must go on - Politics on pellicule	26	(Un)bound - At liberty, in captivity	38
Dance with football from the movie ‘A Csodacsatár’, 1956 Brooms on the tarmac in ‘Flyg-Bom’, 1952		Lithuanian political prisoners in Inta, c. 1956 To the land of promise, May 1954 Leaving from London to Brisbane, July 1959	
The big build - Recovery and reconstruction	28	Cherchez la femme - Between bouffant and boiler suit	40
Homeless family at Hakaniemenranta, Helsinki, 1950s Council flats and gaping spaces at London’s Chinatown, 1951		Olive Walker, England’s only lady sweep, 1951 Doing the dishes with boxing gloves, 1950s Filming ‘Roc’ with Carme Trèmols, 1958	
Evolving trades - Postwar problem-solving	30	Suspicious minds - A continent under pressure	42
Harvesting grapes in Hoeilaart, Belgium, c. 1950 Clothes hanging in a ‘Waschkaue’, Germany, c. 1950		Vice-president Nixon opens the American Exhibition in Sokolniki Park, August 1959 The crew of a flying boat, June 1952 American sailors and London showgirls, August 1958	
Age of icons - Tradition & futurism	32		
Feast of flowers, 1953 11th Triennale in Milan ‘Eclettismo-formalismo’, 1957			



Stalin floored in Budapest, October 1956
National Széchényi Library. CC BY-NC-SA

Crowds for giants

The rise and fall of dictators

In the kaleidoscope of the 1950s, a handful of political heavyweights take pride of place. Among them Joseph Stalin, who transformed the Soviet Union into a world power during his 25-year rule. At the time of his death in 1953, Stalin had imposed control on over 100 million people living in Eastern Europe. Among these citizens, discontent with low living standards and scarce consumer goods was growing. The communist party too was in dire straits, particularly after the 'secret speech' delivered by First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev at the party congress of 1956. His anti-Stalinist philippic spurred excitement in the eight countries bound by the Warsaw Pact. Among them was Hungary, where an uprising ensued in October 1956. After an initial victory of the rebels and the withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact proclaimed by premier Imre Nagy, the Soviet army put a violent stop to the revolt, leaving behind 2.500 casualties and a fallen giant: the statue gifted by Stalin at the occasion of his 70th birthday. 'The Free World', in the meantime, had its own crosses to bear. Like Salazar in Portugal, dictator Francisco Franco ruled Spain for decades with a policy of limited personal freedom, state-controlled markets, censorship, repression and militarism. This photograph of a cheering crowd commemorates the inauguration of two very different 'giants': the folkloristic figures Grau and Eulàlia, whose impressive 3,5-metre silhouettes can still be seen wandering the streets of Salt.

The giants of Salt, October 1952 - Salvador Crescenti Miró
Ajuntament de Girona / CRDI. CC BY-NC-ND





Ready to fly with BEA, 1952
TopFoto.co.uk. In Copyright

Form & function

Ingenious design

A stylish globetrotter steals the scene, flaunting a prime example of 1950s smart design: the Canasta coat, made of water- and travel-proof cotton to cater for the adventurous fashionista. The choice of an airport as a setting for commercial photo shoots such as this one, was anything but a shot in the dark: the transport sector - aviation in particular - was Britain's most powerful lever of economic recovery in the postwar era. The story of British European Airways - an airline that operated from 1946 to 1974 and later transformed into British Airways - is exemplary. BEA operated the first-ever turbine-powered commercial air service in 1950, flew its millionth passenger in 1952, and by the end of the decade had become the biggest airline outside of the States. The aircraft featured in this image was another triumph of design, be it of American origin: a Douglas DC-3, the hero of the Allies' fleet in World War II. Its counterpart in the Luftwaffe was the Messerschmitt Bf 109, one of the most-produced warplanes in history. After the war, company director Willy Messerschmitt was convicted of collaboration and imprisoned for two years. Upon his release, as Germany was forbidden to produce aircrafts until 1955, Messerschmitt decided to target the consumer market and began producing sewing machines, prefabricated houses and small vehicles. Seen here in the streets of Girona is the three-wheeled Messerschmitt Kabinenroller KR175, designed by aircraft engineer Fritz Fend. The two-seater with plexi cover was a runaway success, as it was affordable, required a moped permit only, and allowed for ultimate liberty in personal transportation.

A German novelty in Girona, July 1954 - Martí Massafont Costals
Ajuntament de Girona / CRDI. CC BY-NC-ND





*Brooms on the tarmac in 'Flyg-Bom', 1952
Kulturmagasinet, Helsingborgs museer. Public Domain*

The show must go on

Politics on pellicule

Predating the 1956 uprising in Budapest by just a few months, the darker of these two film stills represents a scene from *A Csodacsatár* ('The marvelous striker'): a movie by Márton Keleti about the 'Mighty Magyars'. Hungary's golden soccer team of the 1950s put the nation on the map as a world power in sports, thus becoming a vital element of communist propaganda. At the time of the October revolt, the majority of the team was abroad, competing in the European Cup with Budapest Honvéd. Having lost the first game to Atlético Bilbao, the players refused to return to Hungary and arranged for the return match to be played in Brussels. The team was eliminated but instead of traveling home, players got their families to join them and subsequently took off on a fundraising tour in Europe and Brasil. Upon its completion, the group fell apart. The Hungarian regime attempted to erase the disloyal sportsmen from the nation's memory, as a result of which *A Csodacsatár* had to be partially re-filmed. The new version, premièring in 1957, no longer contained scenes with dissident players such as superstar Ferenc Puskás. While in this case, political messages were conveyed under the guise of an entertaining movie, many postwar films featured military scenery as the backdrop to an innocuous tale. In the Swedish comedy *Flyg-Bom* - the fourth in a series with actor Nils Poppe as Fabian Bom - the soldiers' uniforms and Swedish Air Force planes are just props and décors to a Chaplinesque tale of love, misfortunes, silly twists and blissful catharsis.

*Dance with football from the movie 'A Csodacsatár', 1956 - Gábor Kovács
National Széchényi Library. CC BY-NC-SA*





*Homeless family at Hakaniemenranta, Helsinki, 1950s - UA Saarinen
Press Photo archive JOKA, Finnish Heritage Agency. In Copyright*

The big build

Recovery and reconstruction

A dramatically framed no-man's-land, partly immersed in shadow, partly lit by an almost palpable, dusty shine. Very little in this picture hints to its situation in what was once London's 'Chinatown'. Located in the Limehouse area, the neighbourhood was notorious for its (rumored) opium dens, white-slave traders and slums, inspiring movies as well as songs and books such as the Fu Manchu-series. During the Blitz, the area was heavily struck and never managed to reassume its position as the crux of the Chinese community. So when in the 1950s huge waves of Chinese immigrants hit London in the wake of the Hong Kong land reforms, they chose to settle elsewhere: a new Chinatown was born in Soho. In Finland, changes in cityscapes and social stratospheres were mainly connected to transformations in economy and industry. As industrialization fostered rural to urban migration, the housing market in cities such as Helsinki couldn't cope with the influx of people, forcing many to sleep in the streets. Countermeasures were taken as early as 1949, when officials started to campaign against moving to the capital without having the necessary accommodation in place. Simultaneously, the state established the program 'Arava' through which it funded the construction of affordable houses. While several other Western European governments mounted loan, development and building programs and communist countries thought the nationalization of housing to be the solution, none were as successful as Finland, that since has managed to practically eradicate homelessness.

*Council flats and gaping spaces at London's Chinatown, 1951
TopFoto.co.uk. In Copyright*





*Clothes hanging in a 'Waschkaue', Germany, c. 1950
United Archives. In Copyright*

Evolving trades

Postwar problem-solving

Often remembered as an era of new beginnings, the 1950s were to a large extent a backlash to World War II. As political relations, living circumstances and economics underwent drastic changes, so did industry and agriculture. Coal - though threatened by other sources of energy - remained Europe's main energy supplier throughout the decade. Yet measures were needed to allow for expansion of production in what was then a damaged and out-of-date industry. While some countries focused on enlarging capacity through migrant workers' schemes, others invested in modernization. So did the Ruhr area: a chief supplier to the German market and pivotal force in the 'Wirtschaftswunder'. This evocative photograph of a 'Waschkaue' showcases the professional set-up at the Zollern mine. The structure, built above a mine-shaft, provided first-class washing facilities, allowing for colliers to shower and change at the beginning and the end of each shift. When not in use, clean and work clothes were raised on hooks: a safe and space-efficient storage solution. In postwar agriculture too, professionalization and organization were key. In Hoeilaart (Belgium), where grapes were grown in glasshouses as early as 1865, quality control, the establishment of a trade union and product diversification helped to sustain the international success of the luxury fruit during and after the war - a striking accomplishment, since at that time agriculture in Europe was generally on the decline. Yet Hoeilaart's strategy to produce wines from otherwise redundant grapes and to provide central services through cooperatives, made for a viable business model that eventually earned its grapes the 'Protected Designation of Origin' label.

*Harvesting grapes in Hoeilaart, Belgium, c. 1950
KIK-IRPA, Brussels (Belgium). CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*





11th Triennale in Milan 'Eclettismo-formalismo', 1957 - Paolo Monti
Fondazione Biblioteca Europea di Informazione e Cultura (BEIC). CC BY-SA

Age of icons

Tradition & futurism

In 1957, Paolo Monti - one of Italy's most iconic photographers - masterfully documented the eleventh edition of the Milan Triennial: an international exhibition of industrial, architectural and decorative arts, that aimed at "improving the quality of expression in today's civilisation". This photo shows off the state-of-the-art American pavilion designed by Walter Dorwin Teague and Paul McCobb. Known as Mid-Century Modern (MCM), the style of the pavilion reflects trends also seen in contemporary European design: simplicity, inspiration from nature, curved silhouettes, use of glass and aluminum, spatiality, a bright pallet, and a close link between form, function and aesthetics. Fifties design and architecture, as well as cars, fashion and music have remained 'en vogue' ever since. In recent years especially, all things vintage seem to be experiencing a boom, catering to a growing eco-conscious, anti-mass consumption market. Remnants of the 'golden age of Scandinavian design' - with legendary designers such as Arne Jacobsen, Hans Wegner and Poul Henningsen - are particularly coveted, as the democratic ideals at the center of the movement resonate within today's society. Shown in the second image is another side of fifties aesthetics - less iconic but equally as prevalent. In its very own way, the more traditional interior with its mix of patterned carpets, lace curtains and embroidered table runners, has found its way into contemporary homes via the bohemian or 'boho-chic' trend.



Feast of flowers, 1953 - Olof Bellander
Malmö museer. CC BY



*Paul Anka performs at Linnanmäellä, August 1959 - UA Saarinen
Finnish Heritage Agency. In Copyright*

Living apart together

Collectivism versus individualism

While the notions of communism and capitalism seem to suggest otherwise, the relationship between the individual and the collective in fifties-Europe was by no means a simple case of opposites. While Eastern Europe saw the emergence of its very own countercultures (e.g. the 'Stilyagi'), the West experienced state interference in matters such as housing, transport, industry and trades, and was prone to propaganda and mass crazes as much as its antipode. In postwar Germany, the previously centralized radio was dismantled into nine regional networks in addition to those of the allied forces. While in East Berlin, listening to the Radio in the American Sector (RIAS) was discouraged, the station continued to be "a free voice of the Free World", providing news and commentaries unavailable in other media outlets. Another illustration of the intricate intertwining of individualism and collectivism, was the globalization of fashion and music trends. Many of these originated in America and received wide acclaim within Europe's emerging teen culture. Teenagers embraced the "violent and noisy" rock 'n' roll of Elvis Presley, often to the despair of their parents, who preferred the milder style of artists such as Paul Anka. Seen in this press photograph is Anka - only a teenager himself - during his first performance on Finnish soil, to which his female fans reportedly greeted him with "a sound stronger than a million swifts".

*Garden with radio, Germany, 1950s
United Archives. In Copyright*





Policemen break the protest of the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War, December 1958 . TopFoto.co.uk. In Copyright



*Smog mask made from an old war time gas cape, November 1953
TopFoto.co.uk. In Copyright*

Climate of fear

Countercultures and contingency plans

With the devastating impact of the atomic bomb fresh in mind, postwar Europe was left with the terrifying knowledge that mankind held the power to destroy the planet. While experiments with nuclear energy shifted toward the production of steam and electricity, the development of weapons continued on both sides of the divide. Throughout the 1950s, public protest grew more organized, resulting in marches, sit-ins and other actions. Depicted here is the forced removal of an activist of the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War from a site in Swaffham, Norfolk, that was destined to become a missile base jointly operated by the United States and the United Kingdom. A silent killer of which the destructive powers were becoming more apparent too, asbestos continued to be used in house insulation, textured paint and vinyl tiles. Notwithstanding the fact that its detrimental effects were known since the 1900s, asbestos remained attractive as an affordable, naturally occurring and extremely fire resistant material - as demonstrated here by a journalist testing an asbestos suit. A continuous and inescapable danger to health was the smog that covered industrial and metropolitan cities across Europe. The most devastating case was that of London and the 'Great Smog' of December 1952. The worst of all 'pea soupers' was caused by pollutants resulting from the use of coal, combined with cold weather and a lack of wind. Thousands of people succumbed and approximately 100,000 more fell ill, urging the government to issue new regulations (e.g. the Clean Air Act of 1956) and citizens to be at their most resourceful for the sake of self-protection.

*Journalist Matti Jämsä tests an asbestos suit, 1957 - UA Saarinen
Press Photo archive JOKA, Finnish Heritage Agency. In Copyright*





*Lithuanian political prisoners in Inta, c. 1956
Kaunas IX Fort Museum. CC BY*



*To the land of promise, May 1954
TopFoto.co.uk. In Copyright*

(Un)bound

At liberty, in captivity

Advancements in transport, better wages, paid holidays and the window on the world offered by television, sparked off the golden age of mass tourism in the 1950s. While in the west a shift occurred from domestic to international travel, the Eastern bloc's favorite destination was Bulgaria, where commodities such as chocolate and cigarettes were easy to obtain. Europe was on the move, but not only for enjoyment and adventure. An unprecedented number of people left their countries in search of a job, among which 1.5 million 'Ten Pound Poms': British citizens opting in on the assisted passage scheme offered by the Australian government to help solve its 'populate or perish'-issue. Entering the 'doorway to a bright future' costed no more than £10 and a commitment to remain in Australia for at least two years. Moving in the opposite direction, c. 500,000 workers from former British colonies relocated following the 1948 British Nationality Act. The 'Windrush generation' - named after the ship that transported the first Jamaican immigrants - changed the face of postwar Britain. Yet relocating was not always a voluntary move. In Italy, poverty and epidemics forced people out of rural areas in the South. In Hungary over 200,000 people fled after the 1956 revolt. In Greece, thousands were evacuated to Eastern bloc countries following the Civil War. And in Russia, countless opponents of the Soviet regime were imprisoned in labor camps. The cautious smiles and ill-fitting clothes of these Lithuanian prisoners serve as a powerful reminder of the fact that, in Europe too, personal freedom and liberty of speech were never a given but a costly amenity.

*Leaving from London to Brisbane, July 1959
TopFoto.co.uk. In Copyright*





Filming 'Roc' with Carme Trèmols, 1958
Ajuntament de Girona / CRDI. Copyright not evaluated



Doing the dishes with boxing gloves, 1950s - Siegfried Pilz
United Archives. In Copyright

Cherchez la femme

Between bouffant and boiler suit

The cigar-smoking businessman, his apron-clad wife, their cute, obedient children and an always impeccable home: in the US as well as in Western Europe, the 'nuclear family' was championed in the 1950s as a counterweight to the destabilization brought about by the Cold War. Radio, television and advertising jointly conveyed this ideal vision, with slogans such as 'Father Knows Best' and 'Femininity Begins At Home'. Today, still, the fifties are mainly viewed as an age of conformity in which gender roles were clearly defined and uncritically adhered to. But beneath the surface, discontent with the status quo was growing. Having been part of the working force during the war, not all women were eager to return to being a wife and mother. While the baby-boom reinforced the identification of women with the relation to their husbands and children, many chose a different path. Women on both sides of the Iron Curtain started to juggle a household and a job. While in the West, brand-new kitchen appliances and smart housekeeping tools helped women to save time for professional activities, in Eastern Europe they were aided by centralized governmental services and facilities. Still, throughout the decade social repression was a daily reality for women all around Europe - from France, where women were not yet fully enfranchised, to the UK, where conservative postwar policies supported women in their capacity as wife and mother. Only 1.2% of the university population in the 1950s was female, while home and parenting remained to be seen as a woman's responsibility solely. This series of photographs features women in three different guises: 53-year-old grandmother Olive Walker - Europe's only lady sweep - representing the woman at work, a dishwashing housekeeper taking up the gauntlet for the woman at home, and actress Carme Trèmols as the glamour lady on a pedestal.

Olive Walker, England's only lady sweep, 1951 - George Douglas
TopFoto.co.uk. In Copyright





*The crew of a flying boat, June 1952
TopFoto.co.uk. In Copyright*



*American sailors and London showgirls, August 1958
TopFoto.co.uk. In Copyright*

Suspicious minds

A continent under pressure

A festive inauguration, a jolly outing and a casual conversation: at first glance, these photographs are the epitome of the proverbial ‘Fabulous Fifties’. In reality, however, they expose some of the lingering doubts and burning suspicions that took hold of Europe. Despite a beaming Richard Nixon proudly cutting the cord, the American Exhibition at Sokolniki park near Moscow was an extremely controversial affair, that sharpened east/west tensions. Even before the opening, fueled by conspiracy theories (McCarthyism), debate erupted over the presumed communist allegiances of some of the artists featured. Later, the exhibit’s stunning kitchen and ‘Typical American House’ displays spurred heated discussions about the misrepresentation of the Free World. That nothing was clear-cut in the relationship between west and east is also attested to by the portrait of the flight crew of a Swedish Catalina. In what became known as the Catalina affair, Soviet fighter jets shot down their flying boat above international waters, as it was searching for another plane that had disappeared off the radar. It took 40 years for Sweden to admit to having breached the Soviet Frontier during a spying mission, and for the Soviets to confirm they were indeed responsible for the retaliation. Finally, things weren’t all roses between the Allies either. The fear of ‘Americanisation’ took on ‘red panic’ proportions, quite a few Western countries had strong communist movements, and post-imperial Britain struggled to find its place in the new bi-polar world.

To these sailors from the American nuclear submarine Nautilus, those lingering tensions would have been completely forgotten for at least a few hours during their day out in London, heading to the Winter Garden Theatre in the enchanting company of the Folies-Bergère showgirls.

*Vice-president Nixon opens the American Exhibition in Sokolniki Park, August 1959
United Archives/Sovfoto/Universal Images Group. In Copyright*



The partners of the Kaleidoscope project

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

KU Leuven CS Digital has as a main research focus Digitized Cultural Heritage and Digital Culture, in the area of Digital Humanities. In particular, CS Digital works on digitization with photographic techniques of art heritage and of digitization of photographic heritage. CS Digital works with Cultural Institutions and technology partners to push the adoption of imaging technologies in the GLAM sector. CS Digital technically supports the Open Journal “Image [&] Narrative”.

<http://www.kuleuven.be/>

Photoconsortium - International Consortium for Photographic Heritage

Photoconsortium is a non for profit association whose purpose is the promotion and enhancement of the culture of photography and the photographic heritage, including as members important institutions, agencies and photography professionals and amateurs. Photoconsortium acts as the Europeana expert hub and aggregator for photography, also curating a thematic channel featuring early photography from some of Europe’s finest historical collections.

<https://www.photoconsortium.net/>

Coventry University

Coventry University is a forward looking modern University, a provider of high quality education with a focus on quality research. The University has a reputation for excellent teaching and research, believing that arts and humanities have a transformative effect on our lives. Coventry’s new research strategy, ‘Excellence with Impact’, builds on this trend and will transform the way we conduct research by applying fresh and original approaches.

<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/>

Ajuntament de Girona - Centre de Recerca i Difusió de la Imatge

The Centre for Image Research and Diffusion in Girona has the mission to know, to protect, to promote, to offer and to disseminate the Image Heritage of Girona, collecting photographs and audiovisual material that reflect and record every aspect of life of the city, from past to present. The collection has grown to currently around 3 million photographs, complemented by original films and thousands of hours of TV records and Radio broadcasts.

<http://www.girona.cat/sgdap/cat/index.php>

National Technical University of Athens - Image, Video and Intelligent Multimedia Systems Lab

NTUA-IVML is a key technological contributor in the Digital Libraries domain and particularly in the Europeana ecosystem developments, dealing with content analysis and interoperability issues. IVML has developed the MINT tool for metadata interoperability that is being used within the Europeana ecosystem, and is currently developing WITH, a platform dedicated to both cultural institutions and personal users that facilitates access, sharing and reuse of cultural heritage resources.

<http://www.iccs.gr/eng/>



imec Interuniversitair Micro-Electronica Centrum

imec is the world-leading R&D and innovation hub in nanoelectronics and digital technologies, comprising demand-driven and fundamental research, aiming to deliver unique solutions leveraging cross-boundary expertise in micro-electronics & photonics, hardware-software co-design and networks & systems. imec-ETRO-VUB has a long-standing expertise in digital imaging and video processing for medical imaging, media systems, industrial processing and digital heritage.

<https://www.imec-int.com/en/home>

Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz

SPK (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) is an internationally renowned cultural institution and an important player in the humanities and the social sciences, originally founded to preserve the collections of the Prussian state as heritage for all of Germany. The Foundation includes museums, libraries, archives, and research institutes and nowadays its collections have a universal character, documenting the evolution of human culture from its beginnings to the present in Europe and on other continents.

<http://hv.spk-berlin.de/english/>

Koninklijk Instituut voor het Kunstpatrimonium - Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique

The Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage is one of ten scientific institutions falling within the competence of the Federal Ministry of Scientific Policy of Belgium. KIK-IRPA is committed to the photographic inventory, the scientific study, the conservation and the promotion of the country’s artistic and cultural heritage and leads a variety of initiatives for educators and professionals. The Institute plays as such a key role in the promotion of heritage and the diffusion of tools for researchers and the public.

<http://www.kikirpa.be/>

Topham Partners LLP - TOPFOTO

TopFoto is an independent picture library representing 10 million images, from medieval documents to today’s digital files being sent in from all over the world. TopFoto has educated and entertained several generations from all over the world by supplying publishers with a global record of visual cultural heritage from its 20th Century photographic archive, comprising of millions negatives and hardcopy prints, including a number of historic press agencies.

<https://www.topfoto.co.uk/>

Országos Széchényi Könyvtár – National Széchényi Library

National Széchényi Library is the eldest public library in Hungary, preserving the biggest collection of all documents published in Hungary since the 1800s. The Photo Department, recently established, takes care of collecting and digitizing relevant historical photos from different funds for educational and cultural purposes. The 1956 Institute – Oral History Archive is also a department of the National Széchényi Library, preserving and documenting the history of the Hungarian revolution.

<http://www.oszk.hu/>





*Dior's idea for the scooter girl, 5 June 1952
TopFoto.co.uk. In Copyright*

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