

NATIONAL PORTRAIT
GALLERY

Portraits to
Dream In:
Francesca Woodman and
Julia Margaret Cameron





Polka dots inside collage.

1864

Sadness.

polka dots #3



Exhibition Overview

This exhibition, *Portraits to Dream In*, will juxtapose the lives and work of two of the most important & popular women practitioners in the history of photography – Julia Margaret Cameron (1815 – 1875) and Francesca Woodman (1958 – 1981).

Spanning their careers, the exhibition includes some of their best-known and most loved work as well as lesser-known photographs.

Portraits to Dream In will contain roughly 120 original prints, offering visitors the opportunity to consider these two artists in a new light. Its thematic structure of groups and rooms will explore different ideas – both visual and conceptual – that underpin Cameron’s and Woodman’s work. Such as, process, artistic intentions, and formal qualities.

Second Slide images:
Sadness, 1864
by Julia Margaret Cameron

Polka Dots #5, 1976
by Francesca Woodman

Francesca Woodman, 1980

“I feel that photographs can
either document and record
reality or they can offer images as
an alternative to everyday life:
places for the viewer to dream in”



About the Artists

Julia Margaret Cameron and Francesca Woodman encountered very different ways of making and viewing photographs. However, there are many fascinating resonances between the two.

Despite the passage of time that separates them, both women worked for a relatively short and concentrated period. To date, their careers and output have, to some degree, been read with an emphasis on their biographic circumstance. In contrast, this exhibition proposes new ways of appreciating and thinking about these important artists, portraiture and the relationships between 19th and 20th century photographic practice.

Cameron and Woodman provide approachable and inspiring points of entry to photography for students and young people around the world. At the same time, the depth of their practices and the significance of their artistic legacies gives them the rare quality of sustaining an enduring engagement with specialist audiences and life-long lovers of the visual arts.

Further Information

Size: Approximately 120 works

Area: from ca 400-700 m²

Available from: Summer 2024

Important note: the works illustrated in this presentation are indicative of the current exhibition content. They may be substituted for other works, but also potentially supplemented by extra works in discussion with venues. Please get in touch for further information on the works in the exhibition.

The exhibition is curated by Magda Keaney, former Senior Curator of Photographs at the National Portrait Gallery. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully-illustrated publication.

For further information please contact:

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2023 – Portraits to Dream In: Francesca Woodman and Julia Margaret Cameron