



**From 28 May through 24 August in the Mateo Inurria 2 Hall**

***Duane Michals, the  
photographer who makes the  
invisible visible, comes to  
Fundación Canal***

Exhibition included in PHotoESPAÑA 2025's official section

- Duane Michals is one of the most influential contemporary photographers in redefining photographic language. He is one of the most prestigious names in the North American avant-garde, a forerunner of conceptual photography.
- He shifted the photographic paradigm in the 60s when he decided to photograph "the invisible," expressing his thoughts instead of capturing scenes from reality.
- He brought the narrative of a project in sequences and photo text to photography, representing abstract concepts like spirituality, philosophy, the passage of time, death, love, and the self.

NOTA DE PRENSA



**PHE<sup>25</sup>**

PRENSA

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*The Illuminated Man, 1968. © Duane Michals Inc. / courtesy of Admira Milano*

**Madrid, 27 May 2025.-** From 28 May through 24 August 2025, Fundación Canal is pleased to present the exhibition [Duane Michals. El fotógrafo de lo invisible \(Duane Michals. Photographer of the Invisible\)](#), a one-of-a-kind retrospective included in PHotoEspaña 2025's official section. Curated by Enrica Viganà and created in close collaboration with the artist himself, the collection gathers 51 works consisting of 150 photographs spanning six decades of uninterrupted work, from 1964 until his most recent creations, including a sequence from this year.

Duane Michals (McKeesport, Pennsylvania, 1932) was a key figure in the redefinition of contemporary photography and is considered a forerunner to conceptual and philosophical photography. Self-taught and unaware of the medium's standards, he introduced visual narratives through sequences that tell a story and handwritten texts to accompany his images, challenging the documentary canon and shifting the focus toward the emotional, metaphysical, and poetic.

His photography, more like cinema or literature than the photojournalist tradition, questions the status of image as a record of reality. It represents abstract concepts like spirituality, philosophy, the passage of time, death, love, and the self.

The exhibition's itinerary is structured around six thematic sections that fall under key concepts in Michals' work: Imagination, Visualisation, Sensation, Intuition, Indignation, and Revelation. Through them, the visitor discovers a universe where the boundaries between reality and dreams are blurred, and where photography becomes a space for introspection, play, and philosophical questioning.





The exhibition includes some of the most iconic sequences, like *Chance Meeting* (1970) and *Things Are Queer* (1973), portraits of references like Marcel Duchamp and René Magritte, self-portraits loaded with irony and emotion, and recent works in colour. The exhibition ends with an ensemble of five short videos, shot just a few months ago, where Michals himself comments on the purpose and most intimate aspects of some of the works from the exhibition. A fully enriching testimony to delve even deeper into this great photographer and philosopher's work.

This is an exceptional opportunity to rediscover the work of an artist who continues to create at his 93 years of age with the same critical lucidity that made him one of the most unique voices in 20th-century photography.

**The exhibition itinerary is organised around the great themes that run through Michals' work, prioritising the concepts that he investigates more than a chronological or strictly formal focus:**

### **Imagination**

Michals uses imagination not as evasion, but rather as a pathway to access profound truths. In this section, he addresses death with a metaphysical, intimate, and oftentimes tender gaze, like in *Grandpa Goes to Heaven* (1989), where the journey to the afterlife is portrayed through the lens of childhood innocence. Through simple staging and techniques like double exposure, he builds images that are visual allegories of the invisible.

### **Visualisation**

This brings together works that are born of an abstract idea brought to image through visual constructions that are carefully composed and based on his interest in science and philosophy. Sequences like *Things Are Queer* (1973) and *Alice's Mirror* (1974) play with perception and logic, challenging our understanding of reality. It also includes pieces inspired by quantum physics and literature, which show how Michals interweaves science, narrative, and visual art. The author uses technical and staging resources to represent extraordinarily complex thoughts.

### **Sensation**

He explores perception beyond the five senses: intuitions, emotions, presentiments. Works like *The Illuminated Man* (1964) and *Chance Meeting* (1970) reveal moments of transformation and inexplicable recognition. The photographic sequences allow for capturing the progression of an internal experience beyond the grasp of verbal language.

### **Intuition**

Intuition, defined as a sort of immediate and non-rational knowledge, is very present in Duane Michals' work, especially in his facet as a professional portraitist. He rejected the traditional idea of the photographer who "explores" the person in the portrait. Instead, he proposed the "portrait in prose:" images that arise from dialogue, the context, and





the atmosphere of the moment. These are portraits more about a person than of a person. This section gathers a meticulous selection of portraits he made throughout his career, ranging from close individuals like Magritte, Duchamp, and Warhol, to personalities such as Pasolini, Tilda Swinton, and Grace Coddington, in addition to several self-portraits loaded with his proverbial humour.

### Indignation

Duane Michals has always been known for having a critical gaze, engaged with his time. He is neither an activist nor a neutral observer: he takes a stance when something moves or outrages him, and he seeks original ways to spark a reflection in the individual contemplating his work. Photographs and texts address issues like racial discrimination, homophobia, and the loss of the paternal bond, without theatrics, yet with a powerful critical edge. There is no presumption of absolute truth, and much less so a pedagogical attitude. He only aims to show his original reflections without prejudice. Works like *The Unfortunate Man* (1976) and *A Letter from My Father* (1975) combine word and image to denounce injustice from a place of emotion and poetry.

### Revelation

The last section is the most autobiographical. Michals reflects on time, memory, identity, and death. In series like *The House I Once Called Home* (2002), he overlays current and past photographs to reflect the persistence of memories. He also includes imaginary and visionary self-portraits that speak to the viewer of permanence and loss. In this section, his characteristic handwritten texts take on special relevance, forming works that not only reveal aspects of his biography, but also profound reflections with which the artist himself has photography-based dialogue.

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