

# LAGUNA ART MUSEUM

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 17, 2022

### **MEDIA CONTACT:**

Laura Lanzi, The ACE Agency  
(714) 343-5786, [lauralanzi@theaceagency.com](mailto:lauralanzi@theaceagency.com)

## **Laguna Art Museum Spotlights the Lost Art of *Photography & Seduction: William Mortensen's Laguna Beach***

*One of the only museum exhibitions showcasing the work of prolific photographer and Laguna Beach resident William Mortensen*



*Untitled (Self-Portrait as magician).  
Metal-Chrome print. 13 1/2 x 10 5/8 inches. 1981.007  
Laguna Art Museum Collection. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John Poyas.*

**LAGUNA BEACH, Calif. (August 17, 2022)** — Laguna Art Museum will present ***Photography & Seduction: William Mortensen's Laguna Beach*** on view October 1, 2022 through January 15, 2023. Honoring the Laguna Beach resident, the exhibition will be one of the only museum exhibitions of his work, illustrating his ascent as one of the most famous photographers of his time.

“We look forward to presenting one of the only museum exhibitions dedicated to the work of the revered and hated William Mortensen,” said Julie Perlin Lee, Executive Director of Laguna Art Museum. “In addition to showcasing a variety of pieces throughout Mortensen’s famed career, the exhibition will be accompanied by a film narrated by Vincent Price on the artist.”

# LAGUNA ART MUSEUM

*Photography & Seduction* will take museum visitors on a journey through Mortensen's career from his star-studded Hollywood beginnings to his teachings, as well as influences, processes and more. Mortensen was the first American photographer to use the grotesque in a long-term series of artwork, using tools like pens, paints, pumice and razor blades to alter images. After making a name for himself in Hollywood, Mortensen was drawn to the city of Laguna Beach where he opened a photography school and was often called "The Master" by his students for teachings known as "The Mortensen Method."

"What we want to accomplish is to recast Mortensen and his work," said guest curator Larry Lytle. "We will be showing the linkage between Mortensen's photographs with—his teaching; his books and articles; the photographic processes he invented, and the ones he appropriated, using them in a way that suited his needs: his philosophy about art and photography; his use of branded products to control how students approached using his processes; and the multitude of art influences such as paintings, movies, poetry and literature, along with his connections to personalities in a variety of fields that made an impact on him."

American photographer William Mortensen (1897-1965) is remembered as being in contention with the popularly accepted photographic techniques of his time. Rather than presenting a pure or unadulterated image, Mortensen altered his photographs by whatever means necessary to achieve his desired effect. Mortensen was at odds with Group f64 whose members included such influential American photographers as Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham and Edward Weston. It is said that Mortensen was written out of the history of photography by his peers. Ansel Adams notably labeled Mortensen as the "Anti-Christ." His most well-known works speak to themes relating to the grotesque; however, Mortensen focused on various subjects throughout his career.

William Mortensen established his home and the Mortensen School of Photography on October 2, 1931. The school was originally located at 1731 South Coast Highway in Laguna Beach. Mortensen moved the school to different locations throughout Laguna Beach until his death in 1965.

In addition to *Photography & Seduction*, the museum will present ***Her Great Gift: The Nancy Dustin Wall Moure Collection*** on display August 28, 2022 through February 12, 2023. The exhibition features 40 artworks from the 1830s through the 1970s from Wendt Award 2022 recipient Nancy Dustin Wall Moure's collection that traces how artists documented the California experience. Discover the earliest known oil painting made in Southern California, California plein air paintings, watercolors from the WPA period, mid-century abstractions, and explorations into Light and Space.

For more information about *Photography & Seduction: William Mortensen's Laguna Beach* and *Her Great Gift: The Nancy Dustin Wall Moure Collection*, visit [lagunaartmuseum.org](http://lagunaartmuseum.org). To stay connected and learn about upcoming events, follow the museum on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

###

## About Laguna Art Museum

Laguna Art Museum is the museum of California art. It collects, cares for, and exhibits works of art that were created by California artists or represent the life and history of the state. Through its

# LAGUNA ART MUSEUM

permanent collection, its special loan exhibitions, its educational programs, and its library and archive, the museum enhances the public's knowledge and appreciation of California art of all periods and styles and encourages art-historical scholarship in this field.

Laguna Art Museum stands just steps from the Pacific Ocean in the beautiful city of Laguna Beach. The museum is proud to continue the tradition of the Laguna Beach Art Association, founded in 1918 by the early California artists who fostered a vibrant arts community. The gallery that the association built in 1929 is part of today's Laguna Art Museum.

For more information, please visit [www.lagunaartmuseum.org](http://www.lagunaartmuseum.org)

## **Location**

Laguna Art Museum is located at 307 Cliff Drive in Laguna Beach, on the corner of Coast Highway and Cliff Drive.

## **Hours**

Monday - Tuesday, Thursday - Sunday: 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Closed Wednesdays

Closed Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day