

## MEDIA RELEASE

University Galleries of Illinois State University is pleased to present *Ilse Bing: Doublings* from May 20 through August 6, 2024. All events are free and open to the public. This exhibition presents seven photographs by Bing, all of which were selected from the permanent collection of University Galleries.

Born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1899, Ilse Bing was among the most inventive photographers of the 20th century's first half. She spent her most artistically productive decade—the 1930s—in Paris. In the early 1940s she was displaced by the Nazis and moved to New York City, where she continued making and exhibiting photographs. Equally a commercial and a fine art photographer, Bing produced magazine commissions and hazy atmospheric scenes, professional portraits and near-abstract formal studies. While she was never exclusively connected to a particular movement or group, she associated with and was influenced by several: the Bauhaus, New Photography, and Surrealism.

This small exhibition focuses on the artistic technique of "doubling," which Bing adopted from Surrealism. Surrealism was an artistic movement established in Paris in the years following World War I. The movement sought to liberate people's unconscious thoughts and desires from repressive social structures. Inspired by modern psychology, Surrealists developed a host of artistic methods whose aim was to make common objects and experiences seem uncommon. Doubling was one such method. It refers to the act of representing the same object in two or more ways, whether from different angles, in different settings, or in slightly altered forms.

Bing frequently deployed doubling in her work. In [House on river](#) (1934), the artist has captured an image of a riparian structure, as well as its reflection, from the river's opposite shore. Certain aspects of the photograph, like the tree trunk that extends prominently from the photo's bottom left corner to its top edge, give a sense of solidity. The trunk, slightly angled, anchors the picture, a firm form in the foreground against which the view of the town behind it appears to recede. But undercutting this, almost half the image is made up of something markedly less solid: the rippling river. This distorts the same view the tree seems to frame before throwing it back at the camera's lens (and therefore the viewer) upside down and slightly abstracted. Not only does the reflected image of the house waver, but it seems nearly to hover in the ambiguous space of the river's surface. No horizon line or other buildings give it context. The trunk, while parallel to the roof of the original house, bends towards the reflected image at an awkward acute angle. Yet the reflection refers indelibly to the reflected object. Bing seems to ask, "What can we learn about the one that the other on its own can't show us?"

Such dual depictions remind us of the unimaginable complexity of even the simplest objects, and of the ways we tend to ignore or suppress this complexity in our day-to-day experiences. In addition to *House on river*, this exhibition contains three pairs of photographs — each pair showing the same object from different perspectives — that demonstrate how photography can be a key to the hidden world of things. While Bing did not intend any of these photographs to be exhibited as pairs, seeing

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them as such allows us to consider their involvement in her broader modernist project of estranging the subjects of her photographs from any easy notions of what they are or what they mean.

During her lifetime, Bing's photographs were included in such publications as *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue*, *Le monde illustre*, and *Vu*. She has been the subject of exhibitions at the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Victoria & Albert Museum (London), and the Fundación Mapfre (Madrid), and her work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.), the Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam), and the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), among many others. Bing died in New York City in 1998.

*Ilse Bing: Doublings* is organized by Troy Sherman, Curator at University Galleries.

### Events

All events are free and open to the public.

- **Fridays (May 24 through July 26) from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.**  
Independent drawing hour. Look closely at artworks in the exhibition and draw at your own pace. No registration required. Materials provided.
- **Saturdays (May 25, June 1, June 22, July 13, July 20) from 11:00 a.m. to noon**  
Sensory-friendly hour. Visit before opening hours to enjoy dimmed lighting and a quiet space.
- **Wednesdays (May 29, June 12, July 3, July 17) from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m.**  
Sensory-friendly hour. Visit before opening hours to enjoy dimmed lighting and a quiet space.
- **Saturday, June 22 from noon to 2:00 p.m.**  
Drop-in art-making workshop for all ages. View Ilse Bing's photographs and explore digital photography. No registration required. Materials and instruction provided.
- **Thursday, June 27 from noon to 4:00 p.m.**  
Stop-motion animation workshop for all ages. [Registration required](#). Materials and instruction provided.
- **Friday, June 28 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.**  
Poetry workshop. Write and perform poems in response to artworks on view.
- **Wednesday, July 17 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.**  
Poetry workshop. Write and perform poems in response to artworks on view.
- **Friday, July 19 from noon to 4:00 p.m.**  
Stop-motion animation workshop for all ages. [Registration required](#). Materials and instruction provided.
- **Tuesday through Friday, July 23 through July 26 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**  
Summer camp for ages 10 through 14. [Registration required](#). All materials provided.

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- **Saturday, July 27 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.**  
Closing reception
- Free curator-led exhibition tours and workshops are available by appointment for classes and community groups. Contact [Gallery@IllinoisState.edu](mailto:Gallery@IllinoisState.edu) to schedule.

University Galleries, a unit in the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts, is located at 11 Uptown Circle, Suite 103, at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available in the Uptown Station parking deck located directly above University Galleries—the first hour is free, as well as any time after 5:01 p.m.

You can find [University Galleries](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#), and sign up to receive email updates through the [newsletter](#). Please contact [Gallery@IllinoisState.edu](mailto:Gallery@IllinoisState.edu) or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to these exhibitions.