

The Wonderful World of Albert Kahn

Rediscovering a forgotten treasure

HISTORY

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Channel: BBC FOUR

Duration: 9 x 50 minutes

M & E available



Over 72,000 colour photographs. One hundred hours of film footage. This vast treasury is held in the archives of The Albert Kahn Museum in Paris – home to the most important collection of early colour photography in the world.

Between 1908 and 1930, millionaire French banker and philanthropist Albert Kahn decided to send photographers around the globe to document life on the planet. Thanks to his vast personal fortune, Kahn's photographers were able to travel to more than 50 countries, capturing the environment and cultures of the known world.

These photographers witnessed some of the most momentous events of the age, but they also photographed the intimate details of the everyday lives of ordinary people.

A century on, viewers can see Kahn's remarkable archive of vivid and hauntingly-beautiful colour pictures.

Episode 1: A Vision of the World

Explores the origins of the project, the photographic processes of the time and introduces viewers to Albert Kahn, before telling the stories of journeys to England and Ireland in 1913.

Episode 2: Men of the World

In 1908, Kahn and his photographer-cum-chauffeur Alfred Dutertre embarked on the most ambitious of the early journeys of the project: a circumnavigation of the globe, visiting the US, Japan and China.

Episode 3: Europe on the Brink

In 1910, Auguste Léon visited Scandinavia and went on to document life in Italy and the Balkans – a place that within months would witness the event that sparked the First World War.

Episode 4: The Soldiers' Story

Between 1914 and 1918, Kahn dispatched several photographers to the battlefields of Verdun, capturing the destruction and crude medical procedures of the time.

Episode 5: The Civilians' Story

This film records the hardship and heroism of the 39 million ordinary French men and women in the towns and villages on the front lines during the conflict.

Episode 6: Europe: After the Fire

When the Armistice was signed in 1918, Kahn's cameras captured scenes of jubilation in Paris, and went on to document the return to normality.

Episode 7: Middle East: The Birth of Nations

With the war over and the once-mighty Ottoman Empire disintegrated, Kahn's cameras were present as new nations were born – and witnessed the ensuing violence.

Episode 8: Far East: Expeditions to Empires

Between 1914 and 1928, some of Kahn's most talented photographers were sent to the Far East: Cambodia, Vietnam, Japan and India.

Episode 9: The End of a World

The series concludes with the poignant story of Kahn's demise: once one of the richest men in Europe, he died penniless.

Executive Producer

David Okuefuna

Race Through Time, Communism and Football

A BBC/Musée Albert-Kahn (département des Hauts-de-Seine – France) co-production