

People Watching: Contemporary Photography since 1965

June 24–November 5, 2023

Bowdoin College Museum of Art | Brunswick, Maine

Exhibition Labels

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chromogenic print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift, Joe Baio Collection of Photography

2020.51.19

Paul D'Amato is known for his intimate portraits of urban life. In this photograph, he captures a young boy with arms crossed seemingly ignoring the action unfolding behind him. While the boys in the background are blurry with movement, the primary subject—the boy in a light blue shirt—is in sharp focus. His contemplative tranquility appears to transcend the chaos that surrounds him. This photograph was created in Portland during a period when D'Amato taught at the Maine College of Art. Today he resides in Chicago, where he has used his camera to explore different communities in that city.

BRUCE DAVIDSON

American, born 1933

Untitled, 1966

gelatin silver print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Museum Purchase

1985.47

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ZIG JACKSON

Mandan, Arikara, and Hidatsa/American, born 1957

Crow Fair, Montana, 1991

Camera in Face, Taos, New Mexico, 1992

gelatin silver prints

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Museum Purchase, Gridley W. Tarbell II Fund

2019.52.5 and 2019.52.6

These two photographs by Zig Jackson are from his series, “Indian Photographing Tourist Photographing Indian.” Raised on the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota, and of Arikara, Hidatsa, and Mandan descent, Jackson seeks in his photographs to debunk misconceptions about Native

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Midwest and the South photographing civil rights demonstrations and other activist programs. During this same period, he also joined the Chicago Outlaws motorcycle club. For five years he rode with its members, while also creating a memorable series of photographs. *Crossing the Ohio, Louisville* is one example from this series. In 1968 he published a selection of these works in his first book *The Bikeriders*.

DAIDO MORIYAMA

Japanese, born 1938

Three Boys, 1968

gelatin silver print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift, Joe Baio Photography Collection

2020.51.31

Rejecting the straight realism favored by many contemporary fine art photographers and photojournalists in the West, Daido Moriyama embraced a photographic style beginning in the 1960s characterized by blurred movement, sharply tilted angles, and harsh contrast. Carrying a hand-held camera, he made the cultural upheaval of postwar Japan his primary subject. In photographs such as *Three Boys*, he recorded the people he encountered on the street, indifferent to portraying them in a favorable light. In 1968, Moriyama helped to establish *Provoke*, a short-lived but deeply influential avant-garde photography magazine. For the past sixty years, he has used his practice to question preconceived notions of photographic truth and vision.

GARRY WINOGRAND

American, 1928–1984

top row, left to right:

New York City, 1967

New York City, 1972

bottom row, left to right:

New York City, 1968

New York City, 1968

gelatin silver prints

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of Michael G. Frieze, Class of 1960

1983.29.2.4, 1983.29.2.11, 1983.29.2.2, and 1983.29.2.6

“I photograph to find out what something will look like photographed,” Garry Winogrand famously declared. While photographers have pictured people in public since the medium’s advent in the nineteenth century, Winogrand reinvented the genre of street photography beginning in the 1950s. His improvisational and rapid-fire technique of picturing strangers on New York City sidewalks made him more than a quiet bystander, but rather an active participant in the world in which he was photographing.

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Picturing people in other communities—whether regionally, nationally, or internationally—has long engaged the imagination of photographers. Sweeping changes in transportation systems, digital communications, and global markets during the last sixty years have permitted greater access to formerly remote places and resulted in the increased circulation of photographic images. Documentary photographers and photojournalists today face new opportunities for studying other cultures and bearing witness to world events. At the same time, they also confront a host of age-old, yet deeply relevant questions about their ethical obligations as picture-makers. In particular, how does one responsibly photograph people beyond the specific worlds in which they live? Given the inequities and prejudices that exist in the world, being “on assignment” compels photographers to think critically about their practice and their role in larger societal dialogues.

JULES T. ALLEN

American, born 1947

Untitled, 1983

Untitled, 1984

gelatin silver prints

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift in honor of Bowdoin Photography and the Class of 1976

2021.61.2 and 2021.61.6

Jules Allen grew up with boxing. Throughout his childhood in San Francisco, his father’s friends would come over on Friday nights to watch boxing matches. After visiting Gleason’s Gym in New York City

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British, 1926–1971

*Wounded Marine Gunnery Sgt. Jeremiah Purdie Reaches towards a Stricken Comrade
after a Fierce Firefight South of the DMZ, Vietnam, 1966*

dye transfer print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of Robert A. Fresón Family

2021.41

This photograph—commonly known as

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the background, a rapidly growing city whose booming oil economy has benefited a few though failed to impact positively Angola's wider population.

DANNY LYON

American, born 1942

top row, left to right:

Shakedown, Ramsey Unit, Texas, 1967

Heat Exhaustion, Ellis Unit, Texas, 1967

bottom row, left to right:

The Line, Ferguson Unit, Texas, 1969

Cotton Pickers, Ferguson Unit, Texas

dozens of meetings, festivals, and other gatherings. In an era of widespread virtual networking, Soth and Zellar visited places seeking to explore through photography and print the tension between individualism and community and the human search for social connections. This goal led them to travel to the corporate headquarters of Google and Facebook, where this photograph was taken. About visiting Facebook, Zellar wrote: “I suppose California has always been a place where the dreams and disappointments of the past have kept close quarters with the wildest and most futuristic fantasies of progress.”

At Home

Photographing families and friends—one’s own and others—is more popular than any other photographic subject. As common as such images are, given the personal ties that bind relationships with those whom one calls family, they also permit some of the most introspective work in the medium. Home—both as a physical space and an embodiment of intimacy and interiority—provides a particular context for seeing an individual or a group of people. The sense of privacy in those surroundings has long attracted photographers. In this section, artists focus attention on their own homes and venture into the dwellings of others to understand better and connect with those around them. In doing so, they pose important questions about what constitutes a home and a family.

DIANE ARBUS

American, 1923–1971

A Woman with Her Baby Monkey, New Jersey, 1971

gelatin silver print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Museum Purchase, Gridley W. Tarbell II Fund

2001.19

In the photographs of Diane Arbus, individuals who deviated from societal norms were a recurrent subject. At times, the subjects possessed a physical or intellectual disability, though their “difference” was often the result of a personal decision or other circumstances. In this photograph Arbus figures Gladys Ulrich and “her baby monkey” named Sam seated on a couch at Ulrich’s New Jersey home, depicted in the manner of a traditional mother and child. Why do people form such intimate attachments with non-humans? Throughout her career, Arbus created photographs that prompted questions about the nature of family and the role of women in society.

MORRIE CAMHI

American, 1928–1999

Undocumented Family: Two Girls with Two TV’s, 1982

gelatin silver print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift, Joe Baio Collection of Photography

2020.51.13

Two young girls stand together in the corner of a room, next to a table that holds two television sets and various Catholic sacramental objects. The photograph suggests the importance of the sacred and the secular in this household. Throughout his career, California documentary photographer Morrie Camhi was interested in the role of religion in the lives of families from diverse, often marginalized communities. Building upon an earlier critically acclaimed series “Espejo,” which recorded the lives of

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Mexican-American laborers, Camhi makes visible in this and other related photographs the children of undocumented farm workers in California.

LARRY CLARK

American, born 1943

top row, left to right:

Untitled [Portrait of Man in Hallway], 1963–1971

Untitled [David Roper], 1963–1971

bottom row, left to right:

Untitled

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top row, left to right:

Elisabeth + Bengt, The Night Of, Saddle River, NJ, 1982

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In these early photographs, Laura McPhee pictures three generations of her family gathered at their home in Ringoes, New Jersey. McPhee

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against a monochromatic gray backdrop, this dramatically-lit hand in motion represents well its subject. In addition to his work in portraiture, Penn also played a major role in revolutionizing the creative potential of fashion photography as a long-time contributor to *Vogue* magazine.

DAVID SALLE

American, born 1952

Untitled

Unidentified Woman, 1984

polaroid prints

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

2008.28.71; 2008.28.72; 2008.28.74; 2008.28.8; 2008.28.12; and 2008.28.13;

Andy Warhol's Polaroid portraits depict the faces of those who passed through his Union Square studio and through his life. Although photography had been central to his practice since his earliest years as a painter and a printmaker, he decided in the early 1970s to purchase a Polaroid camera. For the remainder of his life, he was rarely without this camera or later a 35-mm compact Minox camera. "The Polaroid gets rid of everybody's wrinkles, sort of simplifies the face," he declared. "I try to make everyone look great." Warhol's subjects knew his reputation as a celebrity portraitist, and, as evident in these two sequences, they responded within his studio by adopting various poses. The identity of these two people are not known.

ANDY WARHOL

American, 1928–1987

top row: left to right

Carolina Herrera, 1978

Jane Fonda, 1982

Martha Graham, 1979

bottom row: left to right

R.C. Gorman, 1979

Sylvester Stallone, 1980

Pele, 1977

polaroid prints

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

2008.28.44; 2008.28.18; 2008.28.17; 2008.28.60; 2008.28.61; and 2008.28.59

Towards the Self

As in centuries past, one's own self remains a notable subject for photographers. Yet, the tradition of photographic self-portraiture is markedly different today—an era in which personal identity is better understood as fluid and multifaceted, government and corporate surveillance is ever-present, and skepticism abounds regarding authority and sight itself. Minds and bodies are contested terrains. Amid a sea of contending pressures, photographers look back at themselves to mark their place in the wider world, to explore their individual identity, and to imagine new futures.

JOHN COPLANS

British, 1920–2003

Self-Portrait (Hands Spread on Knees), 1985

gelatin silver print

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Applicant Photos (Migrants) #2, 2016

pigmented inkjet print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Museum Purchase, The Philip Conway Beam Endowment Fund
2019.25

In *Applicant Photos (Migrants) #2*, Stephanie Syjuco interrogates the system through which immigrants are documented when relocating across national borders. In this block of images that resemble identification photographs, she poses before her own camera, though covers her face in a fabric meant to evoke “colonial” materials, often sold cheaply in first-world countries due to the exploitation of labor in countries with less robust economies. Through this act, Syjuco critiques the pervasive structures of surveillance that act as forms of state authority and control.

AI WEIWEI

Chinese, born 1957

Deluxe Wanted Poster, 2014

color lithograph

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Museum Purchase, Lloyd O. and Marjorie Strong Coulter Fund
2015.8

In 2014, Ai Weiwei created this “WANTED” poster while under investigation by Chinese authorities. Known for his activism, Ai was arrested for alleged “economic crimes” in 2011 when he became a leading voice in exposing government corruption following an earthquake and the death of nearly 70,000 people in Sichuan, a province in southwestern China. Ai’s poster appropriates the design of a 1963 poster advertising the first retrospective exhibition of artworks by Marcel Duchamp, substituting photographs of himself and altering the text to demand an end to his detention. In 2015, the government finally returned Ai’s passport, allowing him to leave China. Since then he has been living in Germany and England.

Presence/Absence

Since the advent of photography in the nineteenth century, artists have ventured with cameras near and far to create work in places of personal significance. These destinations have often been sites of notable human activity. Although the people associated with those places may be absent or no longer present, these photographers go there to connect with the lives of others. With its unique ability to stop time and mark one’s own presence, photography is well suited to bear witness to human achievement and human tragedy. As the artworks in this final section suggest, people inhabit places even when they are absent.

ADOU

Chinese, born 1973

Woman in Fog, 2006

Woman. Umbrella, 2006

two gelatin silver prints

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of Nancy Rutter Clark
2022.8.6 and 2022.8.7

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These two photographs are by the Chinese contemporary photographer Adou from his series

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environments in the western United States. In *Diving Board (Salton Sea)*, he pictures an emptied swimming pool perched on the edge of the lake. A pinkish haze pervades the scene, rendering the background indistinct. In this and other photographs from the series, Misrach makes visible a world eerily lifeless and increasingly uninhabitable.

ABELARDO MORELL, CLASS OF 1971

Cuban American, born 1948

Camera Obscura: Brookline View in Brady's Room, 1992

gelatin silver print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of the artist

1993.7

Abelardo Morell created this photograph from inside his young son Brady's toy-filled room at their home in Brookline, Massachusetts. An upsio6 cm((. A) -01m /TT22 0 633.6TJ ET Q q 0.2 0 0 0.2 0 633.6 cm BT 60