

People Watching: Contemporary Photography since 1965
June 24–November 5, 2023
Bowdoin College Museum of Art | Brunswick, Maine
Exhibition Labels

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This exhibition brings together contemporary photographs from the United States and abroad that reveal how more than fifty leading artists have represented individuals on the street, at home and at work, in the studio, and encountered during documentary or journalistic assignments. In particular, it explores the phenomenon of “people watching” and its recent history as a recreational activity, an act of surveillance, a type of harassment, a marker of admiration, a sign of empathy, and a documentary form of expression.

Since the advent of photography in the nineteenth century, artists have used the camera to look at—and

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New York City. He pictures the shadow of his own head on the back of a woman whose back is turned to the camera. Secretly ph

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and traveled extensively with Martin Luther King, Jr. Freed's commitment to equal rights extended widely, and he used his photography to make visible those groups and organizations that struggled for greater recognition in America.

RASHID JOHNSON

American, born 1977

Larry, 1999

Van Dyke Brown photo-emulsion print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Museum Purchase, The Philip Conway Beam Endowment Fund
2022.22

Larry is part of a series of photographic portraits of homeless men in Chicago titled "Seeing in the Dark" that artist Rashid Johnson developed over three years beginning in 1997. Whereas the unhoused have often been understood as a social problem, Johnson crafted images in which his subjects were seen, treated, and depicted with respect. He titled these works after the names of the men he photographed, rather than portraying them as anonymous figures, and utilized an antique photographic process that produces rich dark browns in order to bath his subjects in a warm and dignified light. For Johnson, art often serves as a vehicle for testing and sometimes bridging the social divides that exist in lives and communities. As historian Shelley Rice has written, the photographs in "Seeing in the Dark" are "arenas of action, places where people come together, and cultures comingle."

YASUHIRO ISHIMOTO

Japanese American, 1921–2012

Untitled (Chicago), ca. 1960

gelatin silver print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift, Joe Baio Photography Collection
2017.61.83

In this photograph, three children look out from the rear of a moving station wagon while photographer Yasuhiro Ishimoto snaps their picture. What is going through each person's mind in this exchange of gazes? This question is not insignificant, especially to Ishimoto, who was imprisoned for two years at a Japanese-American internment camp in Colorado as a young man during World War II. Following his release, he returned to Chicago, where he pursued his newfound interest in photography at the Chicago Institute of Design. Studying with Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and Harry Callahan at the so-called "New Bauhaus," Ishimoto emerged as one of the leading street photographers of his era. In 1961 he left Chicago to take a teaching position in Japan, though he returned often to the country of his birth.

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1962, while still in college at the University of Chicago, he became the first staff photographer for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and spent time over the next several years traveling in the 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.

PHILIP-LORCA DICORCIA

American, born 1951

Los Angeles, 1997

chromogenic print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of Nancy Rutter Clark

2022.8.13

In his “Streetwork” series (1993–97), Philip-Lorca diCorcia created photographs of real people in real places. Yet, each view was carefully planned and staged in advance. For diCorcia, the street was understood as a theatrical stage on which unidentified passers-by might play a part. About this series, of which *Los Angeles* was a part, diCorcia has explained: “The world is too elusive to pin down in a photograph. The image has to create its own world, hopefully self-

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2002.22.2 and 2002.22.1

Not long after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Kevin Bubriski traveled on repeat occasions from his home in Shaftsbury, Vermont, to New York City. In particular, he wanted to photograph people in the area around the World Trade Center, the twin buildings that collapsed as a result of the attack. Bubriski wrote about this moment: “I felt the need to witness and understand the impact of the tragedy through my camera ... I found people experiencing a remarkable sense of community, but also the

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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

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Laura, Occupying Wall Street, April 20, 2012

bottom row, left to right:

Dan Protesting the War and the Economy, Occupying Wall Street, October 28, 2011

Charlie, Occupying Wall Street, November 3, 2011

gelatin silver prints

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

2015.35.1, 2015.18.17, 2015.35.3, and 2015.18.4

When Accra Shepp first visited New York's Zuccotti Park, the primary site of the Occupy Wall Street protests, he was struck by the number of photojournalists already documenting the event. It wasn't until he started talking to these other photographers that he realized he saw the crowds of protesters in an entirely different way. He was drawn to the power of individuals within the crowd and not by the sheer number of people within the park. While journalists and television crews turned their cameras towards the most animated leaders of the movement, Shepp felt a responsibility to focus his large-format camera on the great diversity of individuals who were in attendance. He returned to the site almost daily for more than a year to create this series.

ALEC SOTH

American, born 1969

Facebook, Menlo Park, California, 2013

archival pigment print

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

2015.27

This photograph was created in 2013 during a two-week car trip that Minnesota artist Alec Soth and the writer Brad Zellar took to California. Playing the role of small-town newspaper reporters, they attended 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

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JONAS BENDIKSEN

Norwegian, born 1977

Girl Walking on Water Pipes, Dharavi, 2006

chromogenic print

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

2017.61.11

In 2005, Jonas Bendiksen began a project to explore global poverty. For three years he traveled in Africa, Asia, and South America photographing different people and places and recording interviews

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fellowship, transforms this image into something larger than simply a journalistic record. Burrows lost his life when a helicopter carrying him and three fellow photojournalists was shot down in Laos in 1971.

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 Americans and to make visible long-standing attitudes towards Indigenous peoples held by non-Natives. About this work, he wrote: “In contrast to the seductive and glamorized (or alternately, demonized) caricatures that thrive in Hollywood and the collective American imagination, my images reveal a far different reality—one of a people in transition, a traditional indigenous culture desperately struggling to survive in the midst of a rapidly changing technadstndiey

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OLIVE PIERCE

American, 1925–2016

top row, left to right:

Harvey Family Skiff, 1990

Becky, Madelene, and Jocko, 1988

bottom row, left to right:

Amanda, 1987

Thanksgiving Dinner, 1991

gelatin silver prints

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of the photographer Olive Pierce

2015.20.8, 2015.20.19, 2015.20.3, and 2015.20.14

In 1986, Olive Pierce began a ten-year project photographing two families—the Carters and the Harveys—in a hardscrabble village on Maine’s Muscongus Bay long associated with the commercial fishing industry. These photographs take center stage in her book, *Up River: The Story of a Maine Fishing Community* (1996). A student of photographer Berenice Abbott, Pierce long served as a high school photography teacher in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She devoted her career to educating a new generation of practitioners and to using photography to make visible underprivileged communities. Pierce explained that photographs in this project were not meant as a commentary on poverty but were records of hard-working individuals, whose lives were often hidden from wider sight.

MATTHEW PILLSBURY

American, born 1973

Calum and Erica, Solitaire and Grey’s Anatomy, Friday, September 22nd, 2006, 9:48–10:58 pm, 2006

archival pigment ink print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of Bryson B. Brodie, Class of 2000, in honor of John McKee

2015.44

This three-part panoramic photograph by Matthew Pillsbury pictures two individuals at home on a Friday evening occupied by amusements on their digital devices. Made only with available light, this work is part of his series “Screen Lives,” in which the artist photographed family members and friends watching television or working on their computers. Because of the movement of his subjects’ bodies during this hour-long exposure, the two figures become ghost-like silhouettes mesmerized by the light emitting from their screens. Growing up in France, Pillsbury was not allowed to watch television, though later became fascinated by the medium during college and graduate school. His “Screen Lives” photographs are especially concerned with our simultaneous connectedness to the wider world and the sense of physical isolation that these technologies can produce.

LAURA PRYDE MCPHEE

American, born 1958

Jenny and Pryde, Ringoes, New Jersey, 1986

Pryde, Martha, Tony, Merle, and Sarah, 1986

gelatin silver prints

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

1988.24 and 1988.25

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In two early photographs, Laura McPhee pictures three generations of her family gathered at their home in Ringoes, New Jersey. Her mother Pryde Brown, a photographer herself, appears in both images. McPhee's family photographs depart from the conventions of traditional group portraiture. Her unorthodox cropping decisions, together with the manner that her subjects pose and their arrangement in from

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Untitled [David Roper], 1963–1971

bottom row, left to right:

Untitled [Man Seated in Chair Aiming a Gun], 1963–71

Dead 1970, Tulsa, 1968

gelatin silver prints

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of Charles and Joan Gross and their daughter Emily, Class of 1992

1991.99.34, 1991.99.1, 1991.99.32, and 1991.99.28

In the introduction to his book *Tulsa*, Larry Clark wrote: “Once the needle goes in it never comes out.”

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

JESSICA TODD HARPER

American, born 1975

Judith and Her Children, 2006

chromogenic print

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

2017.61.79

A young infant looks out towards the photographer, while in the background the child’s mother Judith and an older child appear reflected in a mirror. Light falls primarily on the infant, whose intense gaze suggests curiosity about the unseen photographer and her camera. What thoughts are going through the child’s mind at this moment? And what about the thoughts of the photographer, who had recently given birth for the first time? Such intimate exchanges in domestic settings are characteristic of the work of Jessica Todd Harper, whose book *Interior Exposure* (2008) investigated, as Harper explained, “familiar relationships and the unspoken things that make up the inner stories of our lives.”

KATY GRANNAN

American, born 1969

Untitled (from the Poughkeepsie Journal), 1998

chromogenic print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of Michael Edward Tobin

2021.56

In 1998, Katy Grannan embarked on a series of photographic portraits of female strangers with whom she connected through classified advertisements in regional newspapers in the Northeast. Grannan asked her subjects to pose in their own homes, often nude or clad in only their underwear. Like other works in the series, this direct frontal portrait conveys at once the vulnerability and strength of her subject. Figured amidst an ordinary domestic scene, this unidentified woman with long auburn hair adopts a classical contrapposto pose reminiscent of the central female figure in Sandro Botticelli's iconic Italian Renaissance painting *The Birth of Venus*. The product of an active collaboration between artist and subject, the photograph makes visible women's oft-hidden sexuality and secret desires.

MICHAEL KOLSTER

American, born 1963

top row, left to right:

Calvin and Christy, 29 January 2022

Calvin, 22 December 2021

Calvin, 6 August 2022

Christy and Calvin, 24 May 2020

Calvin, 27 July 2020

Calvin, 11 January 2022

bottom row, left to right:

Calvin, 23 January 2022

Calvin, 18 July 2020

Christy and Calvin, 15 November 2020

Calvin, November 2021

Calvin, 06 August 2022

Calvin and me, 30 January 2022

toned gelatin silver prints

Collection of the artist

This series by Mike Kolster centers the artist's son Calvin, who has had epilepsy since the age of two. Kolster has been photographing his son since he was a baby. Here, the pictures suggest Calvin's curiosity with objects and his relationship with the people around him. The images also serve indirectly as a portrait of Calvin's parents. His mother Christy Shake appears often. Whether walking with him in the backyard or holding him indoors, her love and attention is evident. In this selection, all created since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kolster's presence reveals itself as well. He has served as a professor in the department of visual arts at Bowdoin since 2000.

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of Robert Fresón Family
2021.40.12

In his New York studio, Irving Penn built a reputation for his innovative approach to portraying people. He experimented frequently with lighting, set design, and photographic processes, often posing subjects in unconventional positions. Commissioned to create a new portrait of Miles Davis in 1986, Penn photographed the famed trumpeter in a variety of poses before turning his attention exclusively to his hands. In this work, he pictures Davis's left hand replicating the action of playing his instrument. Shot 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.

RICHARD AVEDON

American, 1923–2004

Members of the Young Lords Party, 1971

gelatin silver print

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

2018.3

This photograph figures four leaders of the Young Lords Party, a Puerto Rican civil rights organization founded in Chicago in 1960. From left to right are Pablo Guzmán, Minister of Information; Gloria Gonzalez, Field Marshal; Juan González, Minister of Defense; and Denise Oliver, Minister of Economic Development. Taken at Richard Avedon's New York studio, it was created at a time when he and writer Doon Arbus were working on *Hard Times*, a book of portraits meant to explore "people who were putting themselves on the line." Avedon used an 8 x 10 inch view camera, a new format for the artist that allowed him to look and interact with his subjects face to face rather than through a viewfinder. Employing a white backdrop—another new and studio-specific innovation—he created likenesses that were known for their stillness and frontality. This new minimalism unmoored Avedon's subjects from a larger context and permitted a heightened immediacy and intimacy achievable only in his studio.

ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE

American, 1946–1989

Ken Moody, 1983

gelatin silver print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Inc.

1991.70

Robert Mapplethorpe met Ken Moody in a New York City gym in 1982. Over the course of the next three years, the two men collaborated together to create a series of now-famous portraits. Moody was a professional fitness instructor, and his classical physique drew Mapplethorpe's interest. Regarding these studio sessions, Moody recalled: "There was always a plan. Robert was very methodical, very professional and he didn't fool around. He usually had his assistants set up his lighting, set up the backdrop, he had an idea, and sometimes he even had sketches. He would show them to me, and I would play with the idea, he would see something and say 'oh, stop, hold that.'"

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In *Walking House*, a model house from a railroad train set sits atop a pair of four-inch doll legs. Created in Laurie Simmons's studio, the photograph is part of a larger series inspired in part by a television commercial featuring a dancing box of cigarettes. Simmons has frequently used toys and dolls to create imaginary dreamscapes that serve to critique traditional gender roles and idealized visions of the American family. About this series, Simmons observed: "The way a person lives is so identified with who that person is. We live in a blazingly consumer-oriented society, where the things around us control us, and I think these images are about the way a person can be subsumed by what's around them."

CINDY SHERMAN

American, born 1954

Untitled, 2002–2004

chromogenic print

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Gift of halley k harrisburg, Class of 1990, and Michael Rosenfeld
2004.7

Cindy Sherman explores how women are observed, portrayed, and judged in society. In her work since the 1970s, Sherman uses her own body to take on different personas, dressing up in costumes and disguises to subvert contemporary stereotypes of women. In this photograph, Sherman transforms herself into a pregnant woman. Dressed in tight-fitting clothing that is perhaps meant for a younger generation, Sherman's invented persona seems to be fighting the loss of youthful freedom in the face of

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2019.43

When artist Martine Gutierrez found that no magazine would have her on the cover, she created her own publication. Acting as the costume designer, makeup artist, graphic designer, model, and photographer, she created the artbook *Indigenous Woman*. This photograph is featured in that publication. It depicts Gutierrez in reimagined traditional Guatemalan dress, known as a *huipil*, and several elements that allude to Mayan, Yorùbá, and Aztec deities. Gutierrez embraces what she calls an “Amer-indigenous perspective.” As a trans Latinx woman of color, Gutierrez has observed: “Society perpetuates rigid constructs—

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heard.” Emmet Gowin wrote these words to describe both his artistic practice and his outlook towards life. A recurring subject in Gowin’s photography over more than fifty years has been his extended family. Desirous of capturing the fleeting intimacies of everyday life, he pictures a neatly-made bed at a relative’s home. Gowin likes to work with a large-format camera so that “both the sitter and the photographer look at each other, and what they both see and feel is part of the picture.”

PAUL CAPONIGRO

American, born 1932

Stonehenge, 1967–72

Stonehenge, 1967–72

gelatin silver prints

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

1985.36.1 and 1985.36.2

Stonehenge is a prehistoric stone monument in southern England that was constructed beginning more than 5,000 years ago. Mystery and debate surround its original function and significance. Supported by a Guggenheim Fellowship, Paul Caponigro traveled to England and Ireland beginning in 1967 to photograph ancient human sites. These two photographs are from a larger series of Stonehenge views that he created over the next six years. He photographed the site from various perspectives, times of day, and seasons, aspiring to capture the spirit of what remained and to hint at its power to millennia of visitors. About his photographic practice, Caponigro has explained: “One needs to be still enough, observant enough, and aware enough to recognize the life of the materials, to be able to ‘hear through the eyes.’”

JUDY GLICKMAN LAUD/(e) 0. -0.2 (LET Q q 0.24 0 0 0.24 12 589.92 cm BT 50 0 0 50 175 -67 (t) 0.2 0.2 (a) 50

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background indistinct. In this and other photographs from the series, Misrach makes visible a world eerily lifeless and increasingly uninhabitable.

EDWARD BURTYNSKY

Canadian, born 1955

Marine Aquaculture #2, Luoyuan Bay, Fujian Province, China, 2013

chromogenic print

Frank M. Gren P'13, Annapolis Collection

This panoramic photograph by Edward Burtynsky pictures a sprawling aqua-farming encampment that has been constructed over a portion of Luoyuan Bay in southeast China. A network of structures supports a complex array of nets, cages, and lines that reside below the water's surface. Although no one is visible, the photograph suggests the extent to which human populations have transformed the earth's lands and waters. Over the last two decades, Burtynsky has traveled around the globe recording the impact of international trade and industry. As he has recently written, "These images are meant as metaphors to the dilemma of our modern existence; they search for a dialogue between attraction and