



HIGH MUSEUM OF ART ATLANTA

1280 PEACHTREE STREET, N.E. • ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30309

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HIGH MUSEUM OF ART ORGANIZES SWEEPING SURVEY OF SOUTHERN PHOTOGRAPHY FROM 1845 TO THE PRESENT

Nationally touring exhibition draws extensively from the High's collection of historical and contemporary photography

**"A Long Arc: Photography and the American South since 1845"
Sept. 15, 2023-Jan. 14, 2024**

ATLANTA, Sept. 14, 2023 — This fall, the High Museum of Art will present the first major survey of Southern photography in over 25 years, "A Long Arc: Photography and the American South since 1845" (Sept. 15, 2023-Jan. 14, 2024). The exhibition will reveal the South's critical impact on the evolution of American photography and examine the region's complex history through more than 170 historical and contemporary works, drawn extensively from the Museum's collection. Following its debut at the High, "A Long Arc" will travel to the Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover (February-July 2024) and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (October 2024-January 2025).

"As an institution with one of the leading photography programs in the nation, featuring unparalleled holdings of work created in and about the South, the High is uniquely positioned to examine how photographers throughout history, and those working today, have articulated the distinct and evolving character of our region's people, landscape and culture," said Rand Suffolk, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director of the High.

"A Long Arc" will explore the history of Southern photography by theme and time period, beginning with a section devoted to the Antebellum South and the Civil War, when photographers including Alexander Gardner and George Barnard transformed the practice of the medium across the nation and established visual codes for articulating American identity and expressing collective trauma. The section will include key works from the Julia J. Norrell Collection of 19th-Century American Photography, which the High acquired in 2021 and will be on view at the Museum for the first time. These include prints of extraordinary rarity and power that speak to the issues that divided the country in the 1850s and 1860s, including slavery, race and citizenship.

Photographs from the Reconstruction era through the Great Depression, by artists including James Van Der Zee, Lewis Hine and William Henry Jackson, will examine the changing and

industrializing economy of the South and the articulation of the region's identity through photography, particularly for Black Americans.

Galleries featuring photographs from the 1930s to the 1950s, including many created for the Farm Security Administration, will demonstrate how the postwar era defined a new kind of documentary aesthetic that dominated American photography for decades. The works on view will include some of the most recognizable images of the period, such as Walker Evans' photographs created in Hale County, Alabama, and prints by important women artists including Margaret Bourke-White, Dorothea Lange and Marion Post Wolcott.

As American identity and culture began to shift significantly after World War II, growing racial tensions started to emerge throughout the nation, and artists began to confront those broader divisions as they manifested in striking ways in the South. Through photographs from 1945 to 1970 by artists including Clarence John Laughlin, Ralph Eugene Meatyard and Edward Weston, "A Long Arc" will examine how these often jarring and unsettling pictures of the South revealed economic, racial and psychic dissonance at odds with conventional images of American prosperity popular at the time.

The radical national changes in the first half of the 20th century spurred the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, which the exhibition explores through prints drawn from the High's exceptional collection of work from that era. Photographs by Bruce Davidson, Danny Lyon, Doris Derby and Ernest Withers, among others, galvanized and shocked the nation with raw depictions of violence and the struggle for justice and showed how those engaged in the fight for civil rights persevered and built community. In their wake, artists like Sally Mann, William Eggleston and William Christenberry, all of whom are featured in the exhibition, created narrative, self-reflexive bodies of work that simultaneously sustained and interrogated the South's brutal histories and enduring cultural mythologies.

In the past few decades, contemporary photographers such as Dawoud Bey, Kristine Potter, Mark Steinmetz, Sheila Pree Bright and RaMell Ross have explored Southern history and themes to grasp American identity in the 21st century as influenced by legacies of slavery and white supremacy, marked by economic inequality and environmental catastrophe, and transformed by immigration, technology, urbanization, globalization, and shifting ethnic, cultural, racial, and sexual identities. In its final section, "A New South, Again," the exhibition brings together a diverse array of perspectives in works by these and other artists to demonstrate how contemporary photographers investigate the region's evolution and celebrate its progress while demonstrating its continuing ties to the past.

"The South has long occupied an uneasy place in the history of American photography as simultaneously an example of regional exceptionalism and as the crucible from which American identity has been forged over the past two centuries. This exhibition amounts to a complex and layered record of the South that reveals its profound impact on the development of photography, which is often overlooked or underappreciated," said Gregory Harris, exhibition curator and the High's Donald and Marilyn Keough Family curator of photography. "At the same time, it poses urgent and timely questions about American history, identity and culture that are inspiring photographers working today and are important for audiences from our region and beyond to consider as well."

“A Long Arc” will be accompanied by a fully illustrated, 250-page companion publication co-published by the High and Aperture. In addition an essay by Harris about Southern photography in the 21st century, the book will feature contributions from Sarah Kennel, co-curator of the exhibition and Aaron Siskind curator of photography and director of the Raysor Center at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; Imani Perry, Hughes-Rogers professor of African American studies at Princeton University and winner of the National Book Award; Makeda Best, Richard L. Menschel curator of photography at the Harvard Art Museums; LeRonn Brooks, associate curator for modern and contemporary collections at the Getty Research Institute; photographer Rahim Fortune; Grace Elizabeth Hale, commonwealth professor of American studies and history at the University of Virginia; Maria L. Kelly, the High’s assistant curator of photography; Scott Matthews, professor of history at Florida State College; and Brian Piper, the Freeman Family curator of photographs, prints and drawings at the New Orleans Museum of Art.

“A Long Arc” will be presented in the Lucinda Weil Bunnan Photography Galleries and adjacent galleries on the Lower Level of the High’s Wieland Pavilion.

Related Programming

[Picturing America: Rahim Fortune and Gregory Harris in Conversation](#)

Thursday, Oct. 19, 2023

7-8 p.m.

Photographer Rahim Fortune will take the stage in a conversation about his work on view in “[A Long Arc: Photography and the American South since 1845](#).” Gregory Harris, Donald and Marilyn Keough family curator of photography, will talk with Fortune about his creative practice and what’s next for the artist. Fortune will sign exhibition catalogues following the conversation.

Exhibition Organization and Support

“A Long Arc: Photography and the American South since 1845” is organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta. This exhibition is made possible by funding by Premier Exhibition Series Sponsor Delta Air Lines, Inc.; Premier Exhibition Series Supporters ACT Foundation, Inc., William N. Banks, Jr., Cousins Foundation, Burton M. Gold, Sarah and Jim Kennedy, Harry Norman Realtors and wish Foundation; Benefactor Exhibition Series Supporters Robin and Hilton Howell; Ambassador Exhibition Series Supporters Mrs. Fay S. Howell/The Howell Fund, The Fred and Rita Richman Fund, Louise Sams and Jerome Grilhot, Mrs. Harriet H. Warren, and Elizabeth and Chris Willett; and Contributing Exhibition Series Supporters Farideh and Al Azadi, Sandra and Dan Baldwin, Mr. Joseph H. Boland, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Robin E. Delmer, Peggy Foreman, Helen C. Griffith, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter Jones, Joel Knox and Joan Marmo, Massey Charitable Trust, Margot and Danny McCaul, Wade A. Rakes II & Nicholas Miller, and USI Insurance Services. Generous support is also provided by Alfred and Adele Davis Exhibition Endowment Fund, Anne Cox Chambers Exhibition Fund, Barbara Stewart Exhibition Fund, Dorothy Smith Hopkins Exhibition Endowment Fund, Eleanor McDonald Storza Exhibition

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About the High Museum of Art

Located in the heart of Atlanta, the High Museum of Art connects with audiences from across the Southeast and around the world through its distinguished collection, dynamic schedule of special exhibitions and engaging community-focused programs. Housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, the High features a collection of more than 19,000 works of art, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and self-taught work, especially that of artists from the American South; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, new media and design; a growing collection of African art, with work dating from prehistory through the present; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to reflecting the diversity of its communities and offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit www.high.org.

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