

Press Release

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HIGH ORGANIZES NATIONAL TOUR FOR PHOTOGRAPHER MIMI PLUMB’S FIRST SOLO MUSEUM EXHIBITION

**“Blazing Light: Photographs by Mimi Plumb”
Feb. 6-May 10, 2026**



Mimi Plumb (American, born 1953), *Truckee Canal*, 1985, gelatin silver print, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, gift of Lucas Foglia, 2025.94. © Mimi Plumb.

ATLANTA, Feb. 4, 2026 — Over the last 50 years, photographer Mimi Plumb has expertly and poignantly captured the evolution of the Western U.S. landscape and the lives of those within it. In her first solo museum exhibition, **“Blazing Light: Photographs by Mimi Plumb” (Feb. 6-May 10, 2026)**, the High Museum of Art presents three of her major bodies of work, featuring more than 100 photographs, including 26 recent acquisitions, captured in and around San Francisco and across the American West. Collectively, they contemplate how changes in geopolitics, the economy and the environment have shaped the anxieties of American life from the 1970s to today. After it debuts at the High, the exhibition will travel to three more venues: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University (Ithaca, New York), the Norton Museum of Art (West Palm Beach, Florida) and the Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College Chicago.

Plumb began photographing as a teenager in the San Francisco suburb of Walnut Creek in the 1970s, a time marked by rapid land development, coupled with worldwide political and economic instability. Her early artistic life was defined by a burgeoning awareness of global warming, the AIDS epidemic, violent international conflicts and the looming threat of nuclear war. This atmosphere attuned Plumb to the evidence of such forces around her, including the built environment and the ways people carried themselves and related to one another — concerns that are evident in her early work and continue to abide in her photographs today. Foregrounding the presence of people, her images convey a great degree of pathos and even notes of humorous absurdity.

“Plumb’s photos capture a place in time – often, one fraught with personal, cultural and environmental upheaval. At a time when many see and feel similar changes occurring around them, her work resonates strongly,” said the High’s Director Rand Suffolk. “As a consequence, her photographs offer many entry points for today’s visitors, and we look forward to sharing them with Atlanta and other audiences around the country through the exhibition’s tour.”

In Plumb’s first major body of work, “The White Sky” (1972-1978), she explores the youthful ennui common to American suburbs. She made the photographs in Walnut Creek and other communities around San Francisco in her late teens and early twenties. Because she was just a few years older than her subjects, her photographs of teenagers running wild through the uniform suburban architecture show an empathy for their angst and boredom. She skillfully renders the intense, unyielding California light to amplify the psychological tension and imaginative possibility to be found by rambling through an abandoned construction site or junkyard at the edge of town.

In “Landfall” and “The Golden City” (1980s-1990s), the sense of boredom and mischief of Plumb’s earlier work gives way to unease and skepticism. She explores these sensibilities in gritty photographs of the fraying natural world and the ceaselessly expanding built environment, what she describes as “images of natural cataclysms, fires, manmade scars and refuse.” Weaponry and staged military exercises are recurring subjects, reflecting the ever-present influence of the Cold War in popular culture at the time. More than in any of her other work, people are a key focus of Plumb’s images from this period: She regularly photographed strangers and friends in “odd and disquieting poses,” to reflect, as she put it, “the discomfort I saw in myself and in my community.” Her many photographs capturing people from behind invite the viewer to place themselves in the pictures.

The urgency of Plumb’s pictures from the 1970s and 1980s continues to resonate decades later in “The Reservoir,” her current body of work. Since 2020, she has been photographing around Folsom Lake, a reservoir near Sacramento that was experiencing a 23-year mega drought with extremely low water level and proximity to numerous forest fires. Weaving together images of the dry lake bed and people seeking recreational respite from the heat, these new photographs are an ongoing exploration of how droughts, climate change and persistent anxiety collectively affect life in the Western United States. In what she describes as the “relentless aridity” of the lake bed, Plumb finds a corollary for the human psyche as it grapples with chronic precarity.

“Mimi Plumb is a singular artist who has endeavored to give shape to the layered and disorienting experience of contemporary life through her evocatively charged photographs,” said the High’s Donald and Marilyn Keough Family Curator of Photography Gregory Harris. “While she has been a mainstay of the Bay Area photography community since the 1970s, her astonishing work has only recently begun to receive the attention it deserves, and I hope this exhibition will underscore the originality of her photographs and her important contributions to the history of photography.”

“Blazing Light: Photographs by Mimi Plumb” is presented in the Lucinda Weil Bunnell Gallery for Photography on the Lower Level of the High’s Wieland Pavilion.

Exhibition Catalogue

In collaboration with the High, Radius Books is publishing a companion catalogue that features more than 100 of Plumb's photographs along with scholarly essays by Harris; Lauren Richman, William and Sarah Ross Soter senior curator of photography, Norton Museum of Art; Karen Irvine, chief curator and deputy director, Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College Chicago; and independent curator Amanda Maddox and writer and editor Jordan Bass.

About Mimi Plumb

Based in Berkeley, California, Mimi Plumb (American, born 1953) has photographed the human-altered landscape of California and the Western United States with an eye toward the effects of climate change, unbridled capitalism and looming military conflict since the 1970s. She holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in photography from the San Francisco Art Institute and taught at the Art Institute of Chicago, Stanford University and San José State University. Plumb has published four widely acclaimed monographs: “Landfall” (TBW, 2018), “The White Sky” (Stanley/Barker, 2020), “The Golden City” (Stanley/Barker, 2021), and “Megalith/Still” (Stanley/Barker, 2023). Her latest book, “The Reservoir” (Nazraeli Press), was published in 2025. She is a 2022 Guggenheim Fellow, a 2017 recipient of the John Gutmann Photography Fellowship and a 1989-1990 California Arts Council Artist Fellow. Plumb’s photographs have been exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Light Work in Syracuse, New York; the Institute of Contemporary Art San José; and Pier 24 Photography in San Francisco. Her work is held in numerous public collections including the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Art Collection Deutsche Börse; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Yale University Art Gallery; and Pier 24 Photography.

About the High’s Photography Department

The High Museum of Art is home to one of the nation’s leading photography programs. The museum began acquiring photographs in the early 1970s, making it among the earliest American art museums to commit to collecting the medium. With more than 8,500 prints that span the history of the medium from the 1840s to the present, the collection has particular strengths in American and European modernist traditions and documentary and contemporary photography. Holdings include the most significant museum collection of vintage civil-rights-era prints in the nation as well as important holdings by Harry Callahan, Clarence John Laughlin, Evelyn Hofer, William Christenberry, Ilse Bing, Walker Evans, Peter Sekaer and Dawoud Bey. The collection also gives special attention to pictures made in and of the South and serves as

the largest and most significant repository representing the region's important contributions to photography.

Exhibition Organization and Support

"Blazing Light: Photographs by Mimi Plumb" is organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta. This exhibition is made possible by Premier Exhibition Series Sponsor Delta Air Lines, Inc.; Major Exhibition Series Supporters Sarah and Jim Kennedy; Premier Exhibition Series Supporter Harry Norman Realtors; Benefactor Exhibition Series Supporters Robin and Hilton Howell; Ambassador Exhibition Series Supporter Mrs. Harriet H. Warren; and Contributing Exhibition Series Supporters Farideh and Al Azadi, Mary and Neil Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter Jones, Megan and Garrett Langley, Margot and Danny McCaul, and Wade A. Rakes II and Nicholas Miller. 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 Endowment Fund, The Fay and Barrett Howell Exhibition Fund, Forward Arts Foundation Exhibition Endowment Fund, Helen S. Lanier Endowment Fund, John H. and Wilhelmina D. Harland Exhibition Endowment Fund, Katherine Murphy Riley Special Exhibition Endowment Fund, Margareta Taylor Exhibition Fund, RJR Nabisco Exhibition Endowment Fund and USI Insurance Services.

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 20,000 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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Media contacts:

Marci Tate Davis
Manager, Public Relations
404-733-4585
marci.davis@high.org

Brittany Mizell
Senior Coordinator, Public Relations
404-733-4423
brittany.mizell@high.org