

Harvard's Fogg Art Museum to Highlight Extraordinary Range of Photographic Practice from the Beginning of the Medium's History to the Present

"A New Kind of Historical Evidence" will offer selections from the Carpenter Center Photograph Collection August 6–October 30, 2005

CAMBRIDGE, MA (June 24, 2005) – An exhibition opening August 6 at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum will present images from a vast collection of photographs, negatives, and related material collected during four decades by curators at the University's Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts. The images reflect a range of uses of the medium, including social documentary, vernacular, and art photography.



Barger Studio: Orrion Barger, Edith Barger, *Untitled (Betty's first bike, Chamberlain, South Dakota)*, 1948. Gelatin silver print, c. 1979, by Barbara Norfleet and assistants, 24.1 x 30.8 cm. Fogg Art Museum, HUAM, On deposit from the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, 4.2002.38. Photo: Katya Kallsen, HUAM, © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

A New Kind of Historical Evidence: Photographs from the Carpenter Center Collection, will feature 70 photographs and ephemera selected from the 28,000-object collection, which was placed on permanent deposit at the Fogg in 2002. The title of the exhibition comes from a 1967 *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* article reporting the establishment of the Carpenter Center collection and heralding photography as “a new kind of historic evidence.” The collection contains some of photography's most famous images and is an extremely valuable resource for scholars and researchers. Visitors to the exhibition will see works from the four components of the Carpenter Center's holdings: the Fine Art Photographers Collection, the Social Museum Collection, the American Professional Photographers Collection, and the Boston Transit Collection.

Among the photographs on display will be Edward Weston's classic *Nude* (1936), from the Fine Art Photographers Collection; Frances Benjamin Johnston's comparative photographs (c. 1899) of a poor person's crumbling shack and the tidy two-story house of a graduate of the Hampton Institute in Virginia, once displayed in the Social Museum to show the benefits of education; Harry Annas's 1949 studio portrait of a boy in a cowboy outfit, *Untitled (Lockhart, Texas)*, from the American Professional Photographers Collection; and Paul Rowell's *E.R. Warren, Motorman* – a 1907 portrait of a young, mustachioed man in a double-breasted full-length coat and conductor's cap, from the Boston Transit Collection.

The Carpenter Center Photograph Collection was established by Harvard University in the mid-1960s as a resource for teaching the history of photography and its aesthetic practice. The collection initially consisted of photographs gathered from various Harvard departments and repositories. It was significantly expanded by Davis Pratt, founding curator (1966–72), and by Barbara Norfleet, a social psychologist, noted photographer, and the collection's visionary curator for three decades until her retirement in 2002.

“The Carpenter Collection doubled the size of the Fogg's photography holdings and transformed our Museum into an important center for the study of social documentary and vernacular photography,” said Thomas W. Lentz, Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard University Art Museums. “Visitors will see the extraordinary range of material that is available to them for research and study at virtually any time in our Mongan Center for the Study of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs.”

The exhibition was organized by Michelle Lamunière, the Charles C. Cunningham Sr. Assistant Curator in the Department of Photographs, with the collaboration of curatorial assistant Kate Palmer and former Boston University student intern Julia Dolan. The Widgeon Point Charitable Foundation has provided major support for work on the Carpenter Center Photograph Collection, including this exhibition.

The History of the Carpenter Center Collection

Although photographs had been collected at Harvard since the early days of the medium, their special importance wasn't recognized until the mid-1960s, when photographic history became a discipline in its own right. The University created a repository at the Carpenter Center to consolidate its holdings of significant historical photographs, and the collection began with the transfer of 19th-century prints belonging to the Geology Department Library. At the same time, the Carpenter Center took over responsibility for about 6,000 photographs, diagrams, and publications collected by social ethics professor Francis Greenwood Peabody for the Social Museum he founded in 1903.

Davis Pratt, the collection's first curator, scoured the University for photographs of historical and artistic value, such as an early daguerreotype portrait of Harriet Beecher Stowe and her husband Calvin Ellis Stowe and fine albumen prints from government surveys of the western United States in the 1870s. He also acquired works from modern and contemporary photographers including Minor White and Robert Frank.

When Pratt left in 1972 to become the first curator of photography at the Fogg, he was succeeded by Barbara Norfleet. During her 30-year tenure, Norfleet challenged existing paradigms about the meaning and function of photography and transformed the Carpenter Center's collection into a significant resource for the study of social documentary photography.

The Fine Art Photographers Collection

The approximately 5,000 works from this collection span the history of aesthetic approaches and interpretations of the medium. *A New Kind of Historical Evidence* will feature 18 photographs, including Aaron Siskind's *Gloucester* (1944); O. Winston Link's *Living Room on the Tracks, Lithia, Virginia* (1955); Bruce Davidson's *Untitled (Alabama)* (1965); and Josef Koudelka's *Czechoslovakia* (1968). *Guard at Sugar Plantation, Outside Kampala, Uganda* (1980), was made by Alex Webb, a former student of Norfleet's in the Department of Visual and Environmental Studies.

Also on display will be Marion Post Wolcott's 1939 image titled "*Negro*" *Using Outside "Colored" Stairway to Enter Movie Theatre, Belzoni, Mississippi*. This gelatin silver print shows an African-American man, clad in coat and felt hat, silhouetted against a glaringly white brick wall as he ascends a staircase labeled "Colored adm. 10 cents." An old signboard is propped against the staircase, and the sun casts sharp shadows from the rungs of a leaning stepladder. In the far left corner of the image, opposite the lone man, is a decrepit white door labeled "White Men Only." Wolcott captured this poignant image while working for the Farm Security Administration, a government-sponsored project to document the effects of the Depression on American society.

The Social Museum Collection

Eighteen objects will be on view from this assemblage of about 6,000 photographs, diagrams, and publications amassed by Professor Peabody for his Social Museum at Harvard. That museum, which opened in 1907, was intended to document the international social reform movement at the turn of the 20th century and complement Professor Peabody's teaching.

"Peabody compiled an incredible collection of primary source material, which today serves as a time capsule for the study of subjects across many disciplines," said Lamunière, the curator.

Visitors to the exhibition will see two views of Pittsburgh from the turn of the 20th century. One, a gelatin silver print of solemn-looking children in a vacant lot, was made in about 1908 by preeminent social photographer Lewis Hine (1874–1940), who, as a staff photographer for the National Child Labor Committee, documented the exploitation of children on farms, in mines, and in factories. This image was part of the Pittsburgh Survey, a study of labor practices and living conditions in the immigrant communities of this industrial city.

The second image shows 13 women in floor-length skirts, starched white aprons, and caps posing near cast-iron stoves at the H. J. Heinz Company. The work, made by an unidentified photographer around 1900, documents the Pittsburgh company's pioneering attempts to provide a fair and satisfying workplace for its employees by offering cooking classes, rooftop gardens, lunchtime concerts, and weekly manicures for all food handlers.

These and other selections from the Social Museum Collection are available on-line through the Harvard University Library's Open Collections Program at <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/ww>. Click on "Browse the collection," and then "Browse by genre" (Photographs). Photographs and archival material are organized there by theme.

The American Professional Photographers Collection

This assemblage of 1,500 prints, several albums, and more than 15,000 negatives was acquired in the 1970s by curator Barbara Norfleet. She traveled the country between 1975 and 1977, culling forgotten prints and negatives from the sweltering attics and damp basements of more than 25 professional studios that were active predominantly in the 1930s through 1960s. Norfleet felt it was vital to preserve the posed and candid images—which recorded families, consumer goods, the working world, and community activity—because the work of professional photographers was not being published or preserved.

Twenty-seven photographs from this collection will be on view, including two versions of Harry Annas's cowboy portrait *Untitled (Lockhart, Texas)* (1949); Clement McLarty's bridal portrait *Untitled (Boston, Massachusetts)* (1965); and Francis J. Sullivan's *Untitled (first haircut, Derry, New Hampshire)* (1949).

"These images reflect a compelling blend of desire and reality," said Palmer, who organized this section of the exhibition. "But they are also surprising, humorous, and often poignant revelations of American social customs at the time they were made."

Visitors will see, for example, *Untitled (Betty's first bike, Chamberlain, South Dakota)*, Orrion Barger's 1948 black-and-white image of a skinny girl smiling shyly into the camera as she holds the handlebars of a fat-tired bicycle. The print was made by Norfleet and her assistants at Harvard in the 1970s from a negative acquired from Barger's South Dakota studio. In 1978 Norfleet located Betty, the girl in the photograph, and learned that she had won the red Schwinn bike in a drawing sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce in Chamberlain, South Dakota. Barger took the photograph for the town's newspaper.

The Boston Transit Collection

The approximately 700 glass-plate negatives and prints in this collection chart urban growth in the greater Boston area from the late 19th century to the beginning of World War II. The public transportation corporations serving the city and surrounding towns regularly employed professional photographers to document subway and elevated railway construction. The result was over 200,000 images that provide a visual catalogue of streets and neighborhoods before, during, and after the city's radical physical transformation. The images in the Boston Transit Collection were originally part of a larger Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority archive that is now housed at the Cambridge Historical Society and Historic New England.

Seven images will be on view in the exhibition, but the entire Harvard-owned transit collection can be seen online at www.artmuseums.harvard.edu/btc beginning August 6.

One glass-plate negative in the exhibition, *Harvard Square Progress View*, was made by photographer Paul Rowell on March 9, 1911. It shows the partially completed Harvard Square subway station with the brick buildings of Harvard Yard in the background.

In its entirety, Harvard's Boston Transit Collection provides an invaluable record of the city's architecture and the construction techniques used to build Boston's subway and elevated railway lines.

Research Opportunities

The deposit of the Carpenter Center Photograph Collection at the Fogg Art Museum ensures its ready availability to scholars and researchers in any number of disciplines. Objects from the collection can be seen at the Agnes Mongan Center for the Study of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs on the first floor of the Fogg. It is open to the public Tuesdays through Fridays from 2 p.m. until 4:45 p.m., Saturdays during the academic year from 10 a.m. until 12:45 p.m., or by appointment (call 617-384-8310.) The Mongan Center's large study room affords ample space and optimal lighting for viewing objects from the collection.

Exhibition Programming

Gallery Talks

Fogg Art Museum

Free with the price of admission.

Saturday, August 13, 11:30 a.m.

Saturday, September 17, 2:00 p.m.

Michelle Lamunière, Charles C. Cunningham Sr. Assistant Curator of Photography

Saturday, October 1, 11:30 a.m.

Julia Dolan, student intern, spring 2003, Department of Photographs, and Ph.D. candidate, Boston University

Saturday, October 15, 2:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 29, 11:30 a.m.

Kate Palmer, curatorial assistant, Department of Photographs, and Ph.D. candidate, Boston University

Light Conversation: Seminars with Contemporary Photographers

Fogg Art Museum, Mongan Center

Mondays, 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Free admission.

October 3

Alex Webb

November 7

Sheron Rupp

December 5

Susan Meiselas

These intimate seminars offer the opportunity for a limited audience to interact with contemporary artists, discussing aspects of their work from original photographs in the Fogg's Mongan Center.

The Harvard University Art Museums

The Harvard University Art Museums are one of the world's leading arts institutions, with the Arthur M. Sackler, Busch-Reisinger, and Fogg art museums, the Straus Center for Conservation, and the U.S. headquarters for the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, an excavation project in western Turkey.

The Harvard University Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. As an integral part of the Harvard community, the three art museums serve as resources for all students, adding a special dimension to their areas of study. The public is welcome to experience the collections and exhibitions as well as to enjoy lectures, symposia, and other programs.

For more than a century, the Harvard University Art Museums have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and scholars and are renowned for their role in the development of the discipline of art history in this country.

Location and Hours

The Fogg Art Museum and the Busch-Reisinger Museums are located at 32 Quincy Street, Cambridge. The Arthur M. Sackler Museum is located next door at 485 Broadway. Each Museum is a short walk from the Harvard Square MBTA station.

Hours are Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Sunday 1 – 5 p.m.; the Museums are closed on national holidays. Admission is \$6.50; \$5 for seniors; \$5 for students; and free for those under 18 years of age. The Museums are free to everyone on Saturday mornings, 10 a.m. – noon. The Harvard University Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. More detailed information is available at 617-495-9400 or on the Internet at www.artmuseums.harvard.edu.

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