

Focus on Photography





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Focus on Photography: Recent Acquisitions

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Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum



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Focus on Photography: Recent Acquisitions draws together a selection of some of the significant photographs that the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum has acquired through gifts and purchases in the last five years. The exhibition presents a range of photographic practices, from historical works by photographers who defined the standards of the discipline to an international array of contemporary practitioners who examine and expand the conventional parameters of the medium. In the work of artists such as Doug Aitken, Sophie Calle, Andrea Fraser, David Goldblatt, John Stezaker, and Wolfgang Tillmans, to name only a few, photography is used to probe

the limits of conventional genres such as portraiture and landscape, to critique political and institutional structures and mores, and to explore questions of identity, subjectivity, and the very nature of representation itself. The array of works on display in this exhibition, while varied and unique, offers a lens through which we might address a question weighing on the minds of many artists and critics alike: what is photography today?

The provocative and pointed nature of some recent book and symposium titles, including Michael Fried's *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* and the San

Francisco Museum of Modern Art's 2010 international symposium *Is Photography Over?*, point to the myriad positions assumed and methods employed to analyze the state of contemporary photography.¹ Many of these critics have gone so far as to suggest that photography as it has traditionally been defined—as a modestly scaled, handmade, black-and-white print—is in a state of crisis or even, as the symposium title suggests, over. While there are certainly artists still working in more traditional forms, photography for many contemporary artists has become large scale, intensely colored, theatrical, and often intermingled with other mediums

1. Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008). For more on the symposium at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, see http://www.sfmoma.org/pages/research_projects_photography_over, including statements from thirteen artists, curators, and critics responding to the symposium's central question. For other

recent prominent discussions of the state of photography, see George Baker, "Photography's Expanded Field," *October* 114 (Fall 2005): 120–40; and Matthew Witkovsky, "Another History," *ArtForum* 48, no. 7 (March 2010): 213–21, 274. See also Rosalind Krauss's influential essay from the late 1990s, "Reinventing the Medium," *Critical Inquiry* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 289–305.



Doug Hall
Times Square, 2004

such as performance and cinema.² Some attribute this to the influence of the digital image, whereas others cite the impact of performative and cinematic modes or the trend toward installation-based practices.³ What critics do seem to agree on is that the apparent “crisis” in photography today has significantly altered the nature of photography as we know it.

What is contemporary photography? Let us start with three very different examples. Wolfgang Tillmans takes a photograph of a man walking through a forest, photocopies it so it becomes dark, flat, and blurry, then scans it, enlarges it, and prints out a single,

2. Perhaps in response to the loss of the traditional photographic object, contemporary artists have also begun to turn to antiquated techniques, such as the *camera obscura*, the daguerreotype, the tintype, the photogram, and the photogravure, among others, as a way to counter the expansion of contemporary practice into other modes and return to photography as craft. For a discussion of this

life-size, black-and-white photograph. Sophie Calle receives an upsetting email from a boyfriend, sends it to 107 women, asks them to respond in their professional capacities, and then films and photographs them performing their responses according to their chosen *métier*. Andrea Fraser borrows slides of well-known paintings by renowned male artists from a slide library, superimposes two of them, photographs the resulting juxtaposition, then enlarges it and prints it out in luminous color. All of these artists use photography, but none of them applies it in what we might consider a “traditional” way—that is, with a seemingly objective, nonreflexive,

phenomenon, see Lyle Rexer, *Photography's Antiquarian Avant-Garde: The New Wave in Old Processes* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002).

object-centered approach to photographic production. Rather, these artists work in what art historian George Baker has termed “photography’s expanded field,” or photography filtered through a wide range of artistic practice such as film, video, and performance, as well as a variety of modes of display, including installations, magazines, books, the Internet, and the museum or gallery space.⁴

THE DOCUMENTARY TRADITION

By the end of the nineteenth century, photography had taken on a powerful social role that derived in part from its mechanical

3. For a variety of positions on the topic of recent trends in photography, see the collection of essays in *The Meaning of Photography*, ed. Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008). See also Baker, “Photography’s Expanded Field.”



Edward Sheriff Curtis
Pottery Burners at Santa Clara, 1905



Edward Sheriff Curtis
The Apache Reaper, 1906

ability to register the physical world. The indexical promise of photography offered a means of knowing the world that was thought to be objective and could be used to record aspects of nature and society that were disappearing due to the rapid progress of modernization and industry.

Edward Curtis's monumental and by now historic project to photograph and preserve the culture of disappearing North American Indian tribes engaged with this history of objective observation just as its promise was coming to an end.⁵ Working alone or with various assistants, and with support from prominent individuals

such as President Theodore Roosevelt and financier and banker John Pierpont Morgan, Curtis visited more than eighty tribes across the United States and Canada in order to document, through photography, sound recordings, and written accounts, the customs and traditions of Native Americans. *The North American Indian*, published between 1907 and 1930, consists of twenty volumes of explanatory text and photographic illustrations and twenty portfolios of larger, individual photogravure plates that complement the text volumes. Curtis's complicated project illustrates, among other things, the conflicted nature of photography—part

science, part art—in the first decades of the twentieth century: he employed photography to record and reveal information, and yet many of his photographs are deeply influenced by aesthetic conventions borrowed from traditions of painting. Although he set out with ethnographic ambitions, the works he created are mediated though nostalgia for a preindustrial, Arcadian existence. For instance, the large portfolio plate *The Apache Reaper*, a photograph taken in 1906, shows a man leaning forward in the act of cutting a field of wheat, and yet the gradual blurring, the subtle tonal contrasts, and the artful lighting that highlight the figure against the

4. For an intriguing look at the way in which photographic practice has expanded beyond the concept of the photographic print, see the Guggenheim Museum's 2010 exhibition catalog, *Haunted: Contemporary Photography / Video / Performance*, ed. Jennifer Blessing and Nat Trotman (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2010).

5. Two contemporary photographers in this exhibition are motivated by the same sense of historical urgency. Howard French and Alen MacWeeney both use the photographic medium to preserve cultures and traditions that are threatened by modernization. In his project *Disappearing Shanghai* (2007), French, an American photojournalist, records scenes of life in Shanghai's old quarters, which

are being razed for modern developments (such as the 2010 World Expo). MacWeeney creates semidocumentary scenes of Ireland that are highly composed, cropped, and color-enhanced, yet intended to provide unfettered access to the essence of the sitter or scene.

David Goldblatt
*Abandoned farmhouse
near Molteno, Eastern
Cape*, 25 February 2006



dark hills and the setting sun monumentalize and idealize the anonymous figure in a way that recalls nineteenth-century painted depictions of rural peasant life.

Almost a half-century later, in France in the 1950s, Lucien Clergue was intent on escaping the conventions of photojournalism in the first half of the twentieth century.⁶ Clergue's staged photographs of Saltimbanques call upon a long tradition of painted representations of *Commedia dell'arte* figures, while his studio portraits of close friends such as Pablo Picasso and Jean Cocteau, with their dramatic lighting and artful composition, attempt to

6. Henri Cartier-Bresson, one of the best-known photojournalists of the twentieth century, is one of the canonical figures to whom Clergue might have been reacting. A founding member of Magnum Photos in 1947, he established many of the conventions of photojournalism, in particular a black-and-white aesthetic (he eschewed color photography as too artistic) and a

capture the psychological essence of an individual. Influenced by his friendship with Picasso and the theatricality of Surrealist art and photography, Clergue consciously engaged with a fine arts tradition rather than a documentary one by, for example, supplanting the painted portrait with the photographic image. Yet, his position still relied on a belief in the photographic message that was based on its connection to a person or scene in the real world.

Long a documentary photographer working in small-scale black-and-white, South African artist David Goldblatt turned in the 1990s to large-format color photography,

focus on the shutter moment, or the photographer's ability to capture what he called "the decisive moment" (the title of his first major book) by snapping photographs on the run. Nonetheless, to consider his photographs as unbiased documents is somewhat of a contradiction, as they are often highly composed and contrived.

thereby aligning himself with international developments in the field, in particular with what some art historians have called "the tableau form," or large-scale work designed for the wall that summons a confrontational experience on the part of the spectator.⁷ Goldblatt's subtle message of political and economic critique is achieved through the unexpected juxtaposition of two modes. On the one hand, the flat, painterly treatment of his landscapes, which he created by digitally altering the color, refers to the pictorial tradition of romantic landscape, particularly its tendency to elevate and idealize nature. Yet, on the other hand, Goldblatt

7. For an explanation of the tableau form (translated as the "picture" form), see Jean-François Chevrier, "The Adventures of the Picture Form in the History of Photography," in *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography, 1960–1982*, ed. Douglas Fogle (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003–4). Michael Fried suggests that the tableau form, which emerged in the 1980s in the work

David Goldblatt
In the Katkat Valley,
near Fort Beaufort,
23 February 2006



also taps into the social realist tradition of documentary photography, a mode in which he has worked for over fifty years, as a means to comment on political and economic conditions.

In *Abandoned farmhouse near Molteno, Eastern Cape* (2006) and *In the Katkat Valley, near Fort Beaufort* (2006), for example, he examines the legacy of apartheid in South Africa and the question of property distribution in rural areas, an explosive topic that still shapes the country's identity today. Both works show deceptively straightforward, large-scale panoramic views of the South African

countryside, which, with their high horizon lines, long fields of vision, rugged landscapes, and subtle transitions in color and light, resemble a long tradition of painted landscapes as well as romanticized photographs of similar settings. Closer inspection, however, reveals scenes that suggest economic and social inequality. The first photograph captures a white farmhouse that has been abandoned and is in disrepair near a humble brown hut in a similar state, though it is further in the distance to the right. Although the relationship between the two adjoining properties is unclear (was the hut home to laborers who once worked the farm, or

was the rocky and less fertile land tended by a poor neighbor?), their juxtaposition suggests that racial and economic tensions may lie behind the idealized landscape.

In the second photograph, the expansive vista of a lush mountainous landscape is disrupted by a fence and a dilapidated gate that blocks entry to a road in the foreground. An election poster for the ANC (African National Congress), the party that has made land redistribution a major political issue following the end of apartheid in 1994, is prominently displayed on the fence, suggesting ironic

of artists such as Thomas Ruff, Jeff Wall, and Andreas Gursky, is one of the most important developments in the rise of recent art photography; see Fried, *Why Photography Matters*, 143–46.



Andy Warhol

Two versions of *John and Lorraine Chamberlain*, n.d.

commentary on the political realities of post-apartheid politics.

WARHOL AND THE SOCIETY PHOTOGRAPH

Andy Warhol's black-and-white prints and Polaroids were not originally destined for public or institutional display, and yet they address many of the same themes as his better-known projects, such as his images of Campbell's soup cans and Brillo boxes or his portraits of Elvis and Marilyn Monroe. With the rise of advertising and popular culture imagery after World War II, Warhol used media imagery in a way that no other artist had yet done, making us aware of

the impact of media on our lives and how it inescapably shapes us, and turning the act of taking a picture into a form of photographic performativity. He lived out this reality himself, as he viewed his own life through the lens of a camera, recording from the 1960s on many of his own ordinary, daily interactions with friends and lovers and his attendance at social events, parties, and clubs. The black-and-white images on view in this exhibition were conceived of as snapshots—rather than “art”—that document Warhol's personal and public life, and their apparent casualness and lack of finish attest to this.⁸ Nonetheless, they resist conventional

expectations about the ability of the image to document, forming an archive that by the very nature of its quantity provides information and yet in the end does not convey much about Warhol as an individual, except the presence of a life lived through and for the camera.⁹

If the black-and-white photographs exhibit Warhol's fascination with the media image and turn its tendency to construct identity into a form of auto-performance, Warhol's Polaroids do the same for the various celebrities, socialites, and models who sat for his portraits. Around 1970, Warhol began to use the Polaroid Big Shot camera to make

8. One example of the lack of formality in these works is Warhol's printing method. After they were developed and printed, they were dried on a drum-dryer that heated the images and often resulted in a slightly wavy paper.

9. It is remarkable how little is revealed about Warhol's emotional life by these photographs, despite their variety and quantity. Subjects include, among others, his business manager Frederick Hughes, his lover Jon Gould, Swiss art dealer Bruno Bischofberger, model and fashion icon Tina Chow, the sculptor John Chamberlain, American photographer Christopher Makos, diamond dealer and

jeweler John Reinhold, scenes of gay subculture and homosexual sex, layouts for ad campaigns, and random street scenes. Warhol took thousands of photographs before he died, of which the group of 151 in the collection of the Kemper Art Museum is only a small portion.



Andy Warhol
Three versions of *Arlette Gordon*,
1977

commissioned portraits, capitalizing on his earlier depictions of Marilyn Monroe, Jackie Kennedy, and Elvis Presley to build a successful commercial enterprise. Using the instant technology of the Polaroid, he would take multiple shots of a subject in one sitting. After selecting an image, he would transfer the Polaroid to acetate to make a larger, mechanically reproduced silkscreen image. Although today the original Polaroids are often sold as unique images, they were originally only the initial step in a larger serialized process, serving in effect as a portrait proof. Nonetheless, these Polaroid “proofs” show how Warhol tapped into the theatrical conventions of the portrait genre

by filtering his images through the style of fashion and advertising photography. Taking on the persona of a society portraitist (one might think of John Singer Sargent or Thomas Gainsborough), Warhol employed tactics—such as the application of heavy white makeup to compensate for the effects of the flash—so that his sitters would appear beautiful and glamorous, using the portrait form to facilitate the performance of gendered subject types. His female sitters, like actress Arlette Gordon, toss their hair and smile, pout, and coyly address the camera, while male subjects like Spanish sculptor Miguel Berrocal appear dignified and distinguished, leaning on their hands,

firmly holding their chins, or modeling props like a cigar or cigarette. Indeed, the assumed transparency of the relationship between portrait and sitter is undermined by the idealized, iconic image of the celebrity or socialite that appears overtly and artificially constructed.

IDENTITY AND THE SELF

Georgina Starr, one of the “Young British Artists” who emerged on the art scene in the UK in the mid-1990s, is a conceptual artist for whom photography is just one element in a larger video and installation-based practice. *Hypnodreamdruff—The*

Georgina Starr
Hypnodreamdruff—
The Hungry Brain, 1996



Hungry Brain (1996) resembles a collage, but is in actuality a seamless, digitally manipulated color photograph of scenes taken from a video in a larger installation made up of four interrelated videos shown on TVs in rooms that recreate the setup of each video.¹⁰ A combination of dream, memory, and personal reenactment that resembles a TV sitcom, Starr's elaborate and artificial scenarios are familiar and yet distant. They evoke the ways in which imagery from all aspects of life enters our subconscious and imaginative minds only to be recombined in complex, layered ways and reappear in both conscious activity and through dreams and random exchanges

10. The installation *Hypnodreamdruff* with four videos, *Dream Interference Device* (*Emma, Tricia, and Pauline*), *The Hungry Brain*, *Magic* (*Dave's Caravan*), and *Frenchy* (*Pauline's Bedroom Scene*), was shown at the Tate Gallery in 1996. *The Hungry Brain* is the name of a nightclub where some of the characters meet up in the video *Dream Interference Device*, as well as the title of Starr's video

with others. Starr's madcap dream sequences revel in the ways in which the outside world forms our identities, leaving little room for critical self-awareness.

Sophie Calle began making photo-based work in the early 1980s. While her work is complexly varied and multifaceted, many aspects of it have their roots in both Warhol's adoption of a persona and in conceptual practices that emerged in the 1960s. She often stages her own life as the subject of the work of art, and the present work is no exception. *Ecrivain public / Public letter writer*, *Rafaèle Decarpigny* (2007) uses photography as a means to

that recounts the dream of one of the characters from the first video.

address the question of subjectivity and identity as constructed through personal and professional life. The work, a combination of a photograph and a typed letter, is one of 107 video and photographic portraits that make up Calle's most recent project, *Take Care of Yourself* (2007). The project takes its title from the salutation with which her ex-lover ended his email breaking off their relationship. Calle asked 107 women to respond to the email according to their line of work—criminologist, anthropologist, French intelligence officer, clown, actress, and in this case, a public letter writer.¹¹

11. Like many of Calle's projects, this one was accompanied by a book containing either reproductions of the photos or DVDs of each author's performance, as well as a transcript of the original email from the boyfriend. See Calle, *Prenez soin de vous (Take Care of Yourself)*, trans. Charles Penwarden, (Arles: Actes Sud, 2007).

Sophie Calle
Ecrivain public / Public
letter writer, Rafaèle
Decarpigny, 2007



In *Ecrivain public*, Rafaèle Decarpigny responds to the email as if she had been commissioned to professionally write a public reply. Thus, she uses the first person singular to express what she imagines would be Calle's emotional response, though with a somewhat formal and distant tone: "I could express incomprehension, sorrow, anger. I could tell you that even to write to you would be to express too much interest." The text functions as a kind of masquerade—it reveals only to hold back—for it is not Calle's own response that we receive, nor what would be Decarpigny's response had the incident happened to her. The

photograph takes up this dynamic as well. It shows Decarpigny reading the letter in a public stairwell. A surveillance camera is barely visible near the top edge of the photograph, thematizing the linguistic doubling of the letter by reversing the viewer's own position as a voyeur of this scene. Further confusing the boundaries between public and private, the photograph captures the intimate moment of letter reading and the glance of a passerby—a woman wearing a burqa, another thematic instance of the play between concealing and revealing. In this way, Calle foregrounds structures of desire and absence that permeate relationships

on all levels, and make this project a very public reenactment of mourning.

INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE

Louise Lawler is one of a group of artists associated with the so-called "Pictures" generation of the 1970s.¹² The Pictures generation conceived of the image as a "picture"—that is, as a set of representations that could be found or appropriated, was rarely original or unique, and that contradicted the claims of authenticity that upheld most modern aesthetics. Lawler's *Not Yet Titled* (2004 / 2005) belongs to a long series of projects that

12. Although the group quickly grew to include artists not in the exhibition, the starting point was a seminal exhibition titled *Pictures*, organized by critic Douglas Crimp and held at Artists Space in New York from September 24 to October 29, 1977; see Douglas Crimp and Helene Winer Crimp, *Pictures: An Exhibition of the Work of Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo, Philip Smith*

(New York: Committee for the Visual Arts, 1977).

Louise Lawler

Not Yet Titled, 2004 / 2005



investigate the afterlife of artworks—what happens to them after they leave the artist’s studio and enter the public domain of private homes or public institutions. This photograph captures Gordon Matta-Clark’s building-cut *Bingo*, from 1974, just after it was installed in the contemporary art galleries of the recently renovated Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2004. Only the top of *Bingo* is visible in the near foreground, as the blunt edges of Matta-Clark’s object frame small, black-and-white documentary-style photographs by the contemporary artist Thomas Struth mounted on the gallery walls behind. Lawler’s luminous

color photograph demonstrates the ways in which an institution can change the meaning of an object, as it turns *Bingo*—already transformed from a building part into a sculpture—into a beautiful, formalist framing device that adds yet another layer to the contextual focus of Lawler’s work.

Andrea Fraser is most closely associated with the conceptually driven artistic practice known as institutional critique, which emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the work of artists such as Gordon Matta-Clark, Michael Asher, Hans Haacke, and Daniel Buren. Her

work also engages with issues raised by the feminist movement of the mid-1970s and the Pictures generation from the late 1970s. *Untitled (Pollock / Titian) #4* (1984 / 2005) returns to one of her older projects, an artist’s book she made in 1984 titled *Woman I / Madonna and Child 1506–1967*. To make the book, essentially a parody of an art historical monograph, Fraser created a narrative from appropriated excerpts of art historical essays on the artists Willem de Kooning and Raphael and illustrated it with images that were made by superimposing and then rephotographing reproductions of paintings of women by de Kooning and Raphael. The book project

Andrea Fraser
Untitled (Pollock / Titian) #4,
1984 / 2005



was meant for distribution in museum and art bookstores, whereas *Untitled (Pollock / Titian) #4* was intended for display on the wall of the museum gallery itself.¹³ By superimposing Titian's *Venus* and a drip painting by Jackson Pollock, Fraser collapses Pollock's gesture (commonly critiqued as male-dominated) onto Titian's idealized representation of female beauty, creating a visual dissonance that renders both forms illegible.

Christian Jankowski uses photography and video as a foundation from which to generate participatory experiences that actively criticize our media-saturated

society. Often, this takes the form of an intervention in an existing aspect of the art world, such as the dealer / artist relationship, the exhibition itself, the art market, or the means of producing an artwork. In *Poster Sale* (2005), a series of forty photographs, Jankowski addresses questions of public and communal identity, in particular the ways in which images of popular culture contribute to the construction of individuality. Invited to Washington University in St. Louis for an artist's lecture and an exhibition, Jankowski was inspired to photograph students posing with posters they had just purchased at the annual Washington University poster sale.¹⁴

Jankowski approached students, discussed with them their poster selection, and invited them to participate in his artwork. These photographs allow viewers a glimpse into the students' personal interests through their selected images—of consumer goods, film posters, pop and movie stars, pin-up girls, works of art, famous buildings. In the end result, the students become part and parcel of the same visual fabric as the pictures they are holding, but many of the students seem aware of this duality as they pose, some confidently, others shyly, in a rite of passage for the college student, the selection of imagery to decorate their dorm rooms.

13. For further discussion of this work and Fraser's practice of institutional critique, see Meredith Malone, *Andrea Fraser, "What do I, as an artist, provide?"* (St. Louis, MO: Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, 2007), esp. page 9. As Malone explains, *Untitled (Pollock / Titian) #4* was "rediscovered" by Fraser in 2003 when she went through her earlier works in preparation for a mid-career

retrospective, *Andrea Fraser, Works: 1984 to 2003*, at the Kunstverein, Hamburg. Fraser reprinted images from the book and as well as others that did not make it into the book, such as the present picture, as a series of large-scale editioned C-prints sold through a commercial gallery.

14. Jankowski came to Washington University in 2002 for a lecture in conjunction with the exhibition *Contemporary Projects: Christian Jankowski's Targets*, curated by Sabine Eckmann at the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum (then the Washington University Gallery of Art), from August 30 to December 8, 2002.



Christian Jankowski
 Selections from
Poster Sale, 2005

PHOTOGRAPHY'S EXPANDED FIELD

German artist Ulrike Kuschel uses photography to explore the politics and history of place in contemporary Berlin. Her use of photography is often complicated by references to the legacy of Pop art and Minimalism in postwar Germany. Her assemblage *Kranz (Wreath)* (2008), consisting of a large fiberboard panel that leans against the wall like a Richard Serra prop piece, is divided into a diptych along the lines of a Warhol image, combining an orange field in the upper half and a photograph of a commemorative wreath from the Neue Wache memorial in Berlin

in the lower half.¹⁵ Indeed, the hard-to-read photograph (it is covered by a large dot-matrix screen) from a place that evokes Germany's traumatic past seems to reside in an ambivalent space below the flat monochromatic panel. Kuschel's mass-produced, serialized procedures (inexpensive laser printing, silkscreening, and laminated fiberboard) and the dot-screen that obscures the image of the wreath act like a film or veil, making the historical reference distant and illegible, evoking the imprecise nature of memory and the ambiguity of the cultural and political "landscape" of Berlin.

Wolfgang Tillmans's work addresses the "crisis" in photography today head on. Tillmans grapples directly with questions of originality in his wide-ranging subject matter and means of production. Although *Wald (Briol II) (Forest (Briol II))* (2008) and *Silver 71* (2008) are distinct projects, one a landscape and the other an abstraction, they are connected by the variety of techniques (photocopying, scanning, enlarging, chemical alteration) to which Tillmans subjects many of his works as well as by the larger question of the relevance of traditional art genres within photography today. *Wald (Briol II) (Forest (Briol II))* inserts itself into the tradition

15. The photograph shows a gold and silver oak leaf wreath that decorated a memorial to victims of World War I in the Neue Wache, or "Guard House," in Berlin. The wreath was stolen in 1948. In 1960, 177 oak leaves were found in a trunk, and it was restored in 1965. It is now in the collection of the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin.

Ulrike Kuschel
Kranz (Wreath), 2008



of nineteenth-century German romantic landscape painting, a pointedly clichéd subject today.¹⁶ In the midst of a thick forest that is alternately illuminated by bright sunlight and cast in deep shadow, a man walks alone on a path away from the viewer. Although the image began as a straightforward photograph, it was photocopied, scanned, greatly enlarged, and then printed again as a singular image, placing it somewhere in between a photograph and a unique work. The subject matter and the artful rendering of light and atmosphere invite reverie and nostalgia, yet the mechanical processes to which the work has been subjected,

16. Although German romantic landscape painting seems like an obvious reference point, the genre is so canonical and hence so often referred to in later periods that there could be multiple sources. There are, for example, any number of older photographic renderings of the American West that could be a reference point as well.

flattening and pixelating the image, seem to undermine these auratic qualities. In the end, Tillmans's work presents this dilemma as a question in itself: how does an artist working today depict a highly romanticized and outdated subject? The answer, it seems, is through a self-reflexive analysis of the nature of photographic production today.

Tillmans's work thrives on these dichotomies, and the abstraction *Silver 71* is no different. Tillmans did not use a camera to make this work; instead, he fed a piece of photo-sensitive paper through a processing machine while it was being cleaned,

17. For a description of the process, see the interview between Wolfgang Tillmans and Dominic Eichler, "Look again," *Frieze*, no. 118 (October 2008): 236–43.

allowing the paper to pick up traces of dirt and silver residue from the chemicals. The image was not fixed and the chemicals were not fresh, so the image continued to change hue over the course of a few days. Tillmans then scanned and enlarged the image to its final size, again printing only one version of the work.¹⁷ Despite the apparent lack of authorial presence and artistry, and the direct insertion of chance chemical processes, the work is compellingly beautiful. The pink surface is tinted violet at the top and gradually lightens toward the bottom, while the chemicals have caused the color to appear in regular, horizontal striations across the surface,

Wolfgang Tillmans
Silver 71, 2008



and drips and defects appear at random. The work straddles the categories of photography and painterly abstraction without being purely either one.¹⁸ It is perhaps this in-betweenness that best categorizes Tillmans's practice, but also his up-to-date quality (his disregard for any one process, or any one genre, or any singular subject matter). All of this is done, not so much with a sly wink, but with a certain boldness that does not ask for explanation or justification, but presents itself as simply a contemporary way of being in the world.

Tillmans is not the only artist on display here who exhibits fluency with images,

their social constructs, and their diverse forms of distribution, and then makes all of this the subject of his art. It is perhaps this easy truck with the world of representation that defines much of contemporary photographic production and makes it exemplary of life in the twenty-first century. The respected art historian Leo Steinberg once defined the nature of Pop art as the shift from nature to culture. Perhaps we can see something similar going on here, in the way that these artists so easily dip into the world of representation and come up with work that newly engages with the ever-expanding field that is photographic art today.

18. His procedures recall both Man Ray's rayographs and color-field painting from the 1950s and '60s.



Wolfgang Tillmans
Wald (Briol II) (Forest (Briol II)),
2008

CHECKLIST

All artworks listed here are in the collection of the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum unless otherwise noted.

Doug Aitken (American, b. 1968)
screens, 2005

C-print, 1/6, 48 x 60 ³/₈"
University purchase, Bixby Fund, 2007
p. 4

John Baldessari (American, b. 1931)
Two Compositions (Formal / Informal; Interior / Exterior), 1990

Color photographs and vinyl paint,
96 ¹/₄ x 68 ¹/₈ x 1 ³/₈" overall
University purchase, Charles H. Yalem Art
Fund, 1992

Sophie Calle (French, b. 1953)
Ecrivain public / Public letter writer, Rafaèle Decarpigny, from the series *Prenez soin de vous (Take Care of Yourself)*, 2007
Color photograph and text, 2/3, 44 ¹/₂ x 55"
(image)

University purchase, Parsons Fund, and
with funds from Helen Kornblum, 2007
© 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS),
New York / ADAGP, Paris
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Lucien Clergue (French, b. 1934)
Harlequin, Arles, 1955, from the portfolio
Selected Images, 2006
Gelatin silver print, 15 ⁷/₈ x 11 ¹⁵/₁₆"
Gift of Joanne Herrmann and Douglas
Milch, 2007

Lucien Clergue (French, b. 1934)
Picasso, Cannes, 1955, from the portfolio
Selected Images, 2006
Gelatin silver print, 15 ¹⁵/₁₆ x 12"
Gift of Joanne Herrmann and Douglas
Milch, 2007

Edward Sheriff Curtis (American, 1868–
1952)

The North American Indian: Being a Series of Volumes Picturing and Describing the Indians of the United States and Alaska, vol. 1, *The Apache. The Jicarillas. The Navaho.*, 1907

Published by the artist and The University
Press, Cambridge, MA
Collection of the Washington University
Libraries, Special Collections, St. Louis

Edward Sheriff Curtis (American, 1868–
1952)

The Apache Reaper, 1906
Plate 8, from the supplement to
The North American Indian, vol. 1, *The Apache. The Jicarillas. The Navaho.*, 1907
Published by the artist and The University
Press, Cambridge, MA
Photogravure on vellum, 18 x 22"
Gift of Stephen Bunyard and Cheryl Griffin,
1987
p. 7

Edward Sheriff Curtis (American, 1868–
1952)

The Morning Bath—Apache, 1906
Plate 14, from the supplement to
The North American Indian, vol. 1, *The Apache. The Jicarillas. The Navaho.*, 1907
Published by the artist and The University
Press, Cambridge, MA
Photogravure on vellum, 18 x 21 ⁷/₈"
Gift of Stephen Bunyard and Cheryl Griffin,
1987

Edward Sheriff Curtis (American, 1868–
1952)

The North American Indian: Being a Series of Volumes Picturing and Describing the Indians of the United States, the Dominion of Canada, and Alaska, vol. 12, *The Hopi.*, 1922
Published by the artist and The University
Press, Cambridge, MA
Collection of the Washington University
Libraries, Special Collections, St. Louis

Edward Sheriff Curtis (American, 1868–
1952)

Selections from *The North American Indian*,
1904–6, 1921, vol. 12, *The Hopi.*, 1922
Published by the artist and The University
Press, Cambridge, MA
Photogravures, 9 ¹/₂ x 12 ¹/₄" or 12 ¹/₄ x
9 ¹/₂" each
Gift of Stephen Bunyard in honor of Megan
D. Swider, 2005

Edward Sheriff Curtis (American, 1868–
1952)

Pottery Burners at Santa Clara, 1905
Plate 603, from the supplement to *The North American Indian*, vol. 17, *The Tewa. The Zūni.*, 1926
Published by the artist and The University
Press, Cambridge, MA
Photogravure, 17 ³/₄ x 22"
Gift of Stephen Bunyard and Cheryl Griffin,
1987
p. 7

Spencer Finch (American, b. 1962)

48 Views of Loch Ness, 1997
48 C-prints, 4 x 6" each
University purchase, Bixby Fund, 2004

Andrea Fraser (American, b. 1965)
Untitled (Pollock / Titian) #4, 1984 / 2005
Digital C-print, 1/5, 40 x 61"
University purchase, Parsons Fund, 2006
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Howard French (American, b. 1957)

Contender 2, 2007
Eat Your Dinner 2, 2006
Entropy 2, 2007
Short Walk 2, 2007
Spirit Change 2, 2007
Three Wheel Market 2, 2006
Medium format prints mounted to foam
core, 13 x 13" each
Gift of Howard W. French, 2008

David Goldblatt (South African, b. 1930)
Abandoned farmhouse near Molteno, Eastern Cape, 25 February 2006
Digital print on 100 percent rag cotton paper in pigment inks, 2/10, 36 x 44"
University purchase, Yalem Fund, 2006
p. 8

David Goldblatt (South African, b. 1930)
In the Katkat Valley, near Fort Beaufort, 23 February 2006
Digital print on 100 percent rag cotton paper in pigment inks, 2/10, 31 1/2 x 39 3/4"
University purchase, Yalem Fund, 2006
p. 9

Doug Hall (American, b. 1944)
Times Square, 2004
Three C-prints, 2/6, 62 1/4 x 142" overall
University purchase, Bixby Fund, 2005
p. 6

Christian Jankowski (German, b. 1968)
Selections from *Poster Sale*, 2005
Color photographs, 2/5, 14 x 11" each
University purchase, Parsons Fund and Art Acquisition Fund, 2006
Front cover, back cover, p.16

Ulrike Kuschel (German, b. 1972)
Kranz (Wreath), 2008
Laser print and offset lithograph with silkscreen and laminated fiberboard on fiberboard, 78 3/4 x 39 3/8 x 3/4"
University purchase, Parsons Fund, 2008
© 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn
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Louise Lawler (American, b. 1947)
Not Yet Titled, 2004 / 2005
Cibachrome laminated on aluminum museum box, 4/5, 39 3/8 x 44 x 1 5/8"
University purchase, Bixby Fund, and with funds from Helen Kornblum, 2006
p. 14

Sharon Lockhart (American, b. 1964)
Outside AB Tool Crib: Matt, Mike, Carey, Steven, John, Mel and Karl, 2008
C-print, 6/6, 48 x 67 1/2"
University purchase, Bixby Fund, and with funds from Helen Kornblum, 2009
Inside back cover

Alen MacWeeney (Irish, b. 1939)
Birds, Bloody Foreland, Donegal, 1967, from the portfolio *Selected Images of Ireland*, 2007
Endura print, ed. 50, 19 15/16 x 23 15/16"
Gift of Joanne Herrmann and Douglas Milch, 2008

Simone Nieweg (German, b. 1962)
Gepflügter Acker, Neuss-Kapellen (Plowed Field, Neuss-Kapellen), 2001
C-print, 5/5, 40 x 51"
Gift of the Honorable Thomas F. Eagleton and Barbara S. Eagleton, 2007

Georges Rousse (French, b. 1947)
Meisenthal, 2002
Cibachrome on aluminum, 1/5, 47 1/4 x 57 1/2"
Gift of the Honorable Thomas F. Eagleton and Barbara S. Eagleton, 2007

Georgina Starr (British, b. 1968)
Hypnodreamdruff—The Hungry Brain, 1996
C-print, 2/10, 42 x 62 3/4"
Gift of Helen Kornblum, 2008
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John Stezaker (British, b. 1949)
The Bridge (from the Castle Series) XII, 2008
Collage, 9 x 13 5/8"
University purchase, Parsons Fund, 2009

John Stezaker (British, b. 1949)
The Bridge (from the Castle Series) XXIV, 2008
Collage, 8 1/2 x 13"
University purchase, Parsons Fund, 2009

Wolfgang Tillmans (German, b. 1968)
Silver 71, 2008
C-print, 1/1, 89 5/8 x 67 1/4"
Pending University purchase, Parsons Fund, 2010
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Wolfgang Tillmans (German, b. 1968)
Wald (Briol II) (Forest (Briol II)), 2008
C-print, 1/1, 100 1/2 x 67 3/8"
Pending University purchase, Parsons Fund, 2010
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Andy Warhol (American, 1928–1987)
Selected Polaroid photographs, 1971–86
Polacolor ER and Polacolor Type 108, 4 1/4 x 3 3/8" each
Gift of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., 2008
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Andy Warhol (American, 1928–1987)
Selected black-and-white photographs, c. 1970s–80s
Gelatin silver prints, 8 x 10" and 10 x 8" each
Gift of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., 2008
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This volume is published on the occasion of the exhibition *Focus on Photography: Recent Acquisitions* at the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum at Washington University in St. Louis. On view from May 7 through July 26, 2010, the exhibition was curated by Karen K. Butler, assistant curator at the Kemper Art Museum.

Photography is one of the most exciting and compelling mediums employed by artists today, and it is a vital aspect of the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum's exhibition and collecting program. The Museum is deeply grateful for the generous support of those who have made the acquisition of some of these works possible and whose aid has allowed the Museum to continue its legacy of collecting significant art of the time. These include Stephen Bunyard, the Honorable Thomas F. Eagleton and Barbara S. Eagleton, Helen Kornblum, Joanne Herrmann and Douglas Milch, and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

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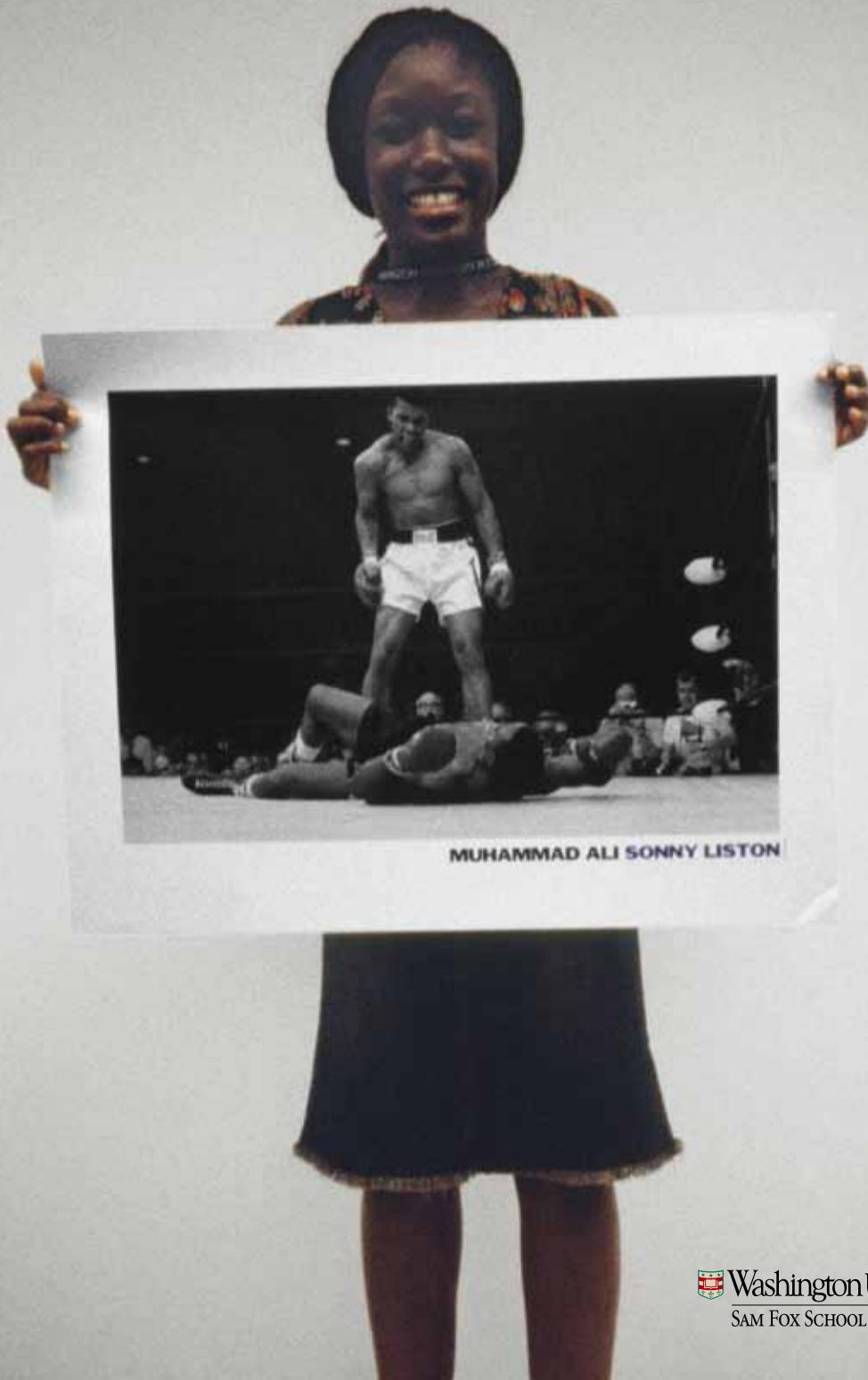
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Front and back covers: Christian Jankowski, selections from *Poster Sale*, 2005
Inside front cover: Andy Warhol, *Carolina Herrera*, November 1978
Inside back cover: Sharon Lockhart, *Outside AB Tool Crib: Matt, Mike, Carey, Steven, John, Mel and Karl*, 2008





MUHAMMAD ALI SONNY LISTON