



Tang Teaching Museum Presents
Borrowed Light: Selections from the Jack Shear Collection

**Premiering February 6, 2016, Exhibition Features
More Than 150 Photographs Spanning History of Medium**

Includes works by Berenice Abbott, Diane Arbus, Eugène Atget, Richard Avedon, Nan Goldin, Katy Grannan, Lewis Hine, Peter Hujar, Sally Mann, Robert Mapplethorpe, Eadweard Muybridge, Catherine Opie, August Sander, Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Weston, and Joel-Peter Witkin

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY (December 17, 2015) — The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College will present *Borrowed Light: Selections from the Jack Shear Collection* February 6 through August 14, 2016. The exhibition will celebrate the major gift of over 500 photographs donated to the Tang by photographer, curator, and collector Jack Shear, and will feature a selection of works chosen by Dayton Director Ian Berry in collaboration with Shear.

Borrowed Light will present a visual history of photography from its inception in the 1840s to the present day, chronicling various photographic processes, techniques, and artistic approaches—from an early half-plate ambrotype of Niagara Falls, to a Polaroid self-portrait by a young Robert Mapplethorpe. Tracing the evolution of the medium, the exhibition will feature historic works by photographic pioneers such as Berenice Abbott, Diane Arbus, Eugène Atget, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Alfred Stieglitz, and Edward Weston, as well as works by notable contemporary photographers such as Tina Barney, Katy Grannan, Malerie Marder, and Sheila Metzner.

The exhibition is a presentation of works that hold significant personal meaning for Shear, and are a reflection of his collecting philosophy and aesthetic as a photographer. In addition to a traditional, chronological display, there will be a densely hung gallery of works spanning all genres and subjects. This salon-style presentation will also include one wall that will change over the course of the exhibition. Skidmore art history students will be invited to re-hang this wall after researching and studying the collection.

"It is exciting for us to share this outstanding and eccentric collection of photography, which compellingly illustrates the evolution of a medium that touches upon many aspects of our culture," said Ian Berry, Dayton Director of the Tang Teaching Museum and exhibition co-curator. "Through Jack's generosity, we have not only the opportunity to explore the full sweep of the history of photography with our visitors, but the ability to use the collection in the interdisciplinary learning and teaching that is the hallmark of the Tang."

"I love the combination of anonymous vernacular photographs and important historical works," said Jack Shear, photographer, collector and exhibition co-curator. "Seeing the collection together brings out so

many personal moments of discovery across a lifetime of looking at images. I began collecting daguerreotypes and other early photographs when I was 16. And as a young photographer in Los Angeles, I remember seeing works by Sander, Avedon, and Michals that made a lasting impression. It's those kinds of moments that I hope my collection will make possible for new generations of photographers."

Human sexuality, one of the themes examined in *Borrowed Light*, has long been a subject of interest for Shear. The exhibition will feature a range of photographs dealing with social constructions of masculinity, the male body, and gender expression. Many of the photographs explore the body as a physical landscape, and reveal sexual expression in public and private spheres. Key photographers include Nan Goldin, Peter Hujar, George Platt Lynes, Catherine Opie, Edmund Teske, Bruce Weber, and Joel-Peter Witkin.

Other themes in the exhibition include war photography, exemplified by iconic images such as *Valley of the Shadow of Death* (1855), Roger Fenton's haunting and vacant landscape of cannonballs in the Crimean War; Timothy O'Sullivan's early depictions of war dead in *A Harvest of Death* (1863); and works by the embedded Vietnam War photographer Art Greenspon. The exhibition will also look at the progression of portraiture, illustrating the medium's nearly immediate democratization through the use of daguerreotypes, albumen prints, and other early photo processes. Examples include Julia Margaret Cameron's soft-focused and reverential *Herbert Wilson* (1868), which helped to move photographic portraiture from pure documentation to artistic intention; and Edward Curtis's field-printed cyanotype of an American Indian (c.1900–1930), which also shows how early photographers checked the quality of their images before digital photography.

Borrowed Light will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue. A series of public programs with several of the photographers whose work is on view in the exhibition will be announced in the coming months. The exhibition and entire collection will support teaching, learning, and research by students and faculty working in a range of disciplines, from Art History and Studio Art, to History and Gender Studies, and Environmental Studies and Biology.

About Jack Shear

Jack Shear, a photographer, curator, and collector, has a long history with the Tang, including working as co-curator with Berry on the two-part exhibition *Twice Drawn* (2006). Shear's gift to the Tang underscores his belief in the teaching mission of the Tang, and his donation will provide new opportunities for future interdisciplinary learning and discovery. As a photographer, Shear is known for his portraits of iconic figures such as William S. Burroughs, Jasper Johns, and Ellsworth Kelly. His work has been exhibited at the Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts, and The Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany, New York. His photography has been published widely, most notably in *Four Marines and Other Portraits* (Twelvetreepress, Santa Fe, NM, 1985) and *Short Season: Portrait of a Minor League Baseball Team* (Williams College Museum of Art, 1996). His curatorial projects include *Drawn from the Artists' Collections* (1999) at the Drawing Center in New York and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and *Shaker Images: Photographs from the Shaker Museum and Library* (1992) at the Shaker Museum and Library, Old Chatham, New York. Shear is the Executive Director of the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation.

About the Tang Teaching Museum

The Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College is a pioneer of interdisciplinary exploration and learning. A cultural anchor of New York's Capital Region, the institution's approach has become a model for university art museums across the country—with exhibition programs and series that bring together the visual and performing arts with fields of study as disparate as history, astronomy, and physics. The Tang has one of the most rigorous faculty-engagement initiatives in the nation, the Mellon Seminar, and robust publication and touring exhibition initiatives that extend the institution's reach far beyond its walls. The Tang Teaching Museum's building, designed by architect Antoine Predock, serves as a visual

metaphor for the convergence of ideas and exchange the institution catalyzes. The Museum celebrates its 15th anniversary in 2015. More information at <http://tang.skidmore.edu>.

Facebook/TangMuseum

Twitter/@TangMuseum

Instagram/TangTeachingMuseum

###

For media in the Capital Region, please contact:

Michael Janairo

Assistant Director for Engagement, Tang Teaching Museum

518-580-5542

mjanairo@skidmore.edu

For media outside the Capital Region, please contact:

Maria Kucinski

Resnicow + Associates

212-671-5173

mkucinski@resnicow.com

Isabel Sinistore

Resnicow + Associates

212-671-5175

isinistore@resnicow.com