

***Tang Teaching Museum Receives Gift of More Than  
500 Photographs Spanning History of Photography from the  
Jack Shear Collection***

***Exhibition 'Borrowed Light: Selections from the Jack Shear Collection'  
To Be Presented in 2016***

***Photographers include Berenice Abbott, Diane Arbus, Eugène Atget, Richard Avedon,  
Nan Goldin, Katy Grannan, Lewis Hine, Peter Hujar, Sally Mann, Robert  
Mapplethorpe, Vik Muniz, Eadweard Muybridge, Catherine Opie, August Sander,  
Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, and Edward Weston, Joel Peter Witkin***

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY (September 28, 2015) — The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College announces a major gift of over 500 photographs from photographer, curator, and collector Jack Shear.

Shear's extensive donation serves as a visual history of photography from its inception in the 1840s to the present day. The collection chronicles different 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. Historic works include important examples by photographic pioneers such as Berenice Abbott, Diane Arbus, Eugène Atget, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Alfred Stieglitz, and Edward Weston.

An exhibition in celebration of the gift, titled *Borrowed Light: Selections from the Jack Shear Collection*, will be on view at the Tang Museum from February 6 through August 14, 2016. It will feature works chosen by Dayton Director Ian Berry in collaboration with Shear, and will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue. A series of public dialogues with several of the photographers on view will be announced in the coming months.

"I want to thank Jack Shear for such a generous and truly transformational gift," said Ian Berry, Dayton Director of the Tang Teaching Museum. "The depth and breadth of these photographs add a new dimension to the Museum's collection and will be an invaluable resource for our students and faculty, researchers, and all visitors to the Tang. The extensive range of time periods, techniques, and subject matter open up countless possibilities for the kind of boundary-crossing explorations at the heart of our mission."

"I have always been impressed by the Tang's spirit of openness, collaboration, and curiosity in its approach to exhibitions and its collection," said Jack Shear. "The Tang consistently offers new and exciting ways for people to engage with objects and ideas—especially through its inventive object-based teaching—which makes the Tang the ideal home for this collection. With the Tang's guidance, these photographs will be able to reach many diverse audiences, and those encounters are sure to bring new life and new meanings to these photographs."

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GIFT

The historic works in the gift trace important themes from the evolution of the medium, including war photography's most iconic images: *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 Greenspoon. The evolution of portraiture is another touchstone—the earliest daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, and tintypes illustrate the medium's nearly immediate democratization. Julia Margaret Cameron's soft-focused and reverential *Herbert Wilson* (1868) helped to move photographic portraiture from pure documentation to artistic intention. Edward Curtis's field-printed cyanotype of an American Indian (c.1900-1930) shows how early photographers checked the quality of their images before digital photography. Six portraits by August Sander demonstrate his attempt to document every type of German citizen, which ran him afoul of the Third Reich.

Other important works include: a large format photogravure of *The Steerage* (1907) by Alfred Stieglitz; Edward Steichen's portrait of the writer Carl Sandburg (1934); Dr. Harold Edgerton's *Pete Desjardin Diving* (1940), one of the professor's experiments in motion capture at MIT; the nearly abstract images of Aaron Siskind; and *Song Without Words #23* (1947) a portrait by the renowned photography teacher Minor White of one of his favorite models, Thomas Murphy.

Human sexuality has long been a subject of interest for Shear, and his gift is rich in photographs dealing with social constructions of masculinity, the male body, and gender expression. Many of the photographs comment on the body as a physical landscape, and 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. Many works in Shear's collection hold significant personal meaning, making the exhibition both a look at the history of photography, and also a reflection of Shear's collecting eye and aesthetic as a photographer himself.

Important contemporary photographers are also well represented in the collection. In *Untitled* (2004), Malerie Marder's large-scale color print features an enigmatic nude lounging in a nondescript upstate interior. The Brazilian-American photographer Vik Muniz presents his sepia-toned self-portrait with an 8x10 view camera, *The Dresser* (2003). A matador dressing in an elaborately ornate room is coolly recorded in perfect detail by Tina Barney, and Katy Grannan—who finds her models through advertisements placed in local papers—makes a grainy black and white photograph of a woman and her dog in *Angie & Betty, Allentown, PA* (2002).

The exhibition and entire collection will support research and analysis by students and faculty working in a range of disciplines, from Art History and Studio Art, to History and Gender Studies, and from Environmental Studies and Biology to Media and Film Studies and Documentary Studies. A sizable collection of photographs by Lewis Hine, for example, is useful for investigating how images can impact government and policy. The work of Sally Mann brings up issues of morality in art. Eadweard Muybridge's *Animal Locomotion* in the 1880s, represented in twelve examples, is a forerunner to the moving image. The impressive collection of astronomy photographs, including images of plaster moons, the earliest star atlases, and photographs from Apollo 11's trip to the moon demonstrates the integration of art and science.

The collection also includes examples of artists who worked in other mediums, but for whom photography held a special significance. For example: both David Smith and Christo used photography to document their work; Andy Warhol appreciated Polaroid's seedy reputation, while Lucas Samaras took advantage of its easily manipulated chemistry; and Constantin Brancusi became such an adept photographer that he is almost as well known for his images as for his sculptures.

### **ABOUT JACK SHEAR**

Jack Shear, a photographer, curator, and collector, has a long history with the Tang; Shear and Berry co-curated the two-part exhibition *Twice Drawn* (2006). This gift emphasizes Shear's 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* (Twelve Trees Press, 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' Collection* (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 AND ART GALLERY**

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; 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 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015. More information at <http://tang.skidmore.edu>.

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