



**The Truth is  
Not in the Mirror**

Not in the Mirror  
The Truth is

Photography and a Constructed Identity

# The Truth is Not in the Mirror

Photography and a  
Constructed Identity  
January 19 - May 22, 2011

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The museum wishes to thank the artists, private collectors, galleries and museums who generously agreed to share their works with the public for this exhibition.

Janet Borden Inc., New York

Carroll and Sons Gallery, Boston

ClampArt Gallery, New York

Danziger Projects

Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago

Noel Kirnon

Kopeikin Gallery, LA

Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York

Marian Goodman, New York

Milwaukee Art Museum

The Museum of Contemporary Photography  
at Columbia College Chicago

Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

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Cover

**Graham Miller**  
Australian, b. 1966  
*Rhonda and Chantelle*, 2007  
from *Suburban Splendor*  
Archival inkjet print  
31 1/2 x 39 3/8"  
2010.31.1  
Collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art  
Gift of the artist

This page

**Jesse Burke**  
American, b. 1972  
*August Shotgun*, 2005  
Chromogenic print  
11 x 14"  
Courtesy of ClampArt Gallery,  
New York and the artist



## INTRODUCTION

*I never let the truth stand in the way of a good story.*  
William Randolph Hearst

### *The Truth is Not in the Mirror* explores the nature of portraits and portraiture in contemporary photography.

The photographic portrait of today is often a highly constructed artifice whose intent and purpose is to comment on the status of the individual and community in contemporary society (rather than to catch a glimpse of who the subject really is) and to challenge or trick the viewer into looking deeper into issues of identity, with those portrayed serving as ciphers for the photographer's point of view.

Until recently, the photographic medium, due in large part to the impact of photojournalism, was thought to reflect an immediacy and veracity about that which was portrayed in a way that was not possible through other media (video now shoulders that burden). Even at a time of greater awareness of the constructed nature of photography, the long-held belief in photography's reliability to deliver truth, or just the facts, draws the viewer into fictive engagements with portraits to construct, assume, and question the identity of the portrayed. Portraits do not lead viewers to an encounter with the facts about the person in the photo but rather

toward a funhouse mirror that cannot be trusted for veracity despite how hard one might look.

Although the portraits in the show do not provide easy access to a truth or viewpoint, they can engage the viewer in an active dialogue, provoking inquiry that places any assumptions of what is viewed in flux. Identity, truth, and process linger for the viewer to imagine and reconstruct. Are these images simple documentation of someone's existence at a place and time? Is this a photograph of a real person? Is the subject a vessel for a self-portrait of the artist? The selection of images for the exhibition with a broad spectrum of image-making directives and strategies is intentional and ranges from cubist infused fracturing of space as seen with David Hockney; to flattening the picture plane through merging the foreground and the background in the images by Lee Friedlander; to works that seem like paragraphs of a longer story in Graham Miller's photographs; to fictions staged with participants unaware of their participation as in the work of Phillip Lorca diCorcia; to images that attempt to reveal nothing and everything in Thomas Ruff's work; and images interested less in developing a logical story than in exploring states of feeling and breakdowns in human connection by LaToya Ruby Frazier. The collective diversity of visual language of these photographers offers a persuasive claim on contemporary storytelling.

The pluralistic nature of the contemporary photographic portrait creates an inquiry that leaves the viewer with open-ended questions rather than a sense of the truth or character of the individual portrayed. Yet, even knowing that many of the images are fiction does not prevent us from wanting to connect with what we are seeing. When we look at a photograph we desperately want meaning and identification. Desire is always a part of the dialogue. And maybe pursuing that desire becomes its own truth.

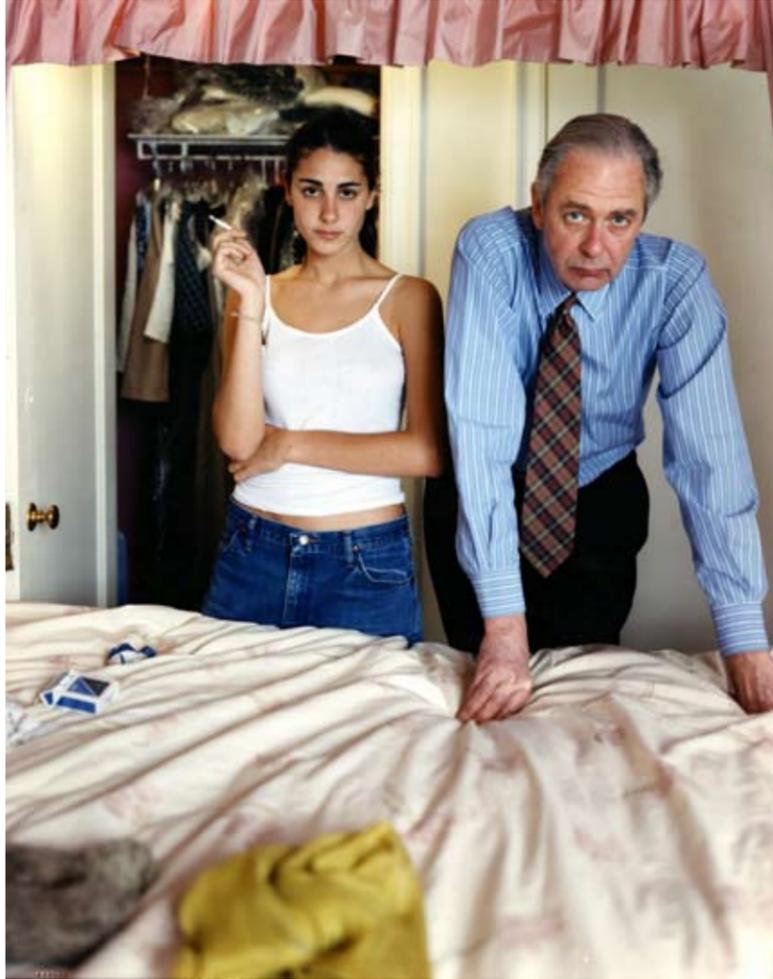
**Alec Soth**  
American, b. 1969  
*Patrick, Palm Sunday, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 2002*  
from *Sleeping by the Mississippi*  
Chromogenic print  
20 x 16"  
2010.23.5  
Collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art  
Museum purchase with funds from Mrs. Karl Ratzsch, Sr.,  
Alan and Barbara Radcliff, and Jetta Muntain Smith in  
memory of her son Aurel Muntain by exchange



**The Sartorialist**  
Scott Schuman  
American, b. 1968  
*Lino with Cigarette, Milan 2007*  
Pigment print  
21 x 17"  
Courtesy of Danziger Projects  
and the artist  
© The Sartorialist



**Will Steacy**  
American, b. 1980  
*Sammy, Atlantic City, 2008*  
from *Down These Mean Streets*  
Pigmented ink print  
30 x 24"  
2010.14.3  
Collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art  
Museum purchase with funds from  
Mr. Paul Lipton, Mrs. Linda Gilbert, and  
De Rance Foundation by exchange



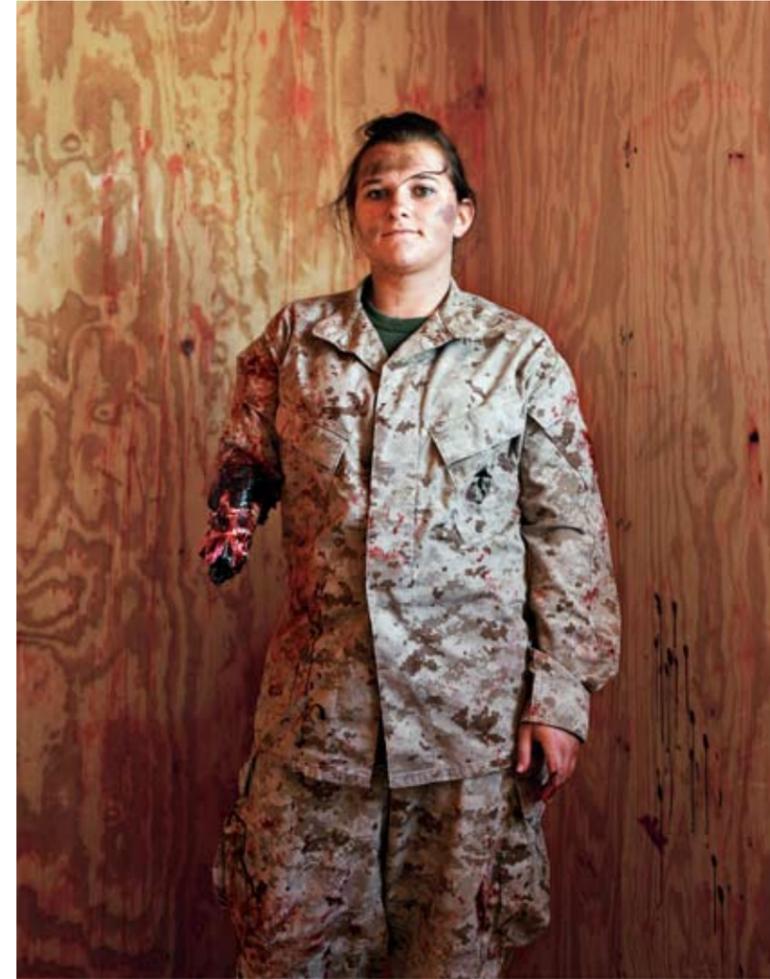
**Tina Barney**  
 American, b. 1945  
*Marina and Peter*, 1997  
 Chromogenic print  
 38 x 31"  
 Courtesy of the Museum of  
 Contemporary Photography at  
 Columbia College Chicago

## TINA BARNEY

In her large-scale portraits of family and close friends, Tina Barney provides a glimpse into the world of the privileged from the vantage of an insider. A native of New York, Barney became a photographer while volunteering at the Museum of Modern Art. After switching to a large-format camera in 1981, Barney adopted a more “directorial” mode of working. With the cooperation of her subjects, she continues to produce images that are both candid yet highly posed. As *Theater of Manners*, the title of her best-known series suggests, the viewer is invited to critique the lifestyles enjoyed by those she photographs. Rather than commemorating specific events, Barney looks for interesting family dynamics and social interactions among her peers.

*“When people say that there is a distance, a stiffness in my photographs that the people look like they do not connect, my answer is, that this is the best that we can do. This inability to show physical affection is in our heritage.”*

While her photographs may mimic family albums—Peter and his daughter Marina posed in 1987 and then again in 1997—Barney’s images are carefully composed, densely-layered tableaux that have an affinity for classical painting. The viewer, in fact, is unsure about the authenticity or spontaneity of her perfectly captured moments of “real life.”



**Claire Beckett**  
 American, b. 1978  
 Civilian Krista Galyean playing the  
 role of an American Marine injured  
 in an IED blast, Wadi Al-Sahara,  
 Marine Corps Air Ground Combat  
 Center, CA, 2008  
 from *Simulating Iraq*  
 Digital chromogenic print  
 40 x 30"  
 Courtesy of Carroll and Sons Gallery,  
 Boston, MA and the artist

## CLAIRE BECKETT

For her *Simulating Iraq* series begun in 2007, Beckett photographed military personnel along with the sites fabricated as a part of pre-deployment exercises. The mock war games designed for these faux “Iraqi” sites feature officers dressed in culturally specific costumes, the use of props and extensive role playing. Beckett presents a complex artificial reality or simulacrum of life in a war zone. Through her photographs, Beckett also poses many questions including, “Who are the ‘good guys,’ and who are the ‘bad guys’? Who is a real Iraqi, and who is a fake insurgent?”

*“I am absolutely the director of my photographs. Using a 4x5 view camera it is nearly impossible to make a candid photograph, so everything is composed by me in collaboration with the people I photograph. I say ‘collaboration’ because I do solicit a lot of input from both the people I photograph and the other people around.”*

Though the spaces are replicated, and the characters invented, *Simulating Iraq* hints at all the preparation undertaken in advance of a theatrical performance. Underlying the work, however, is the fact that actual combat has much graver consequences for those involved.



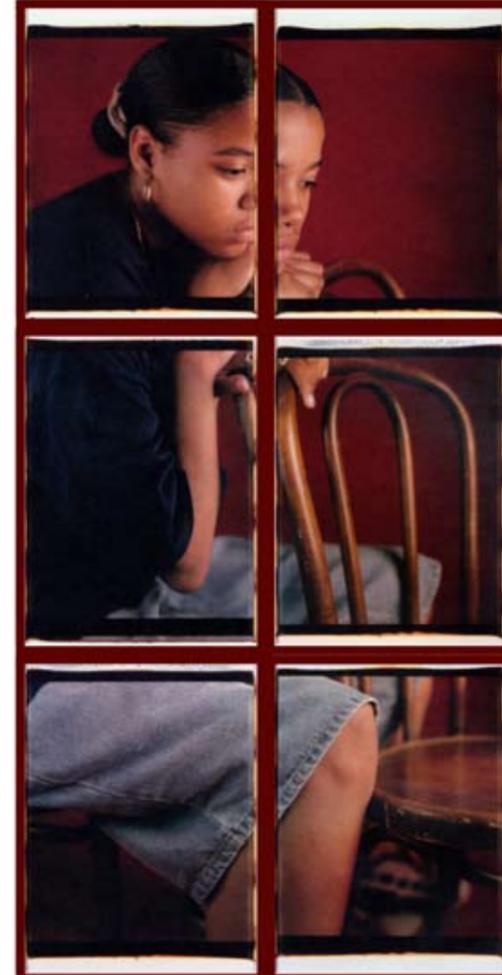
**Valérie Belin**  
 French, b. 1964  
*Untitled # 06070305*, 2006  
 Pigmented ink on paper  
 49 1/4 x 39 3/8"  
 Courtesy of Sikkema  
 Jenkins & Co., New York  
 and the artist

## VALÉRIE BELIN

In each of her photographic series, Valérie Belin treats the iconic and the banal with equal reverence by making no distinction between what is animate and what is not. The ability to merge image, reality, and illusion are what is most intriguing for Belin. After photographing mannequins (and reifying them in the process), the French photographer began posing actual women with flawless features in the guise of lifeless “dummies.” Printed large scale and in color since 2005, Belin’s models have monumental presence, like totems of a specific type or stereotype made hyper-real. On seeing her work, viewers wonder what they are looking at, a photograph of an object, a photograph of a painting, or a painting of a photograph.

*“The original idea was to make photographs that evoked perfect virtual women, like Lara Croft [of the ‘Tomb Raider’ series]. But I wanted to shoot a real object, not something from a computer.”*

A haunting ambiguity also comes from a lack of textual information. Belin’s work is explicitly “untitled” to avoid defining the image, or providing any hint of a narrative. When the title is a number, as in *Untitled # 06070305*, the artist is intentionally suggesting something other than what we actually have before our eyes. This strategy is further explored during exhibition openings. According to Belin, “When nobody knows I’m the artist, I can hear people talking among themselves, saying: ‘It is real.’ Or: ‘No, no, no. It’s not real!’” When this happens, the artist knows she has achieved what she set out to do.



**Dawoud Bey**  
 American, b. 1953  
*Syretta*, 1996  
 Dye diffusion transfer prints  
 94 x 48"  
 2008.2  
 Collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art  
 Museum purchase with funds from  
 Ms. Joanna Sturm by exchange

## DAWOUD BEY

Dawoud Bey sees the portrait as the psychological record of his engagement with the people he photographs. The self-imposed goal for the artist is to create an image that viewers will find engaging in the absence of knowing who is represented. In his series of young people from the 1990s, Bey decided to abandon straight photography in favor of using multiple panels to describe a single sitter or group. This signature approach using a large-format camera allows the artist to include the momentary changes in expression, fleeting gestures, and the subtle articulations of personality. The resulting polyptychs are among Bey’s most profound work because of the work he does in advance.

*“I’m interested in using the camera to try to portray some aspect of the physical, emotional or psychological aspect of the person in front of the lens. I always try to create a real sense of intimacy in the photographs, so that the camera itself kind of disappears and the viewer is left with a heightened sense of the person.”*

The artist has people assume various poses to provoke a range of responses, both an outwardly directed engagement with the camera (and the world) and a more introspective engagement with self. Bey’s photographs are thus highly constructed images.



**Jesse Burke**  
 American, b. 1972  
*American*, b. 1972  
*Woodchuck*, 2005  
*Open Country*, 2008  
*August Shotgun*, 2005  
*Spring Training, Ryan*, 2005  
 Chromogenic prints  
 Approximately 240" (detail)  
 Courtesy of ClampArt Gallery,  
 New York and the artist

## JESSE BURKE

Using male friends and family members as models, Jesse Burke explores ideas of masculinity in contemporary culture from heroic myth to less-noble reality. His subtle photographs of young men in a variety of guises are consistently filled with contradictions. Arranged as an installation, they tackle the underlying rift between society's assumptions about masculinity and the more complicated reality of how men really behave, exposing tensions and vulnerabilities that fall beyond a simplistic view of male toughness. These are introspective pictures taken with tenderness and understanding to convey a more-nuanced and less-polarized portrait of the "Fight Club"-search for male meaning in the modern world.

*"I am most drawn to the moments that are representative of vulnerability or emasculation; where there is a presence of a rupture or wound inflicted in some way, whether it be physical, emotional, or metaphorical. I employ concepts such as male bonding and peer influence, masculine rites and rituals, homosocial desire, physical exertion, and our connection to one another as well as the landscape that we interact within to expose these instances."*



**Kelli Connell**  
 American, b. 1974  
*Carnival*, 2006  
 Lambda print  
 30 x 40"  
 Courtesy of Catherine Edelman Gallery,  
 Chicago and the artist

## KELLI CONNELL

Kelli Connell plays multiple roles in each of her photographs; she is the actor, the double and the producer of each image. Drawing on personal experience as well as what she has witnessed firsthand, Connell fabricates visual narratives which she describes as "constructed realities." The result is a multi-faceted questioning of duality; of masculine and feminine, exterior and interior, along with static and evolving. Appropriately, Connell's intentions are two-fold. On the one hand, she exposes her autobiographical questioning of sexuality and gender roles, particularly as they influence identity in relationships. On the other hand she is interested in how the response of viewers reveals their own notions of identity and social constructs. Using

*"I am interested in not only what the subject matter says about myself, but also what the viewers' response to these images says about their own identities and social constructs."*

the computer as a tool to create a "believable" situation is not that different from accepting any photograph as an object of truth, or by creating a story about two people seen loving, laughing or quarreling in a restaurant.

According to the artist, "My photographs reconstruct the private relationships that I have experienced personally, witnessed in public, or watched on television. The events portrayed in these photographs look believable, yet have never occurred. By digitally creating a photograph that is a composite of multiple negatives of the same model in one setting, the self is exposed as not a solidified being in reality, but as a representation of social and interior investigations that happen within the mind."



**Michael Corridore**  
 Australian, b. 1962  
*Untitled 11, 2006*  
 from *Angry Black Snake*  
 Digital chromogenic print  
 36 x 40 5/8"  
 Courtesy of the artist

## MICHAEL CORRIDORE

Australian Michael Corridore's main interest over the past six years has been inventing new narratives around automobile culture and its influence on us. After photographing spectators at various races and burnouts contests, particularly popular in Australia, he began paring down his images to the very moment when the action and its environmental effect obliterates the scene. The resulting *Angry Black Snake* series features barely recognizable spectators cloaked in smoke and dust. Despite the trappings of a tragedy, there is a prevailing calm among the spectators in their emotive responses that suggests a fiction or dreamlike scenario rather than a real competition. Many of the people have to turn away from the action leaving the viewer to question the

*"There are so many variables, the people's positions, level of smoke, direction of wind, weather conditions, and the nuances of peoples' reactions. The people need only open their mouths slightly, close their eyes or turn their heads down and the pictures will communicate a different story. ... The 'Angry Black Snake' project has led me down a path of searching for fiction captured within real moments."*

nature of the event, and even the logic of the people's involvement. Through careful scene selection and editing, Corridore focuses our attention on the smoke that both censors and literally clouds the true story.



**Philip-Lorca diCorcia**  
 American, b. 1953  
*New York, 1993*  
 Chromogenic print  
 25 1/4 x 38 1/4"  
 2009.3  
 Collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art  
 Museum purchase with funds from  
 Mrs. Martha W. Smith by exchange

## PHILIP-LORCA DICORCIA

A documentarian with a strong background in conceptual art, diCorcia's work operates "in the gap between post-modern fiction and documentary fact." The artist's strategy is to push the limits of a photograph toward the absurd and banal without losing the viewer's confidence in the veracity or truth of an image. By carefully planning the technical aspects of each scene before spontaneously photographing it, he freezes a specific moment or fragment from an otherwise undisclosed narrative.

*"You may think the parts are contingent, they are, still they lead you to the truth."*

Using lighting (both natural and artificial) and staging practices borrowed from the world of film, diCorcia blurs the lines between what is real and what is artificial. In the process he makes the viewer aware of the models and actors he hires, and how isolated they are from each other. Anonymity is reinforced by diCorcia's titles, which tell us only where and when a photograph was produced, such as *New York, 1993*, not what the context for the image might be. According to the artist, "The more specific the interpretation suggested by a picture, the less happy I am with it."



**Rineke Dijkstra**  
 Dutch, b. 1959  
*Tiergarten, Berlin,*  
*August 10, 2003 (Kora), 2000*  
 Chromogenic print  
 59 7/8 x 50 3/8"  
 Courtesy of Marian Goodman,  
 New York and the artist

## RINEKE DIJKSTRA

In images from *Tiergarten (Park Portraits)*, the artist has abandoned the austerity found in her earlier work in favor of the raw innocence that characterizes adolescence. In this series, Dijkstra captures both a sense of the personal as well as the universal in her subjects, specifically during one's rite of passage from childhood to adolescence, or adolescence to adulthood. Recognizing that the people she photographs are at an awkward age, Dijkstra is careful not to compromise their integrity. Rather she establishes a relationship and then includes just enough information to make us both sympathize with them and to feel equally uncomfortable. In this way our perception of them and their reality become indelibly linked.

*"A photograph works best when the formal aspects such as light, color and composition, as well as the informal aspects like someone's gaze or gesture come together. In my pictures I also look for a sense of stillness and serenity. I like it when everything is reduced to its essence. You try to get things to reach a climax. A moment of truth."*



**Jason Florio**  
 British, b. 1965  
*Moudon Bah, Gambian Village*  
*Chief, Alkalo, Kombo Central,*  
*The Gambia, West Africa*  
 Archival pigment print  
 24 x 30"  
 Courtesy of the artist

## JASON FLORIO

For the past twelve years Florio has been returning annually to a sacred forest called Makasutu (Mandinka for "holy forest") in the Kombo Central region of the tiny West African Republic of The Gambia to make large- and medium-format black-and-white portraits of the people who live there. For these photographs, Florio often uses a partially translucent scrim as a backdrop, and then invites his sitters to stand or sit for their portrait with whatever they want to bring with them. Seated in ceremonial garb, or holding a cow's head in advance of a coming-of-age celebration, participants are set off by a scrim or curtain that acts as a filter.

*"I feel that, I am in essence 're-truthing' reality through the photographic medium, molding people on film into a narrative of my own design but solidly based upon real aspects of their quotidian."*

This diaphanous screen separates the sitter from the world behind them, yet includes it at the same time. The artist makes this element even more obvious when we can see its edges or the silhouette of a figure behind it, as in the portrait of Moudon Bah, Gambian Village Chief.



**LaToya Ruby Frazier**  
 American, b. 1982  
*Me and Mom's Boyfriend Mr. Art, 2005*  
 Gelatin silver print  
 16 x 20"  
 2009.12.1  
 Collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art  
 Museum purchase with funds from  
 Mrs. Martha W. Smith by exchange

## LATOYA RUBY FRAZIER

Throughout the 1980s while living at home in Braddock, Pennsylvania, LaToya Ruby Frazier made family the focus of her work. For the artist, collaborating with them (her mother is co-author, artist, photographer and subject) helps blur the lines between self-portraiture and social document. It also allowed the artist to tackle intergenerational issues, along with specific aspects of her home life.

*"I couldn't get the emotional depth that I wanted photographing families in shelters, so I decided that I would go home and start photographing my mom."*

What is unique here is that the photographer(s)—mother and daughter—are part of a narrative which is being presented from the inside out. "In keeping with her role as a decidedly non-objective observer, Frazier turns the camera on herself, exposing her place in the life of her family. In these images she reveals herself not just as a self-aware documentarian, but also as a daughter, a friend, and an artist. Though her focus is specific, her work examines the role that family dynamics play both on a personal level and in society at large."



**Andy Freeberg**  
 American, b. 1958  
*Portrait of Y.M. Yevreinov, 2008*  
 Artist Unknown  
 from *The Guardians*  
 Archival pigment ink print  
 49 x 34"  
 Courtesy of the Kopeikin Gallery,  
 LA and the artist

## ANDY FREEBERG

While visiting art museums in Russia, Andy Freeberg was struck less by the works of art and more by the environment in which they were presented. Specifically, his interest in the museums' security led to the creation of *The Guardians*, a series of photographs not of the art per se, but of the women who sit in the galleries and protect the collections. According to the artist, "When you look at the paintings and sculptures, the presence of the women becomes an inherent part of viewing the artwork itself. I found the guards as intriguing to observe as the pieces they watch over. In conversation they told me how much they like being among Russia's great art." Ironically, some of the pensioners start to resemble the art they are hired to protect, or perhaps the photographer has pre-selected those who do. The artist's

*"A woman in Moscow's State Tretyakov Gallery Museum said she often returns [to the museum] on her day off to sit in front of a painting that reminds her of her childhood home. Another guard travels three hours each day to work, since at home she would just sit on her porch and complain about her illnesses, 'as old women do.' She would rather be at the museum enjoying the people-watching, surrounded by the history of her country."*

strategy of ennobling the banal elements and characters one encounters while visiting some of the greatest art collections in the world subtly forces us to reconsider familiar contexts and find alternative, often-overlooked stories within them.



**Lee Friedlander**  
 American, b. 1934  
*Pt. Lookout*, 2009  
 Gelatin silver print  
 16 x 20"  
 2010.3.1  
 Collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art  
 Museum purchase with funds from  
 Mrs. Martha W. Smith by exchange

## LEE FRIEDLANDER

Lee Friedlander's unique vision underscores the two-dimensionality of the picture plane and the potential for photographs to contain varying levels of reflection, opacity and transparency. Like Atget's photographs, Friedlander's images of shop windows and shadows cast over various surfaces evoke a certain ambiguity, an oscillation between reflected and actual reality that invite inspection of the space and the meaning of the image.

*"I only wanted Uncle Vernon standing by his own car (a Hudson) on a clear day. I got him and the car. I also got a bit of Aunt Mary's laundry and Beau Jack, the dog, peeing on the fence, and a row of potted tuberous begonias on the porch and 78 trees and a million pebbles in the driveway and more. It's a generous medium, photography."*

Similar responses are encouraged by Friedlander's street photographs, in which shadows of figures (usually Friedlander himself) and other subjects overlap in the photographic image. The projected outline of Friedlander's body as within the picture frame implies the notion that the photographer can be both behind the camera and in front of it. Interpreted further, Friedlander's shadow can be taken to represent the imposition of the photographer upon his world and his chosen subject.



**David Hockney**  
 English, b. 1937  
*Mather I, Yorkshire Moors, August 1985, 1985*  
 Photographic collage  
 18 1/2 x 13"  
 Collection of David Hockney  
 © David Hockney

## DAVID HOCKNEY

While primarily a painter, in the 1980s David Hockney began producing photographic collages and composite works using Polaroids. Fascinated by the way a camera frames a scene, Hockney would take pictures as quickly as possible and then assemble them into elaborate collages. In 1983, he used this method to create a series of portraits with his mother as his first subject.

*"To say that 'what we see' is more important than 'how we see it' is to think that 'how' has been settled and fixed. When you realize this is not the case, you realize that 'how' often affects 'what' we see."*

These composite pictures—which the artist refers to as "joiners"—resemble fractured picture planes reminiscent of the work of the Cubists. The components are individual photographic images, yet there is an implied narrative and psychological dimension to Hockney's work, since the variety of perspectives reveal subtle changes of attitude in each sitter.



**Nikki S. Lee**  
 Korean-American, b. 1970  
*The Hispanic Project #18*, 1998  
 Chromogenic print  
 29 x 22"  
 Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College Chicago

## NIKKI S. LEE

Korean-born Nikki S. Lee's truly vernacular images from *Projects* (1997–2001) explore notions of identity, appearance and our ability to adapt to different social settings. For the series, which she began while still in school, the artist acted as director, performance artist, and sociologist. After first studying a particular subculture or ethnic group, she would adopt their general mannerisms, including how they dress, and then approach the group in her new guise. According to Lee, she would also introduce herself as an artist, though not everyone would believe her. After several weeks of play-acting and melding with these new friends, she would have someone in the group photograph her with an automatic camera.

*"Essentially life itself is a performance. When we change our clothes to alter our appearance, the real act is the transformation of our way of expression—the outward expression of our psyche."*

An essential part of the project is its final form, namely a simple snapshot taken with a point-and-shoot camera that adds a date stamp when printed. Her use of the snapshot aesthetic along with her uncanny ability to strike the "right" poses convinces us that she belongs. The electronic date stamp in a corner confers scientific specificity and authenticity, while at the same time marking the picture as both candid and familiar. To many, it may even appear to be the work of an unassuming amateur. Yet unlike most vernacular images, Lee's project proposes questions about identity and social behavior. Do we choose our social groups consciously? How are we identified by other people? Is it possible for us to move between cultures, and what does that mean?



**Graham Miller**  
 Australian, b. 1966  
*Nicole, Monument Valley*, 2010  
 from *American Photographs*  
 Archival inkjet print  
 31 1/2 x 39 2/5"  
 2010.31.2  
 Collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art  
 Gift of the artist

## GRAHAM MILLER

Australian native Graham Miller's photographs often materialize from encounters observed while driving. *American Photographs*, the result of a road trip through the Southwest USA, captures insights into America in a way that only an outsider can, while *Suburban Splendor* (2007) focuses on the psychological isolation felt by many in suburbia. Miller's staged vignettes from *Suburban Splendor* draw from literature and cinema, particularly the writer Raymond Carver, whose short stories describe "ordinary blue collar people living lives of quiet desperation, people who are feeling their way in the dark with the hope that maybe next week things will get better." Highly saturated and mysterious, Miller's suggestive images resemble poignant movie stills, allowing the viewer to delve into stories of their own imagining.

*"I guess the reason people have such a hard time with the constructed image is that for them it somehow feels like cheating. They still believe that because the photograph so closely resembles reality that somehow it must also be 'true.' For me photography is much like writing—in the sense that you can approach writing about a subject or photographing it as fiction or non-fiction. Both are equally valid, and both are able to speak of the human experience in a moving and profound way. It does puzzle me when people go on about it. It just doesn't feel the right approach for me to work in a traditional photojournalistic sense."*



**Martin Parr**  
 English, b. 1952  
*Clare College May Ball, Cambridge, 2005*  
 Inkjet print  
 20 x 30"  
 2010.7.1  
 Collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art  
 Museum purchase with funds from  
 Mrs. Martha W. Smith by exchange

## MARTIN PARR

The British photographer Martin Parr is known for putting his subjects—the wealthy—“under the microscope” in a novel way. Parr, a social documentarian who describes the proliferation of images in society as “propaganda,” takes a critical, anthropological and satirical look at modern society at play. His photographs capture the vivid, often exaggerated and garish colors of people enjoying the advantages of opportunity and means from unique perspectives. By carefully selecting and cropping his images, Parr invites the viewer to concentrate on humorous details that might otherwise be overlooked or appear mundane.

*“Luxury is the new poverty... For years, the subject of documentary social photography has been poverty, whereas I think that the new front line is luxury.”*

While entertaining, Parr’s photographs also show us “in a penetrating way, how we live, how we present ourselves, and what we value.”



**Thomas Ruff**  
 German, b. 1958  
*Untitled (Anna Giese), 1989*  
 Chromogenic print  
 80 x 62"  
 Courtesy of Janet Borden Inc.,  
 New York

## THOMAS RUFF

With high-resolution passport-style images on a scale not seen before, Thomas Ruff is among those artists reviving the art of portraiture. Ruff’s monumental yet dispassionate photographs, made possible using current technology, reflect the New Objectivity movement, a collective rejection of both expressionism and romanticism in art. Ruff’s images are unsettling precisely because of their veracity and immense scale. Every detail is so real that we cannot help but to become engaged with the individual represented.

*“The difference between them [the Neue Sachlichkeit of Sander or Renger-Patzsch] and me is that they believed to have captured reality and I believe to have created a picture. We all lost bit by bit the belief in this so-called objective capturing of real reality.”*

Though no narrative is suggested, the viewer wants to find a story and will begin to wonder who they are looking at, what life they live, or what they were thinking about when their photograph was taken. With a Ruff image, “we may see [it] with our eyes, but the images occur in our minds” as we begin to complete the story.



**The Sartorialist**  
 Scott Schuman  
 American, b. 1968  
*George Cortina, NYC, 2007*  
 Pigment print  
 21 x 17"  
 Courtesy of Danziger Projects  
 and the artist  
 © The Sartorialist

## THE SARTORIALIST

The "Sartorialist" is the pen name, so to speak, for Scott Schuman, a New York-based fashion professional and photographer who attracts considerable attention with his everyday icons of fashion. From the Latin *Sartorius*, the adjective sartorial, meaning of or related to clothes and how they are made, describes Schuman's alter ego, or adopted persona; he is 'The Sartorialist,' the connoisseur and artist identifying and photographing people on the street with a true sense of style. Schuman started the idea simply to share photos of people that he thought looked great.

*"Rarely do [designers] look at the whole outfit as a yes or no, but they try and look for the abstract concepts of color, proportion, pattern-mixing or mixed genres."*

According to the artist, "My only strategy was to try and shoot style in a way that I knew most designers hunted for inspiration." In the process, his work becomes an example of an insider who turns to the street for inspiration in order to inform the professionals so their work will have broader appeal.



**Alec Soth**  
 American, b. 1969  
*Bonnie (with a photograph of an angel),  
 Port Gibson, Mississippi, 2000*  
 from *Sleeping by the Mississippi*  
 Chromogenic print  
 20 x 24"  
 2010.19.2  
 Collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art  
 Museum purchase with funds from Dr. Kenneth Maier by exchange

## ALEC SOTH

Created over a five-year period, Alec Soth's photographs from *Sleeping by the Mississippi* present an often-neglected side of America. The photographs include poetic portraits of people and places in mid-America from northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. During successive road trips, Soth explored life along the Mississippi's over 2,000-mile flow. Inspired by Robert Frank's *The Americans*, a timely profile of this country from the mid-1950s, Soth sought locations from Minnesota to Louisiana that reflect who we are, where we live and what we believe.

*"For me, photography is as much about the way I respond to the subject as it is about the subject itself. My portraits don't reveal all that much about the people I'm photographing. I often say that what I'm really photographing is the space between myself and the subject."*

Using a large-format camera, Soth invariably worked with the people who he met while traveling. The artist's sensitive depiction of seemingly mediocre events, along with banal and neglected sites, captures the essence of life along the river.

Like the fragments of a dream, each image presents part of a larger open narrative.



**Will Steacy**  
 American, b. 1980  
*Tony, San Francisco, 2010*  
 from *Down These Mean Streets*  
 Pigmented ink print  
 30 x 24"  
 2010.14.4  
 Collection of the  
 Haggerty Museum of Art  
 Museum purchase from  
 Mrs. Victoria S. Higgins in memory  
 of Calvin Roll by exchange

## WILL STEACY

Will Steacy is a modern documentarian capturing the physical and psychological state of urban America. His intimate portraits in *Down These Mean Streets* have been described as elegiac reflections of our times. They are hard-hitting yet sensitive portrayals of urban survival in “no-man’s land.” Steacy’s project involves taking photographs at night, within walking distance of the main airport, in various cities across the country. Equipped with a large-format camera, the artist places himself in potentially dangerous situations and allows chance encounters with people to determine his subject matter. The resulting intimate engagements with those driven to blighted areas are photographs that expose life in America’s inner cities “without voyeuristic sentimentality or cheap sensationalism.”

*“When I take a portrait I ask my subject to give a part of him/herself to me. And that I will do the same. We will dance. When it’s over there will be a picture. When I am making a portrait I am looking for that moment when my subject has shed the normal everyday boundaries that we put up to the world and has allowed me inside. This moment usually only lasts for a short time before they become self-aware and those boundaries go back up.”*



**Larry Sultan**  
 American, 1946-2009  
*Mom Posing for Me, 1984, printed 1990*  
 from *Pictures from Home*  
 Chromogenic print  
 16 1/4 x 21 1/4"  
 Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Collection  
 M1991.45  
 Courtesy of the Milwaukee Art Museum

## LARRY SULTAN

*Pictures from Home* (1982-92), Larry Sultan’s decade-long study of family, began when his father Irving was forced into early retirement from his career as vice president of the Schick Safety Razor Company. As initially conceived, the project was to be about “what happens when—as I interpreted my father’s fate—corporations discard their no-longer-young employees, and how the resulting frustrations and feelings of powerlessness find their way into family relations,” explains Sultan.

The series, described as part family album, part visual novella, features Sultan’s parents in retirement dealing with the critical issues that come with getting older. This is not just the story of Sultan’s mother and

*“When I was working on ‘Pictures from Home,’ my parents’ voices, their stories, as well as their arguments with my version of our shared history, were crucial to the book. They called into question the documentary truth the pictures seemed to carry. I wanted to subvert the sentimental home movies and snapshots with my more contentious images of suburban daily life, but at the same time I wished to subvert my images with my parents’ insights into my point of view.”*

father, but also about their relationship with their son, who has made them the focus of his work. The child photographing his parents reverses the social norm and introduces a new power dynamic, seen in *Mom Posing for Me*. Sultan’s only instruction to his parents was not to smile. His father later stated “I’m happy to help you with your project, but for the most part that’s not me that I recognize in those pictures.” The artist provides the viewer not with a picture of domestic bliss, but with a more nuanced and autobiographical look at family.



**Mickalene Thomas**  
American, b. 1971  
*Le déjeuner sur l'herbe,*  
*Les Trois Femmes Noires, 2010*  
Chromogenic print  
52 x 63"  
Courtesy of Lehmann Maupin Gallery,  
New York and the artist

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## MICKALENE THOMAS

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Mickalene Thomas' depictions of African American women explore notions of black female celebrity and identity while romanticizing ideas of femininity and power. Like the '70s style known as Blaxploitation, from the words "black" and "exploitation," Thomas' genre is designed to empower urban blacks. Her photographs radiate sexuality and luxury in the form of kitschy decorative patterns. Inspired by art-historical sources that range from the nineteenth-century Hudson River School to artists like Édouard Manet, Henri Matisse and Romare Bearden, Thomas presents a new concept of beauty from a contemporary perspective.

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*"I'm always looking for strong, beautiful  
and complex women to model for me."*

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