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Curator:

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**FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION OF ROBERT BERGMAN'S
PHOTOGRAPHS ON VIEW AT THE NATIONAL
GALLERY OF ART
OCTOBER 11, 2009 THROUGH JANUARY 10, 2010**



Robert Bergman, *Untitled*, 1989
inkjet print, printed 2004
Anonymous Gift. © Robert Bergman

Washington, DC—In the first solo exhibition of American photographer Robert Bergman (b. 1944), approximately 30 color portraits will display the artist's exceptional ability to reveal the singular nature of each of his subjects and their common humanity. On view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, from October 11, 2009, through January 10, 2010, ***Robert Bergman: Portraits, 1986–1995*** presents everyday people the artist encountered in the streets of the United States during his travels from 1985 to 1997.

The portraits were previously published in Bergman's book, "A Kind of Rapture," with an introduction by Toni Morrison and afterword by art historian Meyer Schapiro.

"An underground legend for decades, Robert Bergman has produced a moving body of work," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "Drawn from a recent gift of 98 photographs, this exhibition is part of a series of exhibitions in the last several years celebrating work by contemporary photographers recently acquired by the Gallery."

Robert Bergman has been organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

The Exhibition

Using a handheld 35mm camera and available light, Robert Bergman spent 12 years making a series of large color portraits that address not only his subjects' physical presence but also their psychic state. Drawing on his finely tuned sense of form and an ability to establish a rapport with his subjects, he never sensationalized or objectified them. Instead, he explored their penetrating gazes, downcast eyes, or distant stares to reveal their startling array of emotions—suspicion with curiosity; despair with resilience—thus making clear each individual's "strength and delicacy," as Schapiro noted.

Robert Bergman

Born in New Orleans in 1944, Bergman's father was a doctor and his mother was a Shakespearean actress. He first began to photograph as a child and seriously embraced the medium in his early twenties. In the mid 1960s, he was deeply influenced by Robert Frank's book *The Americans*. Like so many other "street photographers" of that generation, he abandoned the large-format view camera he had previously employed and began to use a 35mm format to make black-and-white photographs in the American urban environment. Although he worked in the rapidly changing cityscape, he, unlike many of his contemporaries, increasingly sought out quiet, meditative moments.

In the 1980s, Bergman began to make color photographs that combine the saturated and muted hues of both the city and his subjects' attire to achieve a rich, painterly idiom. He resides in Minneapolis and New York City.

Curator and Related Activities

Sarah Greenough, senior curator of photographs, National Gallery of Art, is curator of the exhibition.

On Sunday, November 1, 2009, at 2:00 p.m., author Toni Morrison will read "The Fisherwoman" her introduction to Robert Bergman's book "A Kind of Rapture."

Short Description:

Robert Bergman: Portraits, 1986 – 1995

National Gallery of Art, Washington—October 11, 2009–January 10, 2010



Robert Bergman, *Untitled*, 1987, photograph printed 2004, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Anonymous Donation
© Robert Bergman

For more than 40 years Robert Bergman (b. 1944) has traveled the streets and back alleys of the United States, photographing the people and scenes he encountered. In the 1960s Bergman, like so many other so-called street photographers of that generation, used a 35 mm camera to make black-and-white photographs. In the 1980s he began to work in color. Using no special lighting or equipment, he made a series of monumental portraits of the people he met. The exhibition will present 33 of these compelling portraits from a recent gift to the Gallery of more than 90 photographs by Bergman, most of which have never been exhibited.

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and

January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. The Gallery is now on Facebook—become a fan at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering the East and West Buildings. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 x 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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October 11, 2009 through

January 10, 2010

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Biography

SARAH GREENOUGH

Sarah Greenough is senior curator of photographs at the National Gallery of Art, Washington. She has organized numerous exhibitions for the Gallery, including *Alfred Stieglitz* (1983), *On the Art of Fixing a Shadow: 150 Years of Photography* (1989), *Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries* (2001), *André Kertész* (2005), and *Irving Penn: Platinum Prints* (2005) that have also traveled to museums around the world. Most recently, she was co-curator of *The Art of the American Snapshot, 1888-1978: From the Collection of Robert E. Jackson* (2007) and organized *Richard Misrach: On the Beach* (2008) for exhibition at the National Gallery of Art.

Greenough is the author of many publications, including *Walker Evans: Subways and Streets* (1991), *Robert Frank: Moving Out* (1994), *Harry Callahan* (1996), *Alfred Stieglitz: The Key Set* (2002), and *All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852-1860* (2004), with Malcolm Daniel and Gordon Baldwin.

Her exhibitions and publications have won many awards, including the International Center of Photography Publications Award for *On the Art of Fixing a Shadow: 150 Years of Photography* and the George Wittenborn Memorial Book Award for *Alfred Stieglitz: The Key Set*. In 2007, she and co-author Diane Waggoner won the College Art Association's Alfred H. Barr, Jr. award for outstanding museum scholarship for their exhibition catalogue, *The Art of the American Snapshot: 1888-1978*.

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New York Galleries (2001)

*On the Art of Fixing a
Shadow: 150 Years of
Photography* (1989)

Alfred Stieglitz (1983)

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