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Important Contemporary Photography Collection Inaugurates East Building Reopening; Collection of Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker Promised to National Gallery of Art



Candida Höfer, *George Peabody Library Baltimore*, 2010
chromogenic print
Promised Gift from the Collection of Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker

Washington, DC—In celebration of a remarkable promised gift of 34 important contemporary photographs from the collection of Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker, a special exhibition will be presented in the reopened East Building galleries at the National Gallery of Art. On view September 30, 2016, through March 5, 2017, ***Photography Reinvented: The Collection of Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker*** presents seminal works by 18 artists, including Thomas Demand, Thomas Struth, Hiroshi Sugimoto, and Jeff Wall, who in the last two decades have created pictures that expand our understanding of the nature of photography and greatly enhance the Gallery's holdings of contemporary photography.

In building their collection of photographs since 2007, Robert Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker turned to the most innovative contemporary work that challenges accepted conventions of the nature of photography—in scale, subject matter, and method of creation—and has helped to ensure the medium's prominence in the contemporary art arena. The collection includes works by artists associated with the loosely knit group known as the "Pictures Generation," such as Cindy Sherman and John Baldessari, who appropriated images from the mainstream media, as well as several members of the Düsseldorf school of photography.

"The Gallery is immensely grateful to Bob and Rheda for their exceptional generosity," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art, Washington. "The Gallery is a collection formed from the fertile amalgamation of many personal collections, each one created by gifted, philanthropic collectors, and each one helping to define the standards of excellence for which the museum is justly celebrated. Bob and Rheda's collection of photographs will take its place in this distinguished lineage, where it will enhance appreciation of the vitality and complexity of modern and contemporary art and photography."

Exhibition Highlights

Robert Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker have collected only what they love: pictures that move them visually, intellectually, and even viscerally. The Meyerhoff-Becker Collection brings together works of important artists who have changed the course of photography through their experimentation and conceptual scope. The collection is especially rich in pieces by photographers of the famed Düsseldorf school, including Andreas Gursky, Candida Höfer, and Thomas Ruff. Characterized by a seemingly objective, straightforward style and the use of large-scale, vibrantly colored prints, their work reflects the teachings of Bernd and Hilla Becher, professors at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, whose exacting style and dispassionate examinations of industrial forms are exemplified in their nine-photograph grid *Water Towers* (1972–2009).

The Meyerhoff-Becker Collection also includes work by photographers who explore the nature of the medium itself by appropriating imagery from mass media and other sources to create often carefully staged pictures. Cindy Sherman draws on images of women from Hollywood films and performs for

the camera in such works as *Untitled Film Still #4* (1977). Thomas Demand, using 270,000 individual pieces of die-cut paper, meticulously constructed a handmade forest in a steel frame approximately 50 feet long, 18 feet high, and 32 feet deep for his stunning *Clearing* (2003). He illuminated the construction with intense studio lighting and photographed it before destroying his model. His final print measures 6 by 16 feet. Other artists in the collection appropriate existing photographs. In *Marilyn Monroe, Actress, NY City, May 6, 1957, After Avedon (Gordian Puzzle)* (2007), Vik Muniz reconstructs Richard Avedon's celebrated photograph of a forlorn Monroe using puzzle segments—dissecting her into pieces much as the public did during and after her lifetime.

Curator, Catalog, and Related Activities

The exhibition was organized by Sarah Greenough, senior curator and head of the department of photographs, National Gallery of Art.

Published by the National Gallery of Art in association with Princeton University Press, the accompanying exhibition catalog includes essays by Greenough, Philip Brookman, consulting curator, Andrea Nelson, associate curator of photographs, and Diane Waggoner, curator of 19th-century photographs, all at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, as well as Leslie Ureña, assistant curator of photographs, Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery. The 100-page hardcover catalog includes 68 color illustrations and is available at <http://shop.nga.gov/>; (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002 (phone); (202) 789-3047 (fax); or mailorder@nga.gov.

Diamonstein-Spielvogel Lecture Series

Thomas Struth, in conversation with Sarah Greenough

October 16 at 2:00

East Building Auditorium

The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection at National Gallery of Art

Starting in 1958, Robert Meyerhoff and his late wife, Jane, assembled one of the finest collections of mid-20th-century art in existence. Without using advisors and relying solely on their own eyes and knowledge, they collected more than 300 works by 50 artists from Grace Hartigan, Hans Hofmann, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko to Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Willem de Kooning, Roy Lichtenstein, Brice Marden, Robert Rauschenberg, and Frank Stella. In 1987, they pledged their collection to the National Gallery of Art. In addition, they funded the Gallery's purchase of Barnett Newman's masterpiece, *The Stations of the Cross* (1958-1966), and a related painting, *Be II* (1961/1964). More recently, their home and galleries near Baltimore were designated as part of the donation to the Gallery to be used as an off-site facility for the study and display of art. Jane Meyerhoff passed away in 2004.

Press Contact:

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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 visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt, Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc, and Instagram at <http://instagram.com/ngadc>.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. 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 by 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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[Photography Reinvented: The Collection of Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker](#)

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