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**Spring Exhibitions at the University Art Museum**

*Near & Far: Six Photography Portfolios from the University at Albany Fine Art Collections*

*Carrie Mae Weems: Coming Up for Air*

On view January 23 – April 5, 2023



ALBANY, NY (January 12, 2023) — The University Art Museum is pleased to present *Near & Far: Six Photography Portfolios from the University at Albany Fine Art Collections* in its main galleries. The UAM will present Carrie Mae Weems's feature-length video project *Coming Up for Air* in the Nancy Hyatt Liddle Gallery.

***Near & Far: Six Photography Portfolios from the University at Albany Fine Art Collections***

Photographers Tom Baril, Andreas Feininger, Larry Fink, Mary Ellen Mark, Edward Steichen, and Andy Warhol from the University at Albany Fine Art Collections offer nuanced views of social class, power, desire, and beauty. Covering nearly a century of photographs taken throughout the United States, *Near & Far* brings us close to times past, yet the exhibition's underlying currents of class, unseen labor, and celebrity culture remain as salient now as ever.

The 10 intimate, black and white portraits in **Mary Ellen Mark's** *In America* (1986-91) make strangers feel familiar. Mark's selection shows us people from all walks of life with her inimitable sense of empathy and humanity, including two boys in their Sunday best on their way to church on a dirt road in Tunica, Mississippi, four older women donning sequined tuxedo jackets for a Las Vegas performance, and a seated portrait of controversial McCarthy-era lawyer Roy Cohn, seething with an appetite for power.

The 15 black and white candid shots of socialites in **Larry Fink's** portfolio *Social Context* (1975-1991) oscillate between satire and seduction as they unveil a world of privileged revelry. Among the images we

see an unflattering sneer of a wealthy party goer oblivious to a laboring waitress behind him, and a table whose excess of food, libations, and glittering glassware recall Dutch vanitas. Raised in a working-class family, Fink holds an ambivalent relationship to his subjects ultimately producing images that are, in the artist words, “political, but not polemical.”

The **Andy Warhol** portfolios consist of two bodies of work: 102 color Polaroids and 51 8 x 10 black and white photographs shot in 35mm film. In the Polaroids, which were often the source material for his large-scale silkscreen and acrylic portraits, our gaze is met by a veritable Who's Who of 1970s and 80s celebrities: fashion designer Carolina Herrera, basketball superstar Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and actress and drag icon Jackie Curtis among others. These portraits poignantly contrast with Warhol's 35mm work—the result of his everyday practice of documentation—in which we at times feel longing and loneliness in vacant New York City streets.



**Andreas Feininger** offers a macro view of the city in the five large-scale photographs comprising his *Vintage New York* portfolio. Taken using his super telephoto lens—40 inches long and affixed to his 4 x 5 view camera held up by a five-pod he invented—they allow us to see New York from a distance yet elicit in us a yearning to be up close. The Bauhaus-trained artist who immigrated to New York at the outbreak of World War II, shot many of these photographs concurrent with his time as a staff photographer at *LIFE* (1943-1962).

**Tom Baril's** eight-photograph portfolio (1993-2001), shot in large format, recalls a Pictorialist photographic tradition augmented by his contemplative palette of selenium and sepia tones. A picture taken under the Verrazzano bridge offers a rare moment of quiet solitude in New York. The nostalgic, tactile sensitivity of Baril, who printed for the late photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, is equally felt in the portfolio's flower and landscape photographs.



So many of the themes throughout the exhibition are anticipated in the earlier work of **Edward Steichen** presented in *Edward Steichen: Twenty-Five Photographs*: celebrity portraits of actor, singer, and activist Paul Robeson and actress Greta Garbo, views of the metropolis, and still life and botanical studies that allow us to see the world anew. Steichen led the development of photography as a modern art form in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, transformed the world of fashion photography as Condé Nast's chief photographer (1923-1938), and helped institutionalize the medium's legacy as the Museum of Modern Art's director of photography (1947-1962). The *Twenty-Five Photographs* were selected by Steichen's wife Johanna Steichen, who wrote and curated *Steichen's Legacy* (Knopf, 2000) the definitive catalog on his work, and posthumously produced by master printer George Tice, the last printer to work with Steichen.

### **Carrie Mae Weems: *Coming Up for Air***

This presentation marks the twentieth anniversary of the inception of Carrie Mae Weems's feature-length video *Coming Up for Air* (2003-2004). The video's seven poignant vignettes include appropriated early 20<sup>th</sup> century archival and cinema footage interwoven with staged scenes of family quarrels and reconciliation, poetic reflections on parental loss, and socially pointed moments examining present and historical race and gender relations. Sounds range from the contemplative jazz of Hugh Ragin and a meditative piano piece by John Cage, to a bright pop standard sung by Jimmy Durante, and include Weems herself reciting poetic narratives.



With stylistic echoes of Maya Deren's and Federico Fellini's films, this early foray for Weems into video—a medium which is now a mainstay within her oeuvre—was in the artist's words a “way of extending the vocabulary” of the photographic work for which she was already renown. The 53-minute video runs continuously during museum hours and is presented as a wall-sized video installation.

### About the Collections

The portfolios on view in *Near & Far* are from the University at Albany Fine Art Collections. The Collections are comprised of over 3,000 objects and reflect 50 years of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, photographs, prints, drawings and sculpture by many of the most prominent artists of the 20th and 21st centuries. The UAM is currently seeking funding to expand its current holdings to reflect a greater representation of artists of color, women, transgender, and queer artists.

### About Carrie Mae Weems

One of the most influential contemporary American artists, Carrie Mae Weems's body of work spans photography, text, fabric, audio, digital images, installation, and video. Weems has received numerous awards, grants, and fellowships, including the prestigious Prix de Roma, and The National Endowment of the Arts. In 2012, Weems was presented with one of the first US Department of State's Medals of Arts in recognition for her commitment to the State Department's Art in Embassies program. In 2013 Weems received the MacArthur “Genius” grant as well as the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Lifetime Achievement Award. She is represented in public and private collections around the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Museum of Modern Art, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and The Tate Modern, London.

*The University Art Museum Spring 2023 exhibitions and programs are supported by the UAlbany Office of the President, Office of the Provost, The University at Albany Foundation, and University Auxiliary Services (UAS).*

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**Museum hours beginning January 23, 2023:**

Monday – Friday, 11am – 4pm

Additional Saturday hours to be announced soon.

**Contact:** Darcie Abbatiello, Registrar/Collections Manager, [dabbatiello@albany.edu](mailto:dabbatiello@albany.edu)

**Image credits:**

Edward Steichen, *Avocados* from *Steichen: Twenty-five Photographs*, 1930, gelatin silver print, 10 x 13 inches, collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, gift of Stephen and Linda Singer

Tom Baril, *3 Poppies*, 1997, gelatin silver print, 18 x 14 ½ inches, collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Andy Warhol, *Statue*, n.d., gelatin silver print, 8 x 10 inches, collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, gift of © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

Mary Ellen Mark, *Old women in black, Las Vegas 4/1991* from *Mary Ellen Mark: In America*, 1991, gelatin silver print, 10 ¼ x 10 ¼ inches, collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Larry Fink, *False Men and their Makers, Studio 54* from *Social Context*, 1977, gelatin silver print, 14 x 14 inches, collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Andy Warhol, *Esme and Another Model*, n.d., gelatin silver print, 10 x 8 inches, collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, gift of © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

Andreas Feininger, *Midtown Manhattan* from *Vintage New York: Andreas Feininger*, 1941, gelatin silver print, 33 x 26 inches, collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

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Tom Baril, *Chrysler Building*, 1995, gelatin silver print, 18 x 14 ½ inches, collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Edward Steichen, *The Maypole (Empire State Building)* from *Steichen: Twenty-five Photographs*, 1932, gelatin silver print, 13 x 10 inches, collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, gift of Stephen and Linda Singer

Carrie Mae Weems, *Coming Up for Air* (stills), 2003-04, video, 51:34 minutes; color, sound; © Carrie Mae Weems. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

**About the University at Albany:** *A comprehensive public research university, the University at Albany offers more than 120 undergraduate majors and minors and 125 master's, doctoral, and graduate certificate programs. UAlbany is a leader among all New York State colleges and universities in such diverse fields as atmospheric and environmental sciences, business, engineering and applied sciences, informatics, public administration social welfare, and sociology taught by an extensive roster of faculty experts. It also offers expanded academic and research opportunities for students through an affiliation with Albany Law School. With a curriculum enhanced by 600 study-abroad opportunities, UAlbany launches great careers.*

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