

RISD MUSEUM

RISD and Photography, June 5, 2008-October 26, 2008

This inaugural show celebrates the creation of the Museum's first exhibition space dedicated to photography: The Bill and Nancy Tsiaras Gallery in honor of Aaron Siskind. On view are highlights from the work of many exceptional photographers who have been associated with RISD. Not only have they made important contributions to the history of the medium, but many have also been instrumental to the growth of the collection.

The development of the Museum's holding in this area is closely tied to the founding of RISD's Photography Department. Harry Callahan was hired in 1961 to initiate the program, and Aaron Siskind joined him in 1971. Callahan and Siskind were two of the 20th century's most influential photographers, admired for their unique approaches to the medium as well as for their teaching. They drew remarkably talented students to the College, an occurrence that continues under today's faculty.

One of the earliest programs in the country, the department was founded before photography was widely considered an art form even among museums. Happily, RISD's Museum staff was enthusiastic about photography and set about acquiring its images with advice from the new department shortly after Callahan's arrival. Close connections with prominent RISD faculty and alumni have remained crucial to the development of the collection. To this day, Siskind and Callahan's association with the College continues to attract gifts to the Museum. In fact, it was their friendship with Bill and Nancy Tsiaras that led to the support for this new dedicated gallery.

Siskind was an especially generous donor because of his belief that it was essential for students to have access to a collection of historical and contemporary photographs in order to pursue their studies. In 1983, he funded the Aaron Siskind Center for Photography, a specially designed Museum study center where students may view the photography collection at regularly scheduled hours without an appointment. This important service will be expanded in the relocated Siskind Center within the Minskoff Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs in the new Chace Center, which opens on September 27, 2008.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

David T. Hanson, American, b. 1948, (RISD MFA 1983)
Coal Strip Mine, Power Plant and Waste Ponds, from the series
Colstrip, Montana, 1984
Color chromogenic print
Museum Purchase: Gift of the Artist's Development Fund of the
Rhode Island Foundation 1988.015

Hanson has completed several bodies of work that investigate the landscape as a reflection of our culture, both positively and



RISD MUSEUM

negatively. The “Colstrip Montana” series documents the region where he grew up, which had the largest coal strip mine on this continent. The series of 66 images includes company houses, mines, the power plant, and ends with the aerial views, including this one. When his book, *Wasteland: Meditations on a Ravaged Landscape*, was published in 1997, he stated: “The aerial view increasingly seemed to be the most appropriate form of representation for the late twentieth-century landscape: an abstracted and distanced technological view of the earth, mirroring the military’s application of aerial photography for surveillance and targeting.”

Linda Connor, American, b. 1944, (RISD BFA 1967)
Dots and Hands, Fourteen Window Ruin, Bluff, Utah, 1987
Gold chloride–toned gelatin silver print on printing-out paper
Gift of Aaron Siskind 1990.108.1

Students of Callahan, Connor and Gowin perhaps both took from him the idea that photographs can be quiet, subjective meditations. Connor has traveled the world photographing ancient and powerful cultures in touch with the natural world. Her images seem to capture the spirituality of a place. Humankind’s relationship to land has also been an important part of Gowin’s exploration. The photographs here are from an extended series that focuses on his wife’s family and the Virginia property where its members have lived for four generations. Callahan’s images of family were an example to Gowin, as they demonstrated that one need not travel far to discover a potent subject. Pictured here is Gowin’s niece, Nancy, revealing the marvel of everyday life.



Linda Connor, American, b. 1944, (RISD BFA 1967)
Entwined Buddha, Ayuthaya, Thailand, 1988
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Aaron Siskind 1990.108.2

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RISD MUSEUM

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Harry Callahan, American, 1912-1999, (RISD Faculty 1961 - 1976, Photography)

Wells Street, Chicago, 1949

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Harry and Eleanor Callahan in honor of Aaron Siskind
1991.061.4

Callahan is known for his lyrical and original way of viewing the everyday in both urban and natural environments. He began making photographs in 1938 while working for Chrysler Corporation in Detroit. A workshop with Ansel Adams, famed and admired for his sharp-focused, majestic views of nature, awakened Callahan to the potential of the camera. He was also introduced by a colleague, Arthur Siegel, to László Moholy-Nagy's experimental approach at the New Bauhaus School of Design (founded 1937) in Chicago. With remarkable insight, Callahan combined Bauhaus innovation with a belief that the medium could express a personal vision. Within the first few years of the 1940s, he developed nearly all of the subjects that would sustain him through a life in photography. Moholy-Nagy hired Callahan to teach with him in 1946 at the reincarnation of the New Bauhaus, the Institute of Design (from 1944), Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, where Callahan continued until arriving at RISD in 1961.



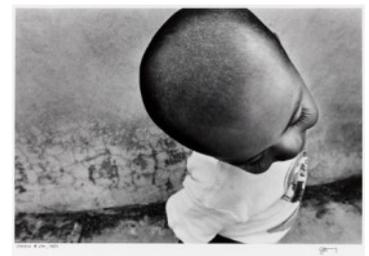
Jed Fielding, American, b. 1953, (RISD BFA 1975, Photography)

Oaxaca #270, 1987

Gelatin silver print

Gift of the artist in memory of Aaron Siskind 1991.076

Fielding worked with Siskind during his time at RISD, and for many years after they traveled together to make pictures. Siskind encouraged Fielding's interest in photographing people on the street. More specifically, Siskind encouraged him to travel to Oaxaca, Mexico, where this photograph was made. Fielding shoots his images from close range and with unusual viewpoints and cropping. His work with his subject is much like a dance, and his subject becomes a partner in the image-making. Horenstein gravitated to Callahan



RISD MUSEUM

during his student days at RISD. From him he learned to photograph what he loved. One of Horenstein's loves was thoroughbred horse racing. His knowledge of the sport gave him access to a little-known world captured by him with grit and humor.

Harry Callahan, American, 1912-1999, (RISD Faculty 1961 - 1976, Photography)
Chicago 1954, 1954
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Mrs. Marion Simon 1991.128

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Henry Horenstein, American, b. 1947, (RISD BFA 1971; MFA 1973, Photography)
RISD Faculty, 1982-present
Jockey's Excuse, Keeneland, Lexington, Kentucky, 1985
Gelatin silver print
Gift of artist 1992.112



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RISD MUSEUM

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Harry Callahan, American, 1912-1999, (RISD Faculty 1961 - 1976, Photography)

Providence, 1966

Gelatin silver print

Gift of the artist in memory of Danny Robbins, Director, Museum of Art, RISD, 1965-1971 1996.12



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Steven B. Smith, American, b. 1963, (RISD Faculty 1996-present)

Valencia, CA, 1996

Carbon ink jet print

Gift of the artist 2001.54



The three artists whose work is displayed here focus on the human-altered landscape. Earlier photographers typically cropped out what interfered with capturing a sublime view; but since the 1970s, it is precisely those interventions that have captured the image makers' attention. Deal was at the forefront of artists looking at urban development spreading into pristine landscapes. His California views often spotlight the peculiarly stark border between expansion and the natural world. Rantoul's image was made on the island of

RISD MUSEUM

Bermuda, although it could be anywhere. Smith was astounded by the extreme degree of earth shifting by Los Angeles area developers in the early 1990s. His images often capture the measures taken to scrape away the earth, hold it from erosion and reconfigure it.

Joe Deal, American, 1947-2010, (RISD Provost 1999-2005; RISD Faculty 2005-2009)

Backyard, Diamond Bar, California, from the series *Diamond Bar*, 1980

Gelatin silver print

Museum Purchase: Gift of James and Diane Burke 2002.25

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Joe Deal, American, 1947-2010, (RISD Provost 1999-2005; RISD Faculty 2005-2009)

Sunset Beach, California, Beach Cities, 1978

Gelatin silver print

Museum Purchase: Gift of James D. and Diane Davies Burke 2002.6.2

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RISD MUSEUM

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Francesca Woodman, American, 1958-1981

Untitled (figure and door), 1977

Gelatin silver print

Museum Purchase with funds from The Judith Rothschild Foundation 2002.71

Francesca Woodman created a remarkably original and influential body of photographs during her short life, largely while she was a student at RISD in Providence and in its Rome program. As the daughter of two artists, George and Betty Woodman, she came to RISD able to incorporate a mature personal investigation into tasks designed for the understanding of fundamental photographic principles. At a time when few exhibiting photographers staged imagery for the camera, Woodman fabricated haunting, psychologically charged scenarios. She frequently posed for her own pictures, saying she knew best what she wanted from them. Her photographs are less self-portraits than fictive worlds for her characters, who might appear vulnerable or daring.



Francesca Woodman, American, 1958-1981

Untitled (greenhouse), 1977

Gelatin silver print

Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 2002.72.1

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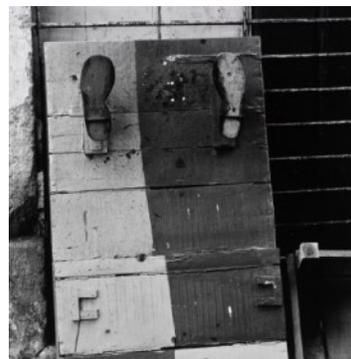
Aaron Siskind, American, 1903-1991, (RISD Faculty 1971-1976, Photography)

Recife (Olinada) 9, 1986

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. William G. Tsiras 2003.150.4

By the late 1930s, Siskind was a successful documentary photographer working with the Photo League in New York on projects such as the *Harlem Document*, which brought attention to socio-economic disparity. Grave political events in Europe and a growing societal focus on interior life in the early 1940s, created in him a desire for abstract, metaphorical pictures. He was looking for a way to make photographs that were more closely related to the expressiveness of poetry or music, his first loves. In photographs such as the *Gloucester (glove)*, 1944, isolated objects became suggestive of contemporary anxieties, here perhaps the disfiguration of war or a plea for divine help. Siskind also found meaning in stains, peeling paint, and remnants of posters on walls of urban environments, wherein he saw allusions to figures, landscapes, or other organic forms. His development of abstract photography was concurrent and in dialogue with the paintings of the Abstract Expressionists, but he continued to work from the figure sporadically throughout his life. His series of divers, *Pleasures and Terrors of Levitation*, are superb examples of the emotional breadth of his work. Siskind left his position as a grade-school teacher in 1949 and began to instruct photography at the Institute of Design, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, from 1951 until 1971, at which time he became a professor at RISD.



Edward Grazda, American, b. 1947, (RISD BFA 1969, Photography)

Taliban at Jadi Maiwand, Kabul, Afghanistan, 1997

Gelatin silver print

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.30.3

Grazda has photographed the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan since 1980. He described the Taliban's rule in Kabul as of February 1997 in his book, *Afghanistan Diary 1992-2000*, where this image appears:

After five years of civil war in Kabul, most of the city was destroyed, and many civilians had been killed or wounded. Everyone had guns, and there was a general sense of unease....At various posts around the city, where Mujahideen fighters once camped, Taliban militia men and boys sat. Most were friendly, and invited the guests for tea. Some



RISD MUSEUM

let me photograph them, although they had been told by their commanders not to be photographed.

Many told stories of atrocities committed by Mujahideen factions during the civil war. They said that now that the Taliban was in charge, Kabul was safe and free from 'corruption.'...A week after I left Kabul, all forms of photography—even family portraits—were banned.

Aaron Siskind, American, 1903-1991, (RISD Faculty 1971-1976, Photography)
Chicago, 1954
Gelatin silver print
Gift of the family in memory of Eugene G. Coombs, Jr. 2004.108.1



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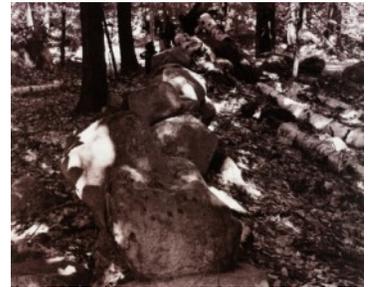
Mary Kocol, American, 1962, (RISD MFA 1987, Photography)
Winter View Back Porch, Somerville, 2000, 2000
Color chromogenic print
Gift of the artist 2004.20

Since completing her studies at RISD, Kocol has been photographing the neighborhood in and around Somerville, Massachusetts. Using long exposures between daylight and evening, she transforms the mundane multifamily houses into magical settings. Her artist statement explains: "I seek to photograph things illuminated, beautiful, and sublime within my midst and to find stillness within a city in motion."



Deborah Bright, American, b. 1950, (RISD Faculty 1989 - 2012)
Conveyed to Ebenezer Goodrich by Deed of Elisha Hervey, 1799, from the series *Manifest*, 2000
Toned black-and-white photograph on chromogenic color paper
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2004.30.2

Bright has created several bodies of landscape photographs on sites of contested terrain, from American Civil War battlefields to the State of Israel. This photograph is from a series inspired by the concept of Manifest Destiny, the 19th-century doctrine that justified expansion of the U.S. across the continent. Bright examines the history of land ownership in the Northeast through its stone walls. Once Native Americans were removed and trees were cleared, settlers delineated the property lines of their farms with these walls. They signify, in her words, "the will of generations of white settlers to 'tame the wilderness' and make it productive." The unusual color of her image refers back to late 19th-century photographic processes, such as the commonly used albumen print.



RISD MUSEUM

Sally Gall, American, b. 1956, (RISD BFA 1978, Photography)

Thirst, 1999

Gelatin silver print

Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 2004.5

Gall photographs nature, and her subjects have ranged from gardens and bodies of water to this more recent series of caves and quarries. She is drawn to “earthy and moist, rocky and watery” sites, but her work underground began by accident when she was forced into a cave during a storm while hiking through the jungle in Vera Cruz State, Mexico. That adventure led to a three-year project exploring subterranean spaces around the world. As she said in her book on the subject, *Subterranea*: “that is when I began to comprehend that I had left the horizon behind and entered the inner outdoors, where known boundaries disappear and night and day somehow manage to coexist.”



Linda Connor, American, b. 1944, (RISD BFA 1967)

Monk and Storm, Spiti, Ladakh, India, 2002

Gold chloride-toned silver print

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2005.34.3

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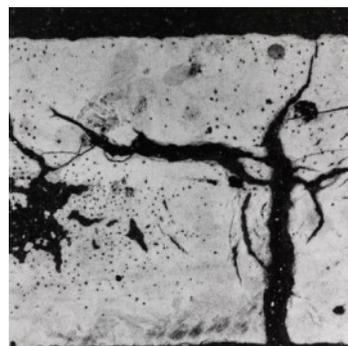
Aaron Siskind, American, 1903-1991, (RISD Faculty 1971-1976, Photography)

San Francisco #15, 1975, 1975

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Jed Fielding 2007.125.4

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Laura McPhee, American, b.1958, (RISD MFA 1986, Photography)
Judy Tracking Radio-Collared Wolves From Her Yard, Summer Range, H-Hook Ranch, Custer County, Idaho, from the series River of No Return, 2004

Color chromogenic print

Purchased with funds donated by Donald Stanon and Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2008.54



McPhee studied under Emmet Gowin at Princeton University before coming to RISD to earn her MFA. Like him, she is interested in how the natural world shapes and is shaped by human behavior. She has photographed all over the world. This recent project resulted from an artist's residency in the Sawtooth Valley of central Idaho, where she examined in a magnificent setting the stereotype of the tough individualist, as well as the current debates over land use. McPhee spent a great deal of time with the family of the woman pictured here, who was photographed while checking for wolves to see if it were safe to let her daughter and dogs go outdoors. In an exhibition brochure for a show of her work at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, McPhee stated:

My interest lies in the dilemmas, and it is dilemma that I picture. While I draw on the language of the nineteenth-century sublime, I am simultaneously presenting twenty-first century conundrums. The images are sometimes abstract and mystical; they are also replete with facts and arguments, though not with answers.

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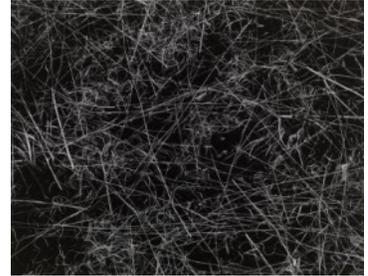
Harry Callahan, American, 1912-1999, (RISD Faculty 1961 - 1976,
Photography)

Providence, 1962, 1962

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Group 7 65.010

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Emmet Gowin, American, b. 1941, (RISD MFA 1967)

Nancy, Danville, Virginia, 1969

Gelatin silver print

Gift of the Photography Department, Rhode Island School of Design
70.064

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RISD MUSEUM

Aaron Siskind, American, 1903-1991, (RISD Faculty 1971-1976, Photography)

Pleasures and Terrors of Levitation 474, Pleasures and Terrors of Levitation, 1954

Gelatin silver print

Gift of the artist 73.011.2

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Emmet Gowin, American, b. 1941, (RISD MFA 1967)

Nancy, Twine and Blanket Construction, Danville, Virginia, 1971, 1971

Gelatin silver print

Museum purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 73.178

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RISD MUSEUM

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Harry Callahan, American, 1912-1999, (RISD Faculty 1961 - 1976, Photography)

Alley, Chicago, 1948

Gelatin silver print

Museum purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and Neuberger Fund 74.090

Callahan is known for his lyrical and original way of viewing the everyday in both urban and natural environments. He began making photographs in 1938 while working for Chrysler Corporation in Detroit. A workshop with Ansel Adams, famed and admired for his sharp-focused, majestic views of nature, awakened Callahan to the potential of the camera. He was also introduced by a colleague, Arthur Siegel, to László Moholy-Nagy's experimental approach at the New Bauhaus School of Design (founded 1937) in Chicago. With remarkable insight, Callahan combined Bauhaus innovation with a belief that the medium could express a personal vision. Within the first few years of the 1940s, he developed nearly all of the subjects that would sustain him through a life in photography. Moholy-Nagy hired Callahan to teach with him in 1946 at the reincarnation of the New Bauhaus, the Institute of Design (from 1944), Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, where Callahan continued until arriving at RISD in 1961



RISD MUSEUM

Aaron Siskind, American, 1903-1991, (RISD Faculty 1971-1976,
Photography)

Gloucester 1H, 1944

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mr. Robert B. Menschel 77.145.2

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Aaron Siskind, American, 1903-1991, (RISD Faculty 1971-1976,
Photography)

Rome 49, 1963

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mr. Richard L. Menschel 77.146.25

By the late 1930s, Siskind was a successful documentary photographer working with the Photo League in New York on projects such as the *Harlem Document*, which brought attention to socio-economic disparity. Grave political events in Europe and a growing societal focus on interior life in the early 1940s, created in him a desire for abstract, metaphorical pictures. He was looking for a way to make photographs that were more closely related to the expressiveness of poetry or music, his first loves. In photographs such as the *Gloucester (glove)*, 1944, isolated objects became suggestive of contemporary anxieties, here perhaps the disfiguration of war or a plea for divine help. Siskind also found meaning in stains, peeling



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paint, and remnants of posters on walls of urban environments, wherein he saw allusions to figures, landscapes, or other organic forms. His development of abstract photography was concurrent and in dialogue with the paintings of the Abstract Expressionists, but he continued to work from the figure sporadically throughout his life. His series of divers, *Pleasures and Terrors of Levitation*, are superb examples of the emotional breadth of his work. Siskind left his position as a grade-school teacher in 1949 and began to instruct photography at the Institute of Design, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, from 1951 until 1971, at which time he became a professor at RISD.

Harry Callahan, American, 1912-1999, (RISD Faculty 1961 - 1976, Photography)

Cape Cod, 1972

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gilman Angier 78.039

Callahan is known for his lyrical and original way of viewing the everyday in both urban and natural environments. He began making photographs in 1938 while working for Chrysler Corporation in Detroit. A workshop with Ansel Adams, famed and admired for his sharp-focused, majestic views of nature, awakened Callahan to the potential of the camera. He was also introduced by a colleague, Arthur Siegel, to László Moholy-Nagy's experimental approach at the New Bauhaus School of Design (founded 1937) in Chicago. With remarkable insight, Callahan combined Bauhaus innovation with a belief that the medium could express a personal vision. Within the first few years of the 1940s, he developed nearly all of the subjects that would sustain him through a life in photography. Moholy-Nagy hired Callahan to teach with him in 1946 at the reincarnation of the New Bauhaus, the Institute of Design (from 1944), Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, where Callahan continued until arriving at RISD in 1961



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Harry Callahan, American, 1912-1999, (RISD Faculty 1961 - 1976, Photography)

Eleanor, ca. 1947

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gilman Angier 78.040

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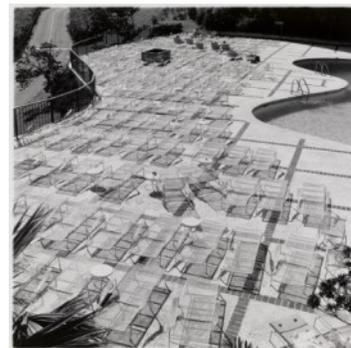
Neal Rantoul, American, b. 1946

Southampton Princess Hotel, 1978

Gelatin silver print

Museum purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 78.097

The three artists whose work is displayed here focus on the human-altered landscape. Earlier photographers typically cropped out what interfered with capturing a sublime view; but since the 1970s, it is precisely those interventions that have captured the image makers' attention. Deal was at the forefront of artists looking at urban development spreading into pristine landscapes. His California views often spotlight the peculiarly stark border between expansion and the natural world. Rantoul's image was made on the island of Bermuda, although it could be anywhere. Smith was astounded by the extreme degree of earth shifting by Los Angeles area developers in the early 1990s. His images often capture the measures taken to scrape away the earth, hold it from erosion and reconfigure it.



RISD MUSEUM

Aaron Siskind, American, 1903-1991, (RISD Faculty 1971-1976, Photography)

Untitled, from the series *Harlem Document*, 1932-1940

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Matrix Publications, Inc. and Alpha Partners 83.031.14

By the late 1930s, Siskind was a successful documentary photographer working with the Photo League in New York on projects such as the *Harlem Document*, which brought attention to socio-economic disparity. Grave political events in Europe and a growing societal focus on interior life in the early 1940s, created in him a desire for abstract, metaphorical pictures. He was looking for a way to make photographs that were more closely related to the expressiveness of poetry or music, his first loves. In photographs such as the *Gloucester (glove)*, 1944, isolated objects became suggestive of contemporary anxieties, here perhaps the disfiguration of war or a plea for divine help. Siskind also found meaning in stains, peeling paint, and remnants of posters on walls of urban environments, wherein he saw allusions to figures, landscapes, or other organic forms. His development of abstract photography was concurrent and in dialogue with the paintings of the Abstract Expressionists, but he continued to work from the figure sporadically throughout his life. His series of divers, *Pleasures and Terrors of Levitation*, are superb examples of the emotional breadth of his work. Siskind left his position as a grade-school teacher in 1949 and began to instruct photography at the Institute of Design, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, from 1951 until 1971, at which time he became a professor at RISD.



Jeffrey Silverthorne, American, b. 1946, (RISD BFA 1969; RISD MAT 1970; RISD MFA 1977)

Nude, from the portfolio *Photographs: Rhode Islands School of Design*, 1967

Gelatin silver print

Museum Works of Art Fund 68.107.10



RISD MUSEUM

William Burke, American, b.1943, (RISD BFA 1968, Photography)
Barbershop, from the portfolio *Photographs: Rhode Island School of Design, 1967*
Gelatin silver print
Museum Works of Art Fund 68.107.12



Bart Parker, American, b. 1934, (RISD MFA 1969, Photography)
Pawtucket, from the portfolio *Photographs: Rhode Island School of Design, 1967*
Gelatin silver print
Museum Works of Art Fund 68.107.14



Jim Dow, American, b. 1942, (RISD BFA 1965; MFA 1968, Photography)
South Boston, VA, from the portfolio *Photographs: Rhode Island School of Design, 1967*
Gelatin silver print
Museum Works of Art Fund 68.107.17



Richard Lebowitz, American, b. 1937, (RISD Faculty 1964-1995, Photography; Professor Emeritus)
Jim Dow, Photo Student, from the portfolio *Photographs: Rhode Island School of Design, 1967*
Gelatin silver print
Museum Works of Art Fund 68.107.2



RISD MUSEUM

Bert Beaver, American, b. 1921, (RISD Faculty 1967-1995,
Photography; Professor Emeritus)
Providence, from the portfolio *Seventh Annual Portfolio of the
Photographic Education Society, Rhode Island School of Design, 1973*
Gelatin silver print
Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 75.005.1



Peter Jones, American, b.1952, (RISD BFA 1974, Photography)
Union Station, from the portfolio *Seventh Annual Portfolio of the
Photographic Education Society, Rhode Island School of Design, 1972*
silver print
Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 75.005.13



Arno Rafael Minkinen, American, b. Finland, b. 1945, (RISD MFA
1974, Photography)
11, from the portfolio *Seventh Annual Portfolio of the Photographic
Education Society, Rhode Island School of Design, 1972*
Gelatin silver print
Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 75.005.17



Ira Garber, American, b. 1950, (RISD BFA 1974, Photography)
Billboard, Providence, from the portfolio *Seventh Annual Portfolio of
the Photographic Education Society, Rhode Island School of Design,
1972*
Gelatin silver print
Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 75.005.8

