

Press Release

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on View June 24 through August 19, 2000

Anna & Bernhard Blume, Sophie Calle, Mat Collishaw, Jim Dine, Flor Garduño,
Candida Höfer

CHICAGO, June 2000 -- From June 24 through August 19, 2000, The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College Chicago, will present exhibitions by seven prominent contemporary artists working with photography: Anna & Bernhard Blume (Germany), Sophie Calle (France), Mat Collishaw (UK), Jim Dine (United States), Flor Garduño (Mexico), and Candida Höfer (Germany). The works on view have never before been shown in Chicago.

Wife and husband team Anna & Bernhard Blume have been creating artworks collaboratively since the 1970s. Often using themselves as the protagonists, the Blumes have produced numerous suites of staged photographs that create ambiguous narratives. Informed by conventional German middle-class values, the Blumes are inspired by cultural stereotypes and clichés such as the German romance with the forest. "Metaphysics Is Men's Work II," a tableau of nine 98-by-49-inch black-and-white photographs, features a couple moving through a mysterious wood. Often marked by an ironic humor reminiscent of vaudeville, the Blumes' work both questions and illuminates traditional gender roles and domesticity; their approach consistently evokes the strangeness, rather than the normalcy, of seemingly quotidian settings and objects.

Beginning in 1980 and for thirteen consecutive years, French artist Sophie Calle threw a dinner party on her birthday in her own honor. Each year she invited the exact number of people corresponding to her age, always including one stranger chosen by one of her guests. Instead of using the gifts she received, she collected them and created "The Birthday Ceremony," a chronology of white cases displaying the gifts and accompanied by text on the front cataloguing each item. The other works on view come from a series entitled "Autobiographical Stories," comprising short textual recounts of memories accompanied by five-foot-high black-and-white photographic illustrations. It is impossible to ascertain if the memories are true, invented, or a mixture of both.

British artist Mat Collishaw, a manipulator of photography and video, utilized his vast technical expertise to create his 1998 piece "Shrunken Heads." This three-dimensional architectural model of a picturesque town center in England becomes the stage for a semi-violent video projected by laser disk into the town square. The scenario begins with a quiet night shattered when a crowd of hooligans bursts out of the pub. A fight breaks out, a gun is fired, a woman screams from a second-floor window, an SUV blows up. Collishaw's narrative lures the viewer into the role of voyeur, simultaneously revealing and questioning society's fascination with violence, as well as the ubiquity of brutality and aggression in our culture today.

Two digital pigment prints on canvas recently donated to the museum by Jim Dine represent his most current work. Using a digital camera to capture the images, Dine then transferred the output onto canvas. Internationally known for his mastery in a multitude of mediums, Dine has responded to a similarly broad spectrum of inspirations, ranging from Abstract Expressionist influences to poetry to the most cutting-edge innovations in contemporary digital artmaking.

In her silver gelatin prints, Mexican artist Flor Garduño explores ideas of history and tradition as they relate to both mythology and the natural world. Photographing in many countries and working in genres that include still life, landscape, and portraiture, she addresses the grand themes of life and death in images of disembodied sculpture, holy relics, and mystical animals. Through her use of iconic imagery, Garduño creates a mythical view of the world that is both timeless and placeless.

Candida Höfer's photographs present a systematic visual study of rooms in various libraries, some modern and institutional, others centuries old and grand. People are noticeably absent from these highly formal images. Instead, Höfer has emphasized repeated forms within the rooms such as chairs, tables, bookshelves, and light fixtures to create patterns and produce a sense of orderliness in her photographs. Höfer's straightforward and detached style at first seems very objective and purely documentary. However, her juxtaposition of incongruous elements and the mimetic nature of her subject matter hint at wit, irony, and the surreal.

A public booksigning by Deborah Willis, author of *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers, 1840 to the Present*, will take place on Saturday, June 24, 2000 at 1 pm in the galleries of The Museum of Contemporary Photography. A special screening of *Double Blind*, Sophie Calle's feature-length video made in collaboration with artist Gregory Shephard, will take place at 6:00 pm on Wednesday, July 12, 2000, in the Ferguson Theater, Columbia College Chicago, 600 South Michigan Avenue. General admission to the video screening is \$5; \$3 for students; and free for museum members and Columbia College Chicago students, faculty, and staff.

The Museum of Contemporary Photography will be closed for renovations from August 20 through September 17, 2000. From September 18 through September 22 the museum will reopen during its installation period. During this time the public is invited to visit the museum for a look "behind the scenes" as the staff (often with the artists themselves) unpack, lay out, assemble, and hang works by the next group of exhibiting artists including Anna Fox (England), Barbara Kasten (United States), Seydou Keïta (Mali), and Tracey Moffatt + Gary Hillberg (Australia).

The exhibitions, presentations, and related programs of The Museum of Contemporary Photography are supported in part by grants from The Chicago Community Trust; The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; the Sara Lee Foundation; the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts. This ongoing series of exhibitions is principally sponsored by American Airlines, the official airlines of The Museum of Contemporary Photography. Press prints are available upon request.