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on View September 23 through November 22, 2000

Thomas Joshua Cooper, Anna Fox, Barbara Kasten, Seydou Keïta,  
Tracey Moffatt and Gary Hillberg, 20 x 24 Polaroids

CHICAGO, August 2000 -- From September 23 through November 22, 2000, The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College Chicago, will present exhibitions by prominent contemporary artists working with photography: Thomas Joshua Cooper (United States/Scotland), Anna Fox (England), Barbara Kasten (United States), Seydou Keïta (Mali), Tracey Moffatt and Gary Hillberg (Australia), and a selection of 20 x 24 Polaroids by various artists. The works on view have never before been shown in Chicago.

Thomas Joshua Cooper investigates the persistent beauty of the sea in his moody, black-and-white photographs of the waves, whirlpools, rocks, and breakers of various oceans around the world. Using a 1898 field camera, Cooper often photographs in places charged with history, such as the area on the coast of Iceland where, in the eleventh century, Lief Ericson departed to explore the New World. Often composed with dim illumination and without a horizon line, Cooper's images are difficult to decipher in terms of scale. A master of photographic craftsmanship, Cooper creates images of exquisite resolution and rich tonality.

For the Dutch, the Christmas season starts in late November. With much merriment, they celebrate the arrival of Sinterklaas, the white bishop of Toledo, who comes riding through town surrounded by his black servants, the so-called Zwarte Piet. Usually white women dressed in elaborate, clown-like costumes, the Zwarte Piet throw candy to the crowds of children and shake birch branches at the naughty. In her portraits, British photographer Anna Fox explores this Dutch tradition that raises issues of race, class, and gender; ultimately questioning what it means to hold onto a tradition that demonizes the foreign in the advent of growing racial diversity.

American artist Barbara Kasten is known for using light and color to photographically transform architectural structures into images of depth and formal beauty. The photographs on view at the museum were made in 1990 at the Puye Cliff Dwellings in New Mexico, a location significant as an origin of built culture in the United States. The making of these photographs was an elaborate production involving a crew of electricians, gaffers, and assistants borrowed from the film industry, who worked throughout the night to alter the space using tungsten lights with color gels plugged into portable generators.

From 1948 until 1962, Seydou Keïta was the most successful commercial portraitist in Bamako, capital city of the former French Sudan (now Mali). In addition to being striking images, Keïta's photographs of the Bamakois are also sociological documents that reflect colonial influences as well as the rise of modernity in West Africa. Having a portrait taken by Keïta in the 1940s and 1950s implied one's cosmopolitanism. His subjects' desire to be

seen as modern, wealthy, and beautiful is reflected in their choices of props, adornments, and clothing, some of which were supplied by Keita. Born in 1923, and retired since 1977, Keita has always lived in Bamako, Mali.