

Press Release

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The Furtive Gaze

The Museum of Contemporary Photography

Columbia College Chicago

May 8 - July 12, 2003

CHICAGO - The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College Chicago, is hosting an exhibition featuring contemporary artists who use the camera as an instrument of stealth to record voyeuristic glimpses into the lives of strangers. The exhibition, entitled "The Furtive Gaze," will be open to the public from May 8 through July 12, 2003.

Beginning with a view to historical works such as Walker Evans's 1930s subway portraits and selections from Garry Winogrand's *Women Are Beautiful* portfolio, this exhibition will focus on contemporary photographers whose work explores the boundaries of privacy, with particular emphasis on the role of the camera as surveillance tool. All of the participating artists hide their photographic actions to a certain degree—concealing their camera, disguising themselves, or feigning their motivation—resulting in a common performative dimension to the works. The artists have a special relationship with their subjects, who must give something of themselves, either wittingly or unwittingly, in order for the project to be successful.

The exhibition will highlight four artists. Chris Verene (United States, born 1969) will be featured with his *Camera Club* series. In this work Verene infiltrated the world of "camera clubs," groups of men who lure young women into modeling nude or semi-nude by pretending to be professional fashion photographers. To create this series, Verene posed as a camera club photographer, but then turned his camera on the photographers themselves.

Shizuka Yokomizo (Japan, born 1966, United Kingdom resident), will exhibit her series *Dear Stranger*. To create this series, Yokomizo sent her subjects an anonymous letter proposing they stand in their front window at a specified date and time, at which point the artist arrives outside, photographs for a few minutes, and then leaves. Although the subjects never meet the photographer, they do know that she is an artist and the activity they are participating in is art.

Merry Alpern (United States, born 1955) will exhibit her *Shopping* photographs, created by concealing a video camera in a plastic shopping bag and visiting luxury department stores. Printed as video stills, Alpern's pictures capture women enthralled in a mesh of consumerism and vanity. Working without the subjects' knowledge, Alpern used her own gender to gain access to communal dressing rooms in order to photograph these women in a vulnerable state.

The museum will also exhibit French artist Sophie Calle's piece *TheShadow* (La Filature). For this piece Calle had her mother hire a private detective to shadow Calle, report her daily activities, and provide evidence of her existence. This work turns the tables on the concept of photographer as voyeur: here the artist assumes the role of the observed person.

The opening reception takes place on Friday, May 9, 2003 from 5 until 10 pm at The Museum of Contemporary Photography main gallery. Shizuka Yokomizo and Chris Verene will be present at the opening and will speak briefly about their work.

The exhibitions, presentations, and related programs of The Museum of Contemporary Photography are sponsored in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Kaplan Family Foundation; the National Endowment for the Arts; the Peter Norton Family Foundation; the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs/Gallery 37; and American Airlines, the official airlines of The Museum of Contemporary Photography.

The museum is free and open to the public weekdays from 10 am until 5 pm (Thursdays until 8 pm) and Saturdays from 12 until 5 pm. It is located at 600 S. Michigan Avenue at Harrison Street. Phone 312-344-7104 or visit mocp.org for additional information.