

Press Release

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Paul Shambroom: Evidence of Democracy
at The Museum of Contemporary Photography,
Columbia College Chicago
October 3 through December 5, 2003

CHICAGO, June 2003 – The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College Chicago, will present two series of photographs by Paul Shambroom (United States, born 1948). These series provide rarely seen glimpses into hidden places of American power – small town municipal meetings and the US nuclear arsenal. The exhibition, entitled Paul Shambroom: Evidence of Democracy, will be on view from October 3 through December 5, 2003.

In the first series, Meetings, Shambroom photographs local government and community meetings throughout the United States. Using mapping software and a database of over 15,000 meeting dates in over thirty-five states, he enters specifications such as “Indiana, 2nd Wednesday, population less than 2000” into his laptop computer, and charts his photographic journey according to the results. After obtaining permission to photograph, Shambroom reveals relationships between community leaders and their constituents. An investigation of power at the grassroots level of democracy, in Shambroom’s pictures seating arrangements, clothing, and body language provide clues to local culture and political dynamics as farmers, teachers, and real estate agents affect change in their local communities.

The second series, Nuclear Weapons, presents the first comprehensive look inside the US nuclear arsenal by a civilian. Beginning in the early 1990s, just after the Soviet Union collapsed, Shambroom spent years photographing various products of the Cold War including ‘Peacekeeper’ missiles, B-2 bombers, and Trident submarines. During his project Shambroom made thirty-four visits to twenty-five weapons and command sites in twenty states, until the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 resolutely shut the door of access to all military installations. His images are visually arresting and chillingly straightforward as they document the highest and most hidden levels of power in the United States, and the results of over fifty years of nuclear-arms development, deployment, and accumulation. In trying to make the nuclear arsenal “real” for himself and for others, Shambroom has said that his intention was not to criticize or glorify, but rather to “present areas that have existed as powerful concepts in our collective consciousness.”

Together, Shambroom’s Nuclear Weapons and Meetings series investigate polarities of American power from direct human debate to hidden military threat.

Shambroom received a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in 2003, a Creative Capital Foundation Grant in 2001, and is a four-time recipient of The McNight Foundation Fellowship. His Nuclear Weapons photographs were recently published by Johns Hopkins University Press in *Face to Face With The Bomb: Nuclear Reality After the Cold War* (2003).

An opening reception will be open to the public on Friday, October 3, 2003 from 5 until 7 pm at The Museum of Contemporary Photography. An artist's talk will precede the opening on Friday, October 3 at noon.

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 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 312-663-5554 or visit mocp.org for additional information.