

A Photographer's Collection: Gifts from Michael and Michele Marvins

For more than three decades, the Department of Photography at this Museum has benefited from the enlightened philanthropy of the Marvins family. The gift and promised gift of more than four hundred photographs from the collection of Mike and Mickey Marvins, celebrated here, is a most welcome capstone to that history. As with any collection, theirs reflects a constellation of experiences lived, lessons learned, tastes refined, connections nurtured, and opportunities seized. Mike Marvins's understanding of the history of photography and his sense of connoisseurship—his recognition of what makes a compelling photograph and a beautiful print—are inextricably linked to his heritage as a fourth-generation professional photographer and his lifelong experience behind the camera. That insider's perspective gives the collection its unique character.

Marvins began with the idea of collecting canonical photographs, and to that end he acquired the work of mid-20th-century masters, including Ansel Adams, Walker Evans, André Kertész, and Edward Weston. Fortunately, he also followed his own passion and judgment, even when the works he loved bucked fashion or were scorned by other collectors at the time. As a result, the Marvins collection includes strong examples of American and European Pictorialist photography by Alvin Langdon Coburn, Edward Sheriff Curtis, Adolf Fassbender, Gertrude Käsebier, Heinrich Kühn, and others now recognized as key players in the medium's development. This exhibition presents only a small portion of the collection's treasures, grouped in four themes: of character expressed in portraiture; of qualities of light; of the infinite space of the world; and of the real and imaginary realms of childhood. The richness and variety of the photographs that Mike and Mickey Marvins have collected and are so generously donating to the Museum ensure that many more will find a place on these gallery walls in other thematic, aesthetic, and historical contexts in the years to come.

Fellow Man, the Most Common and Complex of Photographic Subjects

Of the trillion photographs estimated to have been taken last year, the largest portion shows people—friends out for a drink, the daily exploits of a new family member, a selfie someplace notable or mundane. The desire to record and share our own features and those of our loved ones has been an overwhelming impulse since photography's invention. From childhood, we learn to read character and mood from the most subtle aspects of pose and facial expression, and the best portrait photographers have learned to understand and speak that language with particular skill and intelligence. Many photographers travel the world in search of exotic locales or sites of uncommon beauty, but others throughout the course of photography's history have found in the faces of their fellow man the medium's most subtle and challenging subject, an opportunity for collaborative expression, and photography's most cherished role.



Unknown artist

[Portrait of a Woman]

c. 1855

Daguerreotype

The Sonia Marvins Collection, gift of Sonia Marvins

2003.516

When first presented to the public in 1839, daguerreotypes—one-of-a-kind photographs on highly polished, silver-plated sheets of copper—were thought to be impractical for portraiture. Improvements to the process soon shortened exposure times, however, and all but a few of the many millions of daguerreotypes produced in the 1840s and 1850s showed the faces of men and women of all stripes. In America, daguerreotypes were most often presented in leather (or later, thermoplastic) cases, just as painted portrait miniatures had been a generation earlier. Although it is now impossible to identify the artist or sitter for many, if not most, surviving daguerreotypes, the miraculous precision of this first photographic process, the artistry with which the best daguerreotypists composed their scenes, and the expressive qualities of the sitters all make these mirrorlike portraits compelling nonetheless.



William Henry Fox Talbot, British, 1800–1877

Bust of Patroclus

1843

Salted paper print from paper negative, printed later

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.137

When William Henry Fox Talbot first announced his process for paper photography in 1839, the process required exposures too long to be practical for portraiture; his new art was better suited to subjects that did not move—landscape, architecture, or still life. Talbot's plaster cast of a Hellenistic marble bust of Achilles's comrade Patroclus provided an animated and expressive substitute for the live model, and he photographed it more than forty-five times between 1839 and 1843, when this version was made. This particular print was once plate 17 in a copy of Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature*, the first photographically illustrated book, published in parts between 1844 and 1846. Although Talbot's improved process was by then capable of recording portraits, he included none in his volume, but instead chose two photographs of this plaster bust.



André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri, French, 1819–1889

Count and Countess Tyszkiewicz

1860

Albumen silver print from glass negative

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2014.934

In 1854, A. A. E. Disdéri patented a system for cheaply and quickly producing cartes de visite—photographs the size of a visiting card, exposed eight per glass-plate negative, developed and printed as a unit, then cut into eighths and mounted to cards for distribution to friends and family. This rare, uncut sheet from the Disdéri archive shows how various poses could be captured on a single negative with a multi-lens camera. His system was widely adopted by other photographers in the years and decades that followed, bringing photographic portraiture within the grasp of nearly everyone, whether a count and countess or a cook.



Mathew B. Brady, American, 1823–1896

Mr. & Mrs. General Tom Thumb in their Wedding Costume

1863

Albumen silver print from glass negative

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2014.928

The wedding of Charles S. Stratton (also known as “General Tom Thumb”) and Lavinia Warren at New York’s Grace Church on February 10, 1863, was a lavish event, promoted wildly—and profitably—by their employer, P. T. Barnum, at whose American Museum on Broadway the diminutive couple starred. Brady’s cartes de visite of the two in their wedding attire, undoubtedly issued by the thousands, were sold as souvenirs by Stratton and Warren as they toured the world in the years that followed.



André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri, French, 1819–1889

[Carte-de-visite Album]

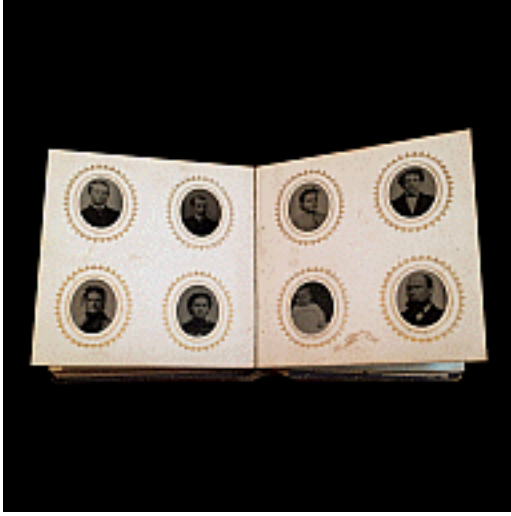
c. 1870–1910

48 albumen silver prints from glass negatives

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1040-2014

Just as people “friend” one another on Facebook today, family and friends in the second half of the 19th century exchanged carte-de-visite portraits and gathered them in albums that were manufactured to hold the standard-size, mass-produced cards. Portraits of celebrities and royalty were often interspersed with true kin, as more common folk hoped some of the luster might rub off on them.



American

[Gem tintype album]

c. 1850–1910

94 tintypes

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1037-2014

Even as the daguerreotype process died out in the 1850s, its cheaper and more durable cousin, the tintype, continued to be popular for decades. At the low end, as in the coin-size “gem” tintypes in the album displayed to the right, the products of itinerant artisans or run-of-the-mill studios exhibited little artistry but still provided people with a treasured record of their own faces or those of loved ones. At the high end, great care was given to the studio setup, the posing, and the preparation of the finished product, as in this beautiful tintype of three children dressed in their Sunday finest and bound together as a family unit through their poses. The photographer or his assistant has given a touch of extra life and richness with a hint of rouge retouching on the cheeks and a sparkle of gold on the pendant, ring, and watch fob.



Unknown artist

[Three Children]

c. 1850–1910

Tintype

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1035-2014



Unknown artist

[Woman with Horse]

no date

Cyanotype

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.293

By the end of the 19th century, commercial and artistic photographers had been joined by the first wave of amateur snapshotters armed with handheld cameras and roll film. The informality and authenticity of such snapshots now seem like a charming contrast to the work of skilled professionals.



Gertrude Käsebier, American, 1852–1934

Nancy and Bubby at Five Months

1900

Platinum print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2013.715

At the turn of the century, Gertrude Käsebier was among the country's leading Pictorialists, as fine art photographers then called themselves, and the first issue of Alfred Stieglitz's lavishly produced and influential journal *Camera Work* in 1903 was devoted to her work. In addition to her more purely artistic compositions, she ran a highly successful portrait studio. Although the specific identities of "Nancy and Bubby" are unknown, this intimate portrait conveys a more universal portrait of motherhood, delicately lit and softly focused, printed on a velvety-surfaced, warm-toned platinum paper, stamped with a chop reminiscent of those found on the Japanese prints that advanced artists of the time so admired, and mounted on layers of colored paper. At a time when the Kodak camera was already leading people to think that anyone could be a photographer, soft focus, subtle lighting, platinum printing, and layered mounts declared one's artistic ambition.



Clarence Hudson White, American, 1873–1925

The Orchard

from *Camerawork*, January 1905

1902

Photogravure

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.72

Like Gertrude Käsebier, Clarence White was selected as a founding member of the Photo-Secession—the circle of Pictorialist photographers anointed in 1902 by Alfred Stieglitz as the future of artistic photography—and published in the pages of its journal, *Camera Work*. *The Orchard*, one of twenty-seven photogravures by White to appear in *Camera Work* between 1903 and 1910, was published in its ninth issue in 1905. The image itself, however, dates to 1902, when White was still working as a bookkeeper for a wholesale grocery in his native Newark, Ohio, producing images born from and celebrating the values and customs of small-town life. These women (White's wife, Jane; her sister Letitia Felix; and their friend Julia McCune), dressed in costumes that, already in 1902, signaled a remove from the modern urban world, appear as embodiments of feminine grace rather than portraits per se.



Dorothy Norman, American, 1905–1997

Alfred Stieglitz, An American Place

1934

Gelatin silver print, printed c. 1950

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.234

At the start of the 20th century, the photographer, publisher, and gallerist Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) was the most influential advocate for a painterly Pictorialist approach to photography, but by the late 1910s he had renounced such ideas and embraced the straightforward language of the medium. His own portrait, made in 1934 by his acolyte and mistress Dorothy Norman, is one such picture, relying equally on the master's somewhat dour collaboration and Norman's deliberate framing of the scene, posed in Stieglitz's gallery "An American Place."



Frederick H. Evans, English, 1853–1943

Aubrey Beardsley

1894

Photogravure

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.119

At the time Frederick Evans and Aubrey Beardsley met, in 1889, Evans was a London bookseller and a sometime photographer, and Beardsley was a frustrated insurance clerk and a would-be artist who haunted the bookshop though too poor to buy anything. Evans recognized freshness and beauty in the seventeen-year-old's sinuous drawings, traded books for them, and made and sold platinum-print copies of them. Most important, he recommended Beardsley to the publisher of a new edition of Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur*, a commission that would prove to be the young artist's breakthrough moment and enable him to become a full-time illustrator and artist.

Beardsley, whose gaunt face was described by Evans as like that of a gargoyle and by Oscar Wilde as "a silver hatchet," proved to be a challenging portrait subject. Ultimately, Evans embraced, rather than masked, the artist's beaklike profile and rapt attention, conveying something of the intense and dandyish image that Beardsley cultivated. After a brief career that included scandalously irreverent illustrations for Wilde's *Salome* and *The Yellow Book*, Beardsley died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-five.



František Drtikol, Czech, 1883–1961

[Figure Study]

c. 1924

Bromoil print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.114

František Drtikol's Prague portrait studio, where he photographed many of the era's notable artistic and literary figures, was equally a place for experimentation in the 1920s. His nude models became mere elements in quasi-abstract arrangements, rather than portrait subjects. Although he retained the painterly bromoil process favored by Pictorialists in this instance, Drtikol had clearly begun to embrace—indeed, to define—the formalist tendencies of a budding Modernism in works such as this one.



Alma Lavenson, American, 1897–1989

Self-Portrait

1932

Gelatin silver print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.213

In 1932, seven San Francisco-based photographers, including Ansel Adams and Edward Weston, banded together to form Group *f/64*, named for the smallest aperture on a large-format camera, the setting that yielded the greatest depth of field. Alma Lavenson was among those invited to participate in the group's first exhibition that November—a show that heralded a new aesthetic of sharply focused, carefully composed images, often contact-printed on glossy gelatin-silver paper for maximum clarity.

Lavenson's *Self-Portrait*, made earlier that year, was a daring departure from her own earlier Pictorialist style and from the traditions of self-portraiture. Presenting herself almost as a hybrid creature, half human and half machine, she declared the central importance of straightforward camera aesthetics in her new, modern style of photography, leaving the painterly past behind.



Lotte Jacobi, American, born Germany, 1896–1990

Head of a Dancer (Niura Norskaya)

1929

Gelatin silver print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:974-2014

Although Jacobi would photograph luminaries as diverse as Albert Einstein and Marc Chagall after immigrating to the United States in 1935 to escape the rising threat of Nazism, her portrait of the relatively obscure dancer Niura Norskaya, made while still in Berlin, remained the photographer's favorite and became her signature image because of its bold design and the clarity of her subject's porcelain features.



Philippe Halsman, American, born Latvia, 1906–1979

Dali Atomicus

1948

Gelatin silver print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.178

It is hard to imagine a studio setup more elaborate or a collaboration between a sitter and photographer more complex than Philippe Halsman's portrait of the Surrealist artist Salvador Dalí, *Dali Atomicus*. His absurdly freewheeling image, with artist, cats, furniture, and splash of water all suspended in midair, might have been easier for Dalí to paint than for Halsman to photograph: it took twenty-eight attempts before all of the elements came together perfectly. "My assistants and I were wet, dirty, and near complete exhaustion," wrote Halsman. "Only the cats still looked like new."

An Eye for Light

These photographs are united by their most insubstantial element: light and its play across surfaces and around forms. The sources and quality of light employed by these photographers vary tremendously, as do what subjects are illuminated, altered, or prioritized by the effects of its rays. The photographers documented a peculiarly photographic event. What is seen in the image probably would not have been envisioned by others' eyes. It existed first in the photographers' evaluation of the possibilities and then in how they crafted their negatives and prints, or now their digital settings. Ansel Adams called it "previsualization," a process through which the photographer can see the final print before the image is captured.



Edward Steichen, American, born Luxembourg, 1879–1973

Nocturne—Orangerie Staircase, Versailles

from *Camerawork*, April/July 1913

1908

Duogravure

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.54



Drahomir Josef Ružicka, American, born Bohemia, 1870–1960

Pennsylvania Station

1921

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2014.953

While practicing medicine in New York City, Drahomír Josef Ružicka was also a serious amateur photographer. He was a member of the Pictorial Photographers of America and regularly exhibited his photographs in its annual salons. A naturalized American, Ružicka returned frequently to his native Czechoslovakia in the 1920s and 1930s, opening discussions about shifts in American photographic aesthetics and instigating parallel shifts in Czechoslovakia. He used soft-focus lenses, which added a romantic flavor to his images, and was particularly known for his mastery of dramatic light situations. His photograph of Pennsylvania Station, one of his most famous, is a classic example of his style.



Adolf Fassbender, American, 1884–1980

Becalmed

c. 1940

Bromoil print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.124

The dominance of anything white in a subdued light situation tends to shift the importance of things that might otherwise not command immediate attention. The American Adolf Fassbender, a leading Pictorialist between the two World Wars, favored pictures that were atmospherically soft and morally uplifting. In *Becalmed*, the white sails of the drifting toy boat immediately draw attention, whereas the reflected presence of boys is perceived upon closer consideration. Fassbender's pictures of children often seek to evoke longings for idle time and the sweet games of childhood.



Josef Sudek, Czech, 1896–1976

Stromovka Park

1926

Bromoil print, printed 1950

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.273

Like Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Josef Sudek is recognized for his iconic photographs and also was beloved in Czechoslovakia as a nurturing mentor and as an initiator of intellectual discussions in gatherings in his studio. In a career that spanned six decades, his style evolved from the soft-focus, romantic, Pictorial style employed in *Stromovka Park* to more modern styles featuring crisp details, fully graduated tonalities, and less inherently dramatic subjects. The features and clothing of the families strolling in *Stromovka Park* are defined more by the highlights on their contours and hats than by salient details.



Jack Delano, American, born Russia, 1914–1997

A Country Store on the Outskirts of the Town of Lajas, Puerto Rico

1946

Gelatin silver print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:I319-2012.109

Jack Delano, well known for his crisp and perceptive documentary pictures for the Farm Security Administration and his extended series of images of Puerto Rico after World War II, captured a nighttime scene of light spilling out of a brightly lit country store. Men and boys are gathered around the store's counter; the interior lights reveal some animated faces and silhouette others whose backs are turned. Delano's beautiful print carries full detail in the shadows as well as in the brilliant interior, revealing two boys in the dark just outside the door who seem alone in noticing the photographer.



Walker Evans, American, 1903–1975

Washroom and Dining Area of Floyd Burroughs' Home, Hale County, Alabama

Summer 1936

Gelatin silver print, printed later

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:I319-2012.122

Walker Evans worked for the Resettlement Administration (RA) and its successor, the Farm Security Administration, during the Great Depression, often photographing in the rural South. The curator John Szarkowski referred to Evans's discovery of "the poetic uses of bare-faced facts, presented with . . . fastidious reserve." In *Washroom and Dining Area of Floyd Burroughs' Home, Hale County, Alabama*, which Evans made while taking a leave from the RA to work with the writer James Agee on a project that eventually became their book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), Evans presents the laconic beauty of Burroughs's rough-hewn dwelling and its contents without commentary or political motive.



Wright Morris, American, 1910–1998

Gano Grain Elevator, Western Kansas

1940

Gelatin silver print, printed c. 1980

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.227

In Wright Morris's photograph of the Gano, Kansas, grain elevator, the large scale and simple, if unusual, design of the elevator is presented without flourish or sentiment. Morris was a novelist, essayist, and photographer who developed a special blend of texts and photographs in books that document life on the Great Plains. This "wood-crib" elevator dates from about 1915 and, like much of what Wright appreciated about the Midwest, adheres to a no-frills "form follows function" practice. In the low, rolling hills of western Kansas, the elevator would have been visible for miles, especially with its brilliant white exterior.



Berenice Abbott, American, 1898–1991

Nightview, New York

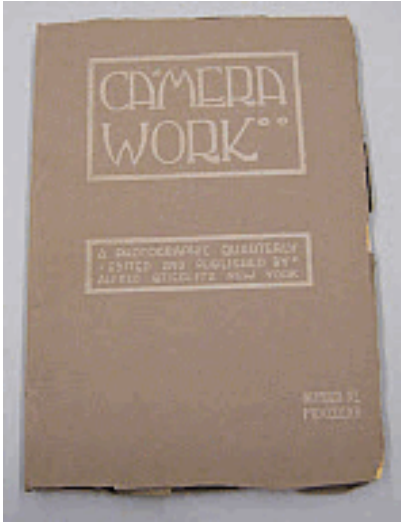
1932

Gelatin silver print, printed c. 1980

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2012.618

Berenice Abbott had three distinct periods of work. In the twenties in Paris, she made incisive portraits of the intellectuals, artists, and notable characters who then populated Paris. She returned to the United States in 1929 and began a decadelong project titled *Changing New York*, which was partially funded by the Federal Art Project to document the buildings being destroyed to make room for New York's new skyscrapers. In 1958 she began to photograph scientific phenomena for the Physical Sciences Study Committee at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Abbott's *Nightview, New York* captures thousands of skyscraper office lights illuminating the darkness of midtown Manhattan as viewed from the Empire State Building.



Alfred Stieglitz, American, 1864–1946

Camera Work, No. 40

October 1912

Bound journal with photogravures

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:84-2015

Camera Work, a lavishly produced journal first issued in January 1903, was the primary vehicle through which Alfred Stieglitz promoted his aesthetic ideas. For its first five years, Camera Work was devoted almost exclusively to Pictorialist photography, reproducing the work of Gertrude Käsebier, Heinrich Kühn, Edward Steichen, Clarence White, and others as beautifully printed, tipped-in photogravures. Beginning in 1908, however, its focus turned more toward contemporary art in other media, as Stieglitz's own interest in avant-garde European and American painting and sculpture grew. The final issues of Camera Work, appearing in 1916 and 1917, marked a return to photography and included Modernist photographs by Paul Strand. Although superb reproductions dominated the publication throughout its run, it also contained exhibition reviews and articles by influential critics.

The cover of Camera Work was designed by Steichen in an Art Nouveau style inspired by the work of Josef Hoffmann and the Vienna Secession.



Alfred Stieglitz, American, 1864–1946

The Steerage

from *Camerawork*, October 1911

1907

Photogravure

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.59



Paul Strand, American, 1890–1976

Abstraction, Porch Shadows, Twin Lakes, Connecticut

from *Camerawork*, June 1917

1916

Photogravure

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.66



Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Mexican, 1902–2002

La Hija de los Danzantes

[The Daughter of the Dancers]

c. 1933

Gelatin silver print, printed c. 1980

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2012.620

Manuel Álvarez Bravo is the most internationally recognized photographer who worked in Mexico in the 20th century. He was equally treasured as a mentor to other photographers and for his campaigns to preserve and promote Mexican photography. From the influence of European Surrealists came the dreamlike quality in many of his photographs. His preferred subjects, like this young woman dressed in a simple white lace skirt, sombrero, and shiny shawl, with unexpectedly bare feet, preserve a poetic, rural Mexico that was disappearing in modernity. The great muralist Diego Rivera wrote that poetry and irony emanate from “the photographs of Manuel Álvarez Bravo, like those particles suspended in the air which render visible a ray of light as it penetrates a dark room.”



Unknown artist

[Film Set for Kiss Me Kate]

1953

Gelatin silver print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.98



Brassaï, French, born Hungary, 1899–1984

Une Vespasienne, Boulevard Auguste Blanqui

1935

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2013.707

In the late 1920s, Brassai's first project in Paris was to photograph the city at night, capitalizing on the mysterious effects of light on nocturnal life. This street urinal with its advertisement for Byrrh aperitif is silhouetted against a dusting of snow, with the tracks of feet and tires as the only evidence that the city is not entirely asleep. Published in Brassai's classic book *Paris de Nuit* (*Paris at Night*, 1933), this image is one example of his acute understanding of how Paris's architecture—from historical buildings to humble urinals—represents the complexities and charm of his adopted city as discovered in his nightly meanderings.



Henri Cartier-Bresson, French, 1908–2004

Hyères, France

1932

Gelatin silver print, printed 1990s

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2014.930

The French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson and the Mexican photographer Manuel Álvarez Bravo are known for their lyrical approaches to daily scenes that might go unnoticed by others. In Hyères, France, Cartier-Bresson's speeding bicyclist is perfectly framed between the arching street curb and the descending iron stair railings. As in the title of his famous book *The Decisive Moment* (1952), Cartier-Bresson freezes that second in which all the forms cohere to make a haunting picture.



Marion Post Wolcott, American, 1910–1990

Negro Man Entering Movie Theatre By Colored Entrance, Belzoni, Mississippi

1940

Gelatin silver print, printed 1940

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.321

Many of the photographs in this section are exceptionally complex, formal compositions in which the play of black-and-white shapes and structures is as critical as the subject matter to these photographs' success. Like Jack Delano, Walker Evans, and Dorothea Lange, Marion Post Wolcott worked for the Farm Security Administration during the Great Depression, but Post Wolcott was the most direct in combining her desire for social commentary with her strong artistic vision. One might miss the modest texts about "colored admission" and the door for "white men only" in the picture's graphic play of text and patterns of light and shade, so Post Wolcott made the content plain in the title: *Negro Man Entering Movie Theater by Colored Entrance, Belzoni, Mississippi*.



Louis Faurer, American, 1916–2001

Win, Place, and Show, 3rd Ave. El at 53rd St, New York, N.Y.

1947

Gelatin silver print, printed 1981

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2014.935

Magazine photographer Louis Faurer, best known for his fascination with street life in New York City, particularly on and around Broadway, is especially admired for his use of the distortions and disruptions caused by reflections and for his photographs that evoke the layered illusions of city life. In *Win, Place, and Show*, a figure is seen both through a glass divider and again, but magnified and darker, in a reflection that Faurer probably intensified in the darkroom.



Dorothea Lange, American, 1895–1965

[Demonstration]

c. 1934

Gelatin silver print, printed 1940s–1950s

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.208

Many of Dorothea Lange's best-known photographs, made when she was working for the Farm Security Administration, document families who had lost their farms in the American South and Midwest and had become migratory workers seeking jobs in California. This earlier photograph was made in San Francisco when she had begun to abandon her practice as a studio portrait photographer and to photograph the poor and unemployed whom she found on the San Francisco streets. She was particularly attentive to how people's feelings were translated into body gesture, seen here in the tension in one demonstrator's neck and the fist of another gripping the banner's pole.



Ray K. Metzker, American, 1931–2014

Philadelphia

1964

Gelatin silver print, edition 1/25, printed 1985

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2014.949

The American photographers Louis Faurer and Ray K. Metzker, and the Italian photographer Mario Giacomelli, were particularly adept at previsualization and often chose techniques that were more about creating a picture than about objectively documenting a place. Trained at Chicago's Institute of Design, Metzker was also known for his formally innovative pictures, employing bold graphic designs, deep shadows, and clean highlights. His city views convey isolation, longing, and anonymity, as well as formal beauty and empathy.



Mario Giacomelli, Italian, 1925–2000

Le Mie Marche

[My Marche]

from the series *Presa di coscienza sulla natura [On Being Aware of Nature]*

1955–1984

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2014.940

Mario Giacomelli's principal subjects were the people, villages, and landscapes in and around his native Senigallia, Italy, in the region known as Le Marche. His prints are highly graphic, often eliminating details in the shadows and highlights to amplify what he saw as postwar decay and depletion. There is, however, beauty in his starkness and occasional joy among the inhabitants. In his image *Le Mie Marche*, the variously plowed fields that crisscross rolling hills evoke a patchwork quilt of stark patterns.



Clarence John Laughlin, American, 1905–1985

The Enigma

1941

Gelatin silver print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.211

Mike Marvins has collected images by three famous photographers who documented the ruins of Windsor Plantation between 1940 and 1942—Clarence John Laughlin (shown here), Eudora Welty, and Marion Post Wolcott. The plantation was built in 1861 and burned in 1890, leaving twenty-three Corinthian columns now braced together with a metal grid. When Laughlin photographed it, trees and vines covered much of the site and partially blocked the columns. He took advantage of the incongruity of the once-elegant columns rising from the rampant growth and added mystery by making the sky and mold on the columns unnaturally dark. He titled his picture *The Enigma*.

Spatial Explorations

Whether exploring great western landscapes or dramatic urban views, photographers are challenged to bring order to these vast, complicated spaces. The further photographers are from the most distant point in their picture, the greater the challenge. One critical decision facing them is where to place the skyline or whether to include it.

As a successful landscape photographer, the collector Mike Marvins is drawn to fine examples of the genre by other photographers, particularly those working in the American West. This selection from his collection of landscape photographs and city views richly samples the issues confronted by the artists represented in his collection, issues that have also challenged Marvins in his own work at Big Bend National Park.



William Henry Jackson, American, 1843–1942

Clear Creek Canyon, Colorado

c. 1899

Photolithograph

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2013.732

For over half a century, William Henry Jackson photographed the American West as it was mapped and settled after the American Civil War. He was first employed by the U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, and later by the various railroads that had begun to crisscross the United States. He documented towns, settlers, railroad works, and the scenic views along the tracks. In his picture of Clear Creek Canyon, the ragged contours of a V-shaped cut, made for the rails' passage through the Rockies, were dramatic and alien to Americans in the East and Midwest, where mountains could best be described as rolling rather than thrusting. Jackson increased the drama by coloring his black-and-white photograph in this photolithograph version. Complementary colors flow toward the picture's center: red rocks, a blue stream, and a cloudy blue sky.



Carleton Emmons Watkins, American, 1829–1916

The Bridal Veil Falls, 900 feet, Yosemite, California

1865–1866

Albumen silver print from glass negative, printed later by Taber Studio

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.307

Like William Henry Jackson and Ansel Adams, Watkins is best known for his landscape photographs of the American West, particularly those of what became Yosemite National Park. In 1861 and on seven subsequent trips to Yosemite, Watkins brought a custom-made camera that was capable of exposing eighteen-by-twenty-two-inch glass plates. The arduous task of sensitizing and processing these unwieldy plates in the field was offset by the plates' capacity to capture the vastness and grandeur of Yosemite in exceptional detail. These mammoth-scale prints, along with hundreds of stereo views that he made during each trip to Yosemite, were sent to the East Coast and helped influence the U.S. Congress to pass, and Abraham Lincoln to sign, legislation protecting Yosemite Valley in 1864. This later view of Bridal Veil Falls was taken from the valley floor looking up at the massive, sheer-faced Cathedral Rock and its delicate falls. Adams as well as Watkins made dozens of photographs of the falls, Cathedral Rock, and the valley beyond.



Edward Sheriff Curtis, American, 1868–1952

The Vanishing Race - Navajo

1904

Orotone, printed 1908

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.99

Edward Curtis devoted his life to photographing Native American tribes, their habitats, rituals, and activities in their various terrains. He first observed the dramatic decline in all of North America's native tribes and their distinct cultures in 1900 and for over thirty years was driven to produce a massive photographic record that included taking forty-five to fifty thousand negatives. *The Vanishing Race—Navajo*, one of his most famous pictures, was included in the final version of *The North America Indian*, which exists in both bound albums of high-quality gravure prints and in fine orotone prints such as this one. Curtis worked when the sun neared an unseen horizon to produce *The Vanishing Race—Navajo*. The sun's slanting rays highlight the edges of the receding riders and mirror both men and horses in long shadows. To accentuate their ride from light into darkness, Curtis printed both the distant mountains and the sliver of sky above them in darker tones than naturally occurred in the negative, alluding to his title, which works on literal and metaphorical levels. These riders vanish into the night; their nation faces a diminished future.



André Kertész, American, born Hungary, 1894–1985

Sunset

May 15, 1917

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2013.716

The sheer diversity of subjects photographed by the Hungarian André Kertész is impressive: landscapes, elegantly minimal still lifes, charming portraits, distorted nudes, and modern city views. For this image, made very early in his career in 1917, he chose the moment just as the blazing sun crossed the horizon in an otherwise spare picture. Only the backlit silhouettes of two boatmen compete with the fiery ball for our attention in this elegant pictorial jewel.



Edward Weston, American, 1886–1958

Point Lobos

1938

Gelatin silver print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.315

In the last decades of his life, Edward Weston lived in Carmel, California, and photographed the Pacific Ocean from almost every possible perspective. In this view of Point Lobos, he eliminated the sky by working from an elevated view of the coastline. The space is compressed by the exclusion of the horizon but animated by the swirling surf and shimmering light on the waves. Weston was known for accentuating undulating rhythms and life forces in subjects as simple as a green pepper or as grand as the Pacific. He was also known for exquisitely rich prints made from eight-by-ten-inch negatives that facilitated sharply rendered details and subtle gradations of tonalities essential to recording the thin flow of retreating seawater across the sand and over the rocks as well as the darker stony texture of the beach.



Ansel Adams, American, 1902–1984

Mount Williamson, the Sierra Nevada, from Manzanar, California

1944

Gelatin silver print, printed c. 1973

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2012.619

Ansel Adams is best known for his majestic photographs of portions of the American West that were still unpopulated in the 20th century. He was also a founding member of the Sierra Club and a tireless campaigner for preserving America's wildernesses and shores, and his pictures were among the strongest tools in the campaign for their preservation. *Mount Williamson, the Sierra Nevada, from Manzanar, California*, which was made while Adams was on a self-assigned project to photograph the Japanese relocation settlement in Manzanar, is of a deceptively simple subject: a vast boulder field at the base of a distant mountain range. But by shooting from a low angle, Adams created a scene that is simultaneously majestic and playful. The boulders mimic the mountains and spark the question "Is this some abandoned sports field of the Gods?"



Eudora Welty, American, 1909–2001

Home Before Dark, Yalobusha County

1936

Gelatin silver print, edition 19/20, printed 1980

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.311

More famous now for her Pulitzer Prize-winning novels and essays, the Mississippi native Eudora Welty was a photographer before her first article was published. During the first half of the 1930s, she photographed the rural poor, white and black, employing the empathy and acute observations that would later mark her work as a writer. Welty's most famous picture is *Home Before Dark*, of an African American family in a receding horse-drawn wagon. In her memoir, Welty wrote, "Photography taught me that to be able to capture transience, by being ready to click the shutter at the crucial moment, was the greatest need I had. Making pictures of people in all sorts of situations, I learned that every feeling waits upon its gesture; and I had to be prepared to recognize this moment when I saw it."



O. Winston Link, American, 1914–2001

Hot Shot Eastbound

1956

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2014.948

O. Winston Link is best known for documenting the final years of steam-powered trains on the Norfolk and Western Railway, the last major railroad in America to operate exclusively with steam power. A masterwork in its control of a complicated composition, Link's picture *Hot Shot Eastbound* is also a puzzle on how many types of modern transportation the viewer can identify: cars, trucks, trains, and planes. It also alludes to the demise of steam-engine-drawn trains with the growing preference for cars and planes. Perhaps, because he was photographing a drive-in theater's movie screen, Link was commenting as well on the role of motion pictures in promoting those changes. This photograph required two exposures on separate sheets of film, one for the image on the screen, and the other for the rest of the picture. He then skillfully blended both images in his print.



Unknown artist

[East 42nd Street at Vanderbilt Avenue]

c. 1940

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2013.725



Alvin Langdon Coburn, British, born United States, 1882–1966

St. Paul's from Ludgate Circus

1905

Photogravure

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2012.621

Though Alvin Langdon Coburn also photographed in the American West, he was known primarily for his city views and portraits of notable subjects made in New York and London in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His city views were often taken from elevated perspectives looking across the roofs and pinnacles of other buildings, some modern and others historical. When Coburn photographed it in 1905, St. Paul's Cathedral had been a London landmark for centuries. One of Europe's largest cathedrals, it was built on the highest point in London between 1675 and 1711 by the great architect Christopher Wren. As in many of his city views, Coburn juxtaposed signs of industry and modernity with historical landmarks such as St. Paul's Cathedral.



Eugene Omar Goldbeck, American, 1892–1986

Dedication of the New Bridge Connecting the United States with Mexico - Laredo, Texas and Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico.

February 22, 1922

Gelatin silver print, printed later

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.172

The Texas native E. O. Goldbeck enjoyed an almost eighty-year career as a photographer. He was best known for two types of photographs, both represented in this exhibition and both requiring technical skill and, at times, considerable advance planning. Using a Cirkut camera, which was mounted on a revolving tripod geared so that the camera and film could move in synchronization, he produced long, narrow prints ideal for recording large groups, landscapes, and events such as Dedication of the New Bridge Connecting the United States with Mexico—Laredo, Texas and Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. He also became known as the “unofficial photographer of American’s military” for his photographs of large military groups positioned in striking designs. Indoctrination Division was his most ambitious: 21,765 men were arranged to represent the U.S. Air Force insignia, requiring six weeks of planning and the construction of a two-hundred-foot tower. It is his most frequently reproduced picture.



Eugene Omar Goldbeck, American, 1892–1986

Indoctrination Division, Air Training Command, Lackland Air Base, San Antonio, Texas

July 1947

Gelatin silver print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.173

Songs of Innocence, Songs of Experience

It is often said that photography freezes and preserves a fleeting instant, and in its most literal form, it does just that—the crownlike splash of a drop of milk or the nose of a horse crossing the finish line. It is the medium's capacity to hold a state of being, however, that is the more challenging and poetic side of that truism, and no moment is more fleeting than childhood. Sometimes hovering perilously close to the edge of sentimentality or self-righteousness, photographers have long sought to make concrete and graspable the ineffable qualities of childhood. It is no easy task. Whether consciously or unwittingly, Mike and Mickey Marvins have gathered a strong group of photographs that do just that.

From the perspective of adulthood, the innocence and fragility, and the joy and pain, of children can be heartbreaking. Like the rainy-day carousel in Robert Doisneau's *Manège de Monsieur Barré*, the young lives portrayed in these photographs are a temptingly sweet and exhilarating ride one can look at from a distance but can no longer climb aboard.



Heinrich Kühn, Austrian, 1866–1944

Walther, Edeltrude, and Hans Kühn

c. 1905

Platinum/palladium print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2013.717

About 1904–5, inspired in part by his contact with the American photographer, publisher, and gallerist Alfred Stieglitz and by having seen the outdoor figural compositions of the American Pictorialists Gertrude Käsebier and Clarence White, the Viennese photographer Heinrich Kühn turned from monumental landscapes and carefully composed still lifes to intimate and informal images of his four children and their nanny, often out-of-doors in the countryside. *Walther, Edeltrude, and Hans Kühn* is an almost dreamlike depiction of childhood innocence: three young siblings, dressed in white, hand in hand, playing ring-around-the-rosy on a hillside of wildflowers, all rendered in delicate tones that imbue the scene with an Impressionist sensibility.



Robert Doisneau, French, 1912–1994

Le Manège de Monsieur Barré

[Mr. Barré's Carousel]

1955

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2012.622

The artistic heir to Eugène Atget and Brassai, Robert Doisneau was a chronicler of Parisian life throughout his career and held a preeminent place among the post-World War II French photographers referred to as “humanists.” A master at capturing moments of pure emotion and a visual storyteller par excellence, Doisneau nonetheless declared that “you must let the person looking at the photograph go some of the way to finishing it. You should offer them a seed that will grow and open up their minds.”

Something about that openness to interpretation must have appealed to Mike Marvins. This melancholy view of a children’s carousel in the rain was the first photograph he collected—a seed of a different sort.



Lewis W. Hine, American, 1874–1940

*Jo Bodeon. A "Back-Roper" in the Mule Room, Chace Cotton Mills,
Burlington, Vermont*

1909

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2013.713

Trained as a sociologist and recognizing the power of photography to sway public opinion and to create social change, Lewis Hine gave up his teaching job in 1908 and went to work full time as a photographer for the recently formed National Child Labor Committee (NCLC). His photographs of young children working on the street and in fields, factories, mills, and mines were reproduced in pamphlets and display materials of the NCLC and helped raise awareness of the plight of child workers, eventually leading to protective legislation. The wide-eyed Jo Bodeon was one of many children that Hine found tending the gargantuan, cacophonous spinning mules of cotton mills up and down the East Coast.



Augustín Victor Casasola, Mexican, 1874–1938

Niño Soldado

[Child Soldier]

June 1914

Gelatin silver print, printed later

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.82

The Mexican photojournalist Augustín Casasola's *Child Soldier* might seem a vivid portrayal of children's make-believe were it not, like Lewis Hine's photograph displayed nearby, a true depiction of adulthood thrust too early upon youth, here during the Mexican Revolution: Antonio Gómez Delgado was just ten when he enrolled in Pancho Villa's Northern Division of the Constitutionalist Army on July 2, 1910.



Grancel Fitz, American, 1894–1963

The Baseball Game

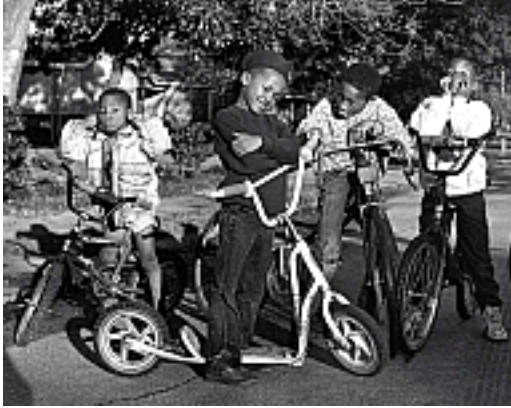
1924

Gelatin silver print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.136

If it is difficult to know just what piece of the American Dream Grancel Fitz's image of youth, friendship, and healthy recreation was meant to promote, that is no accident; his strategy as an advertising photographer was not to focus on the product itself but rather on its associations with a desired type of person, mood, and lifestyle, and as a result his pictures have a life and meaning beyond their original function.



Earlie Hudnall, Jr., American, born 1946

Rascals

1991

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2013.714

Born in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, but a Houstonian since 1968, Earlie Hudnall, Jr., has made the everyday lives of African Americans his abiding subject. "I chose the camera as a tool to document different aspects of life," he wrote, "who we are, what we do, how we live, what our communities look like. . . . My photographs are archetypes of my own childhood." Although his photographs have sometimes focused on the more difficult aspects of life, the joy of children playing in the street, mugging for the camera, and mimicking the attitudes of adults has also been a recurring subject and uplifting theme in his work.



W. Eugene Smith, American, 1918–1978

Walk to Paradise Garden

1946

Gelatin silver print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.255

Made in 1946, this image of the photographer's two young children walking into a sunlit clearing was the first picture that W. Eugene Smith made as he took up the camera again during a long and arduous recovery from wounds suffered on Okinawa while serving as a photojournalist for *Life* during World War II. "I was determined that the first photograph would be a contrast to the war photographs and that it would speak an affirmation of life," Smith later wrote.



Elijah Gowin, American, born 1967

Moth Catcher

1998

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2014.943

For the body of work titled *Hymnal of Dreams*, Elijah Gowin spent a decade exploring the roots and heritage of his Southern family, transplanted to the northern United States. As the son and frequent subject of the photographer Emmet Gowin, Elijah has a personal familiarity with the photographic presentation of home in richly intimate portraits of family life. Gowin chose to explore his family history by reconstructing found objects to express imagined narratives. He has explained, “A slice of family land in Virginia, nourished by stories of relatives long dead, provides the source for my imagery. In my mind’s eye, this landscape is thick and tangled as are recollections of the place and family I knew as a boy. I want to understand my human connection to this geography as new place; a realm where dreams and memories are given a material presence.”



Debbie Fleming Caffery, American, born 1948

May Van's Camp

1987

Gelatin silver print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.29

Debbie Fleming Caffery utilizes light and shadow to dramatically abstract her subject, virtually transforming figures and scenes into shadow puppetry. Working in her native southwest Louisiana, she photographs the sugarcane industry, the community, and her family, frequently working at dawn and dusk with a large-format camera to heighten the silhouetted quality of her imagery.



Matt Mahurin, American, born 1959

Nicaragua

1987

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2013.728

Matt Mahurin's photograph of two boys holding hands was taken as part of a photo-essay on Nicaragua. Known for staged or manipulated scenes, Mahurin divorced his subjects from their surroundings in this photograph, removing the implicit photojournalistic content and presenting a seemingly universal narrative in its place. The photograph may show signs of hunger and poverty, widespread during the Sandinista regime and the Contra War, but it speaks to the powerful solidarity of a childhood friendship.



Mario Cravo Neto, Brazilian, 1947–2009

Odé

1989

Gelatin silver print

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.231

A photographer and sculptor, Mario Cravo Neto emphasized form and texture in his photographs to convey the sculptural and tactile aspects of his subjects. His staged studio photography combined people and found objects—ordinary and surreal—with a strong play of light to create images that verge on the mystic and supernatural. Some, such as *Odé*, reference Candomblé, an Afro-Brazilian religious practice that celebrates a ritual attention to the relationship between man and nature.



Keith Carter, American, born 1948

George Washington

1990

Gelatin silver print, edition 26/50

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:I319-2012.77

After photographing on assignment at the Angola Prison in Louisiana one day in 1990, Keith Carter stopped in a small community and invited some of the children playing outside to be photographed holding something they considered special. The contrast with the day's earlier assignment made this boy's choice particularly poignant. "My pictures occasionally tend toward the dark or solitary side," Carter wrote. "In my world of truths and half-truths, the inhabitants might be amiss or fallen from grace, but my children inhabit a peaceable kingdom where everything that falls deserves a chance to be restored. My children are beautiful, intelligent, sometimes sad, pensive, devastatingly perceptive, complex, occasionally humorous, always creative, and often inscrutable."



Luis González Palma, Guatemalan, born 1957

The Angel

1991

Gelatin silver print with toning on artist's mount, printed 1992

Promised gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

TR:1319-2012.236

Luis González Palma, who trained as an architect and cinematographer before becoming a photographer, brings skills of construction and model building to his work. In his earliest works of the 1990s, such as this one, he employed models, costumes, and often elaborate props as well as darkroom manipulation of the prints to evoke psychological issues for Native or mestizo citizens in Guatemala. Palma, who is of Mayan heritage, uses both tangible objects and symbols that are important to the Mayan culture, sometimes to communicate the loss of cultural identity. The direct gaze of the subject, which Palma accentuated by heightening the whites of the eyes, conveys what Palma called the “consciousness of our solitude.” The unattached wings in *The Angel* seem inadequate for actual flight and more likely evidence the desire for freedom; they may also reference the complex mixed beliefs of the Mayan and Catholic religions.



Josef Koudelka, Czech, born 1938

Spišské Bystré

1966

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mike and Mickey Marvins

2014.946

Josef Koudelka began photographing Gypsies in Czechoslovakia in 1961 while studying to be, and then working as, an aeronautical engineer. He became a full-time photographer in 1967, but left Czechoslovakia for political asylum in 1970, living in England and then France. Just before the Russian invasion of Prague in 1968, he had expanded his project on Gypsies to Romania. While in exile, he traveled in the spring and summer months to photograph Roma gatherings in Western Europe, and then edited and printed the images in the winter, publishing his first book on the Gypsy project in 1975. The project is not a traditional documentation but rather acutely visual poetry of human dramas large and small, public and private, with no clear reading. Is this boy running for joy or in fear? Is either house his home, or either woman his mother? The child is the central player in a drama that, for the viewer, has no beginning or end.