

YALE UNIVERSITY ACQUIRES PHOTOGRAPHER LEE FRIEDLANDER'S ARCHIVE AND MASTER PRINTS

The Yale University Art Gallery and Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library announce the joint acquisition of the Lee Friedlander Archive and 2,000 of the photographer's master prints. With this acquisition, the Yale University Art Gallery becomes the largest holder of Friedlander's work by any museum, and the Beinecke Library becomes home to the preliminary work and records that document the career of one of America's most original and prolific photographers. "We have been particularly pleased to work so closely with the Beinecke Library to secure this monumental acquisition," notes Jock Reynolds, the Henry J. Heinz II Director of the Yale University Art Gallery. "Together, the Friedlander Archive and master prints form an unmatched resource for those interested in the life and work of one of photography's most ambitious masters."

Selected from Friedlander's past two decades of work, the master prints — 1,800 of which will reside at the Gallery — include examples of every image published in Friedlander's monographs of new work since 1996. The archive, housed at the Beinecke along with a smaller group of master prints of Western landscapes, includes all of the photographer's negatives, contact sheets, journals, monographs, correspondence, books featuring his images, and preliminary work prints corresponding to Yale's master prints.

Born in Aberdeen, Washington, in 1934, Lee Friedlander began his deep engagement with photography as a teenager. In the 1960s, his work was instrumental in paving the way to a broader appreciation of photography's unique visual language, distinguishing itself from that of his contemporaries with its full embrace of American vernacular culture, which he depicted with an irreverent wit. Humorous improvisations and uncanny visual juxtapositions are recurring motifs in Friedlander's pictures, which, like Walker Evans's before him, demonstrated that the most seemingly ordinary of subjects could in fact be the main ingredients of a challenging, personal, and utterly compelling art.

Since 1970, Friedlander has also devoted his creative energies to the translation of his work to the printed page, having conceived and supervised the production of over 30 distinct monographs to date. Among other honors, he has been the recipient of multiple Guggenheim Fellowships, a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, and the Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography. Friedlander received an honorary doctorate from Yale in 2004, and his work was the subject of a major traveling retrospective organized by the Museum of Modern Art in 2005.

Yale's 2,000 master prints represent the finest examples of the photographer's work since

adopting the Hasselblad Superwide as his primary camera in the early 1990s. Yielding a square negative, the Superwide gives its user the ability to seamlessly render everything within its ample view with an exaggerated yet palpable sense of physicality. With this new tool, Friedlander reinvigorated his already voracious eye, boldly tensioning foreground and background, lines and shapes, and light and shadow like never before to create images of remarkable formal complexity and grandeur. “Friedlander’s pictures from the past two decades playfully exploit the medium’s still-thrilling ability to create fresh and unexpected relationships out of the things we see every day,” observes Joshua Chuang, the Gallery’s Assistant Curator of Photographs. “Even if you think you’ve seen it all, they make it easy to become ecstatic about the possibilities of photography all over again.”

The Beinecke Library’s Lee Friedlander Archive will allow scholars the opportunity to delve into the various aspects of the artist’s creative process. At the core of the archive are more than 40,000 rolls of film and associated contact sheets representing the artist’s creative output since the mid-1950s, including his wide-ranging portrait, landscape, and still life work. Also included are a vast array of the artist’s preliminary explorations in the darkroom, materials that will allow users the ability to follow Friedlander’s rigorous editing and proofing process from negative to finished print. “The comprehensive preservation of the raw records of Friedlander’s prolific career will provide students and scholars with extraordinary opportunities to appreciate the decisions he made in the field and the lab,” observes George Miles, the William Robertson Coe Curator of the Collection of Western Americana at the Beinecke Library. “We are excited that Friedlander’s work will join the library’s extensive collections of works by American photographers, including Carleton Watkins, Timothy O’Sullivan, Alfred Stieglitz, Carl Van Vechten, David Plowden, Carl Mydans, and Eve Arnold, and pleased that we could collaborate with the Gallery to create an unprecedented resource for scholarship about one of America’s foremost visual artists.”

Yale University Art Gallery

The Yale University Art Gallery, America’s oldest university art museum, was founded in 1832 when patriot-artist John Trumbull donated more than 100 of his paintings to Yale College. Since then, the Gallery’s collections have grown to number more than 185,000 objects, spanning the globe and ranging in date from ancient times to the present day. In addition to its celebrated collections of American paintings and decorative arts, the Gallery is noted for its important holdings of Greek and Roman art, early Italian paintings, later European art, Asian art, African art, art of the ancient Americas, and Impressionist, modern, and contemporary works. The Gallery’s ongoing installation of works from these collections is complemented by a variety of special exhibitions and public programs. In an effort to share its resources with a broader public, the Gallery also organizes collections-based exhibitions that travel to museums nationwide.

Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library

The Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library is Yale University’s principal repository for literary papers and for early manuscripts and rare books in the fields of literature, theology,

history, and the natural sciences. In addition to its general collection of rare books and manuscripts, the library houses the Yale Collection of American Literature, the Yale Collection of German Literature, the Yale Collection of Western Americana, and the Osborn Collection. The Beinecke collections afford opportunities for interdisciplinary research in such fields as medieval, Renaissance, and eighteenth-century studies, art history, photography, American studies, the history of printing, and modernism in art and literature.

For additional press information or visual materials, please contact Ana Davis, Associate Director of Public Information, at 203.432.0611 or ana.davis@yale.edu.