

October 29, 2018

**Malcolm Daniel**  
Gus and Lyndall Wortham  
Curator of Photography



Dear Friends of the MFAH Photography Department,

Although I'm at the Museum almost every day, and I see the Nancy and Rich Kinder Building rising on the site of our old parking lot, it's my husband Darryl who keeps me informed about the daily progress of construction. "They poured the floor of your gallery today," he tells me one day. "They've started building the forms for your walls," he announces a few weeks later. And sure enough, he's right. Somehow, he finds a moment each day to open the MFAH website and check out the construction cam to see what the day's progress is. You can too. Here's a link: <https://www.mfah.org/about/campus-redevelopment/>. Our suite of galleries—the Phillip Leonian and Edith Rosenbaum Leonian Gallery and two others that are just waiting for one of you to step up and fund them—is the corner of the Kinder construction site closest to the camera (circled in red on the screen grab to the left.) I think that will give you a sense of the scale (it's almost 4,000 square feet) and will convey why we're so excited about the chance to show our world-class collection in this handsome new space beginning in 2020. I can't wait.

### Double header...

Looking to the more immediate future, we're excited to welcome **Laurie Simmons** to the MFAH next month. A key figure in the so-called "Pictures" generation, Simmons was among those artists who came of age in the media-saturated 1970s and who played with the visual clichés of advertising, television, and Hollywood films. Simmons (and her contemporaries Richard Prince, Cindy Sherman, Sarah Charlesworth, and others) understood personal identity to be shaped by—rather than merely reflected in—media representations of gender, sexuality, race, and nationality. Last year we acquired Simmons's *Magnum Opus II (the Bye-Bye)*, the summation of her famous "Walking Objects" series, and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth is currently presenting a major retrospective of her work.

Simmons will introduce her film **My Art** and take questions following the screening on **Wednesday, November 14, in Brown Auditorium Theater**. *Vogue* describes *My Art* as a must-see, especially for "women, people interested in how art is made, and those who like to laugh," saying that Simmons, who directed and stars in the film, "puts a devastatingly funny and subtle lens on such subjects as success, ageism, loneliness, absurdity, dating in your 60s, inhibition and disinhibition, collaboration, and ruthlessness." Click [here](#) to read an interview with Simmons about the film and [here](#) for more info or to buy tickets; Photo Forum members, you may request two complimentary tickets to the screening when you rsvp to Christin Blaschke for the next night's program.



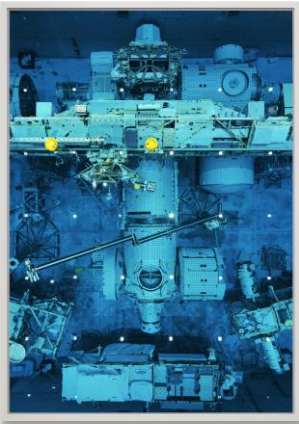
The next evening, **Thursday, November 15**, Laurie will speak to **Photo Forum** and **contemporary@mfah** (the patron group for modern and contemporary art), reviewing the trajectory of her career and participating in an open-ended conversation. Forum members should already have received an invitation for the event, and Benefactor and Founder members will soon receive invitations to a private dinner with Simmons at the home of a local collector and museum trustee following the talk.

**And while you've got your calendar out...**

Make sure you've got the December Photo Forum event on your calendar, too. On **Thursday, December 13**, Lisa and I will present some of the year's **major acquisitions** stretching from the 19th century to the present. We'll share with you how these works of art relate to the Museum's existing collection and what criteria we use when making our acquisition decisions. Get the curators' inside viewpoint and see some of the Museum's newest treasures.

**Once again, remember to vote on November 7...**

And no, I don't mean our midterm elections on November 6 (but please DO vote then too!) No, I'm referring to "One Great Night" the next evening, the annual all-male acquisitions benefit where we've had some great success in funding our proposed photographic purchases (although I have to confess that it still strikes this Yankee as a bit anachronistic in the #metoo era.) Our proposal for "the big prize" this year is a spectacular photograph that Thomas Struth made last year here in Houston at the Johnson Space Center when he came to install his exhibition at the Moody Center for the Arts. Struth's "Museum Photographs"—images of visitors viewing art in the Louvre, the Prado, and other great museums or visiting other cultural sites—propelled him to the forefront of contemporary photography beginning in the 1990s, but he has spent the past decade exploring sites of scientific, technological, and medical innovation instead. Our picture—the one that needs your vote if you're attending One Great Night or know others who are—shows NASA's full-scale mock-up of the International Space Station submerged in a 40-foot deep, 6.2-million-gallon pool, the Neutral Buoyancy Lab where our astronauts practice working in a weightless environment.



**Thomas Struth** (German, born 1954), *Full-scale Mock-up 3, JSC, Houston*, 2017. Inkjet print, 80-1/2 × 56-3/4 in.

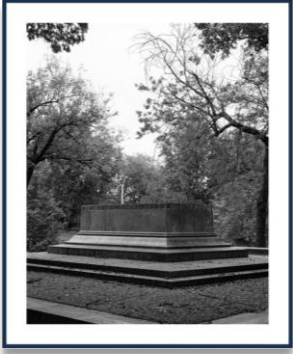
**256,051 photographs now on view in Cullinan Hall...**

Minute by minute, day by day, month by month, **Kevin O. Mooney** documents his life. His ever-present camera catches the meanderings of two ginger cats, the mundane rituals of daily existence—sleeping, brushing teeth, drinking coffee, driving to work, eating lunch, checking the mailbox, watching television—and welcome diversions such as art openings, a Cincinnati Reds game, cycling in the countryside, and beers at the bar. It records, too, the more personal and profound passages of life: a graduation in May, a friend's wedding in July, his father's illness, death, and funeral in the autumn. More than 250,000 photographs from the year 2012 fly by—twelve months playing simultaneously on twelve screens from January at top left to December at bottom right until each fades into darkness. In the age of the selfie, when millions share on social media their happy-hour cocktails, memorable dinners, or vacation travel, Mooney pushes that idea to the extreme with unsparing honesty, revealing the truer nature of our lives rushing past, minute by minute, day by day, month by month.



**Kevin O. Mooney** (American, born 1957), *366247•2012*, 2015, single-channel video, sound, 1 hour 13 seconds. Museum purchase funded by Clinton T. Willour (2018.179)

Kevin Mooney's **366247•2012**, an hour-long video funded by Clint Willour at Photo Forum's 2018 Vote Night, will be projected in Cullinan Hall in the Caroline Wiess Law Building through December 9. MFAH is the first museum to purchase this mesmerizing and moving work.



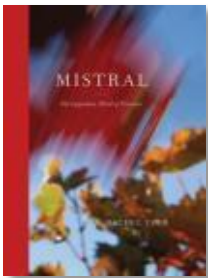
**Matthew N. Shain** (American, born 1978), *Baltimore, (Robert E. Lee & Stonewall Jackson, erected 1948)*, 2017, from the series *Post-Monuments*. Inkjet print, framed, 30 × 25 × 1¼ in. (76 × 63.3 × 3.2 cm). Museum purchase funded by Nena Marsh.

### **A monumentally important new acquisition...**

Born in California, photographer **Matthew Shain** admits, "The Civil War was very academic to me." Travelling to New Orleans, however, Shain began to understand how the past was intimately intertwined with the present in many Southern cities. He encountered statues, monuments, and historical markers, all seeming to celebrate the men and moments of the Confederacy. The issues of legacy and racial tension, which are inherent in the Civil War, came to the fore once again during recent protests and removals of these statues. Shain noted, "These symbols were being removed... without having new symbols put in their place. It's a transitional time, trying to find more inclusive and equitable ways of telling the story." Shain travelled the country, photographing the now empty plinths and places that previously held statues of Confederate heroes for his series *Post Monuments*. Like bodily scars, the empty places framed in Shain's photographs suggest the lasting effects of racism and violence. MFAH is first museum to acquire this powerful series.

### **Photographer blows into town with her new book...**

How do you photograph the wind? That's the challenge that veteran photojournalist Rachel Cobb set for herself and that resulted in the photographs collected in her new book, *Mistral*, named for the powerful winds that have swept through Provence since time immemorial. I'll be in conversation with Rachel at a book signing at 6:30 on Friday, November 16, at Brazos Bookstore, 2421 Bissonnet St. Click [here](#) for more information about Rachel, the book, or the event, and [here](#) for a great review in *Lensculture*.



### **Rendez-vous au Grand Palais...**

And finally, are you going to **Paris Photo** next week? If so, and if you'd like to meet up with Associate Curator Lisa Volpe and me on Friday morning to look at things together that you or we found noteworthy, please be in touch with me and I'll share details about our meeting point and rendez-vous time. I joked about a quarter-million photographs being on view in Cullinan Hall, but it's almost true at Paris Photo, so the more eyes looking, the better.

As Thanksgiving approaches, my colleagues in the Department of Photography join me in wishing you and yours a joyous holiday and in sending our heartfelt thanks for the support and interest that so many of you have brought to our activities in the past year.

With warmest wishes,