

Fraenkel Gallery

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For immediate release



How I Learned to See: An (Ongoing) Education In Pictures

Curated by Hanya Yanagihara

Fraenkel Gallery
49 Geary Street, San Francisco

June 30 – August 20, 2016

Fraenkel Gallery is pleased to present ***How I Learned to See: An (Ongoing) Education in Pictures***, **Curated by Hanya Yanagihara**, from June 30 – August 20, 2016, at 49 Geary Street. The exhibition brings together a varied array of photographs that Yanagihara has chosen for their significance to her growth as an artist. The overarching theme is one of a writer looking deeply at other artists' creative work—specifically, photographs—as a process of learning and discovery.

Hanya Yanagihara is an American novelist whose most recent book, *A Little Life*, was a finalist for the 2015 National Book Award and shortlisted for the 2015 Man Booker Prize and the 2016 Baileys Prize for Fiction. She has been a periodic visitor to Fraenkel Gallery for 17 years.

Yanagihara remarked:

The challenge for any artist, in any medium, is to find work that inspires her to re-see the things and people and places she thought she knew or understood. So much of my artistic development is directly linked to the images and photographers I encountered through years of visiting Fraenkel Gallery; the work here has, in ways both direct and not, influenced my own fiction.

How I Learned to See is organized by six sections or “chapters” on the subjects of loneliness, love, aging, solitude, beauty, and discovery. Yanagihara has selected an idiosyncratic mix, with iconic and less familiar works by 12 artists: **Robert Adams, Diane Arbus, Elisheva Biernoff, Harry Callahan, Lee Friedlander, Nan Goldin, Katy Grannan, Peter Hujar, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Richard Misrach, Nicholas Nixon, Alec Soth, and Hiroshi Sugimoto.**

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Many of the works in *How I Learned to See* convey a strong emotional tone through the portrayal of character and setting. As a preface, the exhibition begins with an early work by Peter Hujar, *Girl Throwing Ball, Southbury (I)*, 1957, which depicts a girl playing in a field at a state facility for adults with intellectual disabilities.

The first chapter, on **loneliness**, features *The Backwards Man in his hotel room, N.Y.C. 1961* by Diane Arbus; a photograph of a desolate motel at night by Alec Soth; Robert Adams's picture of a solitary figure in a suburban home; a Nicholas Nixon photograph of an AIDS patient; and an affecting recent portrait by Katy Grannan.

The second section of *How I Learned to See* explores **love**, including couples by Arbus; erotic works by Nan Goldin; Elisheva Biernoff's painting based on a found photograph; and two pictures from Ralph Eugene Meatyard's *Lucybelle Crater* series (1970-72), showing pairs posing contentedly in humorous and disfiguring masks.

Chapter 3, on **aging**, begins with a photograph by Arbus of a former beauty, heavily made up while smoking in bed (*Brenda Diana Duff Frazier, 1938 Debutante of the Year, at home, Boston, Mass. 1966*). Another highlight of this section is a group of eight works from Nixon's series *The Brown Sisters*, for which he has photographed his wife, Bebe, and her three sisters annually over the course of 41 years.

The following section explores **solitude** through works by Harry Callahan, Lee Friedlander, and Arbus, as well as Adams' celebrated photograph of an illuminated gas station at night (*Pikes Peak, Colorado Springs, 1969*).

Beauty is the theme of the Chapter 5, for which the curator has selected two seldom seen portraits by Hujar from the late 1950s; Callahan's iconic portrait of his wife in the water, with her eyes closed and hair floating on the surface (*Eleanor, Chicago, 1949*); and a luminous work by Goldin (*Pawel on the beach laughing, Positano, 1996*).

The exhibition concludes with a section on **discovery**, continuing the thematic thread of learning about the world through pictures. The final chapter features work that suggests the position of an outsider coming upon an unfamiliar subject and milieu, including Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Mandrill, 1980*, from his *Diorama* series; Soth's photograph of a single light bulb hanging above a mysterious clearing in the trees; as well as a pair of pictures by Richard Misrach, shot in Hawaii at night, in which a harsh flash captures the odd tangle of vegetation against the shadowy background of a dense tropical forest.

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For press inquiries and images, please contact Rebecca Herman at 415.981.2661 or rherman@fraenkelgallery.com

IMAGE: Alec Soth, *Riverview Motel*, 2005. © Alec Soth, courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco