

HARVARD'S FOGG ART MUSEUM PRESENTS FIRST MAJOR SURVEY AND MUSEUM EXHIBITION OF MOYRA DAVEY'S PHOTOGRAPHS

Exhibition is the first to present a comprehensive look at the artist's 20-year career



Moyra Davey, *Greatest Hits*, 1999.
Chromogenic color print, 20 x 24 in.
Collection of the artist. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

CAMBRIDGE, MA (November 27, 2007)—The Harvard University Art Museums present *Long Life Cool White: Photographs by Moyra Davey*, on view from **February 28 through June 30, 2008**, at the Fogg Art Museum. This exhibition of 40 photographs marks the first survey of Davey's work, and her first major exhibition in a museum. The photographs on view provide a comprehensive look into Davey's 20-year career, which has included multiple solo and group exhibitions in galleries and group exhibitions in museums in the United States and Canada.

Moyra Davey's work focuses on the humble and mundane accumulations of everyday objects such as stacks of newspapers, books, records, and money. Her images of domestic interiors feature dust, bookshelves, and the stuff that accumulates on top of refrigerators. Her New York City street pictures focus on the disappearing world of newspaper vendors. Shying away from contemporary practices of large-scale, digitally manipulated, and staged photography, Davey works on a small scale—typically in 20 x 24 inch format—and prints her own work. Her modest scale encourages viewers to focus their attention and consequently increase their awareness of everyday life.

Davey's photographs and videos have been featured in exhibitions at Alexander and Bonin, New York; American Fine Arts, Co., New York; Artists Space, New York; the International

Center of Photography, New York; LACE, Los Angeles; the Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal; Massimo Audiello Gallery, New York, and the Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco; as well as other galleries and museums. She recently collaborated with Jason Simon on a video for *50,000 Beds*, a project by Chris Doyle at Artspace in New Haven, CT, and is currently one of twelve founding members of Orchard, a co-operative exhibition and event space in New York City's Lower East Side. She was also one of ten recipients of the 2004–05 award from the Anonymous Was a Woman Foundation.

Helen Molesworth, Maisie K. and James R. Houghton Curator of Contemporary Art, curated the exhibition, and collaborated closely with the artist on this survey. “Working with Moyra Davey on this exhibition has been a lesson in subtlety; whether it’s how one looks at the overlooked or how one threads together passages from numerous books, Davey’s work invariably offers a kind of intellectual and aesthetic “time out.” She slows things down and hushes the room so that everyone can not only have their own thoughts but can hear them as well.”

Also an established author, Davey has written *The Problem of Reading* (2003), an essay ruminating on the act of reading, and edited *Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood* (2001), a compilation of writing by artists and writers on the struggles and joys of being a creative producer and a mother. In her essay “Notes on Photography & Accident” in the accompanying catalogue, Davey expounds on the idea that “accident is the lifeblood of photography.” With an interest in traditional photography’s reliance on the notion of accident, she contemplates the philosophical and psychological problems posed by photography, largely by parsing the work of Walter Benjamin, Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, and Janet Malcolm. Though her photographs of cluttered desks are interspersed with this essay, they are not intended to function as illustrations; rather, they run parallel to her questioning of the differences between photographers and writers and the similarities between taking photographs and taking notes.

Molesworth was appointed in February 2007 as the Art Museums’ first full curator of contemporary art. Since her appointment, she has become the first incumbent of the Maisie K.

and James R. Houghton Curatorship of Contemporary Art, an important gift that supports the Art Museums' mission of collecting contemporary art.

“In establishing an endowed curatorship of contemporary art, we have renewed our commitment to living artists and the unique inspiration and discoveries they enable us to share with scholars, students, and the wider public,” said Thomas W. Lentz, Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard University Art Museums. “This exhibition, Davey’s first museum retrospective, reflects our intention to highlight the work of artists who are not yet part of the canon, but from whom we have a great deal to learn.”

Featured Works

The entryway to the gallery features 100 of Davey’s *Copperheads* (late 1980s–early 1990s), in a 10 x 10 grid form under Plexiglas. This series, taken with a macro lens, depicts extreme close-ups of President Lincoln’s profile on various pennies. Each image shows a different penny whose surface has been nicked, scarred, gouged, and tarnished, or a combination of all mutilations that make it sometimes impossible to discern the profile. Other works feature LP’s, as in *Shure* (2003) or *Greatest Hits* (1999), focusing on the persistence of analog technologies in our digital age. Books and magazines play an enormous role in Davey’s oeuvre in such works as *Early* (1999), *Newsstand No. 3* (1994), and *Yma* (1999). In Davey’s pictures, books accumulate wildly, mimicking the feeling of endlessness one has in a library; but books also gather dust, and Davey’s pictures are as much about how books can produce feelings of entropy and death as they are about the ability of books to propagate knowledge.

Credits

Funding for the exhibition and catalogue was provided by the Alexander S., Robert L., and Bruce A. Beal Exhibition Fund, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and Wynn Kramarsky.

Catalogue

The catalogue that accompanies this exhibition includes an introduction by Helen Molesworth and an essay by Moyra Davey entitled “Notes on Photography & Accident.” Also included are

a transcript of Davey's video *Fifty Minutes* and 67 color photographs. The catalogue is published by the Harvard University Art Museums and distributed by Yale University Press.

Carpenter Center Exhibition

Two or Three Things I Know About Her, an exhibition also curated by Helen Molesworth, is running concurrently at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, adjacent to the Fogg Art Museum, at 24 Quincy Street, Cambridge, MA. The exhibition is on view February 28 through April 6, 2008, and features Moyra Davey's video *Fifty Minutes*, along with video, sound, and slide pieces by fellow artists Wynne Greenwood, K8 Hardy, Sharon Hayes, and Ulrike Müller. Please see www.ves.fas.harvard.edu/2or3things.html for more information.

Exhibition Programming

Opening Celebration

Thursday, February 28, 2008

Free admission, open to the public

5:00–8:00 p.m., Viewing of the exhibitions in the Fogg Art Museum and Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts

6:00 p.m., Reception at the Fogg

6:00 p.m., Lecture at the Carpenter Center Auditorium:
Between the Sheets: Two or Three Things We Might Have Said to Each Other
Catherine Lord, Professor of Studio Art, University of California at Irvine

7:00 p.m., Reception at the Carpenter Center

The exhibitions:

Long Life Cool White: Photographs by Moyra Davey
February 28 through June 30, 2008
Fogg Art Museum, 32 Quincy Street, Cambridge, MA

Two or Three Things I Know About Her
February 28 through April 6, 2008
Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, 24 Quincy Street, Cambridge, MA

M. Victor Leventritt Symposium

MODERN/AGE

Saturday, April 5, 2008

9:00 a.m., Coffee

9:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Symposium

5:00 p.m., Reception

Arthur M. Sackler Museum, lecture hall

Free admission, open to the public

This symposium will use *Long Life Cool White*, the exhibition of Moyra Davey's photographs of analog technologies and discarded objects, as a platform to bring together a diverse group of scholars dealing with the problem of the outmoded. Rather than engaging in nostalgia for the passing of objects or bemoaning the loss of the analog due to the rise of the digital, speakers will consider the ongoing texture of the daily experience of objects and their obsolescence.

Speakers will include **Emily Apter**, New York University; **Bill Brown**, University of Chicago; **Bill Horrigan**, Wexner Center for the Arts; **Robin Kelsey**, Harvard University; **Chris Kraus**, writer and art critic; and **Eric Rosenberg**, Tufts University.

The Harvard University Art Museums

The Harvard University Art Museums are one of the world's leading arts institutions, comprising the Fogg Art Museum, Busch-Reisinger Museum, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Straus Center for Conservation, Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, HUAM Archives, and the U.S. headquarters for the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis.

The Harvard University Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. As an integral part of the Harvard community, the three art museums and four research centers serve as resources for all students, adding a special dimension to their areas of study. The public is welcome to experience the collections and exhibitions as well as to enjoy lectures, symposia, and other programs.

For more than a century, the Harvard University Art Museums have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and scholars and are renowned for their role in the development of the discipline of art history in this country.

Location and Hours

The Fogg Art Museum and the Busch-Reisinger Museum are located at 32 Quincy Street, Cambridge. Adjacent to them is the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, located at 485 Broadway. Each museum is a short walk through Harvard Yard from the Harvard Square MBTA station.

Hours: **Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; Sunday 1:00–5:00 p.m.**; closed on national holidays.

General admission is \$9; \$7 for senior citizens; and \$6 for students. Paid admission includes entrance to all three Art Museums, including study rooms, public tours, and gallery talks.

Admission is free for Harvard University ID holders, Members of the Art Museums, Cambridge Public Library cardholders, and visitors under 18 years of age. Admission is free to all on Saturdays before noon. More detailed information is available at 617-495-9400 or on the Internet at www.artmuseums.harvard.edu.

The Harvard University Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

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For more information about this exhibition or the Harvard University Art Museums, please contact:

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