

GALLERY GUIDE

Photography in Focus

Visitor Guide



Images listed from left to right, top to bottom:

Jerry Uelsmann, American, b. 1934, *Museum Wave*, 1978, gelatin silver print, 10 3/8 x 11 7/8 inches, Gift of Dr. James E. and Debra Pearl to the Dr. James E. and Debra Pearl Photograph Collection, UMFA1986.025.005

Amy Jorgensen, American, b. Italy 1972, *Body Archive 12.13.2007*, 2007, from the portfolio *DE | MARCATION: A Survey of Contemporary Photography in Utah*, 2018, pigment print created from a camera-less emulsion exposure on skin, purchased with funds from the Paul L. and Phyllis C. Wattis Fund, UMFA2018.19.1.3

Malick Sidibe, Malian, 1936–2016, *Untitled*, 1982, gelatin silver print, 5 x 3 1/4 inches, Purchased with funds from The Paul L. and Phyllis C. Wattis Fund, UMFA2017.10.2A

Helen Levitt, American, 1913–2009, *Untitled*, gelatin silver print, 6 13/16 x 10 3/8 inches, Gift of William and Mimi Levitt, UMFA1988.023.001

Patrick Nagatani, American, b. 1945, *Cow Pie/Yellow Cake, Uranium Mine, Homestake Mining Company, near Mt. Taylor, Millan and Grants, New Mexico*, 1989, Chromogenic print, 17 x 22 inches, Gift of Dr. Mark Reichman, UMFA2003.25.27

Daniel Everett, American, b. 1980, *Untitled (I Can Do Whatever I Want)*, 2013, Inkjet print, 40 x 31 1/2 inches, Purchased with funds from The Paul L. and Phyllis C. Wattis Fund, UMFA2014.2.5

William Eggleston, American, b. 1939, *Untitled [Father's Grave]*, 1974, Dye-transfer print, 13 x 19 1/8 inches, Gift of Dr. James E. and Debra Pearl to the Dr. James and Debra Pearl Photograph Collection, UMFA1986.025.011

Ruth Bernhard, American (born Germany), 1905–2006, *In the Box- Horizontal*, 1962, gelatin silver print, 11 1/4 x 19 13/16 inches, Purchased with funds from Friends of the Art Museum Collection, UMFA1884.103

Photography in Focus

We've all seen photographs—digital, Polaroid, daguerreotype, black and white, color—but what defines these varied processes? A photograph is an image created by light exposed on any surface that has been light sensitized, such as film or glass.

Think about where you have seen photographs. Were they on a wall, on a phone, in an album, or on a billboard? Although we use and see photographs in everyday life, some artists use this medium to create art.

Let's look at photographs and explore some important questions: Does photography tell the truth? Is photography fine art? Why are photographs taken? Can photography change the world?

You get to choose which photographs to look at! The UMFA always has photographs on view, but because all photographs are light sensitive, meaning they fade when exposed to light, they can only be displayed for six months at a time to preserve them for future generations. Explore the galleries to find photographs currently on view or ask staff members at the welcome desk to help you locate some.

Does Photography Tell the Truth?

Do you ever question what took place in the moments before or after the camera's shutter button was pressed? Or what lies outside the frame of the composition?

In photography, we see a truth, but not necessarily the truth. Photographs can capture a moment frozen in time, but the photographer, much like a painter or sculptor, decides what the viewer will see.

Think about your social media feed or those of your friends and family. Do these photographs represent reality? Do they tell the whole story? Find a photograph in the Museum that you think might be leaving something or someone out of the story.

(below) Jerry Uelsmann,
American, b. 1934, *Untitled*,
1981, gelatin silver print, 10 1/8
x 13 7/16 inches, Purchased
with funds from Friends of the
Art Museum, UMFA1984.041





(above left) Frederic Remington, American, 1861–1909, *Bronco Buster*, modeled 1895, cast ca. 1898, Bronze, 23 x 18 x 13 inches, Gift of Herbert I. & Elsa Bamberger Michael, UMFA1962.145



(above right) Eadweard Muybridge, American (born England), 1830–1904, *Animal Locomotion*, Plate 626 Bookplate, collotype, 19 x 24 1/8 inches, Gift of Dr. James and Katherine Nelson, UMFA1987.037.004

Is Photography Fine Art?

Since photography's invention in the nineteenth century, photographers have advocated that it is a new form of fine art, another medium in which artists can express themselves. Photographers can manipulate their images to achieve a certain mood or idea—just like a painter can with brushstroke and color. Photography influenced and was influenced by other art forms such as painting and sculpture. For example, Frederic Remington was influenced by motion captured in photographs to create his dynamic sculptures of cowboys, Native Americans, and other figures from the American West.

Find a photograph in the Museum that you immediately like. What about it appeals to you? Notice any movement in the artwork, either actual or implied. Look at the center and edges of the composition. What is being emphasized? Can you find something in focus and something blurry? Now find a photograph that is not as appealing to you and ask yourself these same questions.

Why are Photographs Taken?

Photographers take pictures for many reasons: to preserve memories, to document history, to persuade, to share information, to capture a moment in time, to make a work of art or a scientific inquiry, to name a few. Think about the photographs you display in your home versus the ones you see in public. What about photographs in the news versus in advertising? Why do you take photographs?

Does the reason for taking a photograph change its meaning? Find a photograph on view. Think about why that photograph was taken. What do you think motivated the artist?

(right) George Hurrell, American, 1904–1992, *Jean Harlow*, 1934, gelatin silver print, 14 x 11 inches, Gift of George (John) Potter, UMFA1991.057.005





Can Photography Change the World?

(above) Micha Bar-Am, Israeli (born Germany), b. 1930, *The last days of the Yom Kippur War, Egyptians are still taken prisoners of war near the town of Suez, in the foreground an Israeli soldier continues in his prayers*, 1973, gelatin silver print, 8 x 12 inches, Gift of Dr. James E. and Debra Pearl to the Dr. James E. and Debra Pearl Photograph Collection, UMFA2013.13.4.

Historically, documentary photographers have felt a sense of obligation to record and publicly share what they see as the world's injustices. Recall famous images you've seen of war or poverty across the globe—did they incite an emotional response or instigate change? The ethics of such work can come into question when a photographer is documenting people, cultures, places, or ideas other than their own.

Today's socially engaged photographers and photo-journalists are activists, facilitating and participating in meaningful conversations to pursue social equity. Photography as a social practice can challenge injustices, pose difficult questions, engage communities, and inspire change.

Look at the photograph above from the UMFA collection. How does this photograph comment on social justice? Do you think it would inspire change? How can your camera make the world a better place?

Call to Action

Using your favorite device to capture images, try one or all of these photography projects.



- **Take two pictures.** In the first photo, zoom in to capture a detail of a scene, leaving other details out. In the second photo, zoom out to reveal the whole scene.
- **For one week, take a photo each day of the same subject** (person, place, or thing) from a different point of view. Focus on a different element of art (color, line, shape, texture, etc.) in each photo.
- **Take a few pictures of a person you know.** In these portraits, pose the person in ways that reveal how you see them. Ask the same person to take a few selfies that reveal how they see themselves.
- **Volunteer at an organization of your choice and photograph the work you've accomplished there.** Post your photo to social media, tag the organization, and challenge your followers to do the same.

Share your images by tagging:

@utahmuseumofflinearts and #umfa

Images listed from left to right, top to bottom:

Hank Willis Thomas, American, b. 1976, *The Cotton Bowl* from the series *Strange Fruit*, 2011. Digital c-print. 50 x 73 inches. Purchased with funds from The Phyllis Cannon Wattis Endowment Fund, UMFA2021.6.1

Garry Winogrand, American, 1928–1984, *Woman in Elevator*, ca. 1968–1981, Gelatin silver print, 13 1/8 x 8 3/4 inches, Gift of an anonymous donor, UMFA1986.050.001

William Henry Jackson, American, 1843–1942, *Tower of Babel, Garden of the Gods*, ca. 1875, albumen print, 6 1/2 x 3 15/16 inches, Gift of Dr. James E. Pearl, UMFA2007.29.2

Dorothea Lange, *Amana-General People*, 1941, Gelatin Silver Print, Gift of Dr. James E. and Debra Pearl to the Dr. James E. and Debra Pearl Photograph Collection, UMFA1989.018.007

William Henry Jackson, American, 1843–1942, *Garfield Beach, Great Salt Lake*, ca. 1875–1881, albumen silver print, 6 15/16 x 9 inches, detail, Gift of Dr. James E. and Debra Pearl, UMFA1998.56.4

Trevor Paglen, American, b. 1974, *Chemical and Biological Weapons Proving Ground/ Dugway, UT/Distance approx. 42 miles/ 11:17am*, 2006, detail, Chromogenic print, 40 x 40 inches, Purchased with funds from The Paul L. and Phyllis C. Wattis Fund, UMFA2008.34.4



