

Jordan Putt: Alright, we'll go ahead and get started. Hello everyone. Welcome to "Photos at Zoom." I hope everyone's feeling healthy and well during this very intense time.

Jordan Putt: My name is Jordan Putt and I'm a curatorial assistant here at the MoCP. Also, recent graduate of Columbia College Chicago.

Jordan Putt: So, today we're going to look at approaches to documentary photography and given the current movements and importance of documenting this historic time in our country, this felt like a pretty fitting topic to me. So also, if you have any questions, please put them in the chat. I'm going to make sure that's up right now.

Jordan Putt: And I'll try to get to them every once in a while. Every few slides I'll make sure to keep checking.

Jordan Putt: So yeah, let's get started.

Jordan Putt: So, I wanted to begin with this quote by Walker Evans and this quote was actually shown to me by Paul D'Amato, who works at Columbia College Chicago and is a great mentor and teacher.

Jordan Putt: So, the quote says "Stare. It's the way to educate your eye and more. Stare, pry, listen, eavesdrop. Die knowing something. You're not here long."

Jordan Putt: And this quote is by Walker Evans, and we'll talk more about him later. But just kind of think about that as we go through this through this viewing.

Jordan Putt: So, in thinking about how to structure this, I wanted to go through our collection to look at some of our documentary photographs.

Jordan Putt: But also, look how documentary photography kind of came to prominence around the world. So, to start, we'll begin in France with Eugène Atget.

Jordan Putt: And he was one of the most notable and first documentary photographer's kind of ever.

Jordan Putt: Actually, he was making images in Paris from 1898 until 1927 when he passed away. And I would consider Atget kind of a "photographer's photographer," because he's influenced so many image makers from those who are working for the FSA up to contemporary photographers making work now.

Jordan Putt: Atget was an interesting figure in photography because he didn't see himself as anything more than a documentarian at the time.

Jordan Putt: So, his Paris studio was initially set up to provide documents for artists to utilize in their work. His shop actually had a sign with the categories of landscapes, animals, flowers, monuments, documents, foregrounds for painters, and reproductions of paintings.

Jordan Putt: It was closer to the 1900's, that Atget became focused on making images of Paris which was in the midst of a rapidly changing landscape.

Jordan Putt: So, though he may not have seen himself necessarily as an artist, he became a huge influence for surrealism and the new objectivity movement which drew from the Bauhaus and prioritized formal shapes and designs and kind of this universal aesthetic that art could achieve.

Jordan Putt: Most of his images actually show the Paris streets completely empty, which is mostly because of the slow shutter speed that he had to use to expose the glass negatives. So, because of the time period that he was working the chemicals weren't kind of as they are now. So it was long exposures and he was printing on albumen prints.

Jordan Putt: To give you an example of how he was revered by some of photography's greats- Bernice Abbott said about Atget that "he will be remembered as an urbanist historian, a genuine romanticist, a lover of Paris, a Balzac of the camera, from whose work we can weave a large tapestry of French civilization."

Jordan Putt: And Ansel Adams said of Atget that Atget's prints are "direct and emotionally clean records of a rare and subtle perception and represent perhaps the earliest expression of true photographic art."

Jordan Putt: So Atget's work also was one of the first examples of a flaneur. During the 19th century, there are these explosions of urbanization.

Jordan Putt: Cities like London and Paris grew to enormous new scale and created unfamiliar patterns and experiences in urban life.

Jordan Putt: So, the flaneur was essentially somebody who moved through the maze of the urban environment, observing its attractions and pleasures but remaining rather detached from it.

Jordan Putt: Baudelaire characterized the flaneur as having a key role in understanding and participating and representing the modern city.

Jordan Putt: So many of these early flaneurs were those photographing the streets of Paris. So, one such person who was working within that same tradition was André Kertész.

Jordan Putt: He moved to Paris in 1925 and began making images around the city and this series of work that we have at the museum is actually one that spanned over 50 years.

Jordan Putt: And it's been shot around the world. So, this body of work is titled "On Reading." And I've shown this image so many times in print viewings and kind of looked at it very quickly- like too quickly to even notice the reading woman in the background, which is absolutely incredible to me now that I put it in this viewing.

Jordan Putt: So, as you can tell by these two examples, Kertész was deeply aware of how shapes and forms could aid his images. And like Atget, Kertész was associated with surrealism and paid close attention to his geometric compositions often being influenced by like the Cubists at the time.

Jordan Putt: I wanted to also highlight Kertész because he seems to get overshadowed by photographers, such as Henri Cartier-Bresson or Brassai when discussing early documentary in street photography, especially in Paris. So, about Kertész, Henri Cartier-Bresson once stated on behalf of himself, Robert Kaplan, and Brassai "Whatever we have done Kertész did it first."

Jordan Putt: So, this brings me to Henri Cartier-Bresson.

Jordan Putt: So, he began making photographs in 1931 but he is most well-known for his monograph titled, "The Decisive Moment," published in 1952.

Jordan Putt: The title comes from his philosophy on photography and here he says "To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition in a fraction of a second of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms, which gave that event, its proper expression".

Jordan Putt: I love this image personally because I think that it's captured at a moment which makes everything come together. From the hands all touching and like the hair being touched in different ways. It feels like the moment was perfectly captured. Max Kozloff is a theorist on photography and his book "The Privileged eye" is all about this image. And in the essay, he discusses the image, pointing to its discontinuity and lack of a connection to the past or the future as its strength in allowing us as the viewer to place our own story on the moment.

Jordan Putt: So to him, he says that it puts them into a state of fruitful perplexity. He says, "Here I'm saying that not knowing, a decided lack of knowledge, can become a value in itself. If there's any such thing as a revelation that does not explain its content. This is an example."

Jordan Putt: Another interesting thing that I found out about Bresson was that he was drafted in the French army in 1940 and he was taken prisoner by the Germans but escaped on his third attempt and joined the French resistance.

Jordan Putt: And believing that he died in the war, the MoMA in New York organized a posthumous show for him in 1947. And after escaping he came to find out about this exhibition and ended up assisting with the preparation in

helping get it all ready. And the following year, he founded the Magnum Photo agency with Robert Capa. And he is- the Magnum agency is still going quite strong, if there's any other photographers here who are kind of interested in it. Are there any questions so far with what I've covered?

Jordan Putt: Sweet. I'll keep going.

Jordan Putt: So now we're going to look at what was going on around the same time in the US and I figured we could start with somebody who went between France and the US and essentially helped to bridge those two photographic worlds.

Jordan Putt: So, this image is by Bernice Abbott and its part of her project titled "Changing New York." So, Abbott was born in Ohio and eventually moved to New York City in 1918.

Jordan Putt: And that's where she met Duchamp and Man Ray. And she eventually moved to Paris and became Man Ray's assistant from 1924 to 1926.

Jordan Putt: Here she began picking up photography and had her first photography exhibitions. So, in Paris was also where she met Eugène Atget which was the first slide that I showed.

Jordan Putt: Atget was a huge influence on Abbott ever since she first his images in Man Ray's collection in 1926. And I should note that Man Ray would frequently go to Atget's studio and buy his prints from him.

Jordan Putt: So, Abbott is also credited as one of the main reasons that we have such widespread access to images by Atget today.

Jordan Putt: When he died in 1927 and his studio was closing, Abbott went in and bought all of his negatives, preserving them and bringing them back to New York in 1929 where she ended up printing and sharing his work and she's basically the key reason that that he is so highly regarded today.

Jordan Putt: And I have to think how difficult it must have been to transport glass negatives across the world. But that's just another feat that I think Abbott is pretty amazing for.

Jordan Putt: But we're going to talk about her work. So, when she arrived back in New York in 1929, Abbott was struck by the rapid transformation of the built landscape.

Jordan Putt: And on the eve of the Great Depression, she began a series of documentary photographs of the city.

Jordan Putt: With the support of the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project from 1935 to 1939 she debuted the work in 1939 as a traveling exhibition and a publication called "Changing New York."

Jordan Putt: Abbott was also a huge proponent of the photograph as the document. She said, "I agree that all good photographs are documents. But I also know that all documents are certainly not good photographs. Furthermore, a good photographer does not nearly document. He probes the subject, he uncovers it."

Jordan Putt: If anyone is interested, Abbott has also done some amazing images for physics textbooks. On face value, they look like abstractions. But, given what she just said I have to think that she saw them more as these documents to illustrate the scientific principles. And I didn't include that here, but you can see that work in our first "Photos at Zoom," on fundamentals of photography.

Jordan Putt: So, around the same time that Abbot began photographing in New York, Walker Evans moved to New York and began taking up photography.

Jordan Putt: So he arrived in New York in 1927 to become a writer, but eventually switched his focus to photography in 1928.

Jordan Putt: Around that time, he met Alfred Stieglitz whose response to his photographs was actually pretty disappointing to Evans.

Jordan Putt: Evans felt this distancing from the work of Stieglitz. Saying that he had this authoritarian tardiness and he also felt a distancing from Steichen saying that it is too commercial.

Jordan Putt: So I found this quote from Evans where he says, "I thought, Steichen was too commercial and Stieglitz too art. Playing around photographing the beautiful, calling it God"

Jordan Putt: So Evans early on was asked to take photographs of the Brooklyn Bridge to illustrate Hart Crane's novel "The Bridge," which was published in 1931. And I think that you'll notice, there's a few of these images that I talk about that there's a pretty deep connection between the literary masters of the time and the photographers because they were a community that was pretty linked.

Jordan Putt: So one of the photographs, as a result of this also appear on the cover the issue of USA, which at the time was a new trendy literary magazine.

Jordan Putt: And I think that was the result of Hart Crane as well. And I looked up "The Bridge," the most recent edition on Amazon just out of curiosity, and this edition, published in 2012 also uses a Walker Evans image of the Brooklyn Bridge, which I thought was pretty interesting.

Jordan Putt: So obviously Evans has been one of the most celebrated documentary photographers, but this is definitely in part because he was in the right place at the right time.

Jordan Putt: So, to put it in perspective, in 1929 Evans met Lincoln Kirstein, and Kirstein was a young successful Harvard grad, who promoted modernism in America. And he suggested to Evans, that he'd do a photography project on Victorian architecture. So, Evans began making photos that are similar to this one.

Jordan Putt: It's important to note that Kirstein was a trustee at the MoMA. So he had a huge impact on Evans career, so Evan's images of these home were actually exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art.

Jordan Putt: And this was the first one-person photography exhibition of any major museum and the MoMA's second exhibition of photography ever.

Jordan Putt: While this image actually isn't a part of that exhibition, because it was made two years after that show. It's very much in the same vein as the work that was in that show.

Jordan Putt: Oh, I got a question. So, can you describe what you mean by a documentary photograph? Can you give an example of a photograph that was not described as documentary initially but became documentary later?

Jordan Putt: That's a good question. I'll have to think on the second part, but I guess that I think that a documentary photograph is referring to a photograph that is meant to be a document and in terms of like a reference... a like- I wouldn't say... truthful, a difficult word to put in that.

Jordan Putt: Oh, is everyone's still seeing everything.

Jordan Putt: Can everyone see it now?

Jordan Putt: Let's see. I can try... are you guys seeing it now? Sorry about that.

Jordan Putt: I can try to stop sharing and reshare.

Jordan Putt: Let's see if this works.

Jordan Putt: Alright, how's that working for everyone?

Jordan Putt: Okay, perfect.

Jordan Putt: So back to the question, which is, I think, a pretty difficult question. But I guess the documentary photograph is really referring to something that is meant to be used as a document. So, I think about that in

the way that initially, like we think about photographs and we look at them and we see it and we say, that's the thing. Like we don't say this is a photograph of the thing we say, oh yeah, this is like my niece or my nephew.

Jordan Putt: And I think that it's that use of photography in this way, where it's meant to document this really very real thing and be very descriptive about a specific moment or a specific place.

Jordan Putt: But I think that this idea of documentary photography really shifts depending on who's using the word and who is making the images so I don't think that there's really like a clear-cut answer to what like a very like documentary style photograph would be.

Jordan Putt: And hopefully I can kind of cover that through this presentation just by the different breadth of work that I show.

Jordan Putt: All right. Can everyone see this one?

Jordan Putt: Okay, so we'll keep going now. So, in 1937 Evans was hired by the Resettlement Agency, which eventually was known as the Farm Security Administration.

Jordan Putt: And he was working for Roy Stryker alongside several other photographers who included Dorothea Lange. And we actually discussed Dorothea Lange quite a bit early on. So, if you're interested in that, you can check out some of the previous "Photos at Zoom," cause I believe there's a couple where we discuss her work. But she deserves kind of a whole lecture in her own right.

Jordan Putt: So, to give a little bit of context about this time. Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated in 1933 during the height of the depression.

Jordan Putt: In the first hundred days after being elected, he ended alcohol prohibition and created a set of bills to help lift Americans out of the depression in what was called the New Deal.

Jordan Putt: The New Deal put into place many new bills, including social security, unemployment insurance, and agricultural subsidies which still exist today.

Jordan Putt: As part of FDR's New Deal, he created the Resettlement Program in 1935 which turned into the Farm Security Administration in 1937.

Jordan Putt: Both had the goals of combating rural poverty. The FSA was really trying to document the plight of farmers driven from their land in the Dust Bowl who are migrating to the west. So, Roy Stryker who headed the FSA said his goal was to introduce America to Americans.

Jordan Putt: And I- we're still on the "Sharecropper's Grave," so I think we're all on the right one.

Jordan Putt: And I should also note that the Works Progress Administration that funded Bernice Abbott's work was also a part of the New Deal and was an agency created as part of the New Deal.

Jordan Putt: So, Evans was the only one in the FSA to consistently use the eight by ten camera and he also use smaller formats.

Jordan Putt: But he photographed for the FSA extensively in the south and his subjects were exceptionally diverse, including portraits, interiors, domestic and factory architecture, and popular artifacts.

Jordan Putt: This particular image has always been interesting to me because every detail of the interior seems to be really important to its story.

Jordan Putt: I've always seen this as kind of a subtle critique of- or maybe not so subtle- critique of capitalism, showing that the signs used as advertisements had to be repurposed as insulation for the working class who couldn't actually like get insulation off of their typical wages.

Jordan Putt: So, of all the FSA photographers, Evans was least in sympathy with the social implications of the projects.

Jordan Putt: And regarded with indifference the bureaucratic restrictions that were put on him by Roy Stryker and others.

Jordan Putt: Therefore, he was not bummed to receive a leave in 1936 to work with the writer James Agee on an article about tenant farmers for Fortune magazine.

Jordan Putt: The project culminated in the documentation of the lives of sharecroppers in the book, "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men." I actually have the book right here and it's very cheap still. So, if anyone's interested, it's really interesting to read.

Jordan Putt: So, as you might have guessed, Evans has had a major influence on the documentary tradition in the way that photographers still make work today.

Jordan Putt: So you can see how Alex Soth, who made the image on the right, is using the same tool as Evans, an eight by ten camera, and organizes his interior spaces very similarly, focusing on the images and materials that make up the space.

Jordan Putt: I'm not going to talk too much about Soth because I think that there's so many people talking about him right now and his work is wonderful. He's a huge influence of mine.

Jordan Putt: But if you are into him or into learning more about him, I would start with looking at his book "Sleeping by the Mississippi," which is where this image is from.

Jordan Putt: "It's Sleeping by the Mississippi," oh, the earlier name of the book is called "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men," and it's by Walker Evans and James Agee.

Jordan Putt: And then, Alex Soth's book that he made is called "Sleeping by the Mississippi," and I think there's like seems to be always new additions coming out of that. So, you can typically find that one pretty cheap as well.

Jordan Putt: So many of Evans images up to this point were shown at the MoMA's second one-person solo show of photography and that was in 1938 which if we remember Evans was also the first.

Jordan Putt: So, this show was called "American Photographs," and it was also published as a seminal book which I have here. Which is another one that I think most documentary photographers will end up having in their collection.

Jordan Putt: So, in the press release for this show, it was called MoMA's "First one-man photography exhibition," despite Evans having one five years earlier, which I think is just an interesting detail.

Jordan Putt: This work is also Walker Evans most influential work and is still revered today by many, many photographers and it's kind of set up a blueprint for making a body of documentary work.

Jordan Putt: I really like pointing out how Evans had these first two exhibitions at the MoMA because I think it also helps to paint a picture of how certain photographers end up within like the canon of photography.

Jordan Putt: So, without Evans living in New York and meeting Lincoln Kirstein, I have to wonder how revered he would be in the photography world today.

Jordan Putt: And at this point, are there any other questions by the way before I move on?

Jordan Putt: Alright, I'll keep going.

Jordan Putt: So next we're going to look at Gordon Parks. Gordon Parks was a photographer, film director, author, and musician. He directed the film "Shaft," among several others.

Jordan Putt: And he also joined the Farm Security Administration in 1942. And at the time- or acting for the whole Farm Security Administration, he was the only African American in the FSA.

Jordan Putt: So, while working for the FSA, he primarily photographed in Washington DC and did most of his work about Ella Watson, an African American worker on the cleaning crew at the FSA office.

Jordan Putt: We don't have those images in our collection, but we do happen to have one image from this time at the FSA and this image is the one that I'm showing now.

Jordan Putt: And it's always stuck in my mind since the first time seeing it. There's something so unbelievably tragic about the way that this young boy's trauma of losing a leg and is kind of like, reinforced by him stepping out the door and looking at two people with their legs extended toward him.

Jordan Putt: I should also note that the first time I saw this image- and that many others have probably seen this image is in Teju Cole's show, "Go Down Moses." And it was paired with an image of Dorothea Lange. And the image of Dorothea Lange is actually a young girl holding a chick. So, it was this real- this really interesting juxtaposition of this almost loss of innocence and trauma paired with this almost definition of childhood innocence of the gentleness of holding this baby bird.

Jordan Putt: And I see a question. Is it being recorded to see later? Yes, it is. So, this will be available and posted on our Vimeo page.

Jordan Putt: And then we have another question. Can you discuss the role of bookmaking documentary photography versus non-documentary photography?

Jordan Putt: So, I think that bookmaking became really important for documentary photography because it got the work outside of the art museum. So, if we think about documentary photography, they seem to be more geared towards talking about social issues or documenting a story more for the public to see. So, with it in an exhibition there seems to be less availability for people to see it. Whereas when you make it into a book, I think that it makes it much more easily available. I mean, until it gets crazy expensive and sold out.

Jordan Putt: But in general, I think that it's a way for really getting the work out to the masses and for someone like me who can't afford an exhibition piece, to still have access to look at these really important projects. And so, I think that it that might be my only difference in terms of like documentary versus non-documentary bookmaking.

Jordan Putt: Whereas some- a lot of photographic projects are really just meant for the wall and to be seen in that space of the museum. And it's kind of this like ritualistic space where you go, and you spend time in front of

the work. Whereas it totally changes when you have that book in front of you and you're in control of the sequencing or you're in control of the pacing and you can actually be seated while you're looking at it. So, I think it totally changes.

Jordan Putt: And there's another question that came in, which is what's the distinction between documentary photography, photojournalism, and editorial photography?

Jordan Putt: That's a great question. And I think that this will change depending who you ask. But for me, I think that documentary is typically a much more long term looking at a subject.

Jordan Putt: And one thing that I also think comes with documentary photography is that it comes with a point of view. So, whereas photojournalism seems to be these very specific moments where the photographer is go in really quickly, get the photos for the story, and then get them published.

Jordan Putt: And they're supposed to be objective in their nature, I think that documentary photography has a lot more room for a point of view and tends to be much more long winded in focusing on a subject.

Jordan Putt: And then editorial photography. I think that the distinction there is that those are basically like your commissions. And so, but I, I'm not too familiar with that all the rules with editorial photography. So, I wouldn't, I can go into that too much.

Jordan Putt: And then there's one more question. Aren't most of the people who buy photo books the same people who know the work from museums?

Jordan Putt: I think that's a good question, and I would say probably. But I think that it does also offer this availability for other people who may not be those who are visiting museums to see them. And also, they are ways of remembering these exhibitions if you weren't able to see them.

Jordan Putt: So, for example, I think about the "New Topographics," show which was in the 70's. And I was never alive to see that and I actually just saw a recent like iteration of that. But the only way I really got to see the work from that show was by buying the catalog from that show. And then that kind of opened it all up for me. But I think that that is a good point to make.

Jordan Putt: So, we'll keep going.

Jordan Putt: So, in 1948 Gordon Parks was hired by LIFE magazine. And again, he was the only African American photographer at LIFE.

Jordan Putt: And in 1956 he was commissioned to photograph the segregated South around Birmingham, Alabama.

Jordan Putt: Gordon Parks lived with the shareholders family for two weeks and he was constantly being tormented by Klansmen and white supremacists and actually feared for his life and the lives of his subjects during that time.

Jordan Putt: The photo essay, "The Restraints: Open and Hidden," was included in the September 24th, 1956 issue of Life.

Jordan Putt: And I should note, I didn't include any of them here. But there's actually a lot of photographs from that project where he's looking through the window of a car, and that is literally because a lot of his time, he was essentially on the run and fearing violence against him. So, he had to kind of make images under those conditions.

Jordan Putt: So, this was that spread from the publication and you can actually see in this top right corner. It's the same picture or it's the same building that was pictured in the last slide.

Jordan Putt: And upon publication, the family in the photos was actually run out of town by violent threats from locals and Parks himself was told by the mayor, that if he returned to the town, that the people of the town would essentially be after him.

Jordan Putt: So, the last image I wanted to show is one that Parks had actually staged. So, this may not be your typical like documentary image.

Jordan Putt: So, in 1948, Parks was invited by writer Ralph Ellison to photograph for his "Harlem Is Nowhere," article for "'48: Magazine of the Year."

Jordan Putt: Those images were never actually published until recently, but Parks went on to collaborate with Ellison again for his LIFE magazine essay, "A Man Becomes Invisible," and this was a direct interpretation of Ellison's novel called "The Invisible Man."

Jordan Putt: So, the book follows an unnamed African American male narrator as he moves through the South to New York City, recounting the racial divisions and oppression along the way.

Jordan Putt: And in his photograph, "Emerging Man," which is this one, Park staged an image of the novel's protagonists where he's leaving a manhole that protects his safe home below ground.

Jordan Putt: So, in the prologue, the protagonist states "Now aware of my invisibility. I live rent free in a building rented strictly to whites, in a section of the basement knowledge shut off and forgotten during the 19th

century. The point now is that I found a home, call me Jack the bear for I'm in a state of hibernation".

Jordan Putt: But it's clear this image is more about the narrator's re-emergence, so I also wanted to include one of his final statements in the book.

Jordan Putt: In that he says, "Perhaps my greatest social crime. I've overstayed my hibernation, since there's a possibility that even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play."

Jordan Putt: So, if you haven't read it yet, I would put down "The Invisible Man," on your reading list and especially during the contemporary moment. It feels like it provides some extra context about the moment in the 50's to look at the protests and things that are happening currently.

Jordan Putt: So now that we've looked at work that was being made in the US around the early 1900's, I wanted to also show some work that focuses on the work coming out of Mexico during the same time.

Jordan Putt: So, Manuel Alvarez Bravo was one of the masters of 20th century photography and a participant in the cultural renaissance in Mexico that followed the country's revolution in the 1910's.

Jordan Putt: So, Alvarez Bravo was a self-taught photographer purchasing his first camera at the age of 20 while working in a government office.

Jordan Putt: In 1927, he befriended Italian photographer Tina Modotti, who introduced him to Mexico City's thriving cultural milieu, which included artists such as Diego Rivera and Jose Clemente Orozco.

Jordan Putt: Two years later, Modotti sent some of Alvarez Bravo's prints to Edward Weston, and Weston wrote back to Bravo saying, "Photography is fortunate in having someone with your viewpoint. It is not often I am stimulated to enthusiasm over a group of photographs." And Bravo actually rose to prominence in Mexico after Tina Modotti had to leave Mexico, so he actually got her job working for a local magazine there and that's how he started to kind of gain prominence in Mexico.

Jordan Putt: So, in the 1930's, Alvarez Bravo started to pursue a new direction in his work, focusing on urban street life while exploring the theatrical aspects of ordinary activities.

Jordan Putt: His compositions continue to advance a modernist interest in form, but he imbued these photographs with symbolism, a sense of fantasy, and allusions to Mexican tradition. So, this one is titled "El ensueño," or the Daydream.

Jordan Putt: And I think it's worth noting when showing Bravo's work that his wife for nine years, Lola Alvarez Bravo was also one of the most influential photographers of Mexico in her own right.

Jordan Putt: So unfortunately, we don't have any of her work in our collection. But if anyone's interested, her work is easily as good as Manuel Alvarez Bravo's and I think that his career too often kind of overshadows her contributions to photography, which were really important. I also want to mention that these two prints that I showed are gifts from Lee and Maria Freeland which is a pretty cool to see.

Jordan Putt: Alright, there's a question here.

Jordan Putt: How has documentary photography been impacted by the massification of photography via smartphones? Is it harder to make documentary photography?

Jordan Putt: That's a good question. I don't know if I know the answer to that, but I just think that it changes the way that documentary photography is made.

Jordan Putt: And I think that the big thing with- I think that a documentary photography can be made with smartphones incredibly well. For example, there is an artist named Stacy Kranitz who for years was only making images on her iPhone and they were, it felt like some incredibly important documentary work.

Jordan Putt: But I do think that this like huge amount of images that we're bombarded with definitely affects how images are read now.

Jordan Putt: And I don't know if that's something I can get too deep in here but I think that there are philosophers such as Teju Cole and Sontag that really talk about that proliferation of images and how they might start to lose impact because of the abundance. So, I think it does change the way that documentary photography is made.

Jordan Putt: So next we're going to look at Graciela Iturbide and she studied under Manuel Alvarez Bravo in Mexico City and became a defining photographer from Mexico herself.

Jordan Putt: So initially her work dealt with images of life and death, beginning to photograph funeral and grieving rituals after the death of her six-year-old daughter.

Jordan Putt: And she actually has a story about this, where she was doing this for several years and then eventually she was photographing and she turned and there was the corpse of a man there and she went back to photograph him, and it was just her and the corpse of this man, and that was

the moment where she realized that she couldn't keep photographing this anymore. And that she had to kind of change her sights on some other things.

Jordan Putt: So, much of her work looks at ancient cultural rituals, as well as focusing on the role of women in many of these cultures.

Jordan Putt: So, she's most known for her work photographing the Zapotec women of Juchitán, and this is near Oaxaca, Mexico. So, the Zapotec women took a dominant role often according places of power and subverting these stereotypical gender roles.

Jordan Putt: The project stands a decade and began in 1979 when artists Francisco Toledo invited a group, including Irtubide, to visit Juchitán and contribute to an exhibition for the town's Casa de Cultura.

Jordan Putt: This image of a vendor selling Iguanas to eat at a local market became one of her most popular images from the project.

Jordan Putt: It was placed on posters and banners all around town and in locals' homes and many of the locals actually saw this image as a reference to the Virgin Mary.

Jordan Putt: And in researching this project, I also found out that in the town itself they created a statue for this woman. So, the statue is called El Monumento a la Mujer Juchiteca.

Jordan Putt: And yeah, it's just pretty amazing that these documentary images really start to have a life of their own. And you'll see that in the rest of this presentation and I'm really interested in showing how these images that were made for these kind of long-term documentary works, then take on this life of their own and art is actually made about those images.

Jordan Putt: So, I wanted to include this final image because of hers because I think it helps to show what Iturbide did incredibly well. And much like Bravo, who we discussed earlier, she really was able to take these ordinary quotidian moments and make them look quite extraordinary, whether it's through the lighting or through the composition

Jordan Putt: And unfortunately, our servers were down so I apologize that I couldn't find the high res photo of this, but I've also only ever seen this image in our collection. So, if anyone has any idea where this image exists otherwise, I would love to know because I'd love to find a book or something that has it because it's absolutely beautiful.

Jordan Putt: So now we're going to go back to the documentary work in the US and now looking at kind of the 60's. So, I wanted to highlight some of the work of Danny Lyon.

Jordan Putt: He was mentioned in a previous "Photos at Zoom," so I won't get too deep into his work, but some of the images and the way that they have been used seem to really resonate differently given the current moment.

Jordan Putt: So, Danny Lion was an activist who documented the civil rights movement among several other subjects, including the prisons and he also has a very famous project about these biker clubs.

Jordan Putt: So, he was one of the official photographers of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, or the SNCC.

Jordan Putt: And most of his projects are the results of several years participating within a specific community and photographing.

Jordan Putt: So, at the SNCC, he worked alongside activists, including Howard Zinn and Julian Bond and was at one point, put in the same jail as Martin Luther King during his time photographing the civil rights.

Jordan Putt: His images were not intended for news sources or magazines at the time, instead he printed them as posters and actually used them for the protest movement.

Jordan Putt: So, this next image is a poster that he made of a highway patrolman, photographed during the day that James Meredith tried to register as the first black man at Ole Miss after winning a Supreme Court ruling to attend. And it's really interesting to me that this question seems to have not changed since this poster in the 60's and now people are asking the same question again.

Jordan Putt: So, Lyon's also photographed this horrific image a year later, during a peaceful sit-in protest by the SNCC on the occasion of George Wallace visiting Cambridge, Maryland to speak ahead of the presidential primary that he was running for in that year.

Jordan Putt: So, if any of you don't know George Wallace is the same guy who in his inaugural speech as Alabama's Governor said, "Segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever". So, you can understand why he was such a controversial subject to come during this time.

Jordan Putt: And during the protest, most of which were peaceful sit-ins, The National Guard armed with bayonets released tear gas on protesters.

Jordan Putt: Which reportedly also made those living within a few blocks that this happened, ill for several days.

Jordan Putt: So, in the photograph Clifford Vaughn, an African American photographer for the SNCC is actually being dragged by National Guard's while Stokely Carmichael is the hand on the bottom left on his right leg trying to pull him back. And after seeing many of the images that are surfacing over

the recent weeks, especially thinking about the tear gas put on peaceful protesters, especially those in front of the White House for the famous Bible image, this image really seemed to gain a new poignance in our contemporary moment. So, I thought it was important to bring it back, and also to look at the life that this image has taken after it was made for this movement.

Jordan Putt: So, in 2018, Hank Willis Thomas produced this sculpture titled "Looking for America," as part of his Punctum pieces.

Jordan Putt: So, referencing Roland Barthes's concept of punctum, which Thomas describes as "The thing that sticks with you. It's the thing that pierces you, the thing that makes an image timeless so that it lives on the psyche of the viewer."

Jordan Putt: So, Thomas wonder what it was like to be there and made these life-sized sculptures, so that the viewers could essentially walk into the photograph, walk around the photograph and have a new relationship to the different elements of the photograph. This sculpture is also really interesting because it seems to acknowledge this distinctly photographic process of taking a descriptive fragment of life and then freezing it for view in a different context.

Jordan Putt: So, I actually learned about this sculpture from an Instagram post that was made by Natalie Krick. And she's an alumni of Columbia College Chicago and an artist who is actually a part of our collection at the MoCP.

Jordan Putt: And I just wanted to read a little bit of what she wrote about her experience of the sculpture. So she wrote "This sculpture does not feel like the past, it is our current moment. It is visceral in a way that a photograph can never be, in ways that I cannot describe in words. I felt it in my body. I see his body and I had this physical response to the violence inflicted upon him. These hands grasping at him, lifting him off the ground, attempting to pull him apart. It's horrifying."

Jordan Putt: So this image is of the photographer Clifford Vaughn, who we mentioned earlier, but Vaughn also has an interesting story within like the place of history and kind of not getting due credit. So Hank Willis Thomas also made another piece about Vaughn, which I didn't include in this one which is a sculpture of a dismantled low rider motorcycle, that's like with the American flag on I think it's like the gas tank.

Jordan Putt: And that's because Vaughn was heavily involved with the movie "Easy Rider," and actually created two of the low rider bikes for the movie.

Jordan Putt: But he never received credit for these, despite playing such a huge role in like biker culture and in this movie. So, it really kind of struck me how learning that context and then seeing this work in an exhibition could really change how you view it and change how you view like much of the things that we've been taught in the world and through Hollywood.

Jordan Putt: So far, we've been looking at these photographers who are very much about documenting like a specific event in a specific moment.

Jordan Putt: And, I also wanted to include Diana Matar's work because I think it talks about a different kind of documentary work that seems to deal more with history and storytelling, especially when documenting something that is kept so secret for so long.

Jordan Putt: So, her project "Evidence," is the culmination of a six-year long exploration of the life of her father-in-law named Jaballa and his disappearance under the Gaddafi regime in Libya. So Jaballa, was one of many Libyans who went missing during Gadaffi's rule from 1969 to 2011.

Jordan Putt: And during Gadaffi's reign, he established widespread intolerance for anyone who spoke out against the regime.

Jordan Putt: So those who were guilty of disloyalty disappeared and presumably were in prison, tortured, or killed. So, I'll give everyone a chance to read this text real fast to understand the context of the image that we're looking at-

Jordan Putt: Alright, we'll go ahead and move on to the next one. So, using this very photographic style between abstract to representational, Matar's long investigation is made across the globe. Her texts mirror her diverse approach to photographing, shifting between facts and feelings, discoveries, and further questions.

Jordan Putt: So, "Evidence," is really this complex portrait of a family piecing together one man's life and disappearance, while simultaneously grappling with the history of atrocities and dictatorship in Libya. And I'll also let you all read this one before I move on.

Jordan Putt: So next we're going to talk about Nan Goldin. So, this is one of only two prints of hers that we have at the museum.

Jordan Putt: And it's actually from a New York Times story that she shot about a model named James King, and it was taken during the New York and Paris fashion weeks.

Jordan Putt: And it was all done in 1995. So, James King was just 16 years old at the time and she was thrust into the fashion spotlight.

Jordan Putt: And so, this image is so interesting for that reason. Jennifer Egan wrote the text for the New York Times Magazine story. And I think that her intro sums it up really cleverly. So, she says "In the fashion world of the 90's, teenage models simulate an adulthood they've yet to experience for women who crave a youthful beauty, they'll never achieve. Sweet 16 it's not".

Jordan Putt: So Nan Goldin was most known for *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, which was originally a slideshow put to music and eventually published by Aperture as a book, which I have right here. It's another one of the seminal books.

Jordan Putt: Her images intimately described a time in New York City, Boston, and Berlin showing a social circle and an LGBTQ community which she was very much a part of. So in the MoMA's exhibition of this work, their intro states, "They experience ecstasy and pain through sex and drug use, they revel at dance clubs, and bond with their children at home, and they suffer from domestic violence in the ravages of AIDS. *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* is the diary I let people read." And something to note about Nan Goldin is that she has had a big impact on kind of social justice as well. She's known for her activism and as a part of that she is currently doing a print sale alongside Aperture, that all the money is going to be donated. So if you're interested in collecting some of her work, it may be the cheapest that you'll ever be able to find any of her photographs and it all goes to a good cause. So, I would definitely check that out.

Jordan Putt: So, next I wanted to show more contemporary works by Zora Murff and these works are from our "Midwest Photographer's Project," which is a shifting contemporary collection of work from photographers in the Midwest that we at the museum use mostly for educational purposes such as print viewings like this.

Jordan Putt: So, this image is from Zora's projects titled, "Corrections." He made the work while working as a tracker for Iowa's Linn County Juvenile Detention in diversion services.

Jordan Putt: During that time, he was responsible for keeping tabs on the whereabouts of the young people in that system, either digitally or in person, and assisting in their rehabilitation.

Jordan Putt: This work was incredibly powerful for thinking about the justice system and its impact on youth.

Jordan Putt: Especially as calls to reimagine the school to prison pipeline in the US are being amplified over the last couple weeks with these protests.

Jordan Putt: Photographically this work also had to solve a very real photographic problem. Because Zora had to hide the identities of those in his photographs, he had to find ways to tell a story that showed their emotions without showing their faces, which I believe he does extremely well, especially in this where we can just see the hands of one of these young men.

Jordan Putt: Each of the images are a reflection of a pretty long collaboration with his subjects, often working with them for several weeks and months as a tracker and eventually collaborating to make photographs of them that still represent the person while obscuring their identity.

Jordan Putt: So, Zora would actually work with these people to figure out where they were going to stand, what they were going to wear, so that they felt like they were represented properly in his photographs. And Zora actually published this work as a book with the same title "Corrections," in 2015. We're also very excited to have Zora's newer work as a part of an upcoming show that will be here at the MoCP so everyone will have to stay tuned for that.

Jordan Putt: So last but certainly not least, I wanted to show the work of Carlos Javier Ortiz, and he is a local Chicago photographer. I won't get too deep into his work because he was also covered in our social documentary zoom lecture.

Jordan Putt: But basically, his work has been a long-term look at youth violence in Chicago.

Jordan Putt: And his work is particularly relevant because it takes a multi-dimensional approach, looking at all parts of the system that affect violence in Chicago.

Jordan Putt: His book "We All We Got," compiled of eight years of working within these communities, to make a long-term nuanced look at the issue.

Jordan Putt: I should also note that Ortiz, like Daniel Lyon, is very much an activist as well as a photographer. So during the past few weeks, he has been on the streets protesting and calling for change, while also documenting the work of these protests as well. Ortiz's images were also included in the Atlantic magazine article by Ta-Nehisi Coates titled, "The Case for Reparations," which was one of the bestselling issues in the history of Atlantic magazine and I would encourage everyone to take a look at that article because it really is quite important.

Jordan Putt: So, this brings us to the upcoming programs and at the end of this, I'm happy to take any questions as well. So, this Friday, we will have the pleasure of doing a studio visit with Carlos Javier Ortiz. So, we look forward to seeing everyone there.

Jordan Putt: And then also, please join us next week when we discuss picturing Chicago.

Jordan Putt: So yeah, thanks everyone for listening and I'm open to answer any questions as well. So yeah, thanks.

Jordan Putt: Oh, black and white versus color photographs, can you comment on this in the area of documentary photography?

Jordan Putt: That's an interesting question. I haven't done too much research about that. But I think that there is this thing in photography early on,

until about the 70's, where a way of distinguishing your work as like artful or kind of important was by keeping it in black and white.

Jordan Putt: And it seemed to be that in the 70's that started to change where color photography was starting to be more shown in exhibitions in museums. But in terms of for documentary work, I'm actually am not totally sure about the history. But it was interesting, I will note that for the Gordon Parks work in Life that he did that work in in color, which was like a super interesting thing to see.

Jordan Putt: The article that I last mentioned is called, "A Case for Reparations." Let me make sure I'm saying it right and it is by Ta-Nehisi Coates and it was in the Atlantic magazine and you should- I think they offer free viewings as well up to a certain number.

Jordan Putt: Oh, thank you Amy. Yeah, be sure to check out Zora and Sasha's lecture on June 18<sup>th</sup>.

Jordan Putt: So, there's another question. What is the role of books in today's digital world? And that's a great question, I think I'm still wondering that myself. To me, I think it still plays- well maybe it plays a very important role for a select few. But I think that there's something very important about physically holding the object and like being able to see the printing and all of the design and the intentions of the work. So, for example, Zora Murff just put out a book recently. And in the book, there were several things that were kind of tipped in that you wouldn't really get the gist of unless you were holding the book. So, for example, his book is all about redlining and he tips in a brochure that is, I believe, titled something along the lines of, like, how to tear down a house.

Jordan Putt: So, it allows you to still include these like important objects and really look at the work as an object.

Jordan Putt: But one of the nice things that's happening now is that people are making their photo books available digitally, which is great again for increasing access to those projects as well.

Jordan Putt: And I like that comment by Chris, they also make it more of a keepsake, so having a piece of the work yourself. That's very true.

Jordan Putt: So, here's a question from Paul D'Amato. So, can you talk about some contemporary conceptual trends in documentary photo and how those are in conversation with much more traditional conscious raising ways of making doc work? So, I think what Paul is referring to is there's this recent trend, especially when we look at people like Alex Soth, to be working really within this documentary style, but maybe in less of a... like a socially conscious way. Like there's this big thing that starting, which is like, I once heard someone referred it to me is like pseudo-documentary.

Jordan Putt: And I think that this connection is one, just the style of making images. So many of these contemporary photographers working within this kind of documentary tradition are working really slow with big field cameras or medium format cameras and- but that is a great question Paul. But I do think that the way that they're in conversation, is that they're using a lot of a stylistic methods and a lot of the ways of telling a story.

Jordan Putt: So, for Walker Evans, it was really looking at like this American vernacular and using it to kind of draft these stories that function more in this new context. For example, Soth's "Sleeping By The Mississippi," where Soth is photographing very much in the same style but using it to uncover a different narrative about America that might be less like socially conscious, but still expresses a clear narrative about like the direction of the country, I guess.

Jordan Putt: Any other questions? And if I didn't see your question earlier, feel free to add it at the bottom and I can make sure to get to it.

Jordan Putt: Okay, there's one. Do you consider documentary if the photograph is taken out of context, but still has social intention?

Jordan Putt: I don't know if I understand, like, are you asking if the photograph is still considered a documentary photograph?

Jordan Putt: If that's the question. Then I would say, yes... I think.

Jordan Putt: Just because I think that it's that initial intention that kind of starts to paint it as documentary, as well as it's that working within that style where things aren't really going to be altered much and it's more about kind of picturing this specific set of circumstances to talk about a larger story or issue. So, I would think so, yeah.

Jordan Putt: Sweet. So, if there's no other questions. Thank you, guys, so much for watching and have a great rest of your day.