

Carry this text with you as a guide to navigate the exhibition.



**MoCP**  
Museum of  
Contemporary  
Photography

**01** Julia Margaret Cameron. Edward Curtis. Sunil Gupta. Harry Callahan. **02** Wendy Ewald. Endia Beal. Jim Goldberg. Milton Rogovin. Sally Mann. **03** Omar Imam. Len Prince. Nikki S. Lee. Dorothea Lange. **04** Donna Ferrato. Wafaa Bilal. Nona Faustine. Susan Meiselas. Gilles Peress. **05** LaToya Ruby Frazier. Zanele Muholi. Alfredo Jaar. **06** Taryn Simon. Adam Golfer. Joel Sternfeld. Dawoud Bey. Albert Chong. **07** Chafic el Soussi. Antranik Anouchian. Anonymous photographer from the FarEastFarWest Collection. Armand. Muhi Aref. Unknown photographers courtesy of Laura Larson. Doug Rickard. Simon Menner. **08** Justine Kurland. Paul Mpagi Sepuya. Alayna Pernell.

Collaboration: A Potential History  
of Photography in Dialogue with  
the MoCP Collection

May 30 - August 16, 2025

01

## The Photographed Person was Always There

Despite the fact that multiple individuals are involved in the practice of photography, its history and theory have been written as the story of single heroes: the photographers. Looking at these series of photographs, almost always one can see that this multiplicity is not merely a theoretical assumption but a reality. It can hardly be denied once the presence of the photographed persons is acknowledged. However, a range of procedures and tools were used to deny, suppress or neglect this presence. The modes of participation in the act and event of photography are as varied as the photographs themselves and can be considered from this multiplicity of modes of engagement.

02

## Reshaping the Authorial Position

Some photographers explicitly use collaborative methods and acknowledge them as such. By setting out collaborative forms, platforms, and modes of engagement, and acknowledging them as such, they invite different types of relationship among the participants in the event of photography. In doing so, photographers seek to engage over time with people whose photographs they were taking, while also creating a variety of aesthetic forms. Thus the instantaneity of the encounter scripted in the camera is transformed through these initiatives into only one way to practice photography and engage with the photographed persons. Among these procedures we can count sharing the camera, collecting existing photographs, smuggling them out of imperial archives, sorting, sharing, showing, viewing, and archiving them, as well as writing on, with and through them.

03

## Iconization is Preceded by Collaboration

A certain degree of iconization is implied in the very act of designation - "This is x". Therefore photographs are always susceptible to being reduced to a delineated nameable object, not merely those that became known widely. When the photograph, the outcome of a complex encounter, stands for what it allegedly designates - "x" - one can assume that a certain degree of violence, coercion, or control has been involved in (re)producing its iconicity. When the photographed person resists this iconicity and negotiates the transformation of their lived experience or of their image into an icon, an iconoclastic process has already begun and other potentialities are kept alive.

04

## Potentializing Violence

Since its invention, photography has been used to police and persecute people, to oppress and shame them, and to violate their rights. Although the cameras used in those situations have been operated by the oppressors or by their proxies to serve their interests, they have often betrayed their intentions and encapsulated enough of these violent situations that could, at any moment, be potentialized, even years later. A violent past cannot be completely undone but its memory and consequences can be transformed so that other forms of being in the world, with others, will not be buried forever under the ineluctable fact of history. The active engagement of the spectator is necessary to release those situations from the template of power relations imposed on people as the only one possible, so that, at any moment, the balance can be reversed and new alliances can be formed across times and places.

05

## When a Community is at Stake

Sometime photography is involved in the coming-together of a community that warrants change, restitution, repair, and justice. The use of cameras, the production of images, as well as their withdrawal from circulation, and the creation of (counter) archives are part of the practices used by individuals and groups for sharing experiences, articulating claims and demands, naming and describing abuses, violations and injustice, undoing their marginalization, and performing their power.

06

## Photography Preserves Sovereign History as Incomplete

Photography is being used - at the moment when photographs are taken as well as when accessed later or shared - to undermine sovereign regimes as a fait accompli, and question what they impose as facts. Using different forms of violence, sovereign power draws borders, destroys worlds, announces new beginnings and determines who is allowed to stay, or enter, thus turning others' claims incompatible. These claims, inscribed in photographs, are being used to question the normalization of what was achieved with violence and declared irreversible, and to show that what was taken from others left scars that cannot be erased but can still be redressed. Photography helps overcome state sponsored amnesia and is being used to restore past and present dreams and models for potentially different modes of living together.

07

## Co-archiving

Photographic archives undermine the top-down and exclusivist logic that characterized official archives from the outset. Wherever cameras were used, the presence of other people unsettled the single point of view, and what was recorded during photographic encounters and was archived, is transformed by communities who reshape their self-image and materialize it in archives of their own, valorize their ways of life, and make present what classified documents meant to hide. The persona of the archivist, traditionally identified with the guardian of the law or its delegate, though often occupied by colonial or military agents, is replaced by people who individually or with others perform their right to the archive. This right becomes an essential feature of the archive.

08

## Sovereign and the Civil Potential of the Apparatus

Traditional histories of the invention of photography are organized around series of devices, procedures, and their (mostly) male inventors, while ignoring the community in which photography was practiced and took shape. Photography cannot be identified with a camera as an instrument in the hands of a single person; It is rather an apparatus that involves a more or less contingent group of participants including photographed persons, laboratory workers, translators, distributors, colonial archives, and museum curators, as well as the state and the market. Photography can be used to wield power but it is also used to restrain power and to look for the rehearse, including to create, different ways of being with others in the world.