

Center for Creative Photography

The University of Arizona

1030 N. Olive Rd.

P.O. Box 210103

Tucson, AZ 85721

Phone: 520-621-6273

Fax: 520-621-9444

Email: info@ccp.arizona.edu

URL: <http://creativephotography.org>

Finding aid for the
John Wolbarst archive, 1954 - 1981

AG 61

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Creator

Wolbarst, John, 1915-

Abstract

Polaroid photographs collected by and made by John Wolbarst (1915 – 1986), author, editor, and photographer; also correspondence and printed matter relating to the collection. Includes about 1,200 original black-and-white Polaroid photographs by 60 photographers, gathered by Wolbarst between 1954 and 1961, plus copy negatives and copy prints of the originals. Includes also about 800 original black-and-white Polaroid prints and about 65 original Polaroid negatives by Wolbarst. The collection is inactive.

Quantity/ Extent

5.5 linear feet

Language of Materials

Polish, Russian, English

Biographical/ Historical Note

1915 Born

1950 Makes his first Polaroid picture

1951 – 1965 Managing editor and, later, Consulting editor of *Modern Photography*; writes many articles on instant photography as well as 122 monthly columns titled *Pictures in a Minute* (later, *Pictures in a Moment*).

1956 Produces book *Pictures in a Minute*

1959 Produces book *Polaroid Portfolio #1*

1962 Produces book *How to Make Better Polaroid Pictures with Your J66 or J33 Polaroid Land Camera*

1965 Exhibition of his Polaroid photographs at Modernage gallery (New York); joins Polaroid Corporation

1980 Retires from executive management position with Polaroid Corporation

Scope and Content Note

The bulk of this collection consists of original black-and-white Polaroid prints, Polaroid Copy Service copy negatives, and prints and enlargements made from the copy negatives. These materials were gathered or created by John Wolbarst between 1954 and 1981. The collection also includes a lesser amount of release forms, correspondence, and publications.

The collection was received thoroughly organized and cataloged by Wolbarst. He provided a catalog that contains detailed descriptions of the origin and condition of each photograph. This description includes film type, dates, subject, formal elements, technical data, and condition of print or negative. Wolbarst also included pertinent information on how the collection was assembled, organized, and used by him, as well as autobiographical information. This catalog is located in the control file; consult the Photographic Archive Librarian.

The collection is in three parts. Part I consists of about 1,200 original black-and-white Polaroid photographs by 60 photographers. Among the photographers represented are Ansel Adams, Dr. Harold Edgerton, Peter Gowland, Philippe Halsman, Pirckle Jones, Man ray, Beaumont Newhall, Weegee, and Brett Weston. All of these photographs were collected by Wolbarst between 1954 and 1961 when he was Managing Editor, and, later, Consulting Editor, of *Modern Photography*. These prints have been moved to the Fine Print Collection of the Center of Creative Photography.

Part II consists of black-and-white copy prints and negatives of 1,176 Polaroid prints by 58 photographers. There is not a precise original/copy match. Some originals were not copied and some Ansel Adams originals were returned to Adams after Wolbarst copied them for use in *Polaroid Portfolio #1*. Included in Part II are 101 "Permission to Publish Forms," authorizing publications of some of the images in *Polaroid Portfolio #1*, written by Wolbarst and published by American Photographic Book Company (New York), in 1959. Most of these forms include notes by the photographers regarding the subjects, location, lighting, exposure, and a copy of the photograph to be reproduced. Included also are 225 4x5 inch, 5x7 inch, and 8x10 inch enlargements of some of the original Polaroid prints, and some original and photocopied correspondence between John Wolbarst and Ansel Adams, Philippe Halsman, Dr. Roman Vishniac, and Weegee. Part II also includes two 1961 issues of *America Illustrated* magazine; one in Russian and the other in Polish, which incorporated Wolbarst's work in an article about the Polaroid land process.

This collection includes copies of Wolbarst's three books, but does not contain any of his writings about the Polaroid process which appeared in periodicals and monographs, nor is there any material relating to his exhibition of Polaroid prints.

Part III of the collection contains 800 black-and-white Polaroid photographs and 58 negatives made by John Wolbarst. Although Part III spans the years 1954 – 1981, the bulk of the material dates from 1955 – 1963, when Wolbarst was actively writing books and articles on instant photography. Subjects include Wolbarst's travels in Europe, Canada, Israel and Greece; commercial projects; New York and marine scenes; and friends and acquaintances. Many of these photographs were used to illustrate books and articles written by Wolbarst and others.

Many film types and sizes of Polaroid films are represented in all parts of the collections. Included are Types 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 52, 53, and 55, and sizes 2 ¼ x 2 1.4 inch, 2 ½ x 3 ¼ inch, 3 ¼ x 4 ¼ inch, and 4 x 5 inch. The photographs were made on both sheet and roll film, and all are black-and-white (23 are transparencies). In his catalog, Wolbarst provides descriptions of these various types of films and their technical and historical significance.

Arrangement

This collection has been designated Archive Group (AG) 61, and has been arranged according to the following outline:

Series 1: Original Polaroid Prints, 1954 – 1961

Series 2: Copy Prints, 1954 – 1961

Series 3: Enlargements, circa 1958 – 1959

Series 4: Permission to Publish Forms, 1959

Series 5: Correspondence, 1959

Series 6: Periodicals

Series 7: Prints by John Wolbarst, 1954 - 1981

Names and Subject Terms

Wolbarst, John, 1915- [<https://lccn.loc.gov/n90650174>]

Restrictions

Conditions Governing Access

Access to this collection requires an appointment with the Volkerding Study Center.

Conditions Governing Use

It is the responsibility of the user to obtain permission from the copyright owner (which could be the institution, the creator of the record, the author or his/her transferees,

heirs, legates or literary executors) prior to any copyright-protected uses of the collection.

The user agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Arizona Board of Regents, the University of Arizona, Center of Creative Photography, including its officers, employees, and agents, from and against all claims made relating to copyright or other intellectual property infringement.

Provenance

John Wolbarst gave this collection to the Center for Creative Photography in two parts; the first in 1982 and 1983, the second in 1984.

Separated Materials

About 1,200 original black-and-white Polaroid prints by various artists were transferred to the Center for Creative Photography's Fine Print Collection.

Preferred Citation

John Wolbarst archive, 1954 - 1981. AG 61. Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Processing Information

Processed 1985 by Judith Leckrone. Revised May 1986 with suggestions from J. Wolbarst. The finding aid was updated by Paloma Phelps in 2017.

Container List

Series One: Original Polaroid Prints, 1954 – 1961

Arrangement: Alphabetical by photographer (those believed to be amateurs are identified by [a])

Location: CCP Fine Print Collection

Box Folder

Adams, Ansel
Bagnall, Dr. Richard A. [a]
Balish, Leonard
Basch, Peter
Bellance, Joseph
Bouwens, Richard [a]
Brooks, Percy W.
Chandoha, Walter
Cooper, Mrs. Dennis [a]

Edgerton, Dr. Harold
Farrell, William K. Jr.
Feinstein, Harold
Fickel, Charles A. [a]
Gescheidt, Alfred
Ginniver, Charles [a]
Goeller, John P.
Gonzales, Guillermo [a]
Gowland, Peter
Grant, Donald I.
Halsman, Philippe
Hare, Clyde W.
Henle, Frits
Hoban, Tana
Huf, Paul
Jaffe, Morris H.
Jones, Pirkle
Katz, Edmund
Kramer, Arthur
Kuhlthau, Margaretta [a?]
Lomont, H.G.L.
Lowe, Jacques
Man Ray
Massey, Greg
Matsumoto, Tosh
Millan, Peter
Nikulasson, Stefan [a]
Owen, Burt
Patterson, Marion
Perutz, Carl
Pierson, Homer [a]
Plummer, Rita [a]
Ross, John
Schulthess, Emil and Kornman, Heinrich
Schwartz, Milton J. [a]
Seamans, Laurie L. [a]
Shine, Mrs. E.T. [a]
Solomon, Richard [a]
Steinmetz, Joseph J.
Stern, Leonard
Stewart, Charles

St. Louis, Roland
Vandivert, William
Videtta, Michael [a]
Vishniac, Dr. Roman
Washburn, Bradford
Weegee
Weston, Brett
White, Jerry
Whyte, Peter

Series Two: Copy Prints, 1954 – 1961

Arrangement: Alphabetical by photographer

Quantity: 3 linear feet

Box Folder

1	Adams, Ansel Bagnall, Dr. Richard A. Balish, Leonard Basch, Peter Bellanca, Joseph Bouwens, Richard Brooks, Percy W.
2	Chandoha, Walter Cooper, Mrs. Dennis Edgard, Henry J. Edgerton, Dr. Harold Garrell, William Jr. Feinstein, Harold Fickel, Charles A. Gescheidt, Alfred Gonzales, Guillermo Gowland, Peter
3	Gowland, Peter (continued) Grant, Donald I. Halsman, Philippe
4	Halsman, Philippe (continued) Hare, Clyde W. Henle, Frits Hoban, Tana Huf, Paul Jaffe, Morris H. Jones, Pirkle

	Katz, Edmund
	Knowles, Katharine
	Kramer, Arthur
	Kuhlthau, Margaretta
	Lomont, H.G.L.
	Lowe, Jacques
	Man Ray
5	Massey, Greg
	Matsumoto, Tosh
	Millan, Peter
	Newhall, Beaumont
	Nikulasson, Stefan [a]
	Patterson, Marion
	Pierson, Homer
	Plummer, Rita
	Ross, John
	Schulthess, Emil and Kornman, Heinrich
	Schwartz, Milton
	Seamans, Laurie L.
	Shine, Mrs. E.T.
6	Solomon, Richard
	Steinmetz, Joseph J.
	Stern, Leonard
	Stewart, Charles
	Vandivert, William
	Videtta, Michael
	Vishniac, Roman
	Washburn, Bradford
	Weegee
	Weston, Brett
	Whyte, Peter

Series Three: Enlargements, circa 1958 - 1959

Arrangement: Alphabetical by photographer

Quantity: 0.25 linear feet

Box	Folder	
7	1	Adams, Ansel
	2	Balish, Leonard
	3	Chandoha, Walter
	4	Edgerton, Dr. Harold

5	Feinstein, Harold
6	Gowland, Peter
7	Halsman, Philippe
8	Henle, Frits
9	Hoban, Tana
10	Jaffe, Morris H.
11	Jones, Pirkle
12	Katz, Edmund
13	Lowe, Jacques
14	Owen, Burt
15	Ross, John
16	Schwartz, Milton J.
17	Seamans, Laurie L.
18	Stern, Leonard
19	Videtta, Michael
20	Miscellaneous
8	Oversize Polaroid enlargements

Series Four: Permission to Publish Forms, 1959

Arrangement: Alphabetical by photographer

Quantity: 0.25 linear feet

Box Folder

7	21	A – G
	22	H – L
	23	P – Schu
	24	Schw – W

Series Five: Correspondence, 1959

Arrangement: Alphabetical

Quantity: 1 folder

Box Folder

7	27	Ansel Adams, Philippe Halsman, Dr. Roman Vishniac, Weegee
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Series Six: Periodicals

Arrangement: By title

Quantity: 2 vols., 0.5 linear feet

Box Folder

9		<i>America Illustrated</i> , 25 (Feb. 1961) [Polish] <i>America Illustrated</i> , 54 (Mar. 1961) [Russian]
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Series Seven: Prints by John Wolbarst, 1954 - 1981

Arrangement: By subject, then chronological

Quantity: 1.5 linear feet

Box	Folder	
10	1	Travel: Canada, 1955
	2	Travel: Florida, 1956
	3	Travel: Europe, 1957
	4	Travel: Europe, 1958
	5	Travel: Shipboard, 1960
	6	Travel: Italy, people, 1960
	7	Travel: Italy, miscellaneous, 1960
11	1	Travel: Rhodes, people, 1960
	2	Travel: Rhodes, Greece, 1960
	3	Travel: Israel, people, 1960
	4	Travel: Israel, miscellaneous, 1960
12	1	Travel: France, people, 1960
	2	Travel: France, miscellaneous, 1960
	3	Travel: England, people, 1960
	4	Travel: England, miscellaneous, 1960
	5	Travel: Miscellaneous, 1967 – 1968
13	1	1 Projects: <i>Easy Does It</i> (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1957), 1955-1956
14	1	Projects: <i>Easy Does It</i> (continued)
	2	Projects: Circus, 1955 – 1959
15	1	Projects: Hell Gate, 1958, 1960
	2	Projects: Terken sculpture, 1959, 1961
	3	Projects: Chambered Nautilus, 1961
	4	Projects: East Cambridge Court House, 1969
	5	Projects: Hancock/Copley Place, 1979, 1981
16	1	Marine, 1954 – 1961
	2	New York City scenes, 1955 – 1961
	3	New York City scenes: Sports, 1958, 1961
17	1	People 4x5 in. prints, 1958 – 1961
	2	People: Photography people (<i>Modern Photography</i> staff and others), 1955-1970
	3	People: The Delaneys, 1955 – 1962
	4	People: The Walkers, 1955
	5	People: The Osbornes, 1961
	6	People: The Franks, 1961 – 1963
	7	People: The Slocum Society Meeting, 1960
	8	People: Miscellaneous, 1955 – 1963

- 18 1 Technical pictures, 1955 – 1962
- 2 Miscellaneous: roll film, 1955 – 1962
- 3 Miscellaneous: 4x5 in., 1958 - 1966