

RALPH GIBSON AND LUSTRUM PRESS, 1970 – 1985: A CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF PHOTO BOOK PUBLISHING

CCP exhibition highlights Gibson's unique influence as artist and publisher

Tucson, AZ – May 8, 2007 – Less than 50 years ago, few opportunities existed to showcase fine-art photography. Not satisfied with showing his photography to a limited audience, Ralph Gibson created his own publishing outlet, Lustrum Press.

In the recent compendium *The Photobook: A History*, vol. 1 (Phaidon, 2005), historian Gerry Badger calls Lustrum “arguably the best of the small American photobook publishers of the 1970s.”



Two pages from Ralph Gibson's book "Déjà-vu" (Lustrum Press, 1973)

To highlight this seminal period in photographic history, the exhibition *Ralph Gibson and Lustrum Press, 1970 – 1984* will be on view at the Center for Creative Photography from June 16 through September 30, 2007. Gibson will visit the Center on Friday, September 28, for an artist's talk and reception as the closing event in the exhibition program schedule.

Gibson (b. 1939) is one of the leading figures in modern photography. Influenced as a young man by Dorothea Lange and Robert Frank, both of whom he assisted in the 1960s, Gibson developed a personal aesthetic—based on stark contrasts, graphic precision, and suggestive mystery—through his encounters with European film, literature, and music.

“Lustrum Press, which Gibson founded in New York in 1970, had an immediate impact on the photography scene with its striking and often provocative publications,” curator Britt Salvesen said.

Gibson's own work appears in the influential trilogy *The Somnambulist* (1970), *Déjà-vu* (1973), and *Days at Sea* (1974). Lustrum also published monographs dedicated to the photographs of then-unknown artists Larry Clark (*Tulsa*, 1971), Danny Seymour (*A Loud Song*, 1972), Mary Ellen Mark (*Passport*, 1974), and others. Later thematic titles bring together an extraordinary variety of photographers active during this period. Lustrum Press opened new possibilities in fine-art photography, setting a new standard of quality and pioneering an enigmatic mode of visual communication.

The Center's first director, Harold Jones, approached Gibson about his archive during the institution's earliest years. Both men understood the importance of preserving the record of a living artist's creative process. Over many years Gibson has sent unique documents and artifacts that tell the story of his amazingly diverse and committed career in photography.

Archivist Amy Rule said, “This exhibition draws on Gibson's archival resources to describe an influential chapter in the history of photographic book publishing.”

On view are over 50 prints by Gibson and nearly 30 prints by other artists published under the Lustrum imprint, among them Robert Frank, Manuel Alvarez-Bravo, Paul Caponigro, and Robert Mapplethorpe.

Artifacts such as book mock-ups, printers' invoices, and publicity materials give a sense of Lustrum's operation. Items from other Center archives illustrate two important Lustrum titles from the mid-seventies, *Darkroom* (1976) and *Darkroom 2* (1978), in which the decade's most prominent photographers speak about their working methods. Here, we can view the actual negatives, printing notes, tools, and contact sheets used by the masters and seen in the *Darkroom* books. With his dedication to the book format, Gibson continues to share his unique vision with new generations of photographers today.

PROGRAMS

Sunday, September 9, 1:00 p.m.

Gallery Walk

Tour the exhibition with Mary Statzer, who is pursuing her Ph.D. in the History of Photography at the University of Arizona. She recently completed a Center for Creative Photography internship, focusing on *Ralph Gibson and Lustrum Press*.

Tuesday, September 18, 5:30 p.m.

The Obvious History: Photography and Books

The past ten years have witnessed the birth of a new area of academic discipline: the history of the photography book. In a presentation examining the history of the medium, Darius Himes—editor of *photo-eye Booklist*, a quarterly magazine devoted to photobooks—will discuss the marriage of photography and the book, emphasizing publishing activities since 1970. Himes is a lecturer and has written for *Blind Spot*, *BOMB*, and *American Photo*. He is also Adjunct Professor of Photographic Arts at the College of Santa Fe. He earned a BFA in Photography from Arizona State University, Tempe, and a Master of Arts in Liberal Arts from St. John's College, Santa Fe campus, and actively pursues his own photographic image-making.

Friday, September 28, 5 – 7 p.m.

Closing reception and artist talk by Ralph Gibson

ABOUT THE RALPH GIBSON ARCHIVE

The Center for Creative Photography's Ralph Gibson Archive includes many hundreds of vintage and recent fine prints, as well as archival materials from 1959 to the present such as photographic materials, correspondence, biographical data, clippings, interviews, exhibition files, documentation related to published and unpublished books, and audio and video tapes. The Center presented Gibson's early work in 1978 in an exhibition and in 1987 in issue number 24 of *The Archive*, its scholarly journal. Members of the public can make an appointment to study the archive in the Research Center by calling 520-621-6273.

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About the Center for Creative Photography

The Center for Creative Photography holds more archives and individual works by 20th-century North American photographers than any other museum in the world. The archives of over 60 major American photographers—including Ansel Adams, Harry Callahan, W. Eugene Smith, Edward Weston, and Garry Winogrand—form the core of a collection numbering over 80,000 works. The Center for Creative Photography has an integrated program of preservation, access, and education that celebrates the history of photography and its contemporary practice.

For More Information: 520-621-7968 or <http://www.creativephotography.org>
Gallery Hours: Monday–Friday, 9 am to 5 pm; weekends, 12 pm to 5 pm
Admission: Center for Creative Photography exhibitions, print room viewings, and education events are always FREE and open to the public.
Location: The CCP is located on the University of Arizona campus, Fine Arts Complex, 1030 N. Olive Rd., Tucson, AZ.
Parking: Parking is available at the Park Avenue Garage at the NE corner of Park and Speedway Blvd. The pedestrian underpass gives you direct access to the CCP. Parking directly behind the CCP (off 2nd Street) is free after 5 pm on weekdays and all day Saturday and Sunday.

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