

**MUSEUM of ART | FORT LAUDERDALE**  
**NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY**

**NSU MUSEUM OF ART FORT LAUDERDALE PRESENTS  
AMERICAN SCENE PHOTOGRAPHY: MARTIN Z. MARGULIES COLLECTION  
NOVEMBER 2, 2014 – MARCH 22, 2015**

**Over 190 photographs dating from the early 1900s to today by  
74 photographers offer a new way of looking at U.S. history**



(Fort Lauderdale, FL – September 23, 2014) – Miami-based collector Martin Z. Margulies has built one of the world's most significant collections of modern and contemporary art, and over the past two decades he has avidly collected photography that reflects his interest in the human condition. ***American Scene Photography: Martin Z. Margulies Collection*** will showcase over 190 photographs from his exceptional archive, dating from the early 1900s to today, by 74 photographers. It will be on view at NSU Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale from November 2, 2014 through March 22, 2015, and is curated by NSU Museum of Art Director and Chief Curator Bonnie Clearwater.

The exhibition traces how Margulies developed a photography collection that reflects the narrative of American history from the early 20th century to the present. Visitors will be invited to consider the past and present of the United States, the beauty and expansiveness of its landscape, and the diversity of its people, cities, streets and homes. The exhibition also explores the important role these photographs played in bringing about social reform, and traces the individual progress of photographers who created some of the most indelible images of America.

"In organizing this exhibition, I was fascinated by the way Margulies crafted his collection of photographs into narratives about America since 1900, and how the documentary approach of early 20th-century photographers like Lewis Hine and Dorothea Lange continues to reverberate into the present," states Clearwater. "Each of

these photographs can be appreciated for their emotional impact as well as for their formal arrangements."

The term "American Scene" in the exhibition's title refers to the naturalist style of painting that rose in the United States between the 1920s and 1950s. The trend, which ran counter to Modern and abstract art, was notable for its academic and romantic depiction of urban and rural life in the U.S. and was often infused with a progressive social agenda. The photographs in this exhibition likewise capture scenes of American regionalism and social realism.

The exhibition will include Margulies's holdings of early 20th-century photographs by **Walker Evans**, **Lewis Hine**, and **Dorothea Lange**, whose images of poverty, working conditions, and the vanishing of rural life were instrumental in bringing about social change and inspired generations of documentary photographers. Mid-20th-century photographers **Berenice Abbott**, **William Eggleston**, **Lee Friedlander** and **Weegee** will add visions of urban life and the everyday experience, while contemporary photographers such as **Gregory Crewdson**, **Justine Kurland**, **Ed Ruscha**, **Alec Soth**, and **Hank Willis Thomas** will provide new visions of American life and landscape that expand the scope of photography.

Margulies's interest in collecting photography is inspired by Modern and contemporary artists in his collection that were influenced by photography, such as **Robert Rauschenberg** and **Andy Warhol**. His first major photography acquisition was a portrait by the contemporary German photographer **Thomas Ruff**, a key figure in the resurgence of photo-based art in the late 1980s. Ruff's straightforward portrait photographs of friends and acquaintances are objective, yet they encourage viewers to form their own impressions about each subject's persona and life. The Ruff acquisition established a pattern in Margulies's selection process and informed his interest in photographs that function as documents, rather than "art" photography.

The first American photographer whose work Margulies collected in depth was **Dorothea Lange**, who is best known for her work for the Farm Security Administration during the Great Depression. Lange's "migrant mother" photograph, included in the exhibition, has become an icon of the Dust Bowl era and the desperation that drove families to head west from Oklahoma to California. From 1935-1944, The Farm Security Administration used photographs by Lange, Walker Evans, **Russell Lee**, and **Arthur Rothstein** to document rural poverty. Lange's documentary style, which simultaneously exposed deficiencies in the American social system and identified the beauty and strength of her subjects, became a paradigm for others to emulate; her influence reverberates throughout the exhibition.

Another photographer from this era whose work Margulies collected in-depth is **Lewis Hine**. Through his photographs and written notes, Hine extensively documented child laborers and their working conditions for the National Child Labor Committee. These photographs helped influence public opinion and led Congress to establish child labor standards.

Many works in the collection reflect the period of Margulies's youth in New York City in the late 1940s. Working in his parents' grocery store in Harlem, he witnessed the struggles of his own family and that of others. Included in the exhibition are depictions of mom-and-pop shops by **Aaron Siskind** and contemporary photographer **Zoe Leonard** and prints of children playing in the street by **Helen Levitt**.

The decay of urban centers and sprawl of suburbia are also recurring themes as seen in photographs by **Lewis Baltz**, **Jeff Brouws**, **Stan Douglas**, **Peggy Nolan** and **Bill Owens**.

The romance of the road appears in the photographs of **Ed Ruscha**, whose childhood memories of family road trips inspired him to shoot gas stations along Route 66 between Oklahoma and Los Angeles in 1962. Originally printed in a small photography book titled *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1962), Ruscha reprinted the series as limited edition silver prints in 1989 by rephotographing the original photographs, thereby preserving the stations in their original 1962 state. In contrast, the Standard gas station in **Jeff Brouws's** 2004 photograph *Main Street, Antler, North Dakota* shows a gas station as a forgotten relic of the recent past.

While the documentary photograph gives the impression of candid truth, its objectivity is uncertain, and the advent of digital photography has inspired a generation of contemporary photographers who embrace this artifice. Visitors to NSU Museum of Art will see photographs by **Gregory Crewdson** and **Miles Coolidge**, who have taken to fabricating the scenes in their works. "These works look convincingly like real American scenes, as they are based on a history of American photography that has become widely familiar," states Clearwater.

*American Scene Photography: Martin Z. Margulies Collection* is organized by NSU Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale.

The exhibition is sponsored by the David and Francie Horvitz Family Foundation, Bonnie E. Eletz, Art4Vision Foundation and Scott R. Anagnoste.

**Image Captions (Left to Right)**

Harold Roth; *Brooklyn Bridge*, 1945 Gelatin silver print Photograph courtesy of Anton Alterman/Harold Roth Photography Martin Z. Margulies Collection

Hank Willis Thomas, *It's the Real Thing!*, 2006/1978, From the series *Branded*, LightJet Print

Ed Ruscha, *Standard Station, Amarillo, Texas*, 1962, from *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 1963(print 1989) Gelatin silver print, Martin Z. Margulies Collection, © Ed Ruscha

**NSU Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale**

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**Hours:** 11 AM–5 PM; extended hours Thursdays until 8 PM; Sunday 12–5 PM; Closed Monday. Free Docent tours Thursday 2 PM and Saturday at 3:30.

**Admission:** Free for members, NSU students, faculty and staff and children under 12; \$10 adults; \$7 seniors and military; \$5 Students (13-17) and non-NSU college students. Group rates available for groups of 10 or more by calling (954) 262-0204 or [moagroupsales@moafl.org](mailto:moagroupsales@moafl.org) .

**About:**

Founded in 1958, NSU Museum of Art is a premiere destination for exhibitions and programs encompassing all facets of civilization's visual history. The Museum is located midway between Miami and Palm Beach in the heart of downtown Fort Lauderdale, one of the fastest growing areas in the U.S. Its distinctive 83,000 square-foot modernist building, which opened in 1986 was designed by renowned architect Edward Larrabee Barnes and contains over 25,000 square feet of exhibition space, a 256-seat auditorium, museum store and café. Its acclaimed 11,000 square-foot studio school, the AutoNation Academy of Art + Design, offers art instruction for children, teens and adults year-round. The Museum's international exhibition program is overseen by its visionary Director and Chief Curator Bonnie Clearwater, who joined the Museum in 2013. NSU Museum of Art's celebrated permanent collection contains more than 6,000 works. Among its highlights is the country's largest collection of 19th and early 20th century paintings and drawings by the American realist William Glackens, the most extensive holding in the U.S. of works by post-World War II, avant-garde CoBrA artists from Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam, and extensive holdings of works by leading Latin American artists. In 2008, the Museum became part of Nova Southeastern University, one of the largest private research universities in the United States.

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