

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum
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PRESS RELEASE



Danny Lyon, "Tesca, Cartagena, Colombia," 1966. Cibachrome, printed 2008. Image 25.7 x 25.7 cm (10 1/8 x 10 1/8 in.). Collection of the artist. © Danny Lyon, courtesy Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York

Danny Lyon: Message to the Future Debuts at the Whitney This Summer

NEW YORK, May 12, 2016— The most comprehensive retrospective of the work of American photographer, filmmaker, and writer Danny Lyon in twenty-five years debuts at the Whitney on June 17, 2016. The first major photography exhibition to be presented in the Museum's downtown home, *Danny Lyon: Message to the Future* is organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, where it will make its West Coast debut at the de Young Museum on November 5, 2016.

The exhibition assembles approximately 175 photographs and is the first to assess the artist's achievements as a filmmaker as well as a photographer. The presentation also includes many objects that have seldom or never been exhibited before and offers a rare look at works from Lyon's archives, including vintage prints, unseen 16mm film footage made inside Texas prisons, and his personal photo albums.

A leading figure in the American street photography movement of the 1960s, Lyon has distinguished himself by the personal intimacy he establishes with his subjects and the inventiveness of his practice. With his ability to find beauty in the starkest reality, Lyon has presented a charged alternative to the vision of American life presented in the mass media. Throughout, he has rejected the traditional documentary approach in favor of a more immersive, complicated involvement with his subjects. "You put a camera in my hand," he has explained, "I want to get close to people. Not just physically close, emotionally close, all of it." In the process he has made several iconic bodies of work, which have not

only pictured recent history, but helped to shape it.

“We are delighted to partner with the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco on *Danny Lyon: Message to the Future*,” stated Adam D. Weinberg, the Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art. “Since the early 1960s, Lyon’s photographs and films have upturned conventional notions of American life. The Whitney has long championed Lyon’s work and we are thrilled to present this retrospective, which encompasses more than half a century of important work.”

In 1962, while still a student at the University of Chicago, Lyon hitchhiked to the segregated South to make a photographic record of the civil rights movement. His other projects have included photographing biker subcultures, exploring the lives of individuals in prison, and documenting the architectural transformation of Lower Manhattan. Lyon has lived for years in New Mexico, and his commitment to personal adventure has taken him to Mexico and other countries in Latin America, China, and the lesser-traveled parts of the American West.

“Danny Lyon is one of the great artists working in photography today,” said Julian Cox, Chief Curator and Founding Curator of Photography, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. “Lyon’s dedication to his art and his conviction to produce work underpinned by strong ethical and ideological motivations sets him apart from many of his peers.”

Danny Lyon: Message to the Future will debut at the Whitney from June 17 through September 25, 2016, before traveling to the de Young Museum from November 5, 2016 through March 12, 2017. Shaped in collaboration with the artist, the exhibition provides a fuller understanding of Lyon’s motivations and accomplishments. The exhibition is organized by Julian Cox, Chief Curator and Founding Curator of Photography, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. The installation at the Whitney Museum is overseen by Elisabeth Sussman, Curator and Sondra Gilman Curator of Photography.

Public Program

Danny Lyon as Filmmaker: Screenings and Conversation with Danny Lyon, Andrew Lampert, and Julian Cox

Friday, June 17
6:30–8 pm

Danny Lyon discusses his provocative and deeply empathetic films with artist and filmmaker Andrew Lampert and curator Julian Cox. This program offers a rare chance to delve into Lyon’s rich and longstanding film practice. Known for his important contributions to American street photography and his concern with social and political issues, Lyon has made over a dozen films since the 1960s that remain little known. The program will feature screenings of scenes from Lyon’s early films as well as his most recent works.

Tickets are required (\$10 adults; \$8 members, seniors, students). Please visit <http://whitney.org/Events/DannyLyonAsFilmmaker> for more information.

About the Artist

Born in 1942 and raised in Queens, NY, Danny Lyon was shaped by the prose of Beat Generation writers and the photo albums of his father, an immigrant from Germany. He also was inspired by the unvarnished realism of photographer Walker Evans and writer James Agee. With the support of early mentor Hugh Edwards, a curator at the Art Institute of Chicago, Lyon developed the restless, compassionate vision that marks his work in all media. Lyon’s photographs are held in public and private collections throughout the United States and internationally.

After moving from New York City in 1970, Lyon settled in New Mexico where he has tackled a broad range of subjects: life with his own family, and also the lives of his neighbors, Native Americans, and the Latino children of Bernalillo, a town just north of Albuquerque. Lyon has also worked with abandoned street children in Colombia; photographed the political turmoil in Haiti; documented the chaos of life in the polluted industrial cities of Northern China; and, most recently, he has focused on the Occupy

movement in New York, Los Angeles, and Oakland.

About the Catalogue

Danny Lyon: Message to the Future is accompanied by a fully-illustrated scholarly catalogue that will be the most comprehensive account of the artist's work to date. The catalogue, published by Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco in association with Yale University Press, New Haven and London, is the first publication to present Lyon's influential bodies of work in all media in their full context. Lead essayists Julian Cox and Elisabeth Sussman provide an account of Lyon's five-decade career. Alexander Nemerov writes about Lyon's work in Knoxville, Tennessee; Ed Halter assesses the artist's films; Danica Willard Sachs evaluates his photomontages; and Cox interviews Alan Rinzler about his role in publishing Lyon's earliest works.

Support

Danny Lyon: Message to the Future is organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco in collaboration with the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Generous support is provided by the Henry Peterson Foundation and an anonymous donor.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists at a time when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for more than eighty years. The core of the Whitney's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists themselves, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art

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| <i>June Leaf: Thought is Infinite</i> | Through July 17 2016 |
| <i>Human Interest: Portraits from the Whitney's Collection</i> | Through Feb 12, 2017 |
| <i>Mirror Cells</i> | May 13–Aug 21, 2016 |
| <i>Stuart Davis: In Full Swing</i> | June 10–Sept 25, 2016 |
| <i>Virginia Overton: Sculpture Gardens</i> | June 10–Sept 25, 2016 |
| <i>Danny Lyon: Message to the Future</i> | June 17–Sept 25, 2016 |
| <i>Sophia Al-Maria: Black Friday</i> | July 26–Oct 31, 2016 |
| <i>Carmen Herrera</i> | Sept 16, 2016–Jan 2, 2017 |
| <i>Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905-2016</i> | Oct 28, 2016–Feb 5, 2017 |
| <i>Whitney Biennial</i> | Spring 2017 |
| <i>David Wojnarowicz: History Keeps Me Awake at Night</i> | Spring 2018 |

The Whitney Museum is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Museum hours are: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday from 10:30 am to 6 pm, Friday and Saturday from 10:30 am to 10 pm, closed Tuesday (in July and August the Museum will open on Tuesdays from 10:30 am to 6 pm). Adult tickets: \$22; full-time students and visitors 65 & over: \$18; visitors 18 and under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 7–10 pm. As of June 10, same-day adult admission tickets will be \$25; advance tickets purchased via whitney.org will remain \$22 for adults and be discounted to \$17 for full-time students and visitors 65 & over (same-day tickets are not available on whitney.org). For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit whitney.org.

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