

MOORE COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Women to Watch: Photography in Philadelphia

Featuring new or recent work by
five established and three emerging women artists

October 26 – December 9, 2007

Preview Reception: Thursday, October 25, 6 to 8pm

Panel Discussion: Monday, November 19, 6:30 to 7:30pm

(Philadelphia, PA) – This fall, The Galleries at Moore College of Art & Design and The Pennsylvania State Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) are collaborating to present an exhibition of outstanding women photographers from Philadelphia. Curated by Susan Fisher Sterling, Deputy Director and Chief Curator of NMWA in Washington, D.C., *Women to Watch: Photography in Philadelphia* will showcase new or recent work by established artists: Alida Fish, Eileen Neff, Clarissa Sligh, Ruth Thorne-Thomsen, and Deborah Willis as well as emerging talents: Genevieve Coutroubis, Sarah Stolfa, and Zoe Strauss.

The exhibition, presented in Moore's Levy Gallery for the Arts in Philadelphia, will open with a preview reception on October 25 and run through December 9, 2007. A panel discussion moderated by Susan Sterling and featuring Katherine Ware, Curator of Photographs, Alfred Stieglitz Center, Philadelphia Museum of Art; and Denise Bethel, Senior Vice President and Director of Photographs, Sotheby's, is scheduled for November 19.

"The Pennsylvania State Committee is delighted to celebrate and acknowledge the exceptional quality of women photographers in our state," commented Pennsylvania Board of Trustees Chair, Barbara Richter. "Building on a tradition of partnerships with vibrant regional arts institutions, *Women to Watch: Photography in Philadelphia*, is our committee's first exhibition project. We are proud to present such a stellar group of photographers and thankful to The Galleries at Moore for hosting this exhibition." "The cooperation and enthusiasm of Philadelphia's art community has been wonderful," added Exhibition Chair, Susanna Saunders. "The Photography Department at The Philadelphia Museum of Art, in particular, has offered ongoing guidance and encouragement. Partnering with Moore has been a perfect match."

Guest Curator Sterling noted: "Photography and photo-based work are very strong in Philadelphia, and I am confident that this exhibition promotes eight of the best artists working here today. Whether well-known or up-and-coming, they are all women to watch.

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Given the quality of the work represented in *Women to Watch*, it is my hope that NMWA and Moore—two woman-centered organizations—will work together in the future to support contemporary artists working in Pennsylvania.”

“We’re thrilled to partner with the National Museum of Women in the Arts through The Pennsylvania State Committee on presenting this exhibition to the greater Philadelphia community,” said Lorie Mertes, Rochelle F. Levy Director/Chief Curator of The Galleries at Moore. “This collaboration is deeply meaningful given each institution’s commitment to recognizing and supporting the contributions of women in the arts.”

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

According to Sterling, *Women to Watch* offers markedly different perspectives on the practices and processes of contemporary photography.

New approaches to the documentary:

Zoe Strauss, a photo-based installation artist, records life in South Philadelphia’s marginal neighborhoods. Through her one-person Philadelphia public art project and the yearly “Under I-95” show, Strauss tells a story unto itself while also participating in a larger narrative about “the beauty and difficulty of everyday life.”

A keen observer of her native Greece, **Genevieve Coutroubis** has recently turned her lens toward political broadsides, graffiti, and rally information pasted or painted on walls in Thessalonika and Athens. Formally elegant as well as socially conscious, Coutroubis’ new direction in her photographs can be seen as a commentary on her native country’s democratic process.

Digital meets the unreal:

The *grande dame* of Philadelphia photographers, **Ruth Thorne-Thomsen** presents meticulously crafted scenes that combine old stereopticon views with the painterliness of pictorial photography in her “Agua Tierra” series. This new digital work expands upon her previous process of using the pinhole camera and paper negatives to create convincing, visually inhabitable environments that retain mystery and a strong dreamlike quality.

As ancient as her “Cabinet of Curiosities” tintype images appear to be, **Alida Fish** actually uses contemporary digital technology to manipulate her negatives and extend their meaning. With subtle alterations of form and context, her photographs become mutated musings on the nature of nature rather than objective documents of taxidermy and taxonomy.

Eileen Neff’s large format color photographs have been characterized as images of interiority: vision not as seeing but as knowing. Neff whose major solo exhibition is on view at the Institute of Contemporary Art this fall, combines photography, studio set-ups and occasional digital manipulation to demonstrate how unfamiliar the everyday world can be.

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Portraiture and confounding the expectations of identity:

In the "Bodybuilder" series, **Deborah Willis** focuses on the black female body as a literal as well as a figurative tower of strength. Similar to images of male bodybuilders, oiled and turned-out for show, these photographs work against the stereotypes of women as soft and emotional and the female body as the weaker vessel.

In a complementary vein, **Clarissa Sligh's** "Constructing Masculinities" series presents portraits of men with their children in a direct contravention of long-held cultural notions about fathers as providers but not caregivers. Sligh's views of Lewis posit a new gender reality.

Previously known for her large color portraits of barfly Philadelphians, **Sarah Stolfa's** enrollment in Yale's MFA photography program already has impacted her artistic trajectory. Working now with staged images, Stolfa's new work presents a disjointed script or portrait describing moments of loneliness, distraction, perhaps even emotional longing in the "life" of an unidentified adult male protagonist.

About the Curator

Susan Fisher Sterling is Deputy Director for Art and Programs and Chief Curator at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. As Chief Curator, Sterling supervises all aspects of exhibition planning and collections management. As Deputy Director, she also oversees the Education Department and the Library and Research Center. Recent curatorial projects include: *Forefront: Chakaia Booker* (2006), *Alice Neel's Women* (2005), and *Virgin Territory* (2001). She is currently developing *Role Models: American Women Photographers, 1980-2005* (2008) for national tour. Sterling has a Ph.D. in art history from Princeton University and joined the staff of NMWA in 1988 after completing a Smithsonian Fellowship at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C.

About NMWA and The Pennsylvania State Committee

The National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA), based in Washington, D.C., is dedicated to celebrating the highest creative achievements of women. For twenty years, the museum has pursued its unique mission by exhibiting, preserving, acquiring and researching art by women and educating the public about their accomplishments.

The Pennsylvania State Committee is part of NMWA's growing network of national and international affiliates that seek to promote women's contributions to the arts through arts education, special events and exhibitions in their respective regions. To date, 24 committees are active in the United States, Europe, and Asia.

For information on the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) and its exhibitions, programs and events visit www.nmwa.org

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* Photos available on request

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The Galleries at Moore College of Art & Design

For the past twenty years, The Galleries at Moore have provided a forum for exploring contemporary issues and ideas through the presentation of a diverse range of exhibitions and programs that offer insights into the work of established and emerging artists. As part of the programming offered in The Goldie Paley Gallery featuring the work of national and international artists, The International Discovery Series has featured the first US presentations of such artists as Artur Barrio, VALIE EXPORT, Terry Fox, Jörg Immendorff, and Roman Singer. The Levy Gallery for the Arts in Philadelphia highlights the work of artists and arts organizations based in Philadelphia. As venues serving America's only art and design college for women, the Galleries have also presented exhibitions by such significant women artists and designers as Jo Baer, Janet Biggs, Dara Birnbaum, Mary Cassatt, Jay DeFeo, Viola Frey, Marlene Dumas, Jacqueline Matisse, Alice Neel, Karen Kilimnick, Carolee Schneemann and Hannah Wilke.

The Galleries at Moore receives state arts funding through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. A portion of the Galleries' operating funds for this fiscal year have been provided by grants from the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, Friends of the Galleries of Moore and Moore College of Art & Design. In addition, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, an independent Federal grant-making agency dedicated to creating and sustaining a nation of learners by helping libraries and museums serve their communities, supports The Galleries at Moore. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this exhibition do not necessarily represent those of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The Galleries at Moore

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Moore College of Art & Design sets the standard of excellence in educating women for careers in art and design. The nation's first and only art college for women, Moore offers a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with ten majors. The award-winning faculty, 9:1 student-to-faculty ratio and central location in Philadelphia, place Moore BFA students at the center of a vibrant, supportive community of artists, designers and scholars. In addition, Moore provides many unique opportunities in the arts through The Galleries at Moore, continuing education programs for professional adult men and women, the acclaimed Young Artists Workshop for girls and boys grades 1-12, The Art Shop and Sculpture Park. For more about Moore, visit www.moore.edu.

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