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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The University Gallery at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst will present Au Dela De L'Image: Beyond the Image, an exhibition of photographic work by Sophie Calle, Raymond Depardon, Tom Drahos, Serge Gal, Sophie Ristelhueber, and Agnes Varda, on view from January 30 through March 18.

Curated by Robert Blake, Director of the General Studies Program at the International Center of Photography in New York City, this exhibition brings to the United States the work of six contemporary French imagemakers interested in new approaches to narration. Their work challenges the tendency to equate photographs with facts by demanding more conceptual responses than those traditionally linked to documentary photography. These artists agree with Roland Barthes' assertion that each photograph exists as an image/concept; thus they propose ways of seeing in addition to things or places seen.

Since relating the events of the Spanish Civil War and World War II to the more recent conflicts in Cambodia and Vietnam, French photography has been closely associated with the rise of photographic agencies, such as Magnum, and their celebrated photo-essayists Robert Capa and Henri Cartier-Bresson. Although French photography encompasses diverse styles and concerns, as seen in the work of Eugene Atget, Jacques-Henri Lartigue, Man Ray, and Brassai, the documentary image remains central to our perceptions.

The work included in Au Dela De L'Image allows the image, and its story, to oscillate between fiction and document. In The Detective, Sophie Calle orchestrates the day of a private detective never divulging that it was she who hired his services. Calle emphasizes the discrepancies that exist between private motivations and impersonal observations. Raymond Depardon, a co-founder of the photographic agency Gamma, captions his images from a visit to New York City with personal, sometimes fragmented texts that expand the meaning of both. Sophie Ristelhueber's 1982 photographs of a war-ridden Beirut describe the destruction of a city once referred to as the "Paris of the Middle East." Ristelhueber does not offer the viewer expected images of combat--soldiers in action or victims--but, instead, presents the haunting aftermath of now contemporary ruins. Agnes Varda asks the viewer to discover the meaning of celebrated and/or anonymous images in her video One Minute for One Image. Originally presented by the Centre National de la Photographie on French

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national television, the images were shown sequentially for one minute each night for a period of a month prior to a regularly scheduled broadcast. A spontaneous interpretation of each image is provided by an unidentified individual solicited by Varda.

Although quite different in their working styles, each of the artists in Au Dela De L'Image believes that the photograph exists as an image as well as a concept. These six artists invite us to reflect upon and respond to a world of appearance where imagination and memory join observation and document.

Au Dela De L'Image is supported with funds from the French Cultural Services, New York City; the New England Foundation for the Arts, a consortium of the six New England state arts agencies; and the Arts Council and Alumni Association of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

The University Gallery, located in the Fine Arts Center, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 2 to 5 p.m.