Chuck Close is one of the most important figures in contemporary art, renowned worldwide for more than five decades for his portrait paintings. At the same time he has investigated, experimented and explored another subject with equal virtuosity: photography. *Chuck Close Photographs* is a comprehensive survey of significant scope and scholarship, exploring how the artist has stretched the boundaries of photographic means, methods, and approaches throughout his career. It includes 86 photographs spanning from 1968 to the present, ranging from black and white portraits to monumentally scaled composite Polaroids, to intimately scaled daguerreotypes. For the first time in his extensive exhibition history, this project delves deeply into the full range of his photographic works.

The exhibition is co-organized by Terrie Sultan, Director of the Parrish Art Museum, Long Island, NY, and Colin Westerbeck, an internationally acclaimed author, independent curator, and former curator of photography at the Art Institute of Chicago. The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated book published by Prestel, with essays by Colin Westerbeck and Terrie Sultan.

Until this project, Close’s overall work in photography has not been available for collective examination in a museum. *Chuck Close Photographs* focuses exclusively on this important aspect of Close’s artistic endeavor, amply demonstrating the artist’s range of invention. The exhibition will tour to other museums across the U.S. following its exhibition in Amherst, MA.

Photography is also the only medium in which his mature work has ventured into genres other than portraiture, containing both nudes and flower studies whose importance to his career is acknowledged. The exhibition encompasses not only examples of all the varieties of photography in which he’s worked, as well as the variety of subjects he has photographed, but also the range of other media, besides painting, in which his photography has been reproduced.

Included in the extensive exhibition will be:

- Composite Polaroids, including the large format Polaroid “Museum Camera” that launched an almost 20-year period of profound experimentation and creative output of gigantic, multi-panel portraits and nudes.
- Daguerreotypes, showing Close’s ability to engage in historically time honored techniques, while bringing a new vision to the medium.
- Wall-sized tapestry portraits which, in juxtaposition to the daguerreotypes, illustrate Close’s engagement with scale as content, as well as further underscoring his ability to engage in collaborative processes with master printers and technicians in order to find new ways of seeing.
- Holograms, another recent experimental exploration that emphasizes Close’s ideal to “banish the nostalgia from something old to make it about our time.”
• Black-and-white and color Polaroid “mug shots.” These images are the foundation for Close’s mature artistic direction. While they were intended to function as studio tools leading up to works on paper and paintings, they have now gained the patina of independent works of art.

• Working and process materials: maquettes, black-and-white and color photographs, scored with ink, masking tape that shows Close’s early use of photographs as a conceptual tool toward painting.

Chuck Close’s Connection to UMass Amherst

While a member of the UMass Amherst art department, Chuck Close’s very first solo exhibition, held in 1967, captured the attention of the university administration, which promptly closed it, citing the male nudity as obscene. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) came to the defense of Close, and a landmark court case ensued. A Massachusetts Supreme Court Justice decided in favor of the artist against the university. When the university appealed, Close chose not to return to UMass Amherst, and ultimately the decision was overturned by an appeals court. The original decision is cited regularly as the first decision to extend freedom of speech to visual arts. Close was later awarded an Honorary Doctorate of the Arts by the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1995. In the nearly 50 years that have elapsed since that exhibition was deemed inappropriate, society’s perception and acceptance of the nude has changed.

Although Chuck Close taught at UMass Amherst for a short period of time, from 1965 – 67, his impact and influence were widely felt among students and faculty. He remained friends over the years with many UMass faculty.

Related Events

Opening Reception | Thursday, September 10, 5 – 7pm
Terrie Sultan, the exhibition co-organizer and Parrish Art Museum Director, will give an introductory talk.

Chuck Close Documentary | Date and location, TBA
2007, Dir. Marion Cajori, 116 minutes
This mesmerizing video, the last documentary made by the late director Marion Cajori, expertly reveals Chuck Close’s singular process of portraiture.

Please visit our website for updates on related educational programs: www.umass.edu/umca

Sponsors

The exhibition at the UMCA is made possible, in part, by the generous support of W.B. Hunt Company and Canon U.S.A, Inc. We gratefully acknowledge additional support from Agnoli Sign Company, Springfield, MA, and Whole Foods Market, Hadley, MA.

Special thanks to the staff at the Parrish Art Museum; Pace Gallery, New York; and the studio of Chuck Close for their generous sharing of information.

The exhibition at the Parrish Art Museum is made possible, in part, by the generous support of the Lannan Foundation; Jon and Mary Shirley Foundation; Louise and Leonard Riggio; The Muriel F. Siebert Foundation, Pace Gallery, New York; Amanda and Glenn Fuhrman; Jennifer Rice and Michael Forman; Marie Joséé & Henry R. Kravis; The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation; Joseph M. Cohen; Andrea Krantz and Harvey Sawikin; Gretchen and Andrew McFarland; Arthur Loeb Foundation; and those who wish to remain anonymous.

To download high-res images, please visit:
https://fac.umass.edu/Online/default.asp?BOparam::WScontent::loadArticle::permalink=VisualArtsPressImages&sessionlanguage=