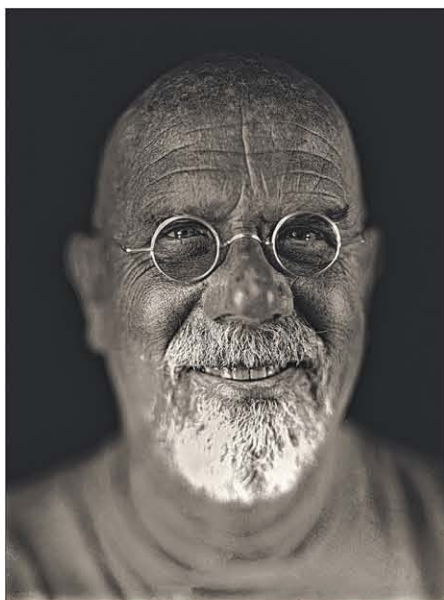




## BACK IN BLACK — AND WHITE AND COLOR



### UMass exhibit debuts iconic photography of one-time art teacher Chuck Close

By STEVE PFARRER  
 Staff Writer

**C**HUCK CLOSE had a brief but dramatic stay at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the mid-1960s. As an art professor from 1965 to 1967, the young painter and photographer put on his first-ever solo exhibition at the UMass Student Union in 1967 — only to have university officials shut it down for “indecent” because it included paintings of male nudes.

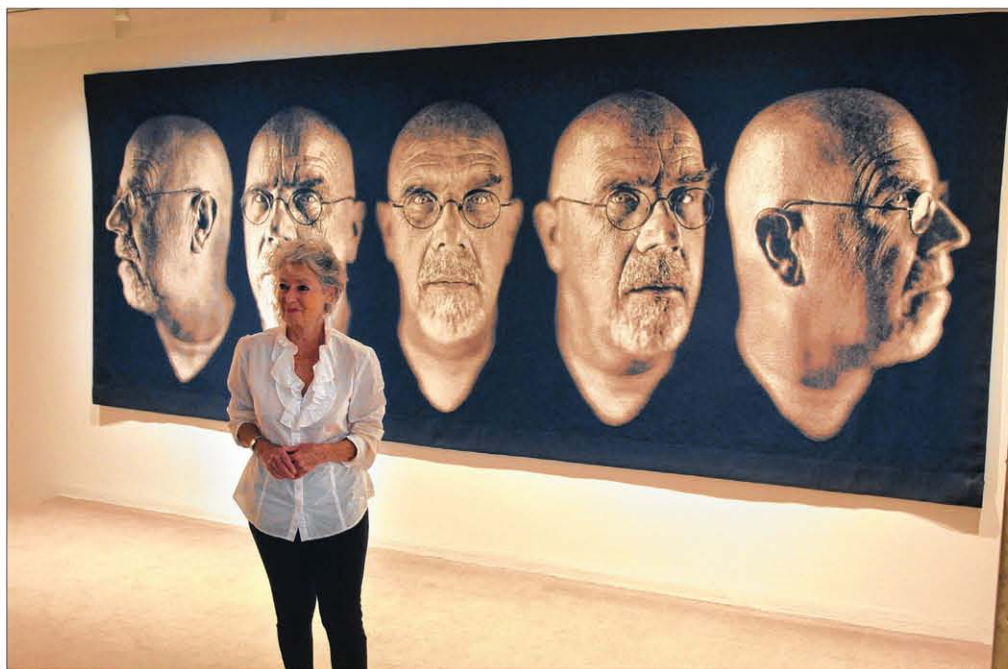
Many people went to bat for Close, including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), and a Massachusetts Supreme Court justice initially ruled the exhibit should remain open. But by that point, Close had decided to leave UMass and head to New York City.

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KEVIN GUTTING

On Tuesday of last week, workers at the University Museum of Contemporary Art had finished installing the largest prints for the “Chuck Close Photographs” exhibit, including this 1984 portrait, “Bertrand II,” but still had several smaller framed works to unbox for the show which opens Friday, at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. At left, a self portrait.



UMCA director Loretta Yarlow, in front of a Chuck Close’s “Self Portrait/ Five Part, a 6-foot-by-15-foot jacquard tapestry, says the artist had a big influence on UMass students and faculty, despite being in Amherst for only a few years.

KEVIN GUTTING



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**"Helios & Eos," ink, oil and gold leaf on engraved aluminum, 2009, from the exhibit "Anne Beresford: Ten Thousand Wonderful Things"**

## UMCA exhibit inspired by multiple university departments

By STEVE PFARRER  
Staff Writer

For several years now, the University Museum of Contemporary Art at the University of Massachusetts Amherst has hosted an annual series that invites regional artists to develop a show that's inspired by a look at the museum's own holdings. But in a new exhibit, Leverett artist Anne Beresford has taken the "Dialogue with a Collection" theme a good step further.

In "Anne Beresford: Ten Thousand Wonderful Things," which opens Sept. 25, the printmaker and painter has examined not just items from UMCA's past, but from the archives, display cases and other storage facilities of multiple university departments: anthropology, biology, botany, geology, special collections.

Indeed, the subtitle of her interdisciplinary exhibit is "A Conversation with the University Collections," and Beresford has juxtaposed her prints, posters and mixed-media pieces with a wide assortment of other objects, some of them dating from the 19th century, including a clutch of birds' eggs, preserved animal specimens, a display of mounted insects, scientific illustrations of leaves and trees and more.

"This is a great opportunity not just for Anne to explore new connections for her art," said Eva Fierst, UMCA's education coordinator, who worked with Beresford and UMass natural science faculty to set up the exhibit. "We also get to show parts of these wonderful (natural science) collections that most people don't ordinarily have a chance to see."

In an artist's statement for the exhibit, Beresford writes that the extent of the university's collections "aligns beautifully" with an ongoing series of posters and broadsides she's developed called "Free4All," which are designed to "celebrate things that most of us enjoy for free," including many artworks.

In that sense, Beresford writes, she also looked at the university's holdings "with an outsider's eye, appreciating them for their beauty as newly discovered treasures — trea-

tures that the University holds for all to see, free for all to enjoy."

To prepare for the exhibit, UMCA staff repainted a section of the gallery and constructed a partial wall that has been hung with a montage by Beresford of prints and silhouettes of birds and other creatures.

To be sure, the exhibit also includes other art that in various ways reference both the natural collections and Beresford's work. And some of the scientific illustrations can stand as works of art in their own right, such as large, full-color illustrations of bees in a 1927 French book, "Insectes," that's part of the UMass Special Collections archive.

"It's a real rich mix of things," said Loretta Yarlow, the UMCA director.

*"Anne Beresford: Ten Thousand Wonderful Things" runs Sept. 25 through Dec. 6 at UMCA. An opening reception takes place Sept. 24 from 5-7 p.m. For a list of related events later this fall, visit [www.umass.edu/fac/umca](http://www.umass.edu/fac/umca).*

## UMass exhibit features Chuck Close photography

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The university's loss, Close's gain: As a painter, he's won international recognition for his enormous and intricate portraits, which are developed from oversize photographs of his subjects. But over the years, Close has also created his own distinctive style of photography — and now a range of that work has been brought together in the place where his artistic career began.

"Chuck Close Photographs," which opens Thursday at the University Museum of Contemporary Art at UMass, includes 86 photos from the artist's long career, including some that served as the basis for one of the paintings from his original UMass exhibition. From intimate daguerreotypes, to huge composite Polaroid portraits, to large studies of flowers, the new exhibit, in black and white and color, explores the full range of Close's photography and the genesis of his photorealist style of painting.

### Famous faces

The show also features numerous famous faces, as Close, now 75, has developed friendships and relationships with plenty of movers and shakers over the years. But these portraits of people like Brad Pitt, Bill and Hillary Clinton, Kate Moss and Philip Glass (and Close himself) are not glamour pictures; many are enlarged Polaroid "mug shots," measuring 20 inches by 24 inches, in which wrinkles, sagging skin, moles and other normal blemishes are clearly visible — and an important part of the picture.

The fact that the exhibit — it will tour nationally after leaving UMass — is beginning in the place where Close began his career provides an interesting bit of symmetry, said Loretta Yarlow, UMCA's director, during a recent tour of the show.

"I think he probably appreciates the irony that he's coming back to a place where he once stirred up some controversy," she said.

Actually, the university and Close long ago patched up their differences. UMass gave him an honorary doctorate in 1995, and Yarlow says Close had a big influence on students and faculty despite being in Amherst for only a few years. In addition, the case over his 1967 exhibition, which eventually made its way to the Massachusetts Appeals Court, is widely seen as the first U.S. judicial decision to extend freedom of expression to the visual arts, Yarlow notes.

As Yarlow sees it, Close's art is even more notable because he's struggled with significant paralysis since the late 1980s, when he suffered a spinal artery collapse. He uses an electric wheelchair to get around and can move his arms and hands to some extent, though not his fingers. He paints with a brush attached by a harness to his wrist and uses foot pedals to move his canvasses; his assistants help with arranging photographs.

"To have an artist of his caliber here is incredibly exciting," Yarlow said. "Most people know him because of his paintings, but he's really stretched the boundaries of photography and developed that into a whole new area of his art."

### A grid of squares

The exhibit has been co-organized by Terrie Sultan, the director of the Parrish Art Museum, located on the eastern end of Long Island, New York, and Colin Westerbeck, an author and independent curator. Yarlow notes that the Parrish Museum was the first institute to display Close's selected photography, "so I got in touch with them and told them I'd love to have it."

As it turned out, Yarlow adds, the UMCA, with the high walls and ceiling of its main room, turned out to be a good setting for Close's composite photographs, such as "Bertrand II" and "Laura I," from 1984. Both these photos, of a nude man and a nude woman, respectively, are huge: "Bertrand II" is 8½ feet by about 17½ feet, and "Laura I" measures about 8 feet by 18 feet.

Both photos, which served as templates for Close's large paintings of the models, are made up of multiple panels of large Polaroid photos; he used single, large-scale pictures for some of his other portraits. It's a style he first developed by using a special 20-inch-by-24-inch Polaroid camera — "It's the size of a Volkswagen," Close said in an interview last year in Vanity Fair — that's now made available to artists through a studio in New York City.

"He used (the photos) as other artists might use a sketch of a subject," Yarlow said.

His technique, which can be seen in the photos of "Bertrand II" and "Laura I," is to superimpose a penciled grid of small squares onto each picture, then put a similarly proportioned but larger-scale grid onto canvas. Then, by filling those grids with selected colors, a huge face or figure slowly emerges in his paintings.

But along the way, Yarlow says, Close began to see photography as a separate means of expression. "He liked the immediacy of the Polaroids," she said. "And I think he also felt there was a kind of honesty to them, that he could really get into the true nature or idea of that person."

Some of the photos in the new exhibit reflect his more workmanlike approach; they're not framed but rather simply mounted on aluminum backing, sometimes scored with the ink, masking tape and other materials that Close used in preparing the photo to be used as a blueprint for a painting.

Others showcase his experimentation with form and expression; in one of his self-portraits, only part of Close's face, including his trademark John Lennon glasses, is in focus, while another features a heavily refracted image of a man's face.

The show includes a number of photos of Close's friends and family members whom he later painted, such as one of his first wife, Leslie, from 1973, and a pair of the artist Lucas

Samaras, from 1984. There's also one from 1970 of Amherst artist Keith Hollingsworth, a one-time UMass art professor who became friends with Close at the university in the 1960s; that photo was the study for one of Close's well-known paintings, entitled simply "Keith."

One of the largest and most impressive works is something altogether different — a 7-foot-by-15-foot Jacquard tapestry, prepared digitally by using data from individual photos that were then "read" by an electronic loom in Belgium. Against a black backdrop, five self-portraits of the artist move from a partial left profile, to fuller front views, to a partial right profile, as if he's turning his head.

And finally, Close has photographed some people by creating a variation of the 19th-century technique of daguerreotype, in which he uses several powerful strobe flashes to speed up the exposure of the photo; in the 1800s, the process took several minutes.

The result can be startling. In a 2003 daguerreotype, Kate Moss, the famous fashion model, for example, could pass for a character from "Oliver Twist"; she has a dazed expression and seemingly begrimed cheeks.

"She looks so vulnerable here," Yarlow said as she looked at the photo. "(Close) really has a way of revealing his subjects in very different ways."

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*"Chuck Close Photographs" will be on view through Dec. 6 at the UMCA. There will be an opening reception Thursday from 5 to 7 p.m. at the museum, which will include a talk by Terrie Sultan, the exhibit's co-organizer.*

*Several related events are scheduled for later this fall, including a screening of a documentary on Chuck Close, a talk by his biographer, Christopher Finch, and a videotaped interview with the artist conducted by two UMass MFA students.*

*For information, visit [www.umass.edu/fac/umca](http://www.umass.edu/fac/umca).*