



California Museum of Photography
Sweeney Art Gallery
Culver Center of the Arts
University of California, Riverside

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PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

California Museum of Photography at UCR ARTSblock presents

Aaron Siskind: Pleasures and Terrors

August 8, 2015–January 30, 2016

Fall reception: Saturday, November 14, 6–9pm
Free and open to the public

The California Museum of Photography at UCR ARTSblock presents work by photographer Aaron Siskind. Mined from the CMP's permanent collection, *Aaron Siskind: Pleasures and Terrors* draws from six decades of the seminal artist's career. Siskind's photographic beginnings took place in the 1930s when he was a member of the New York-based Film and Photo League, a socially and politically conscious organization that sought to document urban life in New York in the midst of the Great Depression. Within a decade he migrated toward a photographic sensibility both radically abstract and concretely representational. Making photographs of architecture, hand-painted signage, politically-fueled graffiti, and other weathered urban surfaces, Siskind is best known for these abstracted compositions that he considered highly personal, symbolic orderings of reality.

The works in this exhibition begin and end in New York, starting with the iconic *Savoy Dancers, Harlem Document* (1936), part of an important series Siskind initiated during his time with the Photo League, and culminating with *New York 25* and *New York 85* (both 1988). These final two works demonstrate Siskind's later sensibilities and interest in capturing close shots of urban mark making. Other photographs included in the exhibition were taken in England, Italy, Mexico, Brazil, and throughout the United States.

This exhibition and others will be celebrated during ARTSblock's fall reception on Saturday, November 14, 6–9pm. The reception is free and open to the public. ARTSblock will also be open late on Thursday, October 8, 5pm-midnight, as part of the City of Riverside's Long Night of Arts & Innovation. The event is free and open to the public.

Aaron Siskind (1903–91) was an American photographer, editor, and professor who was born in New York, and worked primarily in New York and Chicago. The son of Russian Jewish immigrants, Siskind's early and sustained interests were in poetry, music, literature, and social reform. He began photographing during his time as an English teacher at a New York City public school shortly after he received a camera as a wedding gift in 1930. In 1932 his interest in social justice and newly-established interest in photography led him to join the Photo League, an organization founded to document New York City's working class and urban life in the midst of the Great

Depression. He remained active within the group in varying capacities through 1941, generating seminal bodies of work such as *Harlem Document*.

In the 1940s, Siskind turned from depicting people as his primary subjects to increasingly abstract and two-dimensional subject matter including architectural facades, walls, and weathered painted signs. He continued cultivating this aesthetic interest through the end of his career. A close friend of painters Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline, Siskind's work was described by critics as reminiscent of Abstract Expressionism, the artistic movement loosely characterized by dynamic and abstract formal qualities that emphasize psychological tensions.

At the invitation of photographer Harry Callahan, Siskind assumed the post of Professor of Photography at the Institute of Design at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago in 1951, where he remained until 1971. He moved to a position at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1971, where he taught until his retirement in 1976. Though Siskind cited his primary motive for teaching as one of financial necessity, he also formed deep and lasting relationships with many of his students and acknowledged that the role fulfilled a personal need to be around people. It was during his time teaching that he took on important and extended documentary projects with his students, including the documentation of the Chicago buildings of American architect Louis H. Sullivan, many of which were demolished shortly thereafter.

Siskind died at the age of eighty-seven in Providence, Rhode Island. Following his death, the Aaron Siskind Memorial Foundation mounted unique exhibitions of his work at more than a dozen institutions throughout the country in 2003 and 2004. Major collections of Siskind's work are held at the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, and at the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson, Arizona. His photographs are held in the collections of renowned institutions across the country including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and many others. His work stands uniquely among photographers of his time for his adept employment of the theoretical concerns of the Abstract Expressionist painters within the arena of photography, and for his sophisticated stylistic modes that concretely and poetically trace the human encounter.

About the Exhibition

Aaron Siskind: Pleasures and Terrors is organized by the California Museum of Photography at UCR ARTSblock and is curated by Kathryn Poindexter, CMP Curatorial Assistant. The exhibition is comprised of works from the museum's permanent collection. This presentation was made possible by the generous support of UCR's College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS) and the City of Riverside.

Also on view at UCR ARTSblock

Massimiliano Gatti: Passages

Five Projects from Lampedusa, Syria, and Iraq

California Museum of Photography

May 30–September 5, 2015

California Museum of Photography is pleased to host Massimiliano Gatti's first American exhibition. Gatti's photographs explore the history of the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and the immigration from North African coasts to Europe, not by reportage, but by a careful, poetic, archeological description that transforms artifacts into metaphor. Gatti's photographs depict shards, fragments, chips, pieces and particles, the remnants and remains of both necessary and unwanted objects, that attest to human presence and human absence: human industry, creativity, persistence, thoughtlessness, suffering, and tragedy. Their eloquent simplicity interrogates past and present civilizations and references the movements of peoples, armies, immigrants, and refugees across time and across what Gatti refers to as the "extended desert."

Massimiliano Gatti: Passages is organized by the California Museum of Photography at UCR ARTSblock and is curated by Jonathan Green, ARTSblock Executive Director.

CMP Projects: Penelope Umbrico

California Museum of Photography

August 29–November 28, 2015

CMP Projects presents a solo installation by New York-based artist Penelope Umbrico. Umbrico's project *Range* (2013–ongoing) navigates the contemporary vernacular of social media and popular smartphone "app" filters to re-present canonical landscape photographs by photography's twentieth century masters. Umbrico contrasts the historically rooted subjects of the "mountain" and the photographic "master" with the increasing fluidity of photography as a medium and as an extension of quotidian life. Umbrico's approach raises questions surrounding indexicality, the art historical trope of copying the masters, and the contemporary mediation of images.

CMP Projects is an ongoing exhibition series that features photo-based work by contemporary artists. This presentation is curated by Joanna Szupinska-Myers, CMP Curator of Exhibitions, and Kathryn Poindexter, Curatorial Assistant. The series is partially supported with funds provided by UCR's College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS) and the City of Riverside.

Flash! Whitney Hubbs

California Museum of Photography

September 5–November 14, 2015

Flash! contemporary art series presents *Persistent and Falling* (2015), a new work by Los Angeles-based artist Whitney Hubbs. Artist Mark McKnight (UCR MFA 2015) will guest author an original text to accompany the exhibition.

Flash! features single works made within the last year. The exhibitions are presented on the third floor of the CMP. *FLASH: Whitney Hubbs* is the tenth exhibition in the series.

Melanie Nakaue: Eclipses

Culver Center of the Arts

June 27–October 17, 2015

Melanie Nakaue's *Eclipses* is a multi-channel video installation comprised of a series of experimental animations. Through an amalgamation of collages, digital graphics, and stop-motion animation, Nakaue depicts a disjunction between psychological and physical entities associated with eclipses. For this presentation at the Culver Center of the Arts, the idea of an eclipse is manifested through explorations of physical dimensions associated with layering and shadows. Nakaue unites these elements to illustrate the liminal space of passing between two states of being, consciousness and the unconscious.

Melanie Nakaue: Eclipses is organized by UCR ARTSblock and curated by Jennifer Frias, Associate Curator, Sweeney Art Gallery. This presentation was made possible by the generous support of UCR's College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS) and the City of Riverside.

J no.e Parker: Composing [De]Composition

Sweeney Art Gallery

June 27–October 17, 2015

J no.e Parker: Composing [De]Composition joins the seemingly unconnected practices of home composting, data collection, and music composition into a research-based, new media artwork. Parker's interest in creating integrative works that explore new pathways through interconnections between visual art, sound, music, science, and technology has inspired her to repurpose the Sweeney Art Gallery as an active BioArt research lab, addressing issues such as pollution and environmental sustainability from a localized perspective. Throughout the summer, temperature data, generated by an on-site compost pile, will be collected and translated into a soundscape.

J no.e Parker: Composing [De]Composition is organized by UCR ARTSblock and is curated by Tyler Stallings, Artistic Director, Culver Center of the Arts, and Director, Sweeney Art Gallery. This presentation was made possible by the generous support of UCR's College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS) and the City of Riverside. Additional support has been provided by Adrian Freed at UC Berkeley Music Department's Center for New Music & Audio Technologies (CNMAT); UCR Music Department Professor & Chair Paulo Chagas and Assistant Professor Ian Dicke; UCR Environmental Sciences Department Associate Professor David Crohn; Anas Muzamil; Judith Parker; and David Carter at the UCR Institute for Integrative Genome Biology.

VISITOR INFORMATION AND PRESS INQUIRIES

UCR ARTSblock is located at 3824 & 3834 Main Steet, Riverside, CA 92501, and encompasses three venues: the California Museum of Photography, Culver Center of the Arts, and Sweeney Art Gallery. ARTSBlock is open Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 5pm. Admission is \$3, and includes entry to all three venues. Galleries are open late 6-9pm and admission is free during First Thursday ArtWalks, which take place on the first Thursday of every month. Film screenings are held on Fridays and Saturdays in the Culver Theater.

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