



The GRAIN of the PRESENT

April 1, 2017–January 31, 2018

Pier 24 Photography

Exhibition Dates	Location	Hours	Contact	Press Inquiries
April 1, 2017– January 31, 2018	Pier 24 Photography Pier 24, The Embarcadero San Francisco, CA 94105	Monday–Friday 10am–5:15pm	415-512-7424 info@pier24.org www.pier24.org	Allie Haeusslein allie@pier24.org

These extraordinary, compelling, honest, beautiful and unsparing photographs all have to do with the quality of our lives in the ongoing world: they succeed in showing us the grain of the present, like the cross-section of a tree. The photographs have cut it straight through the center.

—Eudora Welty

The GRAIN of the PRESENT

The Grain of the Present, Pier 24 Photography’s ninth exhibition, examines the work of ten photographers at the core of the Pilara Foundation collection—Robert Adams, Diane Arbus, Lewis Baltz, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Lee Friedlander, Nicholas Nixon, Stephen Shore, Henry Wessel, and Garry Winogrand—whose works share a commitment to looking at everyday life as it is. Each of these figures defined a distinctive visual language that combines formal concerns with a documentary aesthetic, and all of them participated in one of two landmark exhibitions: *New Documents* (1967) at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, or *New Topographics* (1975) at the International Museum of Photography, George Eastman House, Rochester.

Looking back, inclusion in these exhibitions can be seen as both a marker of success and a foreshadowing of the profound impact this earlier generation would have on those that followed. Although these two exhibitions were significant, most of these photographers considered the photobook as the primary vehicle for their work. At a time when photography exhibitions were few and far between, the broad accessibility of these publications introduced and educated audiences about their work. As a result, many contemporary photographers became intimately familiar with that work, drawing inspiration from it and developing practices that also value the photobook as an important means of presenting their images.

The Grain of the Present features the work of these ten groundbreaking photographers alongside six contemporary practitioners of the medium—Eamonn Doyle, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Ed Panar, Alec Soth, Awoiska van der Molen, and Vanessa Winship. This generation embodies Wessel’s notion of being “actively receptive”: rather than searching for particular subjects, they are open to photographing anything around them. Yet the contemporary works seen here do not merely mimic the celebrated visual languages of the past, but instead draw on and extend them, creating new dialects that are uniquely their own.

All of the photographers in this exhibition fall within a lineage that has been and continues to be integral to defining the medium. What connects them is not simply style, subject, or books. It is their shared belief that the appearance of the physical world and the new meaning created by transforming that world into still photographs is more compelling than any preconceived ideas they may have about it. Each photographer draws inspiration from the ordinary moments of life, often seeing what others overlook—and showing us if you look closely, you can find beauty in the smallest aspects of your surroundings. As a result, the visual language of these photographers resonates beyond each photograph’s frame, informing the way viewers engage with, experience, and perceive the world.

Each of the 16 featured photographers is represented by an individual gallery devoted to significant series or projects made throughout his or her career. The main front gallery is dedicated to a selection of works by all of the artists that touch on the theme of life in small towns. In the exhibition overview below, each gallery is identified by a title—referring to the series or project on view—and a representative thumbnail image of the featured work.



Robert Adams (American, 1937–)

Prairie

Robert Adams, *Genoa, Colorado*, 1970



Diane Arbus (American, 1923–1971)

A Box of Teen Eleven Photographs*

Diane Arbus, *A family on their lawn one Sunday in Westchester, N.Y.*, 1968



Lewis Baltz (American, 1945–2014)

Candlestick Point

Lewis Baltz, detail from *Candlestick Point*, 1984–88



Bernd & Hilla Becher (German, 1931–2007; German, 1934–2015)

Typologies and Industrial Landscapes

Bernd & Hilla Becher, *Fachwerkhäuser* (Framework Houses), 1959–73



Eamonn Doyle (Irish, 1969-)

i

Eamonn Doyle, *Untitled 07* from the series *i*, 2013



LaToya Ruby Frazier (American, 1982-)

The Notion of Family

LaToya Ruby Frazier, *Momme*, 2008



Lee Friedlander (American, 1934-)

The Little Screens

Lee Friedlander, *Atlanta*, 1962



Nicholas Nixon (American, 1947–)

The Brown Sisters

Nicholas Nixon, *The Brown Sisters*, 1975



Ed Panar (American, 1976–)

Walking Home

Ed Panar, *September 2015, 669 Bedford Street*, 2015



Stephen Shore (American, 1947–)

Uncommon Places

Stephen Shore, *Bay Movie House, 2nd St., Ashland, Wisconsin, July 9, 1973*, 1973



Alec Soth (American, 1969–)
Niagara
Alec Soth, *Tricia and Curtis*, 2005



Awoiska van der Molen (Dutch, 1972–)
Landscapes 2009–15
Awoiska van der Molen, #245–18, 2010



Henry Wessel (American, 1942–)
Odd Photos
Henry Wessel, *Richmond, California*, 1989



Garry Winogrand (American, 1928–1984)

Women Are Beautiful

Garry Winogrand, New York, 1968



Vanessa Winship (British, 1960–)

she dances on Jackson

Vanessa Winship, Victor Snr and Victor Jnr After the Church Meeting,
Richmond, Virginia, 25 March 2012

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Henry Wessel, *Walapai, Arizona*, 1971

Front cover: Robert Adams, *Catholic church, winter. Ramah, Colorado*, 1965

Pier 24 Photography

Located on San Francisco's Embarcadero, Pier 24 Photography provides a quiet, contemplative environment for viewing photographic works. Pier 24 houses the permanent collection of the Pilara Foundation, which is dedicated to collecting, preserving and exhibiting photography. We seek to engage the community through exhibitions, publications, and public programs, and we welcome members of the public, academic institutions, and museum groups for self-guided tours that last up to two hours. Pier 24 Photography is free and open to the public Monday through Friday by appointment.

The Pilara Foundation Collection includes over 4,000 photographs by 300 artists. The core of the Collection focuses on twentieth-century American photographers. Beyond this central concentration, works are international in scope and span from the nineteenth century to present-day.