

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**HIGH PRESENTS MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE OF ABELARDO MORELL
PHOTOGRAPHY WITH NEW WORK COMMISSIONED FOR
“PICTURING THE SOUTH” SERIES**

“Abelardo Morell: The Universe Next Door”

Feb. 23 through May 18, 2014

ATLANTA, Jan. 22, 2014 – In “Abelardo Morell: The Universe Next Door,” the High Museum of Art presents the first major retrospective of Morell’s photography in 15 years. The exhibition, on view from Feb. 23 through May 18, 2014, includes works that span his career presented alongside new works the Museum commissioned in 2013 for its ongoing “Picturing the South” series, which asks noted photographers to turn their lenses toward the American South.

Morell, a Cuban-born American artist, has been internationally renowned over the past 25 years for employing the language of photography to explore visual surprise and wonder. He is particularly well-known for his use of the camera obscura technique, which allows him to transform entire rooms into giant cameras and record mesmerizing scenes from the outside world projected onto interior environments.

Showing a range of series from the artist’s career—including many newer color photographs never before exhibited—“The Universe Next Door” demonstrates how Morell utilizes photography’s earliest techniques and the power of artistic perspective to reveal the contemporary world in fresh, inventive ways. The exhibition will feature more than 100 works Morell created from 1986 to the present, as well as his new “Picturing the South” images.

For his “Picturing the South” commission, Morell focused on representing trees—an iconic subject that has captivated artists throughout the history of photography—in playfully unusual and imaginative ways. He traveled to state parks and wildlife refuges in Georgia and Tennessee to capture the images, 15 of which will be featured in the exhibition.

In addition to Morell’s pictures of trees, the exhibition will feature their urban counterpoint with four views of the Atlanta skyline Morell captured using the camera obscura technique.

All of the new “Picturing the South” prints will be acquired by the High following the exhibition, making the Museum one of the largest repositories of Morell’s work in the world. Morell joins past participants in “Picturing the South” including Sally Mann, Dawoud Bey, Richard Misrach, Emmet Gowin, Alex Webb, Alec Soth, Martin Parr, Kael Alford and Shane Lavalette.

Organized by The Art Institute of Chicago, in association with the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and the High Museum of Art, the exhibition also features Morell’s pioneering explorations with a custom-made tent camera and his series of works based on the classic fantasy novel “Alice in Wonderland.”

“Morell approaches photography with remarkable wit and creativity. In the age of digital photography, it’s refreshing to see how his work returns to the principles of optics and perspective to offer revelations for the viewer,” said Brett Abbott, curator of photography at the High. “The opportunity to present a retrospective of his career and at the same time celebrate the creative potential of our region with his new work is a great honor for the High.”

Key works in the exhibition include:

- “Camera Obscura: Manhattan View Looking South in Large Room,” 1996
- “Down the Rabbit Hole” (From “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland”), 1998
- “Camera Obscura: View of Midtown Atlanta Looking South In Conference Room,” 2013
- “Camera Obscura: View of Atlanta Looking South Down Peachtree Street in Hotel Room,” 2013
- “Cutout in Print with Trees Behind,” 2013
- “Tent-Camera Image on Ground: View of Old Faithful Geysir, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming,” 2011
- “Paper-Self,” 2012 (a portrait of the artist’s profile as delineated by a stack of paper)

“Abelardo Morell: The Universe Next Door” is accompanied by a 176-page catalogue with 40 color and 100 duotone illustrations. The catalogue includes an illustrated chronology of Morell’s life and works by Abbott, as well as an essay by Elizabeth Siegel (The Art Institute of Chicago associate curator, department of photography) and an interview with the artist conducted by Paul Martineau (associate curator of photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles).

About Abelardo Morell

Morell immigrated with his family to the United States as a teenager in 1962. He received a scholarship to attend Bowdoin College in Maine, where he took his first photography course. He later received an MFA in photography from Yale University, looking to street photographers such as Henri Cartier-Bresson and Robert Frank for inspiration. After the birth of his son in 1986, he began making large-format pictures around his home, examining common household objects with childlike curiosity. As a professor at Massachusetts College of Art and Design, he experimented with optics in his teaching and initiated a series in which he turned an entire room into a camera obscura, photographing the projection of the outside world over the surfaces of the room’s interior.

These twin poles—examining objects and images with fresh vision and exploring simple optics in myriad forms—have been consistent orientation points throughout his career. Morell has turned his camera on conveyors of cultural meaning such as books, maps, money and museums in extensive series that explore the perception of images. He has experimented with techniques as varied as photograms, still-life tableaux, stop-motion studies, and most recently the tent camera—a kind of portable camera obscura that throws the image of a landscape upon the ground’s surface. Now, after decades of working exclusively in black and white, he has begun to embrace color, both returning to old themes and series to view them in a new spectrum and pioneering new ways to understand optical effects, nature and picture making.

Exhibition Support

Generous in-kind support for this exhibition is provided by Tru Vue, Inc. and Gemini Moulding,

Inc. The exhibition in Atlanta is made possible by contributing sponsor Delta Air Lines with additional support provided the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation and Friends of Morell.

Photography at the High

The High Museum of Art is home to the most robust photography program in the American Southeast. The museum began acquiring photographs in the early 1970s, making it one of the earliest American art museums to commit to collecting the medium. Today, photography is the largest and fastest growing collection at the High. With more than 5,400 prints, holdings focus on American work of the 20th and 21st centuries, with special strength in modernist traditions, documentary genre and contemporary photography. Holdings include the most significant museum collection of vintage Civil Rights-era prints in the nation, as well as important holdings by Harry Callahan, Clarence John Laughlin, William Christenberry, Ralph Gibson, Richard Misrach, Walker Evans and Peter Sekaer. The collection also gives special attention to pictures made in and of the South, serving as the largest and most significant repository representing the region's important contributions to the history of photography. Since 1996, the High's distinctive "Picturing the South" initiative has commissioned established and emerging photographers to produce work inspired by the area's geographical and cultural landscape. Past participants include Sally Mann, Dawoud Bey, Emmet Gowin, Alex Webb and Alec Soth, whose commissions have all been added to the High's permanent collection.

High Museum of Art

The High is the leading art museum in the southeastern U.S. With more than 13,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American and decorative art; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists. This year, the High celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Stent Family Wing, designed by architect Richard Meier. For more information about the High, visit high.org.

The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is ranked among the top four arts centers in the nation. The Woodruff is unique in that it combines four visual and performing arts divisions on one campus as one not-for-profit organization. Opened in 1968, the Woodruff Arts Center is home to the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art and Young Audiences. To learn more about the Woodruff Arts Center, please visit www.woodruffcenter.org.

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