

HIGH

HIGH MUSEUM OF ART ATLANTA

1280 PEACHTREE STREET, N.E. • ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30309

Press Office

TEL 404-733-4437

FAX 404-733-4529

prinfo@woodruffcenter.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**HIGH COMMISSIONS THREE NEW PHOTOGRAPHERS FOR
“PICTURING THE SOUTH” SERIES**

New Works for the High’s Collection by Photographers Martin Parr, Kael Alford, and Shane Lavalette; New Commissions on View in “Picturing the South” Alongside MoMA Exhibition “Picturing New York”

June 9 – September 2, 2012

ATLANTA, December 1, 2011 – The High Museum of Art has commissioned three photographers—Martin Parr, Kael Alford and Shane Lavalette—for the Museum’s “Picturing the South” photography series. For this distinctive initiative, established in 1996, the High commissions established and emerging photographers to produce work inspired by the American South. Past participants include Sally Mann, Dawoud Bey, Richard Misrach, Emmet Gowin, Alex Webb, and Alec Soth, whose commissions have all been added to the High’s permanent collection. The new work by Parr, Alford and Lavalette—76 prints in all—will be featured in the upcoming “Picturing the South” exhibition, which will be on view alongside “Picturing New York” from The Museum of Modern Art, New York, from June 9 to September 2, 2012. A related exhibition, “Revisiting the South: Richard Misrach’s Cancer Alley” will also be on view at the High from June 2 to October 14, 2012.

“These individuals have been selected for their particular skill in producing evocative and memorable photographs that define and characterize a specific place and region,” stated Michael E. Shapiro, the High’s Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr. Director. “Together with ‘Picturing New York’ and our show of Richard Misrach’s work, these exhibitions demonstrate the High’s commitment to photography and supporting new work by contemporary artists.”

A new series of prints by British photographer Martin Parr focus on the urban setting of Atlanta. Parr’s photography records a colorful social panorama, taking in a wide range of people with diverse social, professional, and economic backgrounds. Parr visited the American South for the first time for this commission and has captured photographs at Atlanta-based Coca-Cola headquarters, CNN, Stone Mountain, the Atlanta Pride Festival, and the Atlanta Steeple Chase, among many other locations. Parr stated, “Ordinary people and ordinary things, like the local supermarket, inspire me with the same passion that leads other photographers to go to war zones.”

Kael Alford’s contributions come from her work in small communities in the marshlands of Louisiana that face an encroaching ocean due to rapid coastal erosion. Through this series, Alford has evocatively recorded the landscape and its native inhabitants who tenaciously persevere in their way of life on ancestral ground that is sinking into the Gulf of Mexico at an alarming rate. Severely damaged by gas and oil extraction and battered by storms, the marshlands are in a tenuous state. According to Alford, “Like the lower ninth ward in New Orleans, what is being lost on the coast of Louisiana is more than a neighborhood, or a storm buffer. It’s a piece of our collective memory and a unique piece of heritage that defines us as a nation.”

Shane Lavalette's work created for this exhibition explores the relationship between traditional Southern music (old time, gospel, blues, etc.) and the contemporary landscape. Though rooted in documentary, the work itself is playful, lyrical and poetic. Lavalette's interest lies in the stories and themes that come out of songs and their significance today. In addition, Lavalette has explored the ways in which the cultural and natural landscape is musical in itself. Commenting about the work Lavalette states, "The musical history of the South is so rich and complex, which made it a natural point of departure for me."

Picturing New York

"Picturing New York" from The Museum of Modern Art, New York is both an exploration of the life of the city and a documentation of photography's evolution throughout the twentieth century. The exhibition consists of approximately 150 photographs that show the city of New York in all its vitality, ambition, and beauty. Depicting the iconic New York that captivates the world's imagination, as well as the idiosyncratic details that define New Yorkers' sense of home, the photographs are drawn from MoMA's extraordinary collection and include classic images alongside lesser known gems. Selections include work by artists Berenice Abbott, Diane Arbus, Harry Callahan, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Walker Evans, Lee Friedlander, Helen Levitt, Lisette Model, Irving Penn, Cindy Sherman, Alfred Stieglitz, Weegee, and many others, revealing the deeply symbiotic relationship between photography and New York.

"Picturing New York" continues a multi-year, multi-exhibition collaboration between the High and MoMA. The collaboration was launched in 2009 with "Monet Water Lilies" followed by "Modern by Design" in 2011. Currently, the High is presenting "Picasso to Warhol," a major exhibition exploring the work of fourteen of the most important artists of the twentieth century: Bearden, Bourgeois, Brancusi, Calder, de Chirico, Duchamp, Johns, Léger, Matisse, Miró, Mondrian, Picasso, Pollock and Warhol. A second large-scale exhibition and one additional focus show are in development for 2012 and 2013.

Revisiting the South: Richard Misrach's Cancer Alley

In 1998, the High commissioned Richard Misrach to create a body of work as part of the Museum's 'Picturing the South' series. Misrach chose to develop a study on the ecological degradation of a passage of the Mississippi river between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, sometimes referred to as Cancer Alley. Like the Western landscapes for which Misrach is best known, his resulting photographs challenge viewers with environmental and political concerns while seducing them with evocative and lyrically beautiful large scale prints. In 2010, the High encouraged Misrach to re-engage with his commission work from the late 1990s. As a result, Misrach further developed the project and has pursued its publication through Aperture. To mark the culmination of Misrach's work on the Mississippi river corridor, a group of twenty-one large scale prints will be accessioned and installed at the High in coordination with the release of Misrach's publication, as well as in coordination with the "Picturing the South" exhibition. This will be the first time that many of these important works have been shown to a broad public.

Kael Alford

Kael Alford (b. 1971, Middletown, NY) is a documentary photographer and photojournalist, currently based in Dallas, TX. Alford lived in Eastern Europe from 1994–96 and covered culture and conflict in the Balkans and the Middle East for many European and American news publications. Her photography about the impact of the Iraq war on Iraqi civilians became widely recognized through the exhibition and book: "Unembedded: Four Independent Photojournalists on the War in Iraq" (Chelsea Green 2005). Alford holds a BA in Literature, an MA in Journalism from the University of Missouri and was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University in 2008-2009.

Shane Lavalette

Shane Lavalette (b. 1987, Burlington, VT) currently lives and works in Syracuse, NY, where he serves as Associate Director of Light Work. He received his BFA from Tufts University in partnership with The

School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Lavalette's photographs have been exhibited widely, including recent exhibitions at Montserrat College of Art Gallery; The Carpenter Center for Visual Arts at Harvard University; The Center for Photography at Woodstock; and The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In 2009, he was awarded the Yousuf Karsh Prize in Photography for his project "Slí na Boirne." Lavalette is also the Publisher and Editor of "Lay Flat."

Martin Parr

Martin Parr (b. 1952, Epsom, Surrey) is a British documentary photographer, photojournalist and collector. When he was a boy, his budding interest in the medium of photography was encouraged by his grandfather George Parr, himself a keen amateur photographer. Parr studied photography at Manchester Polytechnic, from 1970 to 1973. Since that time, he has worked on numerous photographic projects. He has developed an international reputation for his innovative imagery, his oblique approach to social documentary, and his contribution to photographic culture within the UK and abroad. In 1994 he became a full member of Magnum Photos. In recent years, Parr has developed an interest in film-making and has started to use his photography within different conventions, such as fashion and advertising. In 2002 a large retrospective of Parr's work was initiated by the Barbican Art Gallery, London.

Richard Misrach

Born in Los Angeles in 1949, Richard Misrach is internationally recognized for his large-scale color photography. He first started photographing with a 35mm camera with the intent of fostering social change. Misrach graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 1971, and since the late 1970s has photographed using an 8x10 camera and color film. In recent years he has begun to shoot with digital cameras. His work exploring landscape in terms of its beauty and terror is held in numerous international collections and museums, and he has been awarded with the Arts Photography Fellowship four times between 1973 and 1992. In 1993, Misrach was awarded the Koret Israel Prize. He is represented in New York at Pace/MacGill, in San Francisco at Fraenkel Gallery, and in Los Angeles by Marc Selwyn Fine Art.

Picturing the South

The High instituted the "Picturing the South" initiative in 1996 to serve a dual purpose: to provide a contemporary perspective on Southern subjects and themes and to build the High's collection of contemporary photography. The commissions have benefited both the Museum and the artists—Sally Mann's commission in 1996, for instance, helped support her shift to landscape work and resulted in the first works in her "Motherland" series. The other commissions range from Dawoud Bey's over-life-size portraits of Atlanta High School students to Emmet Gowin's aerial photographs of aeration ponds and paper mills. Noted Magnum photographer Alex Webb captured the drama of Atlanta's street and nightlife, and Richard Misrach used a view camera to reveal the beauty and the pathos of the Mississippi River landscapes between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, an area known as "Cancer Alley." Most recently in 2009, Alec Soth produced a series of twelve large archival pigment prints exploring spiritual and hermetic life in the rural South. These were the first works by Soth to enter the High's collection.

Exhibition Organization and Support

"Picturing New York" is part of a series of exhibitions presented as part of a collaboration between The Museum of Modern Art, New York and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta. "Picturing New York" is organized by Sarah Meister, MoMA Curator of Photography. The exhibitions and programs of the MoMA Series are made possible by Presenting Sponsor: Bank of America; Lead Sponsors: Portman, The Gary W. and Ruth M. Rollins Foundation, The Coca-Cola Company, Delta Air Lines, Accenture and Turner Broadcasting System, Inc.; and Planning Partner: The Rich Foundation. The Modern Masters Circle: Margaretta Taylor, Sue and John Wieland. Additional support provided by Carey and Doug Benham, Dr. Robert L. and Lucinda W. Bunn, Mr. and Mrs. Holcombe T. Green, Jr., Louise Sams and Jerome Grilhot, Paul Hagedorn, Jane and Clay Jackson, Sarah and Jim Kennedy, Barbara and Sanford

