

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**HIGH MUSEUM OF ART IS SOLE U.S. VENUE FOR
INTERNATIONAL TOUR OF WALKER EVANS PHOTOGRAPHY**

Co-organized exhibition marks the most comprehensive retrospective of Evans' work to be presented in Europe, Canada and the American South

ATLANTA, June 6, 2016 – The High Museum of Art presents “Walker Evans: Depth of Field,” a major touring retrospective of the work of one of the most influential documentary photographers of the 20th century.

The High is the only U.S. venue for the exhibition, which places Evans' most recognized photographs within the larger context of his 50-year career. Co-organized by the High and the Josef Albers Museum Quadrat, Bottrop, in collaboration with the Vancouver Art Gallery, the exhibition is among the most thorough examinations ever presented of the photographer's work and the most comprehensive Evans retrospective to be mounted in Europe, Canada and the southeastern United States.

The High's presentation features more than 120 black-and-white and color prints from the 1920s through the 1970s, including photographs from the Museum's permanent collection. With a profundity that has not previously been accomplished, the exhibition and its companion publication explore the transatlantic roots and repercussions of Evans' contributions to the field of photography and examine his pioneering of the lyric documentary style, which fuses a powerful personal perspective with the objective record of time and place.

“Evans is a pivotal 20th-century artist whose contributions have deeply affected the development of photography around the world and shaped the way we remember the history of the South,” said Brett Abbott, Keough Family curator of photography at the High. “As the largest and most significant repository of photographs made in and of our region, including leading holdings of Evans' protégés William Christenberry and Peter Sekaer, the High is honored to have the opportunity to explore how Evans' work has inspired the course of contemporary art, both here and beyond.”

Evans (American, 1903–1975) began his career in 1928, working in the vein of European Modernism, or the so-called “New Vision,” which emphasized striking, unconventional perspectives. As his work progressed, he began to develop his own visual idiom, influenced greatly by his encounters with European artistic and literary trends during his time in Paris in 1926. Evans was deeply moved by two major European photographers of the first decades of the 20th century—Eugène Atget and August Sander—whose pictorial ideas were straightforward and quiet in spirit. Modern European literature was equally important to Evans, particularly the writing of French poet Charles Baudelaire, whose work celebrated ordinary life in the streets, and Gustave Flaubert, who emphasized objectivity and the non-appearance of the author in artistic expression. “Depth of Field” examines how Evans' early exposure to these European

creative ideals enabled him to recognize the aesthetic possibilities of capturing everyday life and landscapes in the United States.

Organized chronologically, the exhibition begins with Evans' early work, including a significant selection of his photographs created on the streets of New York City, which showcase his European influences and the development of his signature style. Also included in this section are early portrait photographs and Evans' lesser-known photography projects featuring Victorian and antebellum architecture, along with images he captured during Cuba's political turmoil in the early 1930s.

The exhibition moves on to present indelible images Evans made for the Farm Security Administration during the Great Depression in the American South, including such iconic photographs as "Alabama Cotton Tenant Farmer Wife" (1936), which became a symbol of the era. Evans' distinctive aesthetic and inventive approach are also demonstrated through the little-studied photographs he shot for Fortune magazine, covert views he created in the New York subway system, his meditations on signs, and rarely exhibited Polaroid projects from the end of his career. The works on view emphasize Evans' breach of photography's traditional borders and his pre-Warhol embrace of advertising symbols and words as worthy artistic subjects, foreseeing such movements as Appropriation Art and Pop Art.

In addition to the High's collection, the exhibition draws photographs from such prominent institutions as The Museum of Modern Art and Yale University Art Gallery. More than 50 photographs are on loan from Atlanta residents Marian and Benjamin A. Hill, longtime supporters of the High and among the most significant private collectors of Evans' work.

About Walker Evans¹

"Stare. It is the way to educate your eye, and more. Stare, pry, listen, eavesdrop. Die knowing something. You are not here long." – Walker Evans

Walker Evans III was born Nov. 3, 1903, in St. Louis. Like other important American artists of his time, he spent his early years in the Midwest before moving to the more cosmopolitan East Coast to find a place in the culture of his era. Following a year in Paris in 1926, he returned to live in New York City in 1927. At the time, Evans thought of himself as a writer, though he had already begun to photograph using a small tourist camera. In New York City, his photographic vision developed very quickly and came to reveal a sure mastery of visual form—a complexity in both describing and understanding the rapidly changing postwar world.

In 1930 two of his pictures of New York City skyscrapers were published in a German book on architecture. In the same year, three of his Brooklyn Bridge photographs were published with Hart Crane's epic poem, "The Bridge." Others photographs soon appeared in New York arts and literary magazines, and in 1933 a selection of his works was exhibited in New York's new Museum of Modern Art. In 1935 Evans secured a position as information specialist with the newly organized Resettlement Administration (later called the Farm Security Administration). Toward the end of this engagement, he and his friend, the writer James Agee, took on a Fortune magazine assignment, an essay on cotton tenant farmers in rural Alabama. This Fortune/FSA collaboration would lead to the groundbreaking book "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men." Evans left the FSA in 1938. That same year, to accompany a retrospective of Evans' work, The

Museum of Modern Art published a collection of his pictures in “American Photographs,” which would come to be considered one of the most influential books of 20th century photography. In 1945, Evans joined Fortune magazine as its first staff photographer, where he remained until 1965.

Evans’ prominence grew with a large exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1947, and his photographs frequently appeared in group exhibitions at other museums throughout the mid-20th century. Following the republication of “Let Us Now Praise Famous Men” and “American Photographs” in the early 1960s, Evans began to be known and respected by a new generation of photographers. This interest continued to build, culminating in a second retrospective of his work at New York’s Museum of Modern Art in 1971, which subsequently toured the United States. Evans continued to create, sell and exhibit his photographs until his death in 1975.

“Walker Evans: Depth of Field” Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a 408-page scholarly publication featuring 400 black-and-white and color illustrations with essays by photographer, writer and Evans’ longtime friend and colleague John T. Hill, Josef Albers Museum Director Heinz Liesbrock, photographer Jerry L. Thompson, Yale University professor emeritus Alan Trachtenberg and photography curator Thomas Weski. The essays explore the impact of Evans’ vision before, during and after his signature work created in 1935-1936, and the book includes a selection of photographs that have not previously been published.

Exhibition Organization and Support

“Walker Evans: Depth of Field” is co-organized by the Josef Albers Museum Quadrat, Bottrop, and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, in collaboration with the Vancouver Art Gallery. The exhibition is made possible through support from the Terra Foundation for American Art. The exhibition in Atlanta is made possible with support from The Halle Foundation and the Donald and Marilyn Keough Family. Additional support provided by Friends of A Year in Photography and Friends of Photography.

About the High Museum of Art Photography Collection

The High is home to the most robust photography program in the southeastern United States. 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 6,000 prints, holdings focus on American work of the 20th and 21st centuries, with special strength in modernist traditions, documentary and contemporary photography. Holdings include the most significant museum collection of vintage Civil Rights–era prints in the nation as well as important groups of photographs 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, Alec Soth and Abelardo Morell, whose commissions have all been added to the High’s permanent collection.

About the High Museum of Art

The High is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 15,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American art; a substantial collection of historical and contemporary decorative arts and design; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography, folk and self-taught art, and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists. Through its education department, the High offers programs and experiences that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit high.org.

About The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is one of the largest arts centers in the world, home to the Tony Award–winning Alliance Theatre, the Grammy Award–winning Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the High Museum of Art, the leading art museum in the Southeast. Each year, these centers of artistic excellence play host to more than 1.2 million patrons at The Woodruff Arts Center’s midtown Atlanta location, one of the only arts centers in the United States to host both visual and performing arts on a single campus. The Woodruff Arts Center also offers remarkable educational programming through each of its arts partners, serving more than 300,000 students annually as the largest arts educator in Georgia. www.woodruffcenter.org

About the Josef Albers Museum Quadrat Bottrop

The Josef Albers Museum opened its doors on June 25, 1983, as part of the Museumszentrum Quadrat. A contribution from Bottrop native Albers to his hometown provided the financial foundation, and following his death in 1976, textile artist Anni Albers donated more than 300 works from her husband’s estate to the museum. This formed the nucleus of the Josef Albers Museum Quadrat Bottrop, which today houses one of the world’s largest and preeminent collections of works by Albers, one of the most influential artists and educators of the 20th century. In addition to its permanent exhibits, the museum hosts internationally acclaimed exhibitions focusing on the greater context and influence of Josef Albers’ works, which endures to the present day, especially in the U.S. Past exhibitions have been dedicated to Robert Adams, Donald Judd, Sol Lewitt, Agnes Martin, Giorgio Morandi, Ad Reinhardt, Fred Sandback, and Walker Evans, to name a few.

About the Vancouver Art Gallery

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is the largest visual art museum in western Canada. Its collection, representing the most comprehensive resource for visual culture in the province of British Columbia, now numbers over 11,300 works, with strengths in modern and contemporary Canadian art and a growing emphasis on historical and contemporary photography from around the world. With an emphasis on advancing scholarship through major publications and websites, the Gallery presents approximately 16 exhibitions per year. The Gallery features the work of ground-breaking contemporary artists from around the world and presents historical art of international significance, is committed to exploring the art of Asia, and provides a global platform for British Columbia's dynamic artistic community, including the work of First Nations artists. After more than a decade of research and planning, the Gallery has recently launched conceptual drawings designed by Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron for a new purpose built Vancouver Art Gallery. www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

About the Terra Foundation for American Art

The Terra Foundation for American Art is dedicated to fostering exploration, understanding and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States for national and international audiences. Recognizing the importance of experiencing original works of art, the foundation provides opportunities for interaction and study, beginning with the presentation and growth of its own art collection in Chicago to further cross-cultural exhibition, research and educational programs. Implicit in such activities is the belief that art has the potential both to distinguish cultures and to unite them.

1. Jerry L. Thompson, "Walker Evans: A Brief Sketch of His Life," Walker Evans: Depth of Field (Prestel, 2015), 386-389.

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