



HIGH MUSEUM OF ART ATLANTA

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SARAH KENNEL APPOINTED CURATOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY AT HIGH MUSEUM OF ART

ATLANTA, March 7, 2019 – The High Museum of Art today announced the appointment of Dr. Sarah Kennel as its Donald and Marilyn Keough Family curator of photography. Kennel currently serves as The Byrne Family curator of photography at the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) in Salem, Mass. She will join the High on July 1, 2019.

The High Museum of Art is home to the most significant 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. Kennel will oversee the photography department, including related exhibitions and programs, as well as its collection of more than 7,000 works spanning the 1840s to the present. With strengths in American modernist and documentary traditions from the mid-20th century and a robust commitment to contemporary practice, the photography collection features a strong base of pictures related to the American South, which are situated within a global context that is both regionally relevant and internationally significant.



© Peabody Essex Museum.
Photography by Bob Packert.

Among these important works are one of the largest collections of photographs of the civil rights movement and some of the country’s strongest monographic collections of photographs by Eugene Atget, Wynn Bullock, Harry Callahan, William Christenberry, Walker Evans, Leonard Freed, Evelyn Hofer, Clarence John Laughlin, Abelardo Morell and Peter Sekaer. As part of the High’s recent collection reinstallation, the Lucinda Weil Bunden Gallery for Photography was expanded by 3,000 square feet, offering greater opportunities for ambitious rotating exhibitions.

“Sarah’s myriad accomplishments as a curator and scholar, together with her commitment to innovation and inclusion, make her exceptionally well-suited to lead the continued growth of our active photography department,” said Rand Suffolk, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director of the High. “We are very pleased to welcome her to our staff, and we know that under her leadership our photography program will continue its legacy of exceptional exhibitions and strategic collection initiatives.”

Kennel will also help further develop the High's renowned Picturing the South commissioning initiative, which since 1996 has provided a fresh perspective on Southern subjects and themes while building the Museum's collection of contemporary photography. The works commissioned for this series have inspired some of today's foremost photographers to create new chapters in ongoing projects as well as wholly new bodies of work: Sally Mann's inaugural commission encouraged her focus on Southern landscape, and Alec Soth's 2009 commission resulted in many of the photographs that would become his celebrated Broken Manual series. Other notable commissions have included Dawoud Bey's portraits of Atlanta high school students, Richard Misrach's elegiac documentation of the Mississippi Delta's "Cancer Alley" and Martin Parr's sardonic take on Atlanta high society.

"Sarah's range of expertise, including her knowledge of the history of photography as well as its contemporary practitioners, will greatly enhance our ability to develop the High's collection further and enrich our program with a variety of new and compelling exhibitions," noted Kevin W. Tucker, chief curator at the High.

Kennel joined PEM in 2015, where she oversees an extensive collection of photographs dating from 1839 to the present and manages an active and globally oriented photography program. She recently co-curated the critically acclaimed touring exhibition ["Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings,"](#) organized by PEM and the National Gallery of Art, [which will open at the High in October 2019.](#) She is also the curator and catalogue author of "Order of Imagination: The Photographs of Olivia Parker," opening at PEM this summer. Kennel developed the first strategic plan for PEM's photography collection's care and growth and established the exhibition program for its dedicated photography gallery. She launched PEM's photography visiting committee and has spearheaded important gifts to PEM, including vintage prints by Henri Cartier-Bresson and Ilse Bing; documentary photographs by Danny Lyon, Leonard Freed and Arthur Rothstein; and works by contemporary Native American, African-American and Asian photographers.

"I am delighted to join the High at a vital moment of growth for the photography program and am inspired by the institution's commitment to curatorial excellence, relevance and equity," said Kennel. "The High has played a key role in defining the range of American photographic practice, especially with its commitment to civil rights and Southern photography. I look forward to working closely with my colleagues and the thriving Atlanta arts community to further develop and expand an exciting and rich photography program that is at once locally grounded and nationally distinguished."

Kennel previously served for nine years as a curator at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., where she helped oversee the photography collection and manage an active exhibition, acquisition and research program. Highlights include exhibitions and accompanying catalogues for "Charles Marville: Photographer of Paris" (2013), "Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes, 1909-1929: When Art Danced with Music" (2013), "The Serial Portrait: Photography and Identity in the Past 100 Years" (2012), and "In the Darkroom: Photographic

Processes before the Digital Age” (2009).

As an art historian, Kennel has written and contributed to many publications, including the catalogue for “Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings” (with co-curator Sarah Greenough of the National Gallery of Art), which was awarded best photographic book at the 2018 Festival International du Livre d’Art et du Film. She has taught at Princeton University; the University of California, Berkeley; and George Washington University, and her numerous fellowships and awards include the Samuel H. Kress Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellowship and the Mary Davis Pre-doctoral Fellowship at the Center for the Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, both at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Kennel earned a doctorate and a Master of Arts in art history from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Bachelor of Arts from Princeton University.

About the High Museum of Art

Located in the heart of Atlanta, Ga., the High Museum of Art connects with audiences from across the Southeast and around the world through its distinguished collection, dynamic schedule of special exhibitions and engaging community-focused programs. Housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize–winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, the High features a collection of more than 17,000 works of art, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and self-taught work, especially works by artists from the American South; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, new media and design; a growing collection of African art, with work dating from pre-history through the present; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to reflecting the diversity of its communities and offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit www.high.org.

###

INTERVIEWS AND DIGITAL IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Media contact:

Marci Tate Davis
Manager of Public Relations
404-733-4585
marci.davis@high.org