



International Center of Photography

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news release



Lori Grinker  
"Priya" learns to write in Sinhalese at the Methsevana Government  
Rehabilitation Center for Girls in Nugegoda, Sri Lanka, 1998

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## The Body at Risk: Photography of Disorder, Illness, and Healing

On view from  
December 9, 2005  
through February 26, 2006

Media Preview  
December 8, 2005  
9:30 - 11am

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*The Body at Risk: Photography of Disorder, Illness, and Healing*, a selection of documentary photographs from sixteen renowned photographers depicting individuals who have been affected by a range of challenging circumstances, will be on view at the International Center of Photography (1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street) from December 9, 2005 through February 26, 2006. Featuring some of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries' most iconic images, the exhibition, part of ICP's ongoing commitment to "concerned photography," includes Lewis Hine's photography of child laborers, W. Eugene Smith's documentation of one nurse's effort to treat 10,000 of South Carolina's poorest citizens, Eugene Richards' seven-year study of a trauma center in Denver, and Gideon Mendel's coverage of AIDS in Africa.

ICP curator Carol Squiers is the organizer of the exhibition and author of the accompanying publication of the same name.

These photographs, straightforward depictions of lives shaped by war, disease, poverty, pollution, domestic violence, age, and labor, simultaneously show the vulnerabilities of the human body and

the resilience displayed in the face of stressful situations. *The Body at Risk* provides insight into the social context in which the photos were taken by integrating anthropology, sociology, news coverage, and political history along with writings and interviews from the photographers.

“At the time they were published, many of the images in *The Body at Risk* brought attention to pressing and often-ignored societal issues,” said ICP Director Willis Hartshorn. “This exhibition demonstrates the ability of photography to inform and, often, to effect significant social change.”

*The Body at Risk* begins with a group of photographs by Lewis Hine, a central figure in the history of photography known for his investigative style. Taken between 1906 and 1918, these images helped shed light on the effect long hours of work had on young people’s health and became recognizable symbols of the National Child Labor Committee’s effort to outlaw child labor. They are a testament to Hine’s ability to outmaneuver foremen who kept close watch on their young employees, and to gain the trust of his subjects if only for enough time to take the photo.

Another type of investigative approach informs Donna Ferrato’s photography from the 1980s, which documented domestic violence at a time when most media outlets deemed the topic a private family matter not suitable for coverage. Ferrato’s foray into the subject began while on assignment to shoot a feature on a couple over the course of a year. During this time, Ferrato noticed coercive elements in the husband’s behavior and eventually captured him on film hitting his wife. The images in the exhibition are a result of Ferrato’s continuing commitment to covering intimate partner violence and responses by law enforcement and social services.

Healthcare figures prominently in a number of the pictures, among them the striking images in W. Eugene Smith’s photo essay for *Life* magazine “Nurse Midwife: Maude Callen Eases Pain of Birth, Life and Death,” and in Eugene Richards’ “The Knife and Gun Club: Scenes from an Emergency Room.” In both selections, the images are candid, uncensored looks at healthcare providers as they try to save lives under the most extreme conditions.

Smith’s photo essay for *Life* magazine documented the story of Maude Callen, a licensed nurse-midwife who delivered health care services to 10,000 impoverished African American citizens in South Carolina. The essay is both an inspirational story of an African American woman as she challenges racial and gender prejudices during the Cold War era and a harrowing document of the inadequacies of post-World War II healthcare in the rural South. Smith followed Callen as she created her own health care structure, rigging makeshift clinics in borrowed spaces, conducting prenatal exams in churches, and giving typhoid vaccinations in her front yard.

Modern medicine and contemporary social realities also cross paths in Richards’ photos of Denver General Hospital’s trauma center, dubbed *The Knife and Gun Club* for the numerous amounts of violent injuries it treated. The photographer was given unlimited access to the emergency room for seven years, where he shot graphic images of the hospital staff as they tried to save individuals suffering from shootings, stabbings, disease, and drug overdoses. In *The Body at Risk* these photographs are accompanied by taped interviews Richards conducted with hospital staff, EMTs, and patients, as well as his written accounts of the situation.

Gideon Mendel’s photographs and videotape of the progression of HIV/AIDS in Africa between 1993 and the present offer an unflinching view of individuals as they struggle with the disease, and document the efforts being made by HIV-positive activists, school groups, health organizations, and other individuals as they fight for fair treatment programs. Although HIV/AIDS had been affecting the

continent for nearly fifteen years when Mendel began covering the subject, a stigma was still attached to the idea of photographing individuals with visible signs of infection. During a time when people in the United States and Britain continue to debate how HIV/AIDS patients should be photographed, Mendel's straightforward documentary style brings a larger sense of urgency to the images.

In 2001, Sebastião Salgado was named a Goodwill Ambassador by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and was asked by the World Health Organization to document the global campaign against polio. During that year he accompanied teams of health care workers and volunteer vaccinators in five countries where the disease was still endemic. He produced an extraordinary photographic record as they traveled through the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Pakistan, Somalia, and Sudan—canvassing remote forest villages, desert towns, and refugee camps looking for children to vaccinate.

Also featured in the exhibition are:

Ed Kashi, whose "Aging in America: The Years Ahead" depicts the elderly population in the U.S. from a spectrum of social and economic classes: from active seniors remarrying in their eighties or running for public office to those who are sick and enfeebled.

Lori Grinker, whose striking portraits of veterans from "After War: Veterans from a World in Conflict" show people who live with a variety of physical and emotional wounds.

David Hanson, whose "Waste Land" project documents 67 of the most dangerously polluted sites in the United States. It incorporates color aerial photographs along with U.S. Geological Survey maps—which show the pervasiveness of the contamination—as well as site descriptions of the pollution from the Environmental Protection Agency.

John Collier, Marjory Collins, Jack Delano, Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, John Vachon, and Marion Post Wolcott, who created images for the Resettlement Administration and Farm Security Administration (FSA) in the 1930s and early 1940s, to show the benefits of New Deal programs such as health clinics, nutrition programs, and sanitation efforts.

**Exhibition Artists:**

- |                 |                     |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| John Collier    | Dorothea Lange      |
| Marjory Collins | Russell Lee         |
| Jack Delano     | Gideon Mendel       |
| Donna Ferrato   | Eugene Richards     |
| Lori Grinker    | Sebastião Salgado   |
| David Hanson    | W. Eugene Smith     |
| Lewis Hine      | John Vachon         |
| Ed Kashi        | Marion Post Wolcott |

**Sponsors:**

This exhibition was organized by the International Center of Photography with generous support from the Milbank Memorial Fund. Additional support has been provided by The JM Foundation, Philip Lehman Foundation, Milbank Foundation for Rehabilitation, and Dr. David Kronn and Anthony Vacchione.

Photographs in the exhibition are from the Permanent Collection of the International Center of Photography; the W. Eugene Smith Legacy Collection; the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson; The Photography Collections, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and individual exhibiting photographers.

**Publication:**

The Body at Risk: Photography of Disorder, Illness, and Healing

by Carol Squiers

Published by ICP/Milbank Memorial Fund/University of California Press

Design by Bethany Johns

233 pages with 30 color and 100 duotone images

9.5 x 8.5 in.

Softcover

US \$24.95

**Other exhibitions on view:**

*Che! Revolution and Commerce*

*African American Vernacular Photography: Selections from the Daniel Cowin Collection*

*Ken Light: Coal Hollow*

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**About ICP:**

The International Center of Photography (ICP) ranks among the world's foremost institutions dedicated to preserving the past and ensuring the future of photography. As both a museum and a school, ICP fosters the understanding and appreciation of photography as an artistic and educational endeavor.

In its museum exhibitions, ICP presents an extensive array of historical and contemporary photographs that reveal the power and range of the medium, from documentary photography to digital imaging. ICP strives to illuminate how photography expands our vision of the world, through thought-provoking exhibitions that nurture a popular dialogue on key social issues. As part of the institution's commitment to the broadest and most inclusive definition of photography and its possibilities, ICP celebrates photography's diversity in many roles: as an agent of social change, as a medium of aesthetic expression, as a tool for scientific or historical research, and as a repository for personal experience and memory.