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media release



Aaron Siskind, *Martha's Vineyard*, 1939. International Center of Photography.  
Courtesy Aaron Siskind Foundation.

## **A Short History of Photography: From the ICP Collection Honoring Willis E. Hartshorn, Ehrenkranz Director**

On view from  
May 18, 2012  
through  
September 2, 2012

Media Preview  
May 17, 2012  
11:30 am–1:30 pm

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*“The illiterate of the future,” someone has said, “will be ignorant not of reading or writing, but of photography.”*  
—Walter Benjamin, “A Short History of Photography” (1931)

In honor of Ehrenkranz Director Willis E. “Buzz” Hartshorn, the International Center of Photography presents an engaging survey of its vast and unique collection of photographs in the exhibition *A Short History of Photography* on view at ICP (1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street) May 18–September 2, 2012. This wide-ranging exhibition of 100 images includes the work of Eugène Atget, W. Eugene Smith, Cindy Sherman, Walker Evans, and André Kertész, among many others.

During his 18-year tenure as Director of ICP (1994-2012), Hartshorn oversaw a substantial growth of the Collection. Under his leadership, the size of the Photography Collection has more than doubled and the breadth has expanded from an original focus on documentary photography and photojournalism to embrace myriad alternative histories of photography. The Collection was established by ICP Founder Cornell Capa in 1975 as part of the original concept for ICP, and now includes more than 120,000 objects ranging from 19th century daguerreotypes to contemporary digital prints. Among the substantial holdings of individual prints, the Collection includes the archives of Robert Capa, Cornell Capa, Roman Vishniac, Weegee, Martin Munkacsi, Gerda Taro, and others. Major acquisitions under Hartshorn’s tenure include the Mexican Suitcase, a collection of negatives by Robert Capa, Taro, and Chim acquired in 2008; the *LIFE* Magazine Collection, a group of 1,000 vintage prints donated by Time-Life in 2006; and the Roman Vishniac Archive, donated in 2007, which will provide the basis for a major retrospective exhibition in 2013.

As *A Short History of Photography* demonstrates, the ICP Collection now emphasizes a global approach to contemporary photography, an interest in the uses of photography in reproduction in various printed media,

(more)

and an attention to historical forms of vernacular and commercial photography.

“One of the hallmarks of the ICP Collection is a focus on alternative histories of photography, including marginalized social practices of photography as well as popular and nonart approaches to the medium,” said Chief Curator Brian Wallis, who selected the work shown in this exhibition.

Hartshorn, who is himself a photographer and who studied under Nathan Lyons at the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, has emphasized the need to deploy the Collection to teach visual literacy. “In a world now largely governed by images,” he has said, “we need to develop visual literacy, to understand how pictures create meaning and shape our understanding of our everyday lives.”

The exhibition’s title alludes to German critic Walter Benjamin’s classic 1931 essay “A Short History of Photography,” an early and incisive investigation of the aesthetics and uses of photographic images.

Photographs in the ICP Collection are utilized for almost every ICP exhibition, for loans to other museums, and for ongoing study and research in the history of photography and visual culture. The entire ICP Collection is accessible to students, scholars, and other interested visitors by appointment. Visitors may view original prints, peruse archival documents, or consult the Collection’s digital catalogue. Much of the Collection is also accessible online via eMuseum, a searchable database of the Collection ([www.icp.org](http://www.icp.org)), and the Collections blog “Fans In a Flashbulb” ([fansinaflashbulb.wordpress.com](http://fansinaflashbulb.wordpress.com)).

*A Short History of Photography* was made possible with support from Roberta and Steven Denning, Christian Keese, and Stephanie and Fred Shuman, and with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



### **About ICP**

The International Center of Photography (ICP) was founded in 1974 by Cornell Capa (1918-2008) as an institution dedicated to photography that occupies a vital and central place in contemporary culture as it reflects and influences social change. Through our museum, school and community programs, we embrace photography’s ability to open new opportunities for personal and aesthetic expression, transform popular culture, and continually evolve to incorporate new technologies. ICP has presented more than 500 exhibitions, bringing the work of more than 3,000 photographers and other artists to the public in one-person and group exhibitions and provided thousands of classes and workshops that have enriched tens of thousands of students. Visit [www.icp.org](http://www.icp.org) for more information.

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