

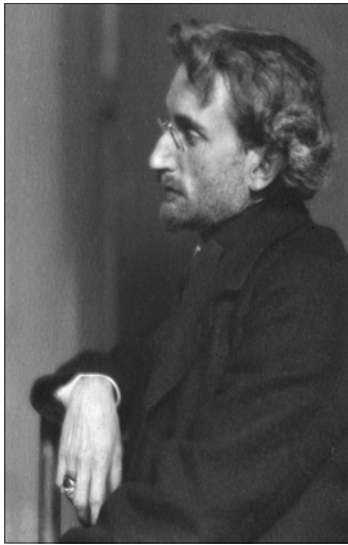
snap shots

Volume 15 Number 2

October 2009

PHSNE Meeting Features Patricia Fanning, Author of *Biography Through an Uncommon Lens: The Life and Photography of F. Holland Day* October 4th, 2009

F. Holland Day, a fascinating and colorful figure and an extraordinary artist, was a bibliophile, publisher, and photographer. He assembled one of the largest collections of Keatsiana in the world and, in 1894, traveled to England to dedicate the first ever memorial to Keats to an audience that included Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, and William Butler Yeats. Day cofounded the Boston publishing firm of Copeland and Day, which received considerable praise as innovators in fine publishing.



F. Holland Day, 1864—1933

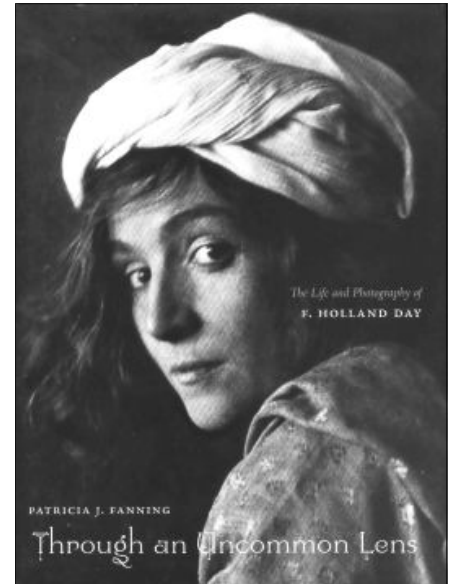
But it is for his photography that Day is most well known. His stunningly original, brilliantly executed, and sometimes controversial photographic images of blacks, children, and allegorical subjects brought him wide acclaim. Day most notably created photographic representations of the crucifixion of Christ, studies for which he was his own model. During the significant 1895-1905 period in photographic history, his fame rivaled that of Alfred Stieglitz.

Day's determination to promote photography as a fine art led him to organize an exhibition in London and Paris (1900-1901). Noted photographer Edward Steichen wrote in retrospect that this exhibition, containing close to 400 prints, was "like a bombshell exploding in the photographic world of London." Decades later, photographic critic Robert Doty agreed that Day's New School of American Photog-

raphy "was unquestionably the final move in establishing the reputation of American pictorial photography before the previously hostile stare of the European public and press."

The illustrated presentation at the October 4th PHSNE meeting will contain an overview of Day's life and career, some examples of his work, and information about his technical expertise and equipment. Members might be particularly interested in Day's own account of the "True and Faithful History of the Smith Lens."

Patricia Fanning's biography of F. Holland Day, *Through an Uncommon Lens: The Life and Photography of F. Holland Day*, was published by the University of Massachusetts Press in fall 2008.



It is the first biography of Day in more than 25 years and includes substantial new material. The book was nominated for the Charles C. Eldredge Prize, given annually by the Smithsonian American Art Museum for outstanding scholarship in the field of American art and was named an honor title in the 9th annual Massachusetts Book Awards competition sponsored by the Massachusetts Center for the Book. Fanning is an Associate Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Sociology at Bridgewater State College.

Polaroid Popular Once More in Germany

In an August article in *Spiegel Online*, Josie Cox wrote of a resurgent interest in Polaroid. She noted that “Just as vinyl records are making a comeback with hipsters everywhere, so too is analog photography. Polaroid cameras, with their retro looks and translucent pictures, are part of that trend. A Berlin shop founded by an Austrian photographer is giving hope to fans mourning the bankrupt brand.”

Cox reports that Austrian photographer Florian Kaps plan to manufacture film compatible with old Polaroid cameras starting in 2010. Financed by private donors, he purchased the former Polaroid manufacturing plant in Enschede, Netherlands and Polaroid equipment for producing film. Kaps also plans to manufacture new cameras



that will use similar technology but be made from “green” materials that are more durable.

Stores were opened in Vienna and Berlin, the only stores in the world dedicated to selling Polaroid cameras, film, and images. A film pack for ten photos costs 30 euros (\$43). Kaps is also selling Polaroid products through Urban Outfitters stores in the United States.

PHSNE Membership

PHSNE membership is \$15 for students, \$35 for individuals, \$40 for a family, and \$45 for foreign membership. Please send checks in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank or dollar-denominated international money orders for dues payments.

Current members can read their renewal date from the mailing label on *snap shots*. For example, “Dec 2010” means your membership expires in December of 2010. Please check your label before sending in your dues.

Send payments, changes of address, and other contact information, to Joe Walters Jr, PHSNE Membership Chair, P.O. Box 650189, West Newton, MA 02465 (phone: 617-694-5594; email: membership@phsne.org, or use the Web form at www.phsne.org/contacts).

snap shots, is published by the Photographic Historical Society of New England, Inc., P.O. Box 650189, West Newton, MA 02465-0189. Articles and exhibition/book reviews are always welcome.

Point Click Shoot: Celebrating Life Reflections of a Juror

In its general use, our attraction to the snapshot is driven by the personal knowledge and relationship we bring to it both in content and context, and far less by its form. Because of this, we overlook poor composition, exposure, color, etc. The image, crude as it may be, is important as a marker and memory of life events—ours or people we know or care about.

Creating an exhibition of snapshots is a different matter. Viewers—and the jury—do not have the advantage of personal relationship. Form now takes on more significance, and you can see evidence of this in the selections for the exhibit *Point Click Shoot: Snapshots Celebrating Everyday Life* at the Fitchburg Art Museum, the destination for the November 1st PHSNE meeting.

But form alone can’t explain why a snapshot can attract those outside the subject’s personal circle. Certainly we bring our own experiences to bear, which have varying degrees of commonality with the snapshot’s circle, but our experience of the image is bound to be quite different. As viewers, do we move the exhibited snapshot to an icon of our shared human/cultural experience, or is something else at work here? It would be interesting to gather comments from exhibition viewers on why images in the show attract them—or don’t—given that they lack the personal connection.

Another thing that struck me as we viewed the 600 entries is that until recently there has been a fairly clear distinction between the use of the snapshot and the professional photograph. The snapshot has generally been relegated to personal and semi-personal viewing. Photos have been put in albums of limited access, placed in wallets, and occasionally pinned to walls — often in a very informal manner and usually in semi-personal spaces (office, workshop). When one wanted a photograph for public display, for example a portrait or wedding photograph, a professional photographer was often engaged.

With the advent of digital photography, software, and printers, this distinction is disappearing. A number of the images we viewed were digitally created/printed by non-professionals and clearly intended for more public display. Certainly the explosion of “snapshots” on social networking sites blurs the distinction between personal and public display to an even greater degree.

- Ron Polito

Handyman Corner: **Better Than Botox**

Skin wrinkled, cracking, dried out, sagging or scaly? If the skin is on one of your cameras I can help. (Anywhere else try the Yellow Pages; Cosmetic Surgeons are the best bet.)

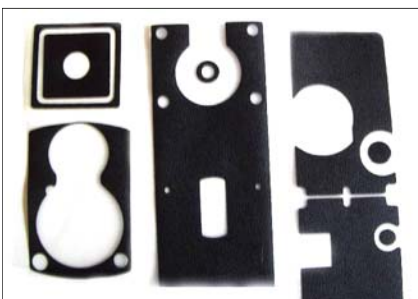
Older cameras sometimes show the ravages of time when their covering fails. Covering material has ranged from the inexpensive embossed paper, to exotic reptile leather, and everything in between. No matter what it is, age extracts a toll. The question is then to repair, restore, or to re-cover?

Real leather lends itself to restoration rather well. Saddle soap, neatsfoot oil, and other commercial preparations often do an excellent job. Minor repairs are often possible, IF, and this is a big if, matching material can be found. Sources to be considered include old wallets, pocketbooks, leather book coverings, old gloves, and anything else your imagination can come up with.

Artificial leather normally doesn't restore well, but vinyl repair kits sold in auto supply houses can go a long way if you are willing to experiment. These kits can provide a number of surface types and also can be colored to taste.

Finally, embossed paper can be improvised sometimes, but again, a lot of trial and error work is involved and in many cases the cameras involved aren't worth the effort required. (But remember, a challenge keeps the mind working overtime.)

Attempting to re-cover a camera is usually beyond the average person's abilities. If you want to try, I suggest that you start with a very simple body that has panels that are square or rectangular in shape. A pattern is helpful as it prepares you for making templates that are more complex if you continue on to more advanced projects.



Leathercrafters kit for Yashica repair

Finally, there are several companies that make covering kits for any number of cameras. In some cases the coverings are still available from manufacturers or other parts sources. A company that I have experience with is Leathercrafters. Their products have been excellent and their instruc-

tions are also excellent. One source of these kits is Morgan Sparks of Burlington, VT. The photos of the Yashica, before and after, were made during a project of re-covering using one of their kits.



Speaking from experience, this type of project is very rewarding but also very time consuming and tests patience and skills considerably. If I can help in any way, contact me at budmidgely1@verizon.net.

- Story and photos by Bud Midgely

Photographica 72 to take place October 24, 25 in Wakefield, MA



As of September 1st, 44 tables have been reserved. We continue to catalog items of interest for the auction to be

held on the first evening of Photographica 72. There are framed prints, camera kits that include flash units and cases, books, antique wooden film holders of all sizes, and many boxes of dollar table items.

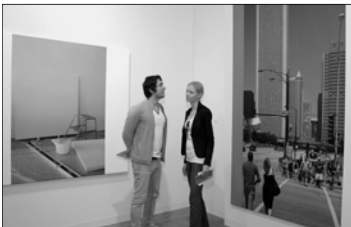


Seeking Articles for *snap shots* *About Collections or Unusual Items*

Recent *snap shots* articles featured unusual collections and /or individual items of photographica, and there are more in the works. These articles are of particular interest to our membership. Please let us know if you have a collection or a special item of interest that you would be willing to describe and photograph for an upcoming issue. Contact snapshots@phsne.org.

Art Basel Draws Worldwide Bidders

Basel, a small town in the Alsace region of France, attracts serious collectors of art, including photography, from Europe and beyond. Approximately 61,000 people attended the recent 40th edition of Art Basel in June. A similar event, under the same title, takes place in Miami every December and this year will be held December 3rd - 6th.



Bruno Bischofberger/Zurich

Photography dealers were located in two areas, though photography was for sale by many of the art dealers in other sections as well. One booth had 40 large albumen prints of the construction of the Forth Bridge by Evelyn Carey. Moon heliogravures by Loewy and Puiseux went for about 2,000 euros each.

A new work by Richard Misrach was displayed by the Fraenkel Gallery, a 93-1/2 x 119 inch color print of a color negative of a dune set in a metal frame at an asking price of almost \$100,000. Fraenkel also had a 56-1/4 x 135 inch triptych of miners by Avedon and a four panel panoramic by Robert Adams.

Sales included 25 unique vintage Lewis Baltz photographs of Maryland for "well into six figures," a large black and white photograph by Hans-Peter Feldmann of his own bookshelves for almost \$90,000 to a trustee of MoMA.

- Information from website at Iphotocentral.com

PHSNE Meetings

Meetings are usually held on the first Sunday of each month, September to June, at 1:30 p.m. at Waltham High School, preceded by a mini trade fair at 12:30 and an open meeting of the PHSNE board at 11:00 a.m.

November 1—*Point Click Shoot: Snapshots Celebrating Everyday Life*, Fitchburg Art Museum

December 6—*Pre-Civil War Photography of Children*, Lauren Hewes

Directions

Waltham High School is at 617 Lexington St., Waltham, MA. The high school is at the top of the hill, behind other school buildings.

From I-95 (Route 128) Northbound: Take Exit 27 and follow Totten Pond Rd. 1.2 miles east until it dead-ends into Lexington St. Turn left and go .5 miles north. Turn right into the school complex.

From I-95 (Route 128) Southbound: Take Exit 28, Trapelo Rd., east 1.3 miles to Lexington St. Turn right and go south .8 miles to school complex on the left.

From Boston/Cambridge: Take Rte. 2 west to Exit 54B, then Lexington St. south 1.7 miles to school complex on the left.

From Lincoln and West: Take Route 2 east to Exit 53, Concord Ave. Go east 1 mile, then right onto Lexington St. and 1.3 miles south to school complex on the left.

PHSNE Online

PHSNE's Web site is online at www.phsne.org. George Champine is the Webmaster.

Join the PHSNE Forum online discussion: sign up and log in at www.phsne.org/forum, moderated by Joe Walters. For an archive of back issues of *snap shots* and meeting presentations, visit www.phsne.org/archives.



PHSNE
P.O. Box 650189
West Newton, MA 02465-0189

Photographic Historical Society of New England
Next Meeting: Sunday, October 4
Waltham High School, 1:30 P.M.

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