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THE MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM NAMES ITS FIRST CURATOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

New York, NY, March 23, 2012—The Morgan Library & Museum announced today the appointment of Joel Smith as the first curator of photography in the institution's history. Currently curator of photography at Princeton University Art Museum, Mr. Smith will begin his work at the Morgan in September, and will focus his attention on building the collection and organizing related exhibitions and educational programs.



Joel Smith

The Morgan since its earliest years has had a small collection of photographs, including a few works acquired by Pierpont Morgan in the early twentieth century. Since 1924, when the Morgan became a public institution, further examples have regularly entered the collection as gifts and, less often, by purchase. The Morgan's holdings currently number several thousand photographs, ranging from the work of amateur or unknown photographers to vintage prints by major masters.

Mr. Smith was named the Peter C. Bunnell Curator of Photography at Princeton in 2011. Since arriving there in 2005, he has curated over a dozen exhibitions, including *Saul Steinberg: Illuminations*, a traveling exhibition that opened in 2006 at the Morgan; *Beloved Daughters: Photographs by Fazal Sheikh* (2007); *Pictures of Pictures* (2010); and *The Life and Death of Buildings* (2011).

“We are delighted that Joel will join our curatorial team at the Morgan, and we are extraordinarily excited about taking a more significant role in the study and exhibition of photography,” said William M. Griswold, director of the Morgan. “As an institution, the Morgan is committed to identifying ways to enhance its holdings of art, literature, and music. In 2006, we named our first curator of modern and contemporary drawings. Joel’s appointment is a further example of our efforts to build a collection that reflects the whole history of works on paper. I very much look forward to working with him in this important area.”

In 2007, the Morgan acquired sixty-seven photographs by Irving Penn portraying notable artists and writers, including Edward Albee, George Balanchine, Alberto Giacometti, and Barnett Newman. The following year, the Morgan purchased fourteen images by Diane Arbus, including portraits of Marcel Duchamp, Agnes Martin, Norman Mailer, Susan Sontag, and Frank Stella. Morgan Trustee Richard L. Menschel, who through the Charina Endowment Fund has established the endowment that will support the new position, played a crucial role in securing these important works.

Mr. Smith received his Ph.D. from Princeton in 2001. From 1999 to 2005, he was Fisher Curator at the Frances Loeb Art Center at Vassar College. Among his books are *Edward Steichen: The Early Years*, *Steinberg at the New Yorker*, and *The Life and Death of Buildings: On Photography and Time*.

“It is an honor and a pleasure to begin shaping a greater role for photography at the Morgan and to make its collection better known to the public,” Mr. Smith said. “The depth, intelligence, and singularity of the Morgan’s holdings in many allied fields—visual art, drama, literature, science, music, the history of the page and of the book—present an opportunity, and even the need, to tell photography’s life story differently here from anywhere else.”

“Since 1839, the camera has played a part in redefining every facet of life. Emphasizing photography’s deep involvement in the modern world, and in the life of the mind, is a logical expansion of the integrated view of human endeavor that one experiences at the Morgan. That will be a consistent keynote, whether the focus of a given show is on an artist, an idea, or a format, such as the photographic book. I look forward to working with my curatorial colleagues, whose work in their respective fields is of the highest quality.”

Many, but not all, of the photographs already at the Morgan portray figures whose work is represented in the museum's core holdings of drawings, letters, manuscripts, books, and music. The Morgan's collection includes rare, early daguerreotypes of Edgar Allan Poe (Samuel Masury and S.W. Hartshorn) and Washington Irving (studio of Mathew Brady). It owns a copy of William Henry Fox Talbot's *Pencil of Nature* and 342 lantern slides by Edward S. Curtis, which it acquired as a consequence of Pierpont Morgan's patronage of the artist. There are also albums of photographs that record the lives and travels of Morgan family members, and three albums by Fernand Lochard documenting the contents of Edouard Manet's studio at the time of his death.

Historically, photographs have been kept with the collections of several different Morgan departments: Printed Books and Bindings, Literary and Historical Manuscripts, Music Manuscripts and Printed Music, and Drawings and Prints. Although they are routinely incorporated in exhibitions of works in other media, over the years, the Morgan also has mounted a number of exhibitions solely on photography, including *Edward S. Curtis and Other Observers of the North American Indian* (1971), *Fox Talbot and the Earliest Photographs, 1833-1845* (1979), *The Golden Age of British Photography* (1985-86), *Edward Curtis and "The North American Indian"* (1988), and *Close Encounters: Irving Penn Portraits of Artists and Writers* (2008).

The Morgan Library & Museum

The Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today, more than a century after its founding in 1906, the Morgan serves as a museum, independent research library, musical venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. In October 2010, the Morgan completed the first-ever restoration of its original McKim building, Pierpont Morgan's private library, and the core of the institution. In tandem with the 2006 expansion project by architect Renzo Piano, the Morgan now provides visitors unprecedented access to its world-renowned collections of drawings, literary and historical manuscripts, musical scores, medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, printed books, and ancient Near Eastern seals and tablets.

General Information

The Morgan Library & Museum

225 Madison Avenue, at 36th Street, New York, NY 10016-3405

212.685.0008

www.themorgan.org

Hours

Tuesday–Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; extended Friday hours, 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; closed Mondays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. The Morgan closes at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.