

DOCUMENT

Contemporary Social Documentary Work from Greater Boston

“Responding to Photography” is an interactive guide designed to enhance your educational experience with exhibitions at the Photographic Resource Center. Educators are encouraged to use the information presented in the guide to prepare for their visit to the PRC.



The camera icon indicates an interactive prompt or activity that will guide you through the material and provide opportunities for discussion in your classroom.

- Introduction – p. 2
- From the Curator – p. 2
- Issues to Explore – p. 3
- Curriculum Connections – p. 3
- Art and Artists – p. 4-7

Documentary photography can provide a glimpse into the world and life of another person or place in time. It has the power to draw attention to important social issues that affect many people. **DOCUMENT: Contemporary Social Documentary Work from Greater Boston** features innovative social documentary-oriented work concerning the people and region of Greater Boston.

DOCUMENT contains works of art that present important yet challenging issues. Teachers are highly encouraged to preview the exhibition before bringing their students.

Boston and the DOCUMENT Scene

DOCUMENT concentrates on people-based documentary photography ranging from the deaf-blind community in Boston to the homeless in Chinatown, and reflects a variety of techniques. A number of photographers use one particular group or person to elaborate on issues that are specifically Boston-related, and others showcase issues that affect the whole nation. Several photographers incorporate a significant amount of text and background information; others aim for minimalism and overall aesthetic effect. This balance between “art” and “document” is an ongoing debate within documentary photography.

Remember

Each of the photographers in *DOCUMENT* has expressed to me, on various occasions and in various ways, an assortment of sentiments that begin with the same verb: “remember....” Remember the issues behind the photos. Remember the subjects. Remember that these people are sharing their life with us. I encourage you, as readers and viewers, to consider this advice as well. What do the subjects give (or not give) to the photographer and by extension, to us? What do we take from this documentary encounter? What could or should we give back to them?

Leslie K. Brown, PRC Curator



As you explore the artwork in *DOCUMENT*, think about the following:

SUBJECT MATTER What is going on in the image and how can you tell?

WHO are the subjects and what visual clues do you see that help you determine their identity?

ARTISTIC INTENT Why do you think the artist created the image?

UNIVERSALITY Does the image document something that is experienced by many people or just those in the photograph? How does that affect the value of the image?

FORM How does the artist's use of formal elements and composition strengthen the image?

TECHNIQUE How did the artist create the image and why do you think s/he chose to create it that way? For example: Is the image black and white or color? How does that choice affect the finished work?

issues to explore

School tours at the PRC are designed to support Citywide Learning Standards and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks using material presented in current exhibitions. The content presented in this guide is designed to help you prepare for your visit and is most suitable for students in grades 9-12 but may be adjusted to meet your needs.

Examples of Visual Art Content Standards connections for Grades 9-12

Content Standard	Proficient Achievement Standards	Advanced Achievement Standards
4. Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures	a. Students will analyze and interpret art works in relation to form, context, and purposes.	
5. Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of students' own work and the work of others.	a. Students will identify intentions of those creating artworks, explore the implications of various purposes, and justify their analyses of purposes in particular works.	a. Students will correlate responses to works of visual art with various techniques for communicating meanings, ideas, attitudes, views, and intentions.
	b. Students will describe meanings of artworks by analyzing how specific works are created.	b. Students will describe meanings of artworks by analyzing how specific works are created.
	c. Students will reflect analytically on various interpretations as a means for understanding and evaluating works of visual art.	c. Students will reflect analytically on various interpretations as a means for understanding and evaluating works of visual art.
6. Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines	b. Students will analyze the function of art in their lives and in society.	

curriculum connections

Mariliana Arvelo and James Patten

Mariliana Arvelo (Cambridge, MA), "Untitled" Newton, MA, 2005, C-print, 24 x 30 inches, Courtesy of and copyright Mariliana Arvelo



The photographs you see here are part of a series created by Mariliana Arvelo and James Patten. As part of this project, Arvelo photographed individuals from the Deaf Blind Contact Center, while also learning sign language.

Patten then created "tactile photographs" based on Arvelo's images using a CNC laser etching process and a computer program that he designed. Everyone can then view the touchable photograph.



Installation shot of Jaimi Laird touching James Patten's piece at the Plano Factory Gallery, July 2005. James Patten (Cambridge, MA), "Tactile Photograph" of Mariliana Arvelo's *Nagala'at performers II*, Watertown, MA, 2004, CNC laser etching on wood, 2005, 15 x 24 inches, Courtesy of the artists.



American Sign Language uses a series of hand, finger, and facial gestures to communicate words, phrases, and expressions. The first step in learning sign language is understanding the alphabet and knowing how to finger spell words. Using the American Sign Language alphabet at the end of this guide try to finger spell your name to a classmate.

Suzi Camarata



Suzi Camarata (Boston, MA), *Fuentes Market*, From the series "Inside Mission Hill" and the 2004 *Mission Hill Main Streets Calendar*, C-print, 2003, 12 1/4 x 12 1/4 inches, Courtesy of the artist and copyright Suzanne Camarata

Suzi Camarata has been photographing the local businesses in her Mission Hill neighborhood for the past three years. Her images capture the ethnically diverse population that makes the neighborhood unique. In recent years the artist has noticed that some of the small, local businesses are closing and being replaced by large, chain organizations.



Think about your neighborhood. How many of the businesses are locally-owned and operated and how many are part of a chain? What are the differences between the two?

Claire Beckett



Left: Lieutenant Alan Kent Perkins, 182nd Infantry, Dorchester, MA, from the series "National Guard" 2005, C-print, 16 x 20 inches, courtesy of the artist.

Right: Private Julian Javier Guzman, a newly enlisted soldier attending pre-basic training, Camp, Edwards, MA, 2005, 16 x 20 C-print.

Since 2004, Claire Beckett has been photographing members of the Massachusetts National Guard. Traveling to a variety of training facilities camps in the Greater Boston area—from Dorchester, to Hingham, Framingham, and the cape—Beckett usually stays the weekend along with these soldiers in training.



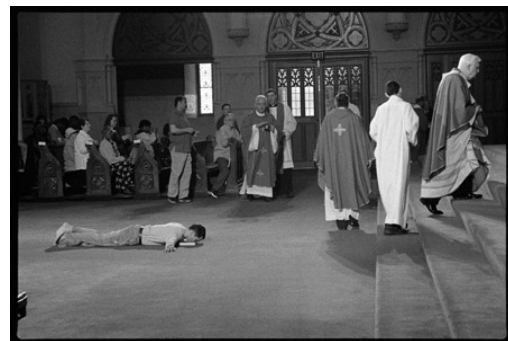
Compare these images of Lt. Perkins, who has served in the Guard for several years, and Private Guzman, who is in pre-Basic Training. What visual clues are provided that help show Lt. Perkins as being a senior ranking officer and having more experience than Private Guzman?

While comparing the two, also notice the differences in the following and think about why the artist made those decisions:

- How the subjects are posed
- The use of lighting and contrast
- What parts of the images are sharply in focus and what parts are not?

Lisa Kessler

Documentary photographers pay careful consideration to how they present the subjects in their work. Lisa Kessler covered the recent abuse crisis in the Boston Roman Catholic Church. She captured everything from protests (as seen here), to the church's reaction, and the resultant legislation.



Lisa Kessler (Boston, MA), *Prostrate, Boston, MA, May 2002*, From the series "Heart in the Wound: Sexual Abuse from the Catholic Church to Civil Society," 2002, gelatin silver print, 16 x 20 inches, Courtesy of and copyright Lisa Kessler



Strong images like this can help shape the public's opinion on issues and concerns. Do you think it is the responsibility of the artist to comment on these issues in their work or to present the issues as objectively as possible, without revealing any personal opinion?

Christopher Churchill

The image to the right is from Christopher Churchill's series taken at the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School. This school, located in Dorchester, is nationally recognized for being inclusive and integrating all students including those who are involved in regular education: students who have mild, moderate, and severe disabilities; and students considered talented and gifted.



Pictured here is Dr. William Henderson, principal of the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School. In the space provided describe how Churchill uses the following elements to create a strong composition and portrait of the subject.

Light:

Shadow:

Pattern:



Chris Churchill (Amesbury, MA), *Dr. William Henderson, Principle of the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School, Dorchester, MA, 2005*, Gelatin silver print, 40 x 32 inches, Edition of 5, courtesy of the artist

Surendra Lawoti



Left: Surendra Lawoti (Somerville, MA), *District Chief Peter St. Clair (Appointed October 31, 1977)*, from the series "Fire," C-print, 40 x 32 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Right: Surendra Lawoti (Somerville, MA), *James F Powers (Appointed October 30, 1977), Somerville Fire Department*, from the series "Fire," C-print, 2005, 40 x 32 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Surendra Lawoti's close-up and straightforward portraits of Somerville firefighters invite us to wonder about the subjects' experiences over the course of their careers. What is the worst fire they have seen? Have they ever lost a friend? How many lives have they saved?



The artist's use of color in these images is very powerful. Compare the color palette of these two photographs and discuss how it affects the overall mood. Does it influence how you feel about the subject? Why?

Michael Manning

This image is from a project the artist created in order to explore how a slumping economy and cuts in social programs were effecting the homeless in Boston. He photographed a group of people who were living on the streets around Chinatown. The group called themselves “La Familia” (The Family).



Michael Manning (Cambridge, MA), *Lee on the corner, Frances and Churro stay warm on the grate*, 2003, From the series "La Familia," 2003, Gelatin silver print, 12 x 18 inches, Courtesy of and copyright Michael Manning



How does the angle of this photograph affect the mood and energy of the image? How would the image differ if it were photographed head-on?

The person on the right-hand side of the photograph is Lee, a mother figure in “La Familia.” The artist had to first get permission from Lee before he could photograph the rest of the group. How do you think an artist’s relationship with his/her subject(s) may effect the final work?

*During the run of **DOCUMENT**, the PRC will be collecting clothes for the homeless. To find out what else you can do to help please visit the Friends of Boston’s Homeless website at www.fobh.org.*

Amber Davis Tourlentes



Amber Davis Tourlentes (Somerville, MA), detail of "Families On Stage," one family from the Boston area out of the series "Family Portraits," Archival ink jet print, 2002-2005, dimensions variable, Courtesy of the artist

For the past eight years, Amber Davis Tourlentes has been photographing her family as well as other non-traditional families who are of diverse backgrounds. She then exhibits many of her finished small photographs, side-by-side, in large grids. Seeing so many different types of people in these multiple images calls to attention what it really means to be a family.



All families are unique. Some are large, some are small, and some include friends as well. Describe at least four qualities that you feel define a family.

For more information on *DOCUMENT* including artist statements and images, websites, and a timeline of documentary photography, please visit www.bu.edu/prc/document. For more information on school tours and education programs please call 617.975.0600.

The American Sign Language (ASL) Alphabet with a description of ASL in Text.

All letters are signed using only the right hand, which is raised with the palm facing the viewer so a straight finger will normally point upwards.

When fingers are folded they point down across the palm.

When the thumb is folded it crosses the palm towards the little finger.

In these descriptions, left and right are from the position of the viewer.

In the case where the hand is turned or tilted, the positions of the fingers are described first for an upright hand and the turn or tilt is added.

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- A.** A closed fist, all finger folded against the palm, thumb is straight, alongside the index finger.
 - B.** All fingers are straight. Thumb is folded across palm.
 - C.** All fingers partially folded. Thumb is partially folded. Hand is turn slightly to the left so viewer can see backward "C" shape formed by thumb and index finger.
 - D.** Middle, ring and little fingers are partially folded. Tip of thumb is touching tip of middle finger. Index finger is straight. Hand is turned slightly so viewer can see "d" shape formed by thumb, middle and index fingers.
 - E.** Thumb is folded across in front of palm but not touching it. All fingers are partially folded with the tips of index, middle and ring fingers touching the thumb between the knuckle and the tip.
 - F.** Tip of index finger is touching tip of thumb. Middle, ring and little fingers are straight and slightly spread.
 - G.** Middle, ring and little fingers are folded down across palm. Thumb is straight but pulled in so that it is in front of the index finger. The index finger is straight and pointing forwards slightly so that it is parallel to the thumb. The thumb and index finger are not touching. The whole hand is turned towards the left and tilted slightly so the thumb and index finger are towards the viewer and pointing up at about 45 degrees.
 - H.** Ring and little finger are folded down. Thumb is folded over ring and little finger. Index finger and middle finger are straight and together. The hand is tilted over so that the fingers are horizontal and pointing to the left.
 - I.** Index, middle and ring fingers are folded down. Thumb is folded across index middle and ring fingers. Little finger is straight.
 - J.** Index, middle and ring fingers are folded down. Thumb is folded across index middle and ring fingers. Little finger is straight. The hand is moved so that little finger draws a "J" shape. Motion is a curve moving forward and then right. The hand turns to the right.
 - K.** Ring and little fingers are folded down. Index and middle finger are straight and slightly spread. Thumb is straight and pointing up to the middle finger. (This is very similar to V the only difference is the position of the thumb.
 - L.** Middle, ring and little finger are folded down over palm. Index finger and thumb are straight. Thumb is sticking out sideways at 90 degrees to index finger to form "L" shape.

- M.** Little finger is folded. Thumb is folded across to touch little finger. Index, middle and ring fingers are folded down over thumb.
- N.** Little and ring finger are folded. Thumb is folded across ring and little finger. Index finger and middle finger are folded down over thumb.
- O.** All fingers are partially folded. Thumb is partially folded and tip of thumb is touching tip of index finger. Hand is turned slightly so viewer can see "O" shape formed by thumb and index finger.
- P.** Ring and little finger are folded down. Index finger is straight. Middle finger is straight but pointing forward so that is at 90 degrees to index finger. Tip of thumb is touching middle of middle finger. Hand is turned to the left and twisted over so that index finger is horizontal and middle finger is pointing down. Viewer can (sort of) see a "P" shape formed by middle finger and thumb.
- Q.** Ring and little finger are folded down across palm. Thumb is straight but pulled in so that it is in front of the index finger. The index finger is straight and pointing forwards slightly so that it is parallel to the thumb. The index finger and thumb are not touching. The Middle finger is bent down and across to the right of the thumb. The whole hand is turned towards the left and tilted so the thumb and index finger are towards the viewer and pointing almost straight down.
- R.** Ring and little finger are folded against the palm, held down by thumb, index and middle finger are straight and crossed, index finger in front.
- S.** Clenched fist. All fingers folded tightly into palm. Thumb is across index and middle fingers.
- T.** Middle, ring and little fingers are fold down across palm. Thumb is folded across middle finger. Index finger is folded over thumb.
- U.** Ring and little finger are folded against the palm, held down by thumb, index and middle finger are straight and together.
- V.** Ring and little finger fold against the palm, held down by thumb, index and middle finger are straight and spread to form a "V" shape.
- W.** Tip of little finger is touching tip of thumb. Index, middle and ring fingers are straight and slightly spread.
- X.** Middle, ring and little fingers are folded down. Index finger is bent at both joints. Thumb is pulled in and slightly bent at the joint. The hand is turned to the left so viewer can see thumb and index finger.
- Y.** Index, middle and ring fingers folded against palm. Little finger and thumb are straight and spread wide.
- Z.** Middle, ring and little fingers are folded. Thumb is folded across middle and ring fingers. Index finger is straight. The hand is moved so that the tip of index finger draws out a "Z" shape. The motion is (1) from right to left. (2) from left to right and forward. (3) from right to left.

**For more information about the Photographic Resource Center,
visit www.prcboston.org**

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