

# *Annu Palakunnathu Matthew*

American, b. England, 1964

*Types, 2005*

**From the portfolio *An Indian from India (vol. 2)***

Inkjet print

Here Annu Palakunnathu Matthew presents a self-portrait that plays on her perceived “otherness” as an Indian immigrant living in the United States. Matthew paired a romanticized historical photograph of a Native American by Edward S. Curtis with an image of herself, modifying the garb and stereotypes of the original “other” to reflect her own culture and present questions about the colonial gaze.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Curtis and other photographers depicted Native people as “the vanishing race.” Curtis sought to record the dignity of his subjects, but his images staged narratives that rendered the people in them figuratively in the past, obscuring their continued presence.

UPPER LEFT

## *Studio of Kusakabe Kimbei*

Japanese, 1841–1934

### *Sumo Wrestlers, 1863–1914*

Albumen print with hand coloring

BOTTOM LEFT

## *Jean Pascal Sébah*

Turkish, 1872–1947

### *Posed Soldiers Thrusting Cannon Loading-Pole Towards the Camera*

*From the Album of Photographs of Scenes and People Taken in Egypt, late 1800s*

Albumen print

RIGHT

## *August Sander*

German, 1876–1964

### *Circus Artists, Düren (Zirkusartisten), 1930, printed later*

Gelatin silver print

In the 1800s, stereotypical images of exoticized peoples were commonly created by both foreign and domestic photography studios for consumption by Western tourist audiences.

After purchasing the negatives of two European photographers, the Japanese photographer Kimbei printed their images of sumo wrestlers and geisha as well as his own. This hybrid cultural narrative makes it impossible to determine whether his photographs are self-representation or “othering” by an artist from a different culture. Jean Pascal Sébah’s photograph of British soldiers in Egypt is similarly complicated. Sébah, a Turkish photographer of Syrian Armenian descent, sold individual portraits, “types,” and local scenes to both Ottoman and European customers.

German photographer August Sander turned a typological lens on his own country by photographing “people of the 20th century.” His nearly 600 portraits placed his subjects firmly within a larger context by identifying them only by occupation and economic class. The Nazis terminated his project because it contradicted their racial categorizations.

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Albumen print with hand coloring

LOWER

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UPPER

## *Sebastião Salgado*

Brazilian, b. 1944

### *A Moment of Rest, Serra Pelada Mine, 1986*

Gelatin silver print

LOWER

## *Agustín Victor Casasola*

Mexican, 1874–1938

### *A Village Evacuation During the Ten Tragic Days, February, 1913*

Gelatin silver print

In documentary and journalistic photographs, depictions of crowds can underscore the gravity of dire circumstances. At top, workers haul sacks of earth out of the Serra Pelada gold mine in Brazil. Sebastião Salgado's presentation highlights the appalling conditions and chaotic danger of the operation, which employed more than 100,000 workers at its peak.

Agustín Victor Casasola composed his frame (bottom) so that the line of evacuating civilians extends to either side, suggesting the large number of people affected by the Mexican Revolution's Ten Tragic Days, during which Mexico City suffered catastrophic damage and thousands were killed.

LEFT

## ***Walker Evans***

American, 1903–1975

### ***Detail from Penny Picture Display Window, Savannah, Georgia, 1936***

Gelatin silver print

RIGHT

## ***Henry Horenstein*** (RISD BFA 1971 and MFA 1973, Photography; RISD Faculty, 1982–present)

American, b. 1947

### ***Bartender, Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, Nashville, Tennessee, 1974***

#### **From the series *Honky Tonk***

Gelatin silver print

The mania for collecting photographs that began in the 1800s continues today through “liking” friends’ and celebrities’ Instagram posts. In the 1900s, Walker Evans and Henry Horenstein captured glimpses of the ways communities picture themselves. Evans’s photo (left) documents pictures displayed in the window of a Depression-era studio photographer, enticing other people to take a look and perhaps sit for their own portrait. At right, Horenstein portrays Wanda Lohman presiding over the bar at Tootsie’s Orchid Lounge, a famous honky-tonk around the corner from the Grand Ole Opry. Tootsie’s “wall of fame” included photographs, signed posters, album covers, and memorabilia, a kind of community scrapbook of the country-music world.

Gift of James Dow 71.043.28

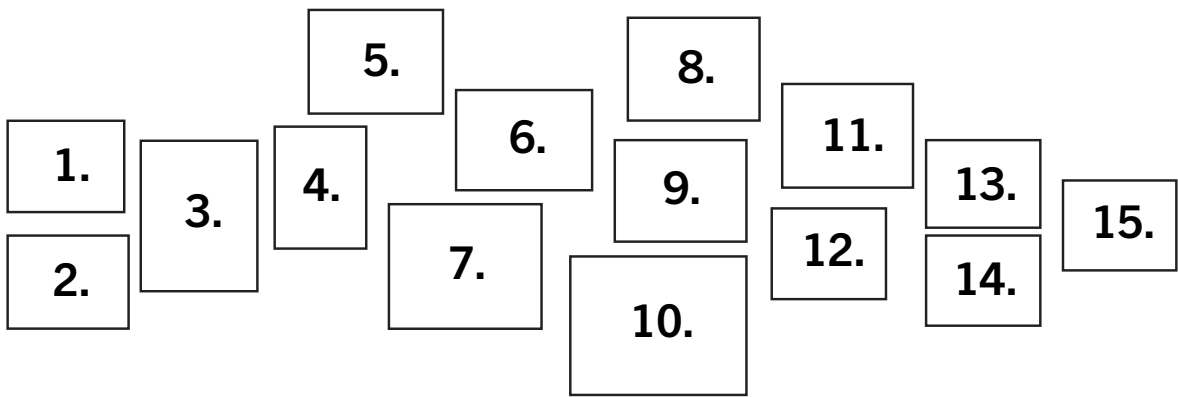
Walter H. Kimball Fund 2007.116.6

British

***Alpine Landscape with Figures, ca. 1860***

Pen and ink, graphite, and albumen prints on paper

In the 1800s, many middle- and upper-class British women enjoyed compiling albums, a favored pastime that exhibited the skills in watercolor and lettering that were part of their genteel education. The woman who likely created this scene went on a flight of fancy, adding photographs of people in her intimate sphere to a fictional landscape. Photocollages such as this one were very popular in fashionable circles and ranged from witty to whimsical, allowing their makers to reimagine memories as they saw fit.



The photographs on this wall—whether staged portraits or candid shots, taken in private or public spaces—portray people coming together. In some images, individuals socialize, enjoying common interests and experiences; in others, they gather for political change, assembling a more powerful group. Still other photographs capture the anonymity that comes from living in close urban quarters. Some subjects clearly identify themselves within a given group and others find themselves caught up in one, through happenstance or external assignment.

**1. James Van Der Zee**

**RECENT ACQUISITION**

American, 1886–1983

*Reception in the Office of the C. J. Walker Company*, 1929

Gelatin silver print

Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chagan MD 2018.15

**2. Aaron Siskind** (RISD Faculty 1971–1976, Photography)

American, 1903–1991

*Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters*

From the series *Harlem Document*, 1932–1940

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Matrix Publications, Inc. and Alpha Partners 83.031.38

Here a gentle tension is created by the solitary figure meeting the gaze of the camera with apparent distrust. This photograph depicts the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first labor organization led by African Americans to receive a charter from the American Federation of Labor. Aaron Siskind was a young white photographer working with the Photo League, a left-leaning social-documentary group in New York, when he produced the series *Harlem*

*Document*. Although Siskind intended these photographs to advocate for improved living conditions, they were often used in ways that reinforced negative stereotypes about the neighborhood.

**3. Sanlé Sory**

**RECENT ACQUISITION**

Burkinabe, b. 1943

*The Young Music Lover* (Les Jeunes Mélomanes), 1974, printed 2017

Gelatin silver print

Museum purchase: gift of Mark Pollack 2018.17

**Morris Engel**

American, 1918–2005

*Coney Island*, 1939

Gelatin silver print

Jesse Metcalf Fund 2001.65.1

**5. Ernest C. Withers**

American, 1922–2007

*Lionel Hampton, The Hippodrome*

From the series *The Memphis Blues Again*, 1950s

Gelatin silver print

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2007.48.3.2

**6. Garry Winogrand**

American, 1928–1984

*New York City*, 1971

From the portfolio *Garry Winogrand*, 1978

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mr. Frederick J. Myerson 82.303.8

**7. Susan Meiselas**

American, b. 1948

*Before the Show, Tunbridge, Vermont*, 1974

From *The PRC Portfolio*, 2008

Gelatin silver print

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2009.47.11



Susan Meiselas was 24 years old and fresh out of graduate school when she began her first major photographic essay, focused on the women who stripped at small-town carnivals in New England. By talking her way into tents that posted just one hard rule: “No ladies and no babies,” Meiselas embedded herself in the dancers’ inner world, photographing their public performances and private lives, ultimately recording interviews with them to more clearly present their perspectives.

### 8. Danny Lyon

American, b. 1942

*The Line, Ferguson Unit, Texas*, 1967–1969

From the portfolio *Danny Lyon*, 1979

Gelatin silver print

Anonymous gift 81.256.11

The powerful linear composition and strong contrasts of this photograph make a stark visual statement about the institutionalized discrimination that led to belonging in this group, defined by its lack of freedom and choice. Granted permission by the Texas Department of Corrections to photograph freely, Danny Lyon produced a raw, visceral portrait of the American penitentiary system.

### 9. Bruce Davidson

RECENT  
ACQUISITION

American, b. 1933

*Martin Luther King Jr. at a Press Conference, Birmingham, Alabama*

From the series *Time of Change*, 1962, printed later

Gelatin silver print

The Jerome Corwin and Phyllis Littman Corwin Fund 2017.14

In this portrait, Martin Luther King Jr. focuses intensely on his notes as a press conference swirls around him. Bruce Davidson engaged issues of racial equality throughout much of his career, conscious of his position as a white photographer. An African American woman watching Davidson photograph her Harlem street block once admonished, “What you call a ghetto, I call my home”—something he did not forget.

### 10. Lisette Model

American, 1906–1983

*Running Feet, 5th Avenue*, 1940

Gelatin silver print

Museum purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 80.229

### 11. Jyoti Bhatt

RECENT  
ACQUISITION

Indian, b. 1934

*Haryana, Woman Making Sanjhi at Craft Village, New Delhi*, 1977

Gelatin silver print

Walter H. Kimball Fund 2015.21.2

### 12. Aaron Siskind (RISD Faculty 1971–1976, Photography)

American, 1903–1991

*Untitled*

From the series *Harlem Document*, 1932–1940

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Matrix Publications, Inc. and Alpha Partners 83.031.21

### 13. Jules Aarons

American, 1921–2008

*North End, Boston*, 1955

Gelatin silver print

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2004.32.2

### 14. Gordon Parks

American, 1912–2006

*Boys in Car Window, Harlem*, 1950s

Gelatin silver print

Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 2001.68.1

### 15. Lewis Wickes Hine

American, 1874–1940

*Royal Mill Workers, River Point, Rhode Island*, 1909

Gelatin silver print

Jesse Metcalf Fund 2002.29.1

In the early 1900s, Lewis Hine documented a number of child laborers, including those working as spinners and doffers at one of Rhode Island’s largest mills, located in West Warwick. A photographer for the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), Hine helped raise awareness of the plight of child workers, which eventually led to the first child labor laws.

## **Photo Album, early 1900s**

**RECENT  
ACQUISITION**

Gelatin silver prints mounted onto black album paper

## ***Conly Studio***

American, Boston, active 1884–1894

## **Portrait of Cora Nash, late 1800s**

Albumen print cabinet card

## **Group Portrait of Athletes, ca. 1880s**

**RECENT  
ACQUISITION**

Tintype

In the second half of the 1800s, standard-sized, mass-produced photographs such as the tintype and cabinet card were introduced. Middle-class and working-class consumers could afford to visit a photography studio and sit for a portrait, buying copies by the dozen to share with friends and family; at the same time, they could purchase portraits of celebrities. Collecting photographs and gathering them in albums became a popular hobby, allowing people to create their own “dream” social networks. People today continue to fill albums with pictures of their loved ones.

Gift of Peter J. Cohen in honor of Luke Cohen, RISD BFA 1971,  
BArch 1972, Architecture 2015.91.145

Gift of John Carpenter 1986.148

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# *Arthur S. Mole*

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Arthur Mole specialized in “living photographs”—special patriotic novelty images he made by posing thousands of soldiers to form iconic American symbols. The images ranged from flags to portraits of leaders such as President Woodrow Wilson, and were intended to promote American nationalism and boost morale as the United States entered World War I or—in the case of this photograph—to spell out victory after its conclusion.

Partial gift of Mr. and Mrs. Barnet Fain 2001.80.96

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Primarily American

## Untitled, ca. 1890s–1980s

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ACQUISITION**

30 gelatin silver, color chromogenic, dye diffusion (Polaroid) and cyanotype prints

Over the last few decades, snapshots and other everyday photographs have been collected and exhibited with serious interest. These images, celebrated for their fresh, “real” insights into specific times and places, offer what can be critical historical information. However, the act of bringing snapshots into a museum context divorces them from their original use and personal value as private objects—objects that were circulated and cherished. Their arrangement here gives some sense of a traditional photo-album display, but the thematic groups point to layers of collecting interest and curatorial selection.

Peter J. Cohen scoured flea markets, garage sales, and shops for years, amassing a collection of about 50,000 snapshots. Distinctive categories have helped him focus his selections, including At Play, Kids, Picnics, and Women Organized Neatly. Cohen has generously donated his snapshots to museums, inviting curators to make selections from his collection.

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