

Inside-Out: Portrait Photographs from the Permanent Collection

July 2 – October 25, 2009

When a subject and a photographer come together and agree that a likeness will be made a complex dynamic is set in motion. Vanity comes into play, as does the subject's comfort or discomfort at being scrutinized by the camera. The influence of popular culture can also affect body posture and expression, as can the relationship between the photographer and the sitter. Do they know each other? And if so, is there trust or intimacy between them?

This exhibition contains a selection of works, drawn largely from the Henry's noted Joseph and Elaine Mosen collection of photographs that suggests a broad definition of portraiture. Some artists, including Jim Goldberg and Patrick Faigenbaum, photograph new acquaintances in their homes. By contrast, Nan Goldin and Nicholas Nixon portray friends and family, or individuals with whom they have cultivated a relationship. Photographs by Imogen Cunningham and Aleksandr Rodchenko depict men and women of arts and letters.

In the most compelling portraits there is often a collision of wills, an exposure of vulnerability, a seduction, or surrender. The public face that a sitter would like the world to see is tempered by something deeper. Multiple layers of experience are brought to the surface and the inside is turned out for us to see. The works in this exhibition assert photography's capacity both to register a subject's physical characteristics and hint at the complexity within.

Sylvia Wolf, Director

Extended wall texts were written by Merith Bennett, Alexandra McLafferty, Sara Krajewski, and Sylvia Wolf. The authors are acknowledged on the labels by their initials.