

**MoMA PRESENTS AN EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL GRAHAM FROM HIS 12-VOLUME EDITION OF BOOKS TITLED *A SHIMMER OF POSSIBILITY***

**Series of Photographs Depict Graham's Observations of Everyday Life in His Travels Across the United States**

*a shimmer of possibility. Photographs by Paul Graham*

February 4–May 18, 2009

Robert and Joyce Menschel Photography Gallery, third floor

**NEW YORK, January 8, 2009**—The Museum of Modern Art presents *a shimmer of possibility. Photographs by Paul Graham*, an exhibition of work by artist Paul Graham (British, b. 1956), who had moved from London to New York in 2002, and, in August of 2004, set out on the first of many meandering trips around the United States to see the country and to take photographs. The exhibition presents nine photographic series from these trips, amounting to some 50 photographs in total, installed with stretches of empty wall to reflect the poetic nature of the work. Each series transcends its nominal subject—a man mowing a lawn, or a woman eating a take-out meal—to describe aspects of life that, while ordinary, are imbued by Graham with affection and curiosity.

The works in the exhibition were selected from a publication of Graham's photographs titled *a shimmer of possibility* (steidIMACK, 2007), which comprises 12 volumes. Each simple yet structurally inventive series includes varying numbers of pictures, from one to nine, and provides a vivid glimpse into unheralded moments of the individual lives Graham encountered on his travels. There are no beginnings, middles, or ends in each filmic series, but a sense of continuation that alludes to narrative.

The exhibition is organized by Susan Kismaric, Curator, Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art, and will be on view in The Robert and Joyce Menschel Photography Gallery, third floor, from February 4 through May 18, 2009.

Explains Ms. Kismaric, "The aspects of American life that Walker Evans, Robert Frank, and Joel Sternfeld identified 80, 50, and 30 years ago—the embattled contrasts, the racism and economic disparity, the consumers, the loneliness, the bad architecture, the disenfranchised—are also present in *a shimmer of possibility*, but Graham's attention deflects their predictable impact on us, so that instead of only recoiling at a problem we feel we can't do anything about, we let our attention be drawn to the normalcy of life and the small pleasures people experience."

Graham walked the streets of residential neighborhoods in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Louisiana, and the sidewalks of New Orleans, Las Vegas, and New York, and when he encountered someone who caught his eye, he photographed them: an older woman retrieving her mail; a young man and woman playing basketball at dusk; a couple returning from the supermarket. Graham

followed people navigating their way through crowded city sidewalks, and tracked and photographed lone figures crossing a busy roadway, unaware of the camera.

Reviewing several trips' worth of photographs on the large, flat screen of his computer, Graham realized that the more or less randomly gathered pictures could be united into multipart works. As in a poem, where language and rhythm organize words, lines, and stanzas into an imaginative interpretation of a subject, Graham's imposed yet open-ended structures imply—through close-ups, crosscutting, and juxtapositions of people and nature—specific narratives and overarching ideas. Images of people placed in tandem with other people and with nature suggest the flow of life, pointing to the unknown and the possibility of change, with nature acting as a balm, whether as raindrops, trees silhouetted against a burning sunset, or the bright green grass on a highway meridian.

In his reconstruction of the world in pictures, Graham describes an America at odds with itself, filled with contradictions and inconsistencies. Yet, through the gloom, the small felicities of life peek through. Fluid, filled with desire, and marked by extremes, his view is what the late curator, critic, and photographer John Szarkowski called, in another context, a “just metaphor” for our times.

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## **No. 2**

**Public Information:**

**The Museum of Modern Art,**

11 West 53rd Street, New York, NY 10019

**Hours:**

Wednesday through Monday: 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday: 10:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m. Closed Tuesday

**Museum Admission:**

\$20 adults; \$16 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$12 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs)  
Target Free Friday Nights 4:00-8:00 p.m.

The public may call 212/708-9400 for Museum information. Visit us on the Web at [www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org).