

The Museum of Modern Art

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NEW PHOTOGRAPHY 3

October 15, 1987 - January 5, 1988

The Museum of Modern Art's annual NEW PHOTOGRAPHY series opens October 15, 1987, with an exhibition of work by three contemporary photographers. Organized by Susan Kismaric, curator in the Department of Photography, NEW PHOTOGRAPHY 3 presents recent photographs by Paul Graham, Barbara Norfleet, and Thomas Roma. Continuing through January 5, 1988, this is the second exhibition in the series sponsored by Springs Industries, Inc.

The work of British photographer Paul Graham was selected from his book Beyond Caring (1986), a series of photographs originally commissioned for The Photographers' Gallery in London as part of the project "Britain in 1984." Graham traveled to employment and social services offices across Britain, often concealing his camera and shooting surreptitiously. The boredom and frustration of Graham's subjects is magnified by his seductive use of color and the poster-size format of the prints. In "Crouched Man, DHSS Waiting Room, Bristol," for example, the hunched form of a despondent man nearly fills the thirty-by-forty-inch frame. Following in the tradition of Walker Evans's and Dorothea Lange's photographs of rural America during the Depression, Graham's pictures renew our belief in the power of photography to stimulate social awareness.

Born in 1956 in Stafford, England, Graham studied microbiology at Bristol University. Self-employed since 1977, he has exhibited extensively in Great Britain and currently lives in London. His other books include Troubled Land:

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The Social Landscape of Northern Ireland (1987) and A1: The Great North Road (1983).

Barbara Norfleet's most recent series departs from earlier work that focused on social behavior in America, including the private lives of the wealthy. In 1984 she began taking pictures of wild and domestic animals, which she had lured with food to unnatural settings. Selecting various rural and suburban locales, Norfleet arranged a variety of objects--such as strips of film, a paperback novel, or her parked car--and startled the animals at night with the camera's flash. In one work, a raccoon is caught among vials of prescription drugs and seems to look at the camera with violent resentment. Kismaric notes, "The animals appear to have thrown off their noble, self-contained personae to adopt our neuroses and qualities." The vivid color of the prints heightens the drama of Norfleet's tableaux, where nature meets civilization in bizarre confrontations.

Norfleet holds a doctorate in social relations from Harvard University, where she has taught for the past thirty years. She developed an interest in photography in the early seventies, resulting in the publication of Killing Time: Photographs by Joe Steinmetz (1982) and the anthologies The Champion Pig: Great Moments in Everyday Life (1979) and Wedding (1975). In 1986 she published the first book of her photographs, entitled All the Right People. Since 1972 she has been curator and director of photography at Harvard University's Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts. Norfleet is the recipient of numerous awards, including grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation.

Thomas Roma's black-and-white photographs, taken in Sicily in the last five years, are an extension of his earlier work depicting the Italian

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neighborhoods of his native Brooklyn. In the Sicilian series, Roma focuses on the island's landscape, architecture, and people, describing an ancient culture little changed by contemporary society. Kismaric notes, "Individuals are elevated to archetypes and the connection of the people to the land appears irredeemable, despite occasional details of modern life." In one of the photographs concentrating on shepherds, for example, a handsome youth leans against a stick in a classical pose, a digital watch on his left hand. Roma prints from larger negatives using paper which has been waxed, capturing the extraordinary light of the Mediterranean landscape and giving his photographs a hazy, almost luminescent quality.

Roma, who is self-taught, has been photographing since 1969. In 1974 he founded the Siciliano Camera Works to manufacture a medium-format camera of his own design. The recipient of New York State Council and Guggenheim Foundation grants, Roma is currently a faculty member at the Yale School of Art and has taught at Pratt Institute and The School of Visual Arts, New York. His work has been exhibited throughout the United States and is represented in several major collections.

The annual NEW PHOTOGRAPHY series continues the Museum's longstanding commitment to lesser-known photographers whose work represents the most interesting achievements of recent photography. The series was initiated in 1985 with an exhibition of works by Zeke Berman, Antonio Mendoza, Judith Ross, and Michael Spano. In 1986 Springs Industries, Inc., gave a major grant to support the series for a three-year period. NEW PHOTOGRAPHY 2 featured the work of Mary Frey, David Tavener Hanson, and Philip Lorca diCorcia.

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For further information or photographic materials, contact the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9750.