

NEWS

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PRESS RELEASE

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For Information Contact:

Rebekah Lamb, 617/353-3329

lambo@bu.edu

www.bu.edu/ART

In the Vernacular
Everyday Photographs from the Rodger Kingston Collection
November 5, 2004 - January 23, 2005

OPENING RECEPTION: Friday, November 5, 6-8 p.m.

CONFERENCE

Vernacular Reframed, a two-day interdisciplinary conference examining issues in vernacular photography. For more information and registration, please visit www.bu.edu/art.

November 5th & 6th, 2004

Boston— *In the Vernacular: Everyday Photographs from the Rodger Kingston Collection* is the first exhibition to fully highlight the exceptional breadth and variety of the Rodger Kingston collection. Since the 1970s, Kingston has assembled a vast collection of visually striking images by primarily anonymous photographers. Drawing from this collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century photographs and photo objects, *In the Vernacular* will explore some of the many functions that photographs have had outside the gallery and museum. The types of images and objects on display will be familiar to the contemporary viewer: snapshots, wedding photographs, news and advertising images, insurance pictures, family pictures, travel albums, school class portraits, pin-up photos, calendars, identification badges, photo buttons, and even a photographic bandana.

Over the last 160 years, photographs have been made, used, collected, and discarded in greatly increasing numbers. Despite the photograph's growing presence in daily life, until recently most types of everyday photography have remained unexamined by historians and have been absent from the walls of galleries and museums. An increasing awareness of the ubiquity of photographic production and use, and of the absorption of modern social life with photography in all its many forms, is leading scholars to consider photography as a 'vernacular' practice. This reframing of the history of photography serves as the starting point for *In the Vernacular*.

Despite the possibility of misinterpretation, the term, "vernacular" is purposefully used in the exhibition to generate multiple associations. In a broad sense, "vernacular" defines that which is domestic or indigenous. In popular usage, the term refers to the common or everyday, and can further identify the personal or private. "Vernacular photography," therefore, represents the kind of photographic production that permeates daily existence. *In the Vernacular: Everyday Photographs from the Rodger Kingston Collection*, hopes to frame the photographs presented in a historical and cultural context that encourages viewers to contemplate how photography is enmeshed in their own histories and their own individual lives. Even as we enter the twenty-first century, photographs continue to serve a variety of social needs. What accounts for the longevity and persuasiveness of photographic representations? Why do we continue to hold on to them? What grants them their power?

The variety of photographic practices that have appeared over the last two centuries presents a daunting series of questions to curators and historians: How are vernacular images and objects to be organized? How are they to be interpreted and understood? What meanings does the vernacular image hold for the contemporary viewer? In emphasizing categories of photography that have been overlooked, *In the Vernacular*, and its related programming, will present previously unseen photographs and photographic objects in a contemporary critical context. Co-curated by Stacey McCarroll (Director & Curator of the Boston University Art Gallery), and Ross Barrett (Warren G. Adelson Curatorial Fellow in American Art in the Art History Department at Boston University), the exhibition includes approximately 160 photographs and objects made between 1850 and 1970.

Vernacular Reframed, a two-day interdisciplinary conference, will elaborate on the themes explored in the exhibition. Speakers will examine the history of vernacular photography through the following topics: approaches to the vernacular, a vernacular history of photography, vernacular pictures and practices, and vernacular collectors and collections. *Vernacular Reframed* will bring together the foremost historians, curators, and collectors in the field to discuss the questions provoked by vernacular images. With this project, the Boston University Art Gallery is in the unique position of being on the forefront of vernacular photography studies, and we are thrilled at the prospect of contributing something new to the scholarship.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

LECTURE

Rodger Kingston will discuss his thirty years collecting vernacular photographs.

Friday, November 5, 5-6 p.m.

Jacob Sleeper Auditorium

College of General Studies, 871 Commonwealth Avenue

GALLERY TALKS

A series of gallery talks on a range of vernacular topics will be held throughout the run of the exhibition. Please visit www.bu.edu/art for a detailed list of speakers and a schedule.

**EXHIBITION AND GALLERY TALKS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.
SEE OUR WEBPAGE FOR CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEES.**

IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Information

Boston University Art Gallery

855 Commonwealth Avenue

Boston, MA 02215

TEL (617) 353-3329

FAX (617) 353-4509

Gallery Hours

Tuesday-Friday 10am - 5pm

Saturday & Sunday 1 - 5 pm

www.bu.edu/ART

The **Boston University Art Gallery** (BUAG) is a non-profit art gallery geared toward an interdisciplinary interpretation of art, and committed to a culturally inclusive viewpoint that expands the boundaries of the museum. Exhibitions focus on international, national and regional art developments chiefly in the 20th century; seek to present the cultural and historical context of art; and to acknowledge the artistic contributions of under-recognized sectors of the population. BUAG is located at 855 Commonwealth Avenue, inside the College of Fine Arts at Boston University (BU West T stop on the B Green Line).

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