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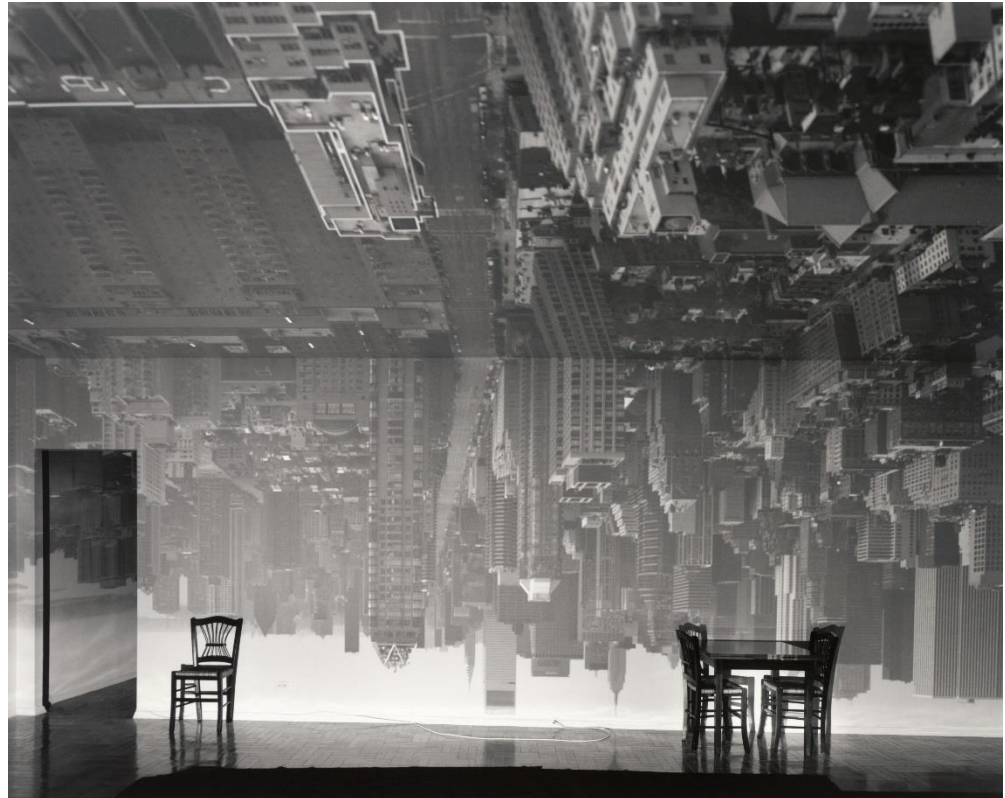
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Art of Illusion* Photography Exhibition Challenges Adage ‘Seeing is Believing’**

Opens at Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art July 2020

Kansas City, MO. Feb. 6, 2020—Does photography accurately reflect the things we see? Or does it merely present illusions? Those are the central questions explored in an exhibition opening this summer at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City. *Art of Illusion: Photography and Perceptual Play*, curated by April Watson, is comprised of 50 photographs from the museum’s permanent collection, many of them recent acquisitions and never before on view.

“The photographs in *Art of Illusion* provide engaging opportunities to consider the ways we form our perceptions of the world through photographs,” said Julián Zugazagoitia, Menefee D. and Mary Louise Blackwell CEO & Director of the Nelson-Atkins. “Seeing and believing have important correlations that



impact our notions of truth and reality. That relationship, as understood in photographs, is not always obvious.”

The majority of works included in this exhibition date from 1970 to the present. Many of the artists use photography in combination with painting, drawing, or sculpture, fabricating subjects to be recorded by the camera. Others maneuver the camera’s optical and technical controls, creating clever visual puzzles that toy with our understanding of space, scale, and distance.



“It is great fun to view these works up close, to try to figure out how these photographs were made, and decipher what the artists are trying to convey about photography and its relationship to physical reality,” said April M. Watson, Photography Curator. “Many of these photographers have a wry and witty sense of humor, which is evident in the works themselves.”

Most of the artists featured work in a straight, documentary-style manner, working without the use of overt darkroom manipulations or editing software to construct their illusions. Photographers such as Arno Minkkinen, Lilly McElroy, Abelardo Morell, Graham Howe, Michel Szulc-Krzyzanowski, Zeke Berman, Grant Mudford, and John Pfahl play with the fundamental laws of optics, perspective, and vantage point to create spatial confusion and optical illusions.

Other photographers, such as Robert Cumming, Jerry McMillan, Marcia Resnick, Rodrigo Valenzuela, and Liat Elbling find and fabricate subjects to be photographed, blurring the fictive and evidentiary functions of the medium. Artists Thomas Demand, John Divola, and Hiroshi Sugimoto explore the tenuous relationship between descriptive representation and original subject matter, prompting us to consider the role photography-as-illusion plays in shaping history and memory. Kenneth Josephson and Thomas Barrow disrupt the illusionistic space of the picture plane, calling attention to the way photographs are framed and mistakenly understood as seamless records. Duane Michels and Lew Thomas use language as imagery to challenge the correlation between photography and cognition.

Ruth Thorne-Thomsen, Michael Bishop, Vik Muniz and the team of Cortis & Sonderegger look directly to the history of photography for inspiration, re-conceiving iconic images and poking fun at the way these venerated photographs are constructed and understood as records of truth. In a recent “photographic drawing” (and the only work in the exhibition created using Photoshop), David Hockney continues his longstanding investigation of image construction by unifying a variety of shifting vantage in a singular frame.

Image: Abelardo Morell, American (b. Cuba, 1948). Camera Obscura Image of Manhattan View Looking South in Large Room, 1996. Gelatin silver print, 18 x 22 1/2 inches. Gift of Hallmark Cards, Inc., 2005.27.4060

John Pfabl, American (b. 1939). Australian Pines, Fort DeSoto, Florida, 1977. Inkjet print (printed 2016), 14 x 13/16 x 19 inches. Gift of the Hall Family Foundation, 2016.75.235.

Exhibition credit line: Organized by The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. This exhibition is supported by the Hall Family Foundation.

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

The Nelson-Atkins in Kansas City is recognized nationally and internationally as one of America’s finest art museums. The museum, which strives to be the place *where the power of art engages the spirit of community*, opens its doors free of charge to people of all backgrounds. The museum is an institution that both challenges and comforts, that both inspires and soothes, and it is a destination for inspiration, reflection and connecting with others.

The Nelson-Atkins serves the community by providing access to its renowned collection of more than 42,000 art objects and is best known for its Asian art, European and American paintings, photography, modern sculpture, and Native American and Egyptian galleries. Housing a major art research library and the Ford Learning Center, the Museum is a key educational resource for the region. In 2017, the Nelson-Atkins celebrates the 10-year anniversary of the Bloch Building, a critically acclaimed addition to the original 1933 Nelson-Atkins Building.

The Nelson-Atkins is located at 45th and Oak Streets, Kansas City, MO. Hours are Monday, Wednesday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Thursday/Friday, 10 a.m.–9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. The museum is closed Tuesday. Admission to the museum is free to everyone. For museum information, phone 816.751.1ART (1278) or visit nelson-atkins.org.

For media interested in receiving further information, please contact:

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