



HIGH MUSEUM OF ART ATLANTA

1280 PEACHTREE STREET, N.E. • ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30309

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**HIGH MUSEUM OF ART CELEBRATES 25th ANNIVERSARY OF  
“PICTURING THE SOUTH” SERIES WITH COMMEMORATIVE 2021 EXHIBITION  
AND NEW PHOTOGRAPHY COMMISSIONS**

*Sheila Pree Bright, Jim Goldberg and An-My Lê to create new works  
for the High’s collection*

*Photographs to premiere in 2021 exhibition featuring groundbreaking  
“Picturing the South” commissions from the past 25 years*

**ATLANTA, Oct. 14, 2020** — The High Museum of Art has commissioned Sheila Pree Bright, Jim Goldberg and An-My Lê for the Museum’s ongoing “Picturing the South” photography series, which will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2021. To commemorate the occasion, the High will present a special exhibition debuting these new works alongside past commissions from the series by artists including Richard Misrach, Sally Mann, Dawoud Bey, Emmet Gowin and Alec Soth.

Launched in 1996, “Picturing the South” supports established and emerging photographers in creating new bodies of work inspired by the American South for the Museum’s collection, which is the largest and most significant public repository of the region’s contributions to photography. Bright, Goldberg and Lê’s commissioned works will shed light on prevailing themes and movements in the American South, including racial and national identity.

“For 25 years, the High has commissioned noted photographers to focus their lenses on the American South, calling attention to universal issues, such as the impacts of environmental pollution, struggles of impoverished communities, and young people’s grappling with public perception verses private self, that make up the fabric of our shared experiences,” said Rand Suffolk, the High’s Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director. “Next year, we are delighted to celebrate this moving initiative by commissioning three new bodies of work and mounting an exhibition looking back at the incredible photographs we have acquired through this series.”

The new commissions will debut as part of the exhibition “Picturing the South: 25 Years,” which will open at the High in fall 2021 and feature in-depth presentations of all the commissions completed since the series launched in 1996, including photographs by the previous participants Alex Harris, Mark Steinmetz, Debbie Fleming Caffery, Abelardo Morell, Martin Parr,

Kael Alford, Shane Lavalette, Richard Misrach, Sally Mann, Dawoud Bey, Emmet Gowin, Alex Webb and Alec Soth. Works on view will include the following:

- Selections from Soth's photographs that would become his celebrated "Broken Manual" series, featuring subjects living in isolation and existing off the grid.
- Bey's striking portraits of Atlanta high school students.
- Misrach's elegiac documentation of the Mississippi Delta's "Cancer Alley."
- Mann's haunting landscapes, among her first created using an alternative photographic process.

"By examining the full range of these works, the exhibition will present a compelling and layered archive of the South and affirm the High's leading role in promoting and shaping American photography," said Sarah Kennel, the High's Donald and Marilyn Keough Family curator of photography. "We look forward to celebrating the series' 25th anniversary with the presentation of these works."

Gregory Harris, the High's associate curator of photography and the exhibition curator, adds: "In this moment of national reckoning with racial and social injustice, we are excited to support the work of the three photographers we recently commissioned, who use their art form to explore the complexity of American identity, in the process encouraging dialogue and inviting reflection."

Bright is the first artist from Atlanta to receive a "Picturing the South" commission. As one of the city's most prominent photographers, she has become recognized nationally for her poignant and powerful documentation of the Black Lives Matter movement. She began photographing Atlanta's hip-hop scene in the 1990s and has since gone on to create several bodies of work that challenge popular depictions of African American life and culture, notably her "Suburbia" series, which puts forth images of Black affluence not often seen in popular media. Recently, she has been photographing Stone Mountain, a public recreation area that surrounds the largest monument to the Confederacy. Her mysterious black-and-white photographs scrutinize the literal and figurative marks that the region's history of white supremacy have left on the land by delving into the tension created when confronted with an enduring symbol of Black terror amidst the alluring beauty of a bucolic space. Informed by Malcolm X's declaration "Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of freedom, justice and equality," Bright's commission will further her exploration of the Southern landscape in relationship to Black bodies.

Since the late 1970s, Goldberg has challenged the conventions of documentary photography. He combines text, ephemera and found images with his photographs to tell deeply personal stories about pressing social and political issues across the world. In collaborations with his subjects, he includes their words written alongside and, often, on top of his disarming portraits. These collaborations express the complexity of the photographer/subject relationship and approach often abstract matters such as economic inequality, youth homelessness and global migration. For his "Picturing the South" commission, he plans to explore expressions of contemporary dynamics of racial identity in the South, with a particular eye to how notions of whiteness are articulated in a society that regularly assumes it as the default American identity.

Inspired by the iconic portrait photographer Mike Disfarmer, who ran a studio in Heber Springs, Arkansas, from the 1930s through the 1950s, Goldberg will focus his attention on two bordering towns in Arkansas to acknowledge how perceived racial identity shapes persistent dialogues in contemporary American culture.

Lê is a photographer and educator whose works have explored the impact of war on American culture and psyche and the natural environment. Born in Saigon in 1960, Lê and her family fled Vietnam in 1975 and eventually settled in the United States. Her early projects include the series “Việt Nam” (1994-1998), in which she pitted her memories of a war-torn countryside against the contemporary landscape around her; “Small Wars” (1999-2002), in which she both documented and participated in Vietnam War reenactments in Virginia and North Carolina; and “29 Palms” (2003-2004), for which she recorded the U.S. military’s simulated war games in the California desert. Other projects include “Events Ashore,” an exploration of the experience, consequences and representations of the military/industrial complex in the United States and abroad, for which she followed the Navy around the world. Most recently, in her ongoing body of work titled “The Silent General,” she has undertaken what she describes as a “re-imagined American road trip,” galvanized by current events and America’s divisive reckoning with its past. For her “Picturing the South” commission, she will create a new “fragment” for “The Silent General” that focuses on the current social unrest that has emerged across the country. Centered primarily on the protests held in Washington, D.C., with national monuments and federal buildings as the backdrop, this new chapter will consider how history is ever present as new challenges and disputes unfold.

### **About Sheila Pree Bright**

Based in Stone Mountain, Georgia, just outside Atlanta, Bright (American, born 1967) has created numerous bodies of work that challenge depictions of African American life and culture, working across genres and subjects that include formal studio portraiture, psychologically charged domestic interiors and engaging documentation of the Black Lives Matter movement. She earned a Master of Fine Arts from Georgia State University and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Missouri. She has been honored with numerous awards and grants, including the Santa Fe Prize for Photography, the Idea Capital Grant, and the Society for Photographic Education’s Imagemaker Award and was a finalist for the ICP Infinity Award. Her work has been exhibited in solo exhibitions at the High Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, and the Southeast Museum of Photography and in group exhibitions at Turner Contemporary in Margate, England; the International Center of Photography; the Annenberg Space for Photography; the Virginia Museum of Fine Art; and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Her photographs are held in numerous public collections, including the High Museum of Art, Birmingham Museum of Art, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Her monograph “#1960NOW: Photographs of Civil Rights Activists and Black Lives Matter Protests” was published by Chronicle Books in 2018.

### **About Jim Goldberg**

Goldberg (American, born 1953), based in the San Francisco Bay area, takes a multidisciplinary

approach to documentary photography, often working collaboratively and integrating text, ephemera and found images into his photographs to tell personal stories about global social and political issues. He earned a Master of Fine Arts from the San Francisco Art Institute (1979) and a Bachelor of Arts from Western Washington University (1971). He is the recipient of numerous awards and grants, including the Deutsche Borse Photography Prize, the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Photography, the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship and the Henri Cartier-Bresson Award. His work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions across the United States and internationally at the Yale University Art Gallery; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Milwaukee Art Museum; Corcoran Gallery of Art; Foam Fotografimuseum Amsterdam; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and Museum of Modern Art, New York. His work is held in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; Baltimore Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; J. Paul Getty Museum; Museum fur Gestaltung, Zurich; Museum of Modern Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art; Pier 24 Photography; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Smithsonian American Art Museum; and Whitney Museum of American Art. He has published a dozen monographs, notably "Rich and Poor" (Random House, 1985), "Raised by Wolves" (D.A.P., 1995), "Open See" (Steidl, 2009) and "Candy" (Yale University Press, 2017). He is a professor emeritus of photography and fine arts at the California College of the Arts.

### **About An-My Lê**

Based in Brooklyn, New York, Lê (American, born Vietnam, 1960) is both a photographer and a professor at Bard College whose works investigate the impact of war on American culture and psyche and the natural environment. She graduated from Stanford University with undergraduate and graduate degrees in biology but then shifted direction toward photography, receiving her Master of Fine Arts from Yale University School of Art in 1993. She has received numerous awards and grants, including a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (the "Genius Grant"), the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship and the New York Foundation for the Arts fellowship in photography. Her work is widely collected and has been exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including at the Art Institute of Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Whitney Museum of American Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Baltimore Museum of Art; Dia: Beacon; MoMA PS1; RISD Museum; Museum of Contemporary Photography; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

### **About "Picturing the South"**

The High began its ["Picturing the South"](#) initiative in 1996 to provide a contemporary perspective on Southern subjects and themes and to build its collection of contemporary photography. The commissions have benefited the Museum as well as the artists — Sally Mann's commission in 1996, for instance, helped support her shift to landscape work and resulted in the first photographs in her "Motherland" series. The other commissions range from Dawoud Bey's over-life-size portraits of Atlanta high school students to Emmet Gowin's aerial photographs of aeration ponds and paper mills. Photographer Alex Webb captured the drama of Atlanta's street life and nightlife, and Richard Misrach used a view camera to reveal the beauty and pathos of Mississippi River landscapes between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, an area known as "Cancer Alley." In the most recent completed commission, Alex Harris made

photographs on independent film sets throughout the South to explore how the region is seen, imagined and created by contemporary visual storytellers. More than 60 of those works debuted in the High's 2019 exhibition "Our Strange New Land: Photographs by Alex Harris."

#### **About the High's Photography Department**

The High Museum of Art is home to one of the nation's leading photography programs. The Museum began acquiring photographs in the early 1970s, making it among the earliest American art museums to commit to collecting the medium. With more than 8,000 prints that span the history of the medium from the 1840s to the present, the collection has particular strengths in American and European modernist traditions and documentary and contemporary photography. Holdings include the most significant museum collection of vintage civil-rights-era prints in the nation as well as important holdings by Harry Callahan, Clarence John Laughlin, Evelyn Hofer, William Christenberry, Ilse Bing, Walker Evans, Peter Sekaer and Dawoud Bey. The collection also gives special attention to pictures made in and of the South, serving as the largest and most significant repository representing the region's important contributions to photography.

#### **About the High Museum of Art**

Located in the heart of Atlanta, the High Museum of Art connects with audiences from across the Southeast and around the world through its distinguished collection, dynamic schedule of special exhibitions and engaging community-focused programs. Housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, the High features a collection of more than 17,000 works of art, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and self-taught work, especially that of artists from the American South; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, new media and design; a growing collection of African art, with work dating from prehistory through the present; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to reflecting the diversity of its communities and offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit [www.high.org](http://www.high.org).

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#### **DIGITAL IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

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