FRESH PERSPECTIVES *on the Permanent Collection from* DARTMOUTH'S STUDENTS

A SPACE *for* DIALOGUE

CHECKLIST

Dmitri Baltermants, Russian, 1912–1920
Hyde Park, *London, UK,* print 2003, gelatin silver print
Purchased through a gift from Harley and Stephen C. Osman,
Class of 1956, Tuck 1957; PH.2003.56.281

Dmitri Baltermants, Russian, 1912–1920
Lunchtime, *London, UK,* negative 1964; print 2003, gelatin silver print
Purchased through a gift from Harley and Stephen C. Osman,
Class of 1956, Tuck 1957; PH.2003.56.270

August Robert Birmelin, American, born 1933
Community of the Moment, 1987,
color etching and aquatint on wove paper
Gift of Varujan Boghosian; PR.2000.48.4

Elliot Erwitt, American, born 1928
Confessional, 1964, published 1977, gelatin silver print
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James Hunter; PH.978.28.6

Leon Levinstein, American, 1910–1988
Street Scene with Man Sitting on Fire Hydrant,
20th century, gelatin silver print
Gift of Harley and Stephen C. Osman,
Class of 1956, Tuck 1957 PH.2001.9.75

John Sloan, American, 1871–1951
Family on Fire Escape (Ella Was a Washtub Woman),
drawing for illustration in *Hearst's International,* August 1922, ink
wash, charcoal, and graphite on wove (Strathmore) paperboard
Purchased through the Julia L. Whittier Fund; D.946.12.3

Garry Winogrand, American, 1928–1984
*New York City, 1972, f*rom *Garry Winogrand,*
a Portfolio of 15 Silver Prints, number 11 of 15, 1972,
gelatin silver print
Gift of Lynn Hecht Schafran; PH.979.9.11

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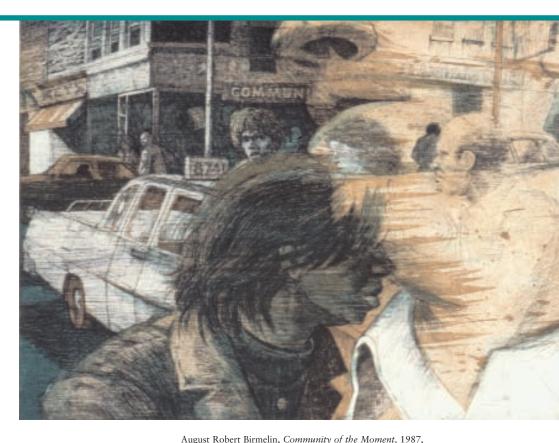
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August Robert Birmelin, *Community of the Moment*, 1987,
color etching and aquatint on wove paper. Gift of Varujan Boghosian; PR.2000.48.4

HOOD MUSEUM OF ART

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Designed by Christina Nadeau, DPMS

FRAMES *of* INFLUENCE

Behavior and Anonymity in Urban Life

Garry Winogrand, *New York City, 1972,* from *Garry Winogrand, a Portfolio of 15 Silver Prints,* number 11 of 15, gelatin silver print. Gift of Lynn Hecht Schafran; PH.979.9.11

We are all deeply impacted by our surroundings, to which we adapt by either conforming or resisting. Whether our direct environment is organic or manmade, its influence manifests itself through our behavior and interactions. The artists in this exhibition were inspired to document how people react and interact within their personal "frames of influence." This interplay between environment and behavior is particularly apparent in urban settings, where the architecture of the built environment either inhibits or encourages the interface between body and city.

Photography as a medium allows the artist to capture instantaneous actions and interactions among people that elucidate patterns in social behaviors. Thanks to photography's immediacy and its influence on other media, modern art is able to present a commentary on society. The five photographic pieces in this installation reveal behavioral trends that pervade society's interactions. In many instances, the artist might not even recognize the trend, either because he does not have enough objective perspective or because the trend requires temporal distance in order to be revealed, just as patterns in history can only be deciphered retrospectively. The drawing by John Sloan and etching by August Robert Birmelin have a sketched quality, as they both capture the atmosphere of a fleeting moment in time. The artists' depictions might be revelations of trends that they perceive in society, or they

might invite the viewer to find trends within the artists' neutral observations. Sloan, a renowned magazine illustrator in New York, believed that art sharpened one's powers of perception and observation, so we may understand his drawings as a tool through which we can examine and interpret trends in society. Also without a camera lens, Birmelin renders concrete the abstract impressions that one gets from the city; its claustrophobia and weight.

These six artists illustrate how the structures in the built environment shape our behavior and reflect on the overwhelming sense of anonymity that dominates urban lifestyles. Elliot Erwitt's *Confessional* depicts the carving out of relationships through architectural elements. It is unusual for such a private act as the Catholic confession to be held outdoors, never mind on the street corner; the body language of the congregants in the street reflects the tensions that can develop out of the incongruous publicness of the activity. The confessors are brought into the public sphere and stripped of their privacy; though they remain somewhat cloaked in the anonymity that the urban atmosphere provides, the passersby on the street do not seem to notice them. Erwitt's composition divides public and private spheres, yet it utilizes the viewer's voyeuristic perspective to juxtapose the two spheres, pointing out the irony that the private is, in fact, public.

Scenes such as Erwitt's confessional and Garry Winogrand's woman in a telephone booth present elegant examples of how the built environment causes people to reject social conformity and instead superimpose a more personal interaction with the urban landscape. Although there is truth in Australian philosopher Elizabeth Grosz's theory that "the city's form and structure provide the context in which social rules and expectations are internalized or habituated in order to ensure social conformity"(Grosz 1992: 250), the built environment may also encourage us to break those rules. Made of glass, the phone booth is completely open to the gaze of strangers. Yet, just like the confessional box, the confining space connotes privacy and protection from the outside world, so much so that the woman obliviously lifts her leg to reveal underneath her short skirt. Winogrand emphasizes our ability to feel secluded, private, and faceless on a populated street by choosing an angle at which the black bars of the booth structure cover the woman's eyes and features, rendering her faceless to the audience.

Russian photographer Dmitri Baltermants represented human behavior in society via a career in journalistic photography. The photographs in this exhibition observe the dichotomy between togetherness and separation, intimacy and disparateness, and interpret the city as an amorphous vehicle for creating a rapport among its inhabitants. *Lunchtime* (1964) shows individuals sitting separately, immersed in their own lunchtime rituals and also visually differentiated by the vertical elements demarcated on the buildings behind them and the vertical bars of the bench on which they sit. Baltermants's composition sup-

ports Grosz's theory of "a kind of parallelism or isomorphism between the body and the city. The two are understood as analogues, congruent counterparts, in which the features, organization, and characteristics of one are reflected in the other" (Grosz 1992: 246). Figures gather to eat on the same bench, but they remain isolated due to the divisive nature of the city, which insists that people be anonymous. *Hyde Park*, conversely, demonstrates how certain environments within the city serve to unite individuals. The organic elements of a park bring people together in a more carnal sense. Contrasted with the claustrophobia of the surrounding concrete jungle, the purity of the park becomes the more appropriate space for engaging in physical intimacy.

The oldest piece in this installation relates the most closely to modern architectural concepts. *Family on Fire Escape* (1922) exhibits the ideology that Rem Koolhaus used for *House Inside Out* (1992). Koolhaus "suggested that the house be turned inside out and that occupation take place in the city" (quoted in Bell 2004: 39). More recently, the architectural community in their designs has admitted the extent to which human beings relate to their inhabitations. Architect Michael Bell's *Binocular House* (2001) is situated in the woods of Ghent, New York, and made almost entirely of glass, so that the forest is seen through the house. The transparency of *Binocular House* fits it seamlessly into its environment and connects us to our surroundings. These buildings are examples of architectural "frames of influence" that force a pattern of behavior onto those who inhabit them. Whether these spaces are built with that purpose in mind or whether they naturally exist in our environment, they will continue to be captured by the scrutiny and analysis of artists.

Jessica Hodin '07
Levinson Student Intern

Leon Levinstein, *Street Scene with Man Sitting on Fire Hydrant,* 20th century, gelatin silver print. Gift of Harley and Stephen C. Osman, Class of 1956, Tuck 1957; PH.2001.9.75

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