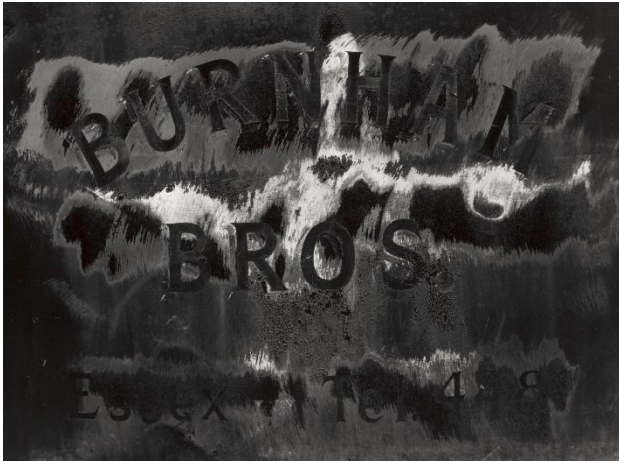


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Opening Tomorrow: *Carl Chiarenza* at VMFA

Works by Contemporary American Photographer Are Generous Gift of the Artist to the Museum



Burnham Brothers, Essex, MA, 1962, printed later, Carl Chiarenza (American, born 1935), gelatin silver print. Gift of Carl Chiarenza, 2016.516

Richmond, Virginia—The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts announces the upcoming exhibition of works by photographer Carl Chiarenza, on view in the Photography Gallery May 17–Nov. 12, 2019. Born to Italian immigrant parents and raised in Rochester, New York, Chiarenza’s interest in photography developed early in his childhood. From 1953 to 1957, Chiarenza studied at the Rochester Institute of Technology under the direction of Minor White and Ralph Hattersley. Since the late 1960s, Chiarenza has been a leading figure in a movement that seeks to expand the conceptual boundaries of photography.

Chiarenza’s photographs have been included in more than 80 solo and 250 group exhibitions since 1957. His black and white photographs, which often contain elements of collage, have continued to challenge notions of landscape, abstraction, visitor perspective, and the very medium of photography itself. This free exhibition is curated by Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Executive Director and CEO Alex Nyerges.

“The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is incredibly grateful to Carl Chiarenza for his generous gift of works to the museum,” says Nyerges. “I am honored to curate the first Chiarenza exhibition at VMFA, and hope that these twenty-two phenomenal works will offer museum members and visitors an opportunity for a deeper understanding and fresh perspective of the limitless world of photography.”

Chiarenza is inspired by both the beauty and human connections to landscapes, but has been continuously dissatisfied with traditional outdoor nature photographs. In acknowledging that depictions of landscapes in paintings are constructed, he began to approach his photographs as abstract and emotional constructions that allow us to examine nature in relation to the self.

The key characteristic that came to dominate Chiarenza’s style was nyctophilia, or a preference for and comfort in darkness. His photographs do not offer familiar faces or landscapes; there is no evident cultural or psychological framework for the viewer to build their response. Rather, the lack of specificity and sense of timelessness reminds us that all photographs are constructions of reality that produce various interpretations relative to each viewer. Chiarenza’s work invites individual reflection by forcing us to examine the subliminal workings of the mind. In these photographs, nothing is absolute, leaving all realities subject to each observer.

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret art, and to encourage the



Sulfite White Figure with Spears, 1962, printed later, Carl Chiarenza (American, born 1935), gelatin silver print. Gift of Carl Chiarenza, 2016.517

study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures, conferences, and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA's permanent holdings encompass nearly 40,000 artworks, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris, and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, and French Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British sporting, and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan, and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened its doors to the public after a transformative expansion, the largest in its history.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, telephone 804.340.1400 or visit www.VMFA.museum.

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