



CONTEMPORARY IMAGES IN PRINT SINCE 1915

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William Earle Williams: Party Pictures
March 17 – May 21, 2011
Thursday, March 17: Reception 5:30-7:30pm

PHILADELPHIA: The Print Center announces *Party Pictures*, an exhibition of photographs made between 1977-1984 by renowned Philadelphia artist **William Earle Williams**. At that time Williams documented a wide variety of parties in Philadelphia, from drag balls to society galas. This exhibition presents these empathetic and entertaining photographs, which perfectly capture the events in every detail from fashion to gesture.

Collectively Williams' *Party Pictures* become a fascinating record of the social life of Philadelphia in that era. Masked figures mingle with familiar faces including media magnate Walter Annenberg and the infamous drag queen Harlow. Shot in dark settings and using a flash, details of his subjects emerge: an expensive watch, an ill-fitting rented tuxedo jacket, a wrinkled arm. At the same time, these photos capture the fleeting moments of the events as they unfold, with partygoers broadcasting their elation, boredom, exhaustion and awkwardness. While there is great voyeuristic pleasure in looking at these photographs, Williams' satirical humor is matched by his compassion for his subjects, which comes through clearly.

For the last fifteen years, Williams has almost exclusively photographed the landscape, in a body of work documenting locations significant to African American history, especially the Underground Railroad. This critically acclaimed series has been exhibited nationally. His early work is less well known, and some of the photographs in this exhibition are being shown for the first time.

William Earle Williams was born in Vicksburg, MS and raised in Warren, OH. He received his BFA in History from Hamilton College, Clinton, NY and his MFA in Photography from Yale University, New Haven, CT. Williams has taught photography at Haverford College since 1978, where he is the Audrey A. and John L. Dusseau Professor in the Humanities. He is also the curator of the College's celebrated photography collection. Williams is the recipient of two prestigious awards, The Pew and Guggenheim Fellowships. A monograph on his recent work, *Uncovering the Path to Freedom: Photographs of the Underground Railroad*, was published in 2008 by Hamilton College. His work has been included in numerous exhibitions internationally, including recent exhibitions at the Eastman House, Rochester, NY; the New York Public Library, New York, NY; and the Center for Documentary Studies, Duke University, Durham, NC. His work is held by a number of public collections including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; and the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY.

Party Pictures: William Earle Williams will be on view at The Print Center from March 17 – May 21, 2011. The reception for the artist is Thursday, March 17 from 5:30-7:30pm, with a gallery talk by the artist at 5:30pm.

The Print Center supports printmaking and photography as vital contemporary arts and encourages the appreciation of the printed image in all its forms. The Print Center presents a variety of programs for the public including exhibitions; The Print Center Gallery Store, which offers the largest and most diverse selection of contemporary prints in Philadelphia; the longest running annual international competition for prints and photographs in the country; and an extensive series of education programs and special events.

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