

Phoenix Art Museum

News Release

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Phoenix Art Museum and **INFOCUS** present juried exhibition of photography books in December *Exhibition explores the art and science of self-published photobooks from artists around the world*

PHOENIX (November 15, 2016) – Phoenix Art Museum will present the second triennial **INFOCUS** *Juried Exhibition of Self-Published Photobooks*, in partnership with **INFOCUS**, a support group that raises funds to benefit photography exhibitions and educational programming at the Museum. The exhibition, opening December 2 and on view through April 9, 2017, reveals a fascinating mix of technological and creative innovation in contemporary photographic practice. Featuring over one hundred number of self-published photobooks of artists from the US, the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Chile, Japan, Russia, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, and Spain, *Photobooks* explores the ways some artists, curators, and museums are choosing to interact with new technologies in photography. With a commitment to producing a deeply personal, engaging art experience, visitors are invited to handle the art of this exhibition; the photobooks will be displayed in a gallery space modeled after the comfortable, familiarity of a neighborhood bookstore, to encourage visitors to settle in and take their time paging through the selected books.

“We are looking forward to presenting photobooks by some of the most up and coming names in photography today,” said Gilbert Vicario, the Museum’s Selig Family Chief Curator. “Our aim is to create a welcoming space in the galleries that encourages visitors to explore these books to learn more about contemporary photography and the thoughtfulness that goes into creating these unique works.”

In an increasingly digitized world, few artistic media have been affected quite like photography. The art form began in the 19th century as a cumbersome chemical process, available to a privileged few. Today, thanks to a multitude of new technologies, photographs can be taken, published, shared, liked, and consumed instantaneously, by anyone, anywhere.

Curated by members of **INFOCUS** in concert with Becky Senf, PhD, the Norton Family Curator of Photography, the selected books had to be entirely self-published and submitted by the artists themselves. Books of all subjects have been considered for submission, including retrospectives, project-based books, souvenir albums, fictional narratives, exhibition catalogues, poetic, biographical, or children’s books, as well as collaborative or collective books in addition to those by a single author.

More than typical books, the exhibition has previously featured truly unique, innovative approaches to publishing, including a book printed on a deck of cards, evidence of how artists utilize new technologies in the service of creating a more intimate art experience than one might have with larger-scale art. It is this goal of meaningful engagement that sets these books apart in a generation of selfies. “There is more than enough accessibility in the photography world, so that’s not our focus,” explains Christian Waguespack, who coordinated the exhibition and is a photography graduate student at the University of Arizona. “What’s exciting is being able to create a personal connection with an art object. The photography medium has a long history with books, and lends itself well to a book format.” In addition to preserving art, the books themselves receive the same dedication and commitment to detail and creative imagining. “The self-publishing tools that photographers have at their disposal allow them to move beyond pure images,” Waguespack adds. “As judges in this exhibition, this is what we want - we like to look for photo books that are interactive, that have been treated as art objects in themselves.”

Visitors to the exhibition will be able to spend time with any or all of the selected books, with ample, comfortable space in the Museum’s Norton Gallery to sit and leisurely peruse through the wide assortment. “We were inspired by the idea of the used bookstore,” Waguespack says, “that place where you can go and spend an afternoon and truly get lost in a

book.” Copies of many of the books on view are available for purchase through the artists, their galleries, or distributors. The exhibition website, <http://www.phxart.org/InfocusPhotobooks2016>, will include links to where each book can be purchased as soon as they are selected.

*The exhibition is organized by Phoenix Art Museum in collaboration with **INFOCUS**. It is made possible through the generosity of **INFOCUS** and donors to the Museum’s annual fund.*

About INFOCUS

INFOCUS is a vibrant support organization of Phoenix Art Museum’s photography department, composed of people interested in photography as a dynamic art form. Working together, photographers, collectors and photography enthusiasts provide a high-quality forum for the study, exhibition and production of fine-art photographs. From access to world-class photography and photography experts through exhibitions and lectures at Phoenix Art Museum to a wide variety of engaging monthly activities, **INFOCUS** programs are designed to educate its members and the public about the history and practice of photography, to encourage collecting and promote the preservation of photographic treasures. In addition, **INFOCUS** has focused increasingly on supporting and spotlighting emerging photographic talent. For additional information about **INFOCUS**, please visit infocus-phx.org.

About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum has provided access to visual arts and educational programs in Arizona for more than 50 years and is the largest art museum in the Southwestern United States. Critically acclaimed national and international exhibitions are shown alongside the Museum’s permanent collection of more than 18,000 works of American, Asian, European, Latin American, Western American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. The Museum also presents festivals, a comprehensive film program, live performances and educational programs designed to enlighten, entertain and stimulate visitors of all ages. Visitors also enjoy vibrant photography exhibitions through the Museum’s landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona. To learn more about Phoenix Art Museum, visit PhxArt.org, or call the 24-hour recorded information line at (602) 257-1222

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