

From Butterflies to Battleships: Selections from the Bruce Museum Photography Collection

Bruce Museum, Greenwich, Connecticut
June 22 – September 1, 2019



Patrick Nagatani (American, 1945-2017), *National Atomic Museum, Kirtland Air Force Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico*, 1989, Chromogenic print (Ilfocolor Deluxe), 17 x 22 in. Gift of Peter and Barbara Noris, Bruce Museum Collection 2004.21.30. © Patrick Nagatani Estate. Photo by Paul Mutino.

GREENWICH, CT, May 23, 2019 – On view beginning Saturday, June 22, 2019, *From Butterflies to Battleships* draws from the Bruce Museum Photography Collection to present a selection of work by four singular American photographers: Margaret Bourke-White, Carl Mydans, Patrick Nagatani, and Brett Weston. The exhibition will showcase the diversity of artistic and documentary approaches taken by photographers in the twentieth century and demonstrate how they expanded on earlier experiments in portraiture, scientific record, and photomontage.

Although renowned for her breathtaking photo essays for *Fortune* and *LIFE* magazines, in which she captured the glories of the industrial age, Margaret Bourke-White (1904-1971) had a lifelong interest in the natural world. Selected for this exhibition is a collection of small insect portraits



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made in the 1930s in which butterflies, moths, and praying mantises are hazily depicted in various stages of metamorphosis. A far cry from the epic scale of her images like that of the construction of Montana's Fort Peck Dam, these photographs show a surprisingly intimate and experimental side of Bourke-White's oeuvre.

First trained as a reporter, acclaimed photojournalist Carl Mydans (1906-2004) captured landmark events in the United States, Europe, and Asia over the course of 36 years as a staff photographer for *LIFE* magazine. There he skillfully honed what would become his trademark, the ability to capture the enormous gravity of an event with a single image. The exhibition includes two iconic photographs taken in 1945 while on assignment during World War II with General Douglas MacArthur and his regiment.

By the time photographer Patrick Nagatani (1945-2017) moved from California to New Mexico in 1987, he had already demonstrated a remarkable talent for a clever layering of imagery to construct surreal photographic satires. He found an ideal subject for his particular brand of politicized artistic intervention in the discordant Southwest landscape, where Native American ancestral grounds rest alongside nuclear weapons test sites. On view in the exhibition are a number of works from the resulting series, *Nuclear Enchantment* (1989-1993), in which Nagatani makes a powerful statement about the environmental and spiritual consequences of nuclear technology.

The son of the pioneering photographer Edward Weston, Brett Weston (1911-1993) began taking pictures as a teenager while living in Mexico with his father. The young Weston displayed an extraordinary eye for subject and form from the start. Over time, Brett would reach beyond the modernist aesthetic championed by his father, to the brink of abstraction, as shown in a series of stunning photographs taken around 1970, in which natural elements such as sand, trees, and water are transformed into expressionistic compositions.

According to the show's curator, Stephanie Guyet, Zvi Grunberg Resident Fellow 2018-19: "It's been fascinating to spend the past nine months working at a Museum that functions as a space for both scientific and aesthetic inquiry. This is a first for me, having worked previously at museums and galleries that are exclusively dedicated to fine art. I wanted therefore to develop an exhibition that would reflect the multifaceted, idiosyncratic, and extremely generative space of the Museum itself. Given that the Bruce has a wide and varied photography collection, and that photography lies at the intersection of art and science, this seemed like the perfect subject to explore. I hope that Museum visitors will be as excited and inspired as I am by the beautiful and provocative work on view."

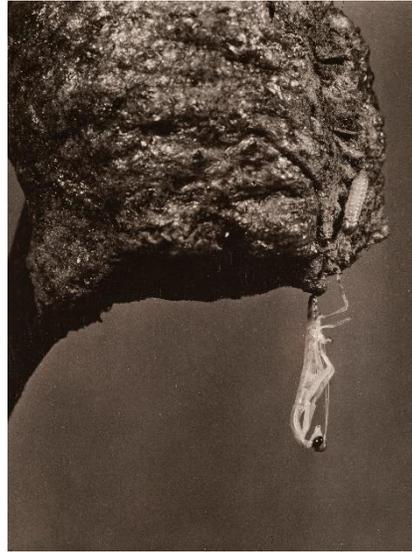
From Butterflies to Battleships: Selections from the Bruce Museum Photography Collection will be on view in the Museum's Arcade Gallery through September 1, 2019. The Museum is grateful for exhibition support from The Charles M. and Deborah G. Royce Exhibition Fund and the Connecticut Office of the Arts.

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Brett Weston (American, 1911-1993), *Untitled (tree bark)*, 1969. Gelatin silver print, 11 x 14 in. Gift of Christian Keesee & The Brett Weston Archive. Bruce Museum Collection 2017.15.37. © Brett Weston Archive. Photo by Paul Mutino.



Margaret Bourke-White (American, 1904-1971) *Study of Insects Hanging from Cocoon*, c. 1935. Vintage gelatin silver print, 4 x 3 in. Gift of Fernando Barnuevo and Gloria Ybarra. Bruce Museum Collection 2005.01.19. © 2019 Estate of Margaret Bourke-White / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Photo by Paul Mutino.



Carl Mydans (American, 1907-2004), *The Japanese Surrender on Board the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay - General Yoshijiro Umezu Signs the Surrender Document while General MacArthur Looks On*, 1945. Gelatin silver print, 11 x 14 in. Gift of the Estate of Carl Mydans. Bruce Museum Collection 2005.03.02. © Estate of Carl Mydans. Photo by Paul Mutino.



Carl Mydans (American, 1907-2004), *Lindberg, Germany (Woman Planting Potatoes in Field)*, 1954. Gelatin silver print, 20 x 24 in. Gift of the Estate of Carl Mydans. Bruce Museum Collection 2005.03.03. © Estate of Carl Mydans. Photo by Paul Mutino.

To review a selection of additional images, please contact Scott Smith, Director of Marketing and Communications, ssmith@brucemuseum.org or 203-413-6537.

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About the Bruce Museum

The Bruce Museum is located in a park setting just off I-95, exit 3, at 1 Museum Drive in Greenwich, Connecticut. The Museum is also a 5-minute walk from the Metro-North Greenwich Station. The Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and students with ID, and free for members and children less than five years. Individual admission is free on Tuesday. Free on-site parking is available and the Museum is accessible to individuals with disabilities. For additional information, call the Bruce Museum at 203-869-0376 or visit brucemuseum.org.