

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NEW ART INSTITUTE PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION EXPLORES  
THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN FINE ART AND THE VERNACULAR**

***In the Vernacular* Opens February 6, 2010**

For at least a century, vernacular photographs—those ordinary, amateur or professional, “everyday” pictures—both challenged and inspired fine-art photography. The Art Institute of Chicago has organized *In the Vernacular*, an exhibition that brings together images by artists who—through their choice of content, process, aesthetic, and means of distribution—blur or erase the boundaries that seem to separate fine art from the commonplace. *In the Vernacular* will be on view **February 6 through May 31, 2010**, in **Galleries 1**



**and 2**, and features more than 100 images culled from the museum’s permanent collection. Twenty new acquisitions made by the Department of Photography—including works by Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Richard Misrach, and Andy Warhol—are included in the show. Many of these images are familiar and universal: snapshots, crime-scene photos, advertising images, family pictures, travel albums, and pin-up posters.

Serving as both practical resource and creative conduit, photography possesses a unique elasticity that makes it a rich medium for artistic scrutiny. Photographs are not limited solely to aesthetic expression, social documentation, or the capture of personal memories. By challenging the uses and restrictions typically imposed on photographs, artists tap into

photography's boundless potential for visual and critical undertakings. Working across the categories of "high" and "low" art enable artists to mine photography's vast emotional and intellectual impact, a range that reaches desire and nostalgia, fear and curiosity.

In their exploration of vernacular photography—be it the amateur vernacular of snapshots, the professional vernacular of studio practice, or the opportunistic vernacular of photojournalism—artists endow their work with a sense of authenticity and refinement, portraying accessible and familiar themes with subjects derived from everyday experience. Photographers who earn a living through photojournalism, editorial, fashion, or commercial work manage to practice in both realms, with some offering family snapshots in their "official" work. Indeed, the history of photography is filled with artists challenging the fine art world's pretension and artifice through the photograph's multiple uses.

*In the Vernacular* presents the work of artists who strategically use the forms of everyday photography as a source of inspiration, consciously interrogating the medium and the complexity of its significance. The exhibition includes prime examples of this photographic style by Walker Evans, Andy Warhol, Lee Friedlander, Cindy Sherman, Martin Parr, Nikki S. Lee, and others, inviting viewers to reevaluate the impact, value, and status of the photographs we encounter in our daily lives.

Intimate and distant, familiar and strange, these images ask the viewer to consider how photographs convey meaning, how their presentation—whether on the walls of a museum, the pages of a magazine, the folds of a cabinet file, or the center of a living room mantel—reflects or distorts reality. While the exhibition presents these works in groups according to the various forms of vernacular photography they address, their porous arrangement suggests a common relationship to one or more vernaculars without being either exhaustive or conclusive.

*In the Vernacular* is organized by the Art Institute of Chicago and is curated by Gregory Harris, curatorial adjunct, the Department of Photography.

**Please note: Some images in this exhibition may be inappropriate for younger visitors.**

**IMAGE:** Martin Parr. *Fashion Magazine: Fashion Shoot, New York, 1999*. David C. and Sarajeon Ruttenberg Arts Foundation Purchase Fund.

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**SUMMER HOURS (from Memorial Day to Labor Day)**

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**FREE FEBRUARY 1 TO 28**

Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

**ADMISSION**

Adults \$18.00 Includes all special exhibitions and coat check  
Children 14 and over, students, and seniors \$12.00 Includes all special exhibitions and coat check  
Chicago residents receive a \$2.00 discount with proof of residency  
Children under 14 always free  
Members always free

Free Evenings are free to all. City of Chicago residents with Chicago Public Library cards can borrow a "Museum Passport" card from any library branch for free general admission to the nine members of Museums in the Park, including the Art Institute of Chicago.

The Art Institute of Chicago is a museum in Chicago's Grant Park, located across from Millennium Park. Visitors can enter the museum via the Michigan Avenue entrance or the Millennium Park entrance on Monroe Street.