

Department of Photograph Conservation Bulletin

December 2024 No. 36



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Ways of Giving: David Neill & Susan Griffith

David Neill and Susan Griffith exemplify the significant role that Museum patrons can play in securing the future of our collections. As steadfast supporters of the Department of Photograph Conservation, their involvement goes beyond financial contributions, being rooted in a personal connection to the arts and a genuine passion for preserving the medium of photography for future generations. Their shared enthusiasm for art, combined with their deep intellectual curiosity and hands-on experience with photography, has shaped their commitment to our department.

On a recent fall afternoon, Natasha Kung and Katie Sanderson visited David and Susan to learn more about their backgrounds and how they became involved with The Met. In their welcoming, two-story New York apartment, whichever walls are not covered by floor-to-ceiling bookshelves are decorated with a wide range of artworks, mostly by contemporary photographers. They toured Katie

and Natasha through the space and talked about the artists and works they are drawn to, many of whom are engaged in manipulating photographic materials, time, or space in one way or another. Katie and Natasha were immediately drawn to a series of “mini-me” figurines—tiny 3D-printed portraits of the couple taken at various moments in time, which reflect their open and upbeat character as well as their engaging humor.

Susan studied chemistry in her undergraduate years. She is naturally inclined towards the material world, paired with an excitement for discovering new things. This curiosity has led her to explore various art mediums, including photography. Both Susan and David made photographs—Susan with her Nikon and David with his Canon—and they loved being in the darkroom. Driven by their appetite for experimentation in the photographic medium, they not only took classes at the International Center for Photography and rented darkroom time in downtown Manhattan but also built their own darkroom in the laundry room of their Utah home.

After meeting former Director of the George Eastman Museum, Anthony Bannon, at an event in Los Angeles, David joined the Eastman Museum’s Board of Trustees. It was during this time that David and Susan’s support of conservation had its start. As the site of the world’s oldest photography museum and on the estate of George Eastman, the founder of the Eastman Kodak Company, they couldn’t help but learn more about the medium and, while there, gained an interest in collecting artworks of their own. They met Conservator in Charge, Taina Meller, a former Met Fellow, and David was soon asked to be the Chairman of the Conservation Committee. As Chairman, his engagement with conservation grew. He helped fundraise for bespoke conservation projects, including a preservation project focused on daguerreotype housings.

David had been a member of The Met for some time, and after retiring as an antitrust lawyer, he took an art history class with the Department of Photographs’ Curator in Charge, Jeff Rosenheim. From there, David and Susan joined the Stieglitz Society, where they participated in events, exhibition tours, and collection visits. It’s clear that the pair follow their many interests, so with their knowledge of and fascination for both photographs and conservation, they developed an interest in the Department of Photograph Conservation as well. When asked why they were drawn to our department, Susan exclaimed, “It’s just such a great intersection of everything.”

Their genuine passion for engagement with the art community and continuous learning is palpable. David and Susan truly are forever students and take online classes that cover a wide range of topics, from the art history of Bernini and Monet to learning bass guitar to German. While taking a plant morphology class at the New York Botanical Garden, Susan was drawn to the expressive shapes of the specimens’ anatomies when they were cut open with a razor blade and intensified under the microscope. She described chasing a view perfectly in focus but ultimately relenting to the plant’s inherent three-dimensionality. Her photographs, which she generously shared with Katie and Natasha during their visit, capture these qualities in vibrant color and detail.

David and Susan’s story is a testament to the impact that dedicated and interested individuals can have on the preservation and appreciation of art. Their commitment stems from their interests and earnest desire to support what they care about. Their sustained contributions help ensure that future generations can enjoy and learn from the rich history of photography and the arts, and their enthusiasm and curiosity are a source of inspiration to us all.



Cover:
A 3D “portrait” of Susan and David depicting the couple with their dogs Milo and Mr. Bert. The small sculpture is roughly six inches tall and sits prominently on a bookshelf in their living room. Credit: David Neill

At left:
Another pair of 3D printed “portraits” of Susan and David seated next to each other in miniature chairs. Credit: David Neill

Iteration Reports in “Purgatory”

The Department of Photographs recently acquired Jesse Krimes’ 2009 artwork, *Purgatory*, which is currently on view in the exhibition [Jesse Krimes: Corrections](#) in the Joyce and Robert Menschel Hall for Modern Photography (Gallery 851), organized by Curator Lisa Sutcliffe. Krimes (American, b. 1982) is a multimedia artist whose practice centers on structures of power, criminal and racial justice, and contemporary depictions of criminality. During his six-year sentence in federal prison, he made several artworks and sent them out piece by piece, only seeing them fully realized after he was released. These works highlight the artist’s ingenuity and commitment to create even when traditional materials and resources were not available to him.

Krimes made *Purgatory* over the course of one year while in solitary confinement awaiting sentencing. He says, “It was a very conscious decision on my part that I was going to use every single minute of my time to create artwork because that was the only thing that they couldn’t take away from me.” In this work, the artist transferred the ink from printed faces of “offenders” in newspapers, including *The New York Times*, onto nearly three hundred pieces of prison-issued soap using a hand-printing technique. In the gallery, each piece of soap is paired with a stack of playing cards that Krimes used to conceal it. Using the edge of a AAA battery, he cut a hole out of each deck to create a space for the soap, which he covered with a lid from a different card, intentionally not matching the face or suit of the surrounding card. Each package was sent out one by one through the prison mailing system. This artwork comments on the hands we are dealt in life and subtly challenges the system that defines those who become “offenders” or not.

When exhibition planning was underway, questions arose about how these components were meant to be displayed, how the work had been installed in the past, and where there was room for variation. We looked at documentation methodologies used for time-based media (TBM) artworks, as these often have an unfixed nature and variable installation parameters. TBM art may exist as digital components, such as video or sound files stored on devices like hard drives, but the content is not “activated” or considered the artwork until it is played back with the right equipment and according to the artist’s



Above:
Assistant Photograph Conservator
Natasha Kung, making sure that the
playing cards and soap pieces are aligned
just so. Credit: Leslie Zacharie



At left:
One of *Purgatory*’s playing card decks
paired with its soap piece. Credit: Hyla
Skopitz

Jesse Krimes (American, b. 1982),
Purgatory, 2009. Soap, ink, and playing
cards [offset lithography]. Dimensions
variable; Image (Soap): approximately 1
1/2 in. × 1 in. (3.8 × 2.5 cm), each; Playing
cards: approximately 3 1/2 in. × 2 1/2
in. (8.9 × 6.4 cm), each. Purchase, Vital
Projects Fund Inc. Gift, through Joyce
and Robert Menschel, and Alfred Stieglitz
Society Gifts, 2024. (2024.3271–.291)

On view in *Jesse Krimes: Corrections*
through July 13, 2025.

installation instructions. This relationship between the raw data and the playback method can be compared to the correlation between a piece of music’s notated score and its performance. The “score” can be understood as the blueprint or roadmap of an artwork, providing the documentation or instructions necessary for its activation, while the “performance” refers to the actual activation of the artwork, which we call an iteration. This concept was described by Pip Laurenson in [“Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations”](#) and then elaborated on by Joanna Phillips in [“Reporting Iterations: A Documentation Model for Time-based Media Art.”](#) This Score and Performance Model, as it is often called, emphasizes the two-step nature of TBM works. Each time a TBM work is activated, it is essentially restaged, and that “performance” can vary depending on many factors, including the equipment used, the nature of the exhibition space, and artist or curator preference, resulting in differing visitor experiences. There may be no single, definitive way to interpret or restage a TBM artwork unless specified by the artist. Instead, the focus for conservators is on documenting the final installation and the decisions that shaped it, distinct from the integral parts of the artwork that do not vary in installation. This approach prioritizes preserving the artist’s intent, ensuring that each iteration remains as true as possible to their vision.

To accommodate this two-step process, conservators usually generate two reports: the Identity Report and the Iteration Report. The Identity Report serves as the “score,” detailing conceptual and technical specifications that are typically unchanging. In tandem, the Iteration Report serves as the “performance” documentation, tracking variations in the installation during each specific iteration and the decision-making that led to these changes. The Iteration Report is usually filled out during installation and completed at the end of an exhibition. Although developed for time-based media

artworks, this methodology can also be applied to any works that are variable in their installation parameters or that require refabrication or restaging.

Jesse Krimes generously communicated with curatorial and design staff, and this information was incorporated into the artwork’s Identity Report. As the artwork’s “score,” the document describes the work in relation to the artist’s larger oeuvre, its materials, and conceptual vision and provides guidelines useful for its installation and exhibition. The installation team learned, for example, that the



Above:
Curator Lisa Sutcliffe, organizing the playing cards in *Purgatory*, one deck at a time. Credit: Natasha Kung.



original pairing of cards and soap must stay together; e.g., soap #5 should always be displayed with card deck #5. However, it is at the curator's discretion to organize the pairs in whichever order they desire; e.g., soap/card #20 could be displayed next to soap/card #2, next to soap/card #4. Also, the pairs may be shown with either the soap or the card lid resting in the cavity, with the other placed close by. These, among others, are the immutable characteristics of the artwork. The Iteration Report for *Purgatory* in this exhibition uses written and photographic documentation to detail how the installation came together. Details range from the order of the card/soap pairs to the manufacturer information for the bespoke display shelves. Importantly, the Iteration Report includes the people who were involved in installing the work and making these decisions. These reports can be referenced the next time the work is shown and can inform future iterations. The reports not only document objective information about an installation but also add to the living history and memory of the artwork itself and memorialize the collaborative nature of these types of installations, including the perspectives of the different people involved in realizing their display.

It is always a privilege and pleasure to work with living artists and to be a part of realizing their vision. We extend our gratitude and congratulations to Jesse Krimes and his studio on this magnificent installation of *Purgatory*.

Above:
Curator Lisa Sutcliffe, and Research Associate
Virginia McBride, admiring the finished
installation of *Purgatory*. Credit: Natasha Kung

Report from VoCA: TBM Stewardship Workshop

In November 2024, Tess Hamilton, Assistant Conservator of Contemporary Art, attended the Time-Based Media Stewardship workshop hosted by [Voices in Contemporary Art](#) (VoCA) at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. Tess was joined at the workshop by Met colleagues Alejandro Leal Pulido, Collections Specialist in the Modern and Contemporary Art Department, and Kaelan Burkett, Audio Visual Specialist in the Digital Department.

VoCA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing the questions generated by diverse and experimental contemporary art practices, and to steward the study of contemporary art through talks, workshops, research, and publications. The Time-Based Media Stewardship Workshop, funded by the Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, was hosted over three days and was led by Kate Lewis, Agnes Gund Chief Conservator, Museum of Modern Art, and freelance time-based media conservator Eddy Colloton. The workshop combined talks, case studies, and discussion groups to equip attendees with skills to better understand and care for time-based media (TBM) artworks in their collections. It also included illuminating behind-the-scenes tours of the exhibits [Charles Atlas: About Time](#) at the ICA Boston and [Made in Germany? Art and Identity in a Global Nation](#) at the Harvard Art Museum.

With participants from a wide range of both public and private art institutions of varying sizes, missions, and collection types, the workshop strongly emphasized the multifaceted skills and backgrounds required to care for complex TBM artworks. These skills are often attained through professional collaboration while delving into key areas of TBM conservation, including digital and physical storage, artist interviews and documentation, file migration, and advocacy. The workshop provided participants with the opportunity to learn from colleagues about their differing collection needs and challenges while emphasizing the importance of collaboration in TBM conservation advocacy. The Met was fortunate to send three participants. Tess, Alejandro, and Kaelan all work with TBM artworks from different facets of museum practice—conservation, collection management, and installation—and contribute different perspectives to address The Met’s growing collection of TBM artworks and their associated needs. This led to fruitful discussions about new acquisitions, collecting practices, installations, staffing, workflows, and departmental priorities and allowed them to learn from one another.

The workshop offered the opportunity for Tess, Alejandro, and Kaelan to think deeply about how to care for TBM artworks and to learn new skills to do so. Their attendance at the VoCA workshop builds on the decade-plus of advocacy to establish TBM conservation at The Met, as we presented in detail in [Bulletin No. 35](#). As the museum continues to collect more complex and experimental artworks representing the diverse voices of contemporary artists from around the globe and the diverse media that reflect the present moment, we look forward to continuing our education on how best to care for these evolving art forms, and to work with our colleagues to steward them into the future.



Above:
Participants at the VoCA TBM
stewardship workshop in the conference
room at the ICA Boston. Credit: Kaelan
Burkett

From Tanks to Tots: A Photographer's Journey

The Photograph Conservation Study Collection recently received a donation of photographs that had belonged to a Chicago woman who died in 2004 at the age of ninety-nine. They were purchased at a garage sale and included subjects likely to be found in any family album. We chuckled when we saw the name “Bunnygraph Studios” on a charming baby picture. Little did we know the story behind that picture! A quick search for Bunnygraph led to a picture of the photographer Walter Heinsen with his patented Bunnygraph camera in his studio on Chicago’s Clark Street circa 1938. Finding the photographer’s name enabled us to learn the incredible story behind our innocent picture.

In 1917, when he was only sixteen years old, Walter Heinsen (1899–1984) was drafted into the German army. Having left school after the sixth grade, he had been an apprentice in his older brother’s photography studio. Because of that experience, rather than being sent to the trenches of the First World War, he was assigned to be an aerial photographer and sent to the Western Front in France. When the Battle of Cambrai began in the early morning of November 20, he was stationed a short distance away at Boistrancourt Airfield.

This British offensive marked the first large-scale, effective use of tanks in warfare. In great secrecy and under the cover of darkness, around 476 tanks, 1,000 guns, eight infantry, and five cavalry divisions were amassed at Cambrai. The German front line was quickly overrun, and the British tanks advanced some five miles through German defenses. However, harsh weather and the lack of adequate infantry reinforcements meant the British were unable to exploit their initial success. By November 29, the offensive had been halted. On November 30, the German Second Army launched a counteroffensive. By December 5, the British had been driven back almost to their original positions, and the German counterattack had been halted by snow. There were heavy casualties on both sides.

When Kaiser Wilhelm made a secret visit to nearby Le Cateau to strategize about the counterattack, Heinsen was there taking pictures of the German leader. When their counterattack ended, he was among the photographers the Germans sent to document the British tanks. In the aftermath of the battle, Heinsen took pictures of British and American prisoners of war being held in Le Cateau. This marked the first time American units saw action in World War I. While most of Heinsen’s war pictures were unknown until recently, a picture he took of



Manfred von Richthofen, the “Red Baron,” in front of his Fokker Triplane aircraft was widely published in 1918. Overall, about two hundred images survive in Heinsen’s archive.

The war finally ended, but there was no real peace. Wanting to escape the turmoil of the Weimar Republic, young Walter emigrated from Hamburg, Germany, to Chicago in 1923. He became an apprentice in a photography studio on Clark Street. Within three years, he bought the business, and eventually, he bought the building. At that time in Chicago, the only people who had money for studio photographs were gangsters, so the enterprising Walter took pictures at their weddings. After one of his clients was killed in a gangland shooting, Walter’s fiancée said she wouldn’t marry him if he continued in such dangerous

From Tanks to Tots: A Photographer's Journey

work. Heinsen already preferred working with children to mobsters, so he decided to enter the mass market business of baby pictures. Fortunately, Chicago's large immigrant community fueled the demand for pictures of children to send back to families in the old country.

After working with more conventional cameras that sometimes frightened his little subjects, in 1938, Heinsen patented his Bunnygraph camera, which was entirely hidden in the belly of a large toy rabbit. He chose the bunny because, unlike dogs and cats, his young subjects had never been scared by one. The bunny produced a wide range of expressions on the children's faces and neither the parents nor the photographer needed to cajole the child to get pleasing results. But more than being just a gimmick, the Bunnygraph camera showed the profound respect and affection Heinsen had for children. Feeling that each child was an individual who deserved the fullest recognition, he rarely did group portraits. His child-centered business thrived. Then, in December 1941, with the American soldiers being deployed to fight in World War II in mind, the prominent Chicago department store Marshall Field's engaged Heinsen to open a studio in their basement. The business exploded, with Bunnygraph eventually operating four studios in Chicago. When the war finally ended, the Baby Boom continued to spur demand. Bunnygraph remained the leading child portrait photography studio in Chicago until 1970, when Heinsen retired. All this time, his wartime photographs were stored unseen in his basement.

That began to change when Heinsen and his young grandson John watched the 1979 remake of *All Quiet on the Western Front* together. That led Heinsen to bring out his pictures and share some of his painful memories with his grandson. When Heinsen died in 1984, John inherited his grandfather's album, but it wasn't until the centennial of World War I in 2014 that the adult John Heinsen, now a Los Angeles-based filmmaker whose own company perpetuates the name Bunnygraph, decided to research his grandfather's wartime pictures. On a trip to France in 2015, he discovered that his grandfather's images were far more historically significant than anyone had thought. It set John on a mission to make an impact in today's world.

In December 2023, with wars raging around the world, the [BallinStadt Emigration Museum](#) in Hamburg, Germany, mounted an exhibition of Walter Heinsen's pictures entitled "Through the Lens of Life." At the opening, John remarked, "Not only is it wonderful to return to Hamburg and celebrate my grandfather's life and work in a city he truly loved, but also to be here at a time when the lessons of World War I need to be remembered so that forgiveness can be embraced now as a path to peace for all peoples of the world."



Previous page, top:
Walter Heinsen with his camera at Le Cateau, 1917. Courtesy of Archives of Walter A. Heinsen

Previous page, below:
Walter Heinsen with his patented Bunnygraph camera in his original studio on Clark St. Chicago, IL, circa 1938. Courtesy of Archives of Walter A. Heinsen

This page, above:
The photograph that started our quest, showing the Bunnygraph logo, inset, on the verso. Walter Heinsen, *Baby Girl, Portrait*, gelatin silver, 7 x 5 in., (PCSC.2022.5.27)

This page, below:
John Heinsen on a visit to Photograph Conservation with volunteer Valerie Thaler who researched the story behind our picture. Credit: Aleya Lehmann

Exhibitions



Current Exhibitions

Afterlives: Contemporary Art in the Byzantine Crypt
January 29, 2024 through January 10, 2027

Ink and Ivory: Indian Drawings and Photographs Selected with James Ivory
July 29, 2024 through May 4, 2025

Mexican Prints at the Vanguard
September 12, 2024 through January 5, 2025

Robert Wood Johnson, Jr. Gallery Rotation
September 12, 2024 through February 25, 2025

Materialized Space: The Architecture of Paul Rudolph
September 30, 2024 through March 16, 2025

Floridas: Anastasia Samoylova and Walker Evans
October 14, 2024 through May 11, 2025

Jesse Krimes: Corrections
October 28, 2024 through July 13, 2025

Flight into Egypt: Black Artists and Ancient Egypt, 1876–Now
November 17, 2024 through February 17, 2025

Upcoming Exhibitions

The New Art: American Photography, 1839–1910
April 11, 2025 through July 20, 2025

Locations

The Met Fifth Avenue
Sunday–Tuesday and Thursday:
10 am–5 pm
Friday and Saturday: 10 am–9 pm
Closed Wednesday

The Met Cloisters
Thursday–Tuesday: 10 am–5 pm
Closed Wednesday

Date Night at The Met Fifth Avenue!
Fridays and Saturdays 'til 9 pm
Friday and Saturday evenings are made possible by the Ruth Lapham Lloyd Trust and the William H. Kearns Foundation.

Above
Chester Higgins (American, b. 1946),
African American pilgrims dance in honor of ancient spirits. Lake Nasser, Egypt, 2006 / 2024. Inkjet print, 26 1/2 in. × 40 in. Purchase, The Ford Foundation Gift, 2024 (2024.446)

Trained by the legendary photographer Prentice Herman Polk at Tuskegee University, Brooklyn-based photographer Chester Higgins has been traveling to Egypt and throughout the Nile Valley since the 1970s, documenting the variety of spiritual expression in the region. Higgins' vibrant photograph captures a ritual scene in Egypt with practitioners of Kemetic spirituality, a modern religious movement based on ancient traditions.

On view in *Flight into Egypt: Black Artists and Ancient Egypt, 1876–Now*, through February 17, 2025.

Support & Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

Afterlives: Contemporary Art in the Byzantine Crypt is made possible by The Jaharis Family Foundation. ♦ The exhibition brings together modern-day works that reckon with death and visualize the afterlife and Byzantine Egyptian funerary art and artifacts in part of the Mary and Michael Jaharis Galleries known as the Byzantine Crypt (Gallery 302).

Ink and Ivory: Indian Drawings and Photographs Selected with James Ivory is made possible by The Hagop Kevorkian Fund. Additional support is provided by the Lavori Sterling Foundation Endowment Fund. ♦ The exhibition presents a selection of superlative drawings from the courts and centers of India and Pakistan (with a few related Persian works) dating from the late sixteenth to the twentieth century.

Floridas: Anastasia Samoylova and Walker Evans is made possible by The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Inc. ♦ This exhibition brings together two distinct but related bodies of work depicting the idiosyncratic visual landscape of Florida: paintings and photographs by Walker Evans and photographs and collages by Anastasia Samoylova.

Jesse Krimes: Corrections is made possible by Joyce Frank Menschel. ♦ This exhibition pairs contemporary installations made in prison by American artist Jesse Krimes with 19th-century photographs from The Met collection by French criminologist Alphonse Bertillon, who developed the first modern system of criminal identification.

Mexican Prints at the Vanguard is made possible by Jessie and Charles Price. Additional support is provided by The Schiff Foundation.

Materialized Space: The Architecture of Paul Rudolph is made possible by The Modern Circle. Additional support is provided by The Daniel and Estrellita Brodsky Foundation, and Ann M. Spruill and Daniel H. Cantwell. The exhibition was organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in collaboration with the Library of Congress's Paul Marvin Rudolph Archive.

Flight into Egypt: Black Artists and Ancient Egypt, 1876–Now is made possible by the Gail and Parker Gilbert Fund, the Jane and Robert Carroll Fund, the Ford Foundation, and the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation. Additional support is provided by The Hayden Family Foundation, Allison and Larry Berg, The Holly Peterson Foundation, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Performance Pyramid performances are made possible by Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky, and the Adrienne Arsht Fund for Resilience through Art

The New Art: American Photography, 1839–1910 is made possible by the Diane W. and James E. Burke Fund and the Diane Carol Brandt Fund.

Support

With steadfast commitment and support from our friends, The Met's Department of Photograph Conservation continues to thrive as a crucial resource for the preservation of works of art, as well as a vibrant center for research.

To learn more about how you can become involved and support this critical area at The Met, please contact:

Hannah F. Howe
Deputy Chief Development Officer of Individual Giving
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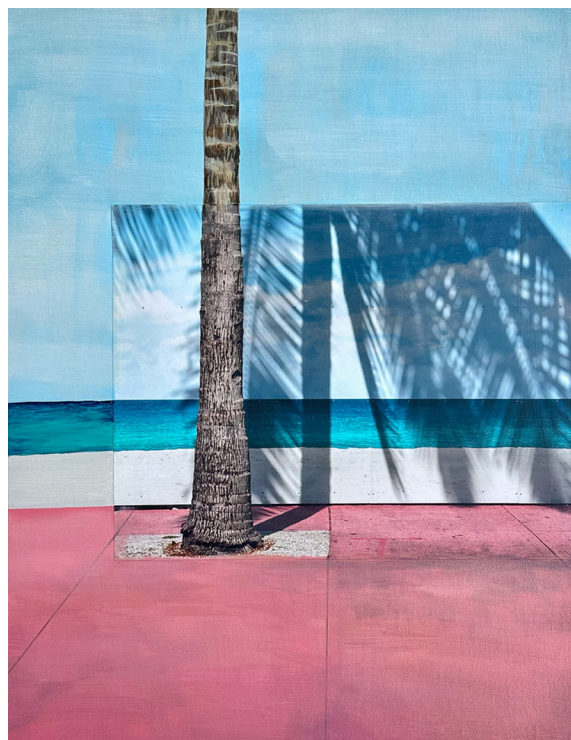
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Bulletin Archive

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Above
Anastasia Samoylova (American, born Russia, 1984), *Palm Shadows*, 2023. Inkjet print and acrylic paint on canvas, 14 × 11 in. Gift of the artist, 2024 (2024.376)

On view in the *Floridas: Anastasia Samoylova and Walker Evans* through May 11, 2025.