



JON NAAR: SIGNATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

NEW JERSEY ARTIST SERIES

NEW JERSEY STATE MUSEUM | TRENTON

This publication accompanies the **NEW JERSEY ARTIST SERIES** exhibition:

## **JON NAAR: SIGNATURE PHOTOGRAPHY**

on view at the

**NEW JERSEY STATE MUSEUM, TRENTON**

from January 19 through May 5, 2013

The **NEW JERSEY ARTIST SERIES** highlights the work of artists born, living or working in New Jersey.

Catalogue Design: Julianne Domm  
Editor: Margaret M. O'Reilly  
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Cover Image: **BARRAGAN RED, 1965**



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NEW JERSEY STATE MUSEUM | TRENTON  
JANUARY 19 THROUGH MAY 5, 2013



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## INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey State Museum has long been committed to presenting the work of New Jersey's visual artists. Through the *New Jersey Artist Series*, we highlight the extraordinary diversity and vitality of our state's artists and reinforce the value of art in our lives. The Series also allows the artists to have their work seen by a wide range of visitors - some who visit specifically to view their works and others who may have come for our exhibitions and programs in science or history, but discover art and artists they may not have encountered otherwise. We now have the tremendous opportunity of sharing the work of Jon Naar.

Naar's photography has been exhibited internationally, but has had little exposure here in the state he now calls home. A resident of Trenton, New Jersey for more than a decade, Naar has a fascinating and expansive history of his own. Born in London in 1920, he was educated at the Mill Hill School, the Sorbonne, the University of Vienna, London University and Columbia University where he earned an MA in political science and international relations, as well as a certificate from the Russian Institute. Trained as a linguist, Naar served as a Major in British Intelligence and Special Operations during World War II. By the late 1950s, he was working in international marketing, but had purchased an East German 35mm single-reflex Praktica camera which he used mostly on weekends around the Greenwich Village neighborhood where he then lived. Meetings with photographers and gallerists who encouraged his efforts provided motivation to continue his interest in photography. But it was an introduction to the groundbreaking photographer André Kertész that cemented his will to pursue photography as a profession. After Kertész reviewed Naar's portfolio, Naar asked, 'Should I become a photographer?' Kertész replied, 'Cher ami, tu y es déjà!' ('Dear friend, you are one already!')

And so, we are the recipients of the extraordinary images and moments which Jon Naar has recorded through the camera's lens over the past fifty years. A photojournalist, a fine artist and a chronicler of his time, Naar has captured so many of the people, places and cultural signposts of the second half of the twentieth century, and now in his early nineties, shows no signs of slowing down.

On behalf of the New Jersey State Museum's Board of Trustees and the Friends of the New Jersey State Museum, it is my pleasure to extend congratulations to Jon Naar for the extraordinary body of work which he has allowed us to share with our visitors. We are all the richer for sharing his vision.

**ANTHONY GARDNER** | *Executive Director, New Jersey State Museum*



## CURATOR'S NOTES

A PICTURE MEANS I KNOW WHERE I WAS EVERY MINUTE. THAT'S WHY I TAKE PICTURES. IT'S A VISUAL DIARY.

ANDY WARHOL

For more than thirty years, I have had a postcard of the Warhol image at left. Picked up in New York during my undergraduate days, the back of the postcard was blank. There was no indication of photographer or the date the image was taken. Back then, that was alright with me; Warhol was the attraction for that young art student. Over the years, that postcard moved around – to my drafting table, painting easel, onto a bookshelf, eventually to my Museum office and now in my home office. During this time, Warhol has remained an important art world figure for me, but the photograph itself took on great importance, too. This captured moment, the contemplative pose, the starkness of the setting. Who took this picture and what led the photographer to make these particular choices? Then, in 2012, I attended an exhibition opening and there, in a painting by the American realist Mel Leipzig, was the Warhol image! I know Mr. Leipzig well, and knew that he had painted a photographer named Jon Naar. Leipzig had shared with me some of the stories that Mr. Naar had told him of his war years in British Intelligence, of the advertising photography he'd created, and of the portraits of artists he'd taken. And, Naar lived less than one mile from the State Museum! I was introduced to Jon Naar that evening and immediately set up a studio visit with him.

What I saw on that visit was astounding: photographs that captured the ever-changing cultural zeitgeist of the second half of the twentieth century and images that clearly depict the photographer's curiosity of and stimulation gleaned from all aspects of life. Naar has traveled extensively and has photographed people and places, both extraordinary and quotidian, with a sense of intimacy. From the earliest images taken in markets in Mexico City, to haunting images of concentration camps, from the glitterati of the art and architecture fields to the groundbreaking advertising images he created, and later to the grit and energy of the graffiti world, Jon Naar has consistently brought his own intellect and humanity to his subjects.

His 1965 images of Luis Barragan's house in Mexico, with its bold colors and strong geometry, reveal Naar's early exploration and mastery of color and composition, while the atmospheric pictures taken at Dachau highlight the photographer's use of mood to express emotion. In the many portraits he has produced, Naar portrays the essence of the subject. In addition to Warhol, whom he photographed a number of times, Naar also knew and photographed other major art world figures including Josef Albers, Harry Bertoia, Christo, Joseph Beuys, Barnett Newman and Alexander Liberman, as well as architects and designers Luis Barragan, Marcel Breuer and Olivier Mourgue. In each of these works there is a directness, a sense of connection between the subject and the photographer, as well as a feeling that both were very much in the moment. Naar's influential photography for advertising and promotional materials, for Knoll in particular, brought a modernist aesthetic to the way contemporary industrial design objects such as the Bertoia and Albinson chairs were represented. These artfully-designed chairs were depicted in equally-artful photographs.

Naar's interest in the visual imagery all around him has been adroitly represented in his extensive series on graffiti, its writers/taggers and the places where it has been and continues to be found. Although graffiti writers, especially in the 1970s and 80s, were part of a largely underground community, their output was very public. Naar has successfully depicted both sides of that world, shooting the graffiti writers and their works with obvious admiration for their energy and creativity.

Today, in his early 90s, Jon Naar continues to be stimulated by life, willing to share the stories of his fascinating personal history, encouraging of younger artists, pleased to record the world he inhabits, and filled with curiosity and wonder. The viewer lucky enough to experience these images gets a brief glimpse into Naar's world and the fascinating people, places and moments he has captured through his lens as life's panoply moves around him.

MARGARET O'REILLY | *Curator of Fine Art, New Jersey State Museum*





## GETTING THE PICTURE

YOUR VISION WILL BECOME CLEAR ONLY WHEN YOU LOOK INTO YOUR HEART.

WHO LOOKS OUTSIDE, DREAMS. WHO LOOKS INSIDE, AWAKENS.

CARL JUNG

For me, photography - writing with light - is a magical process inspired by the paintings of Giotto, Vermeer, Cezanne, Seurat and Matisse I saw as a child in the Louvre. I became interested in becoming a full-time photographer in the mid-1950s when I got my first single-lens reflex camera taking black-and-white pictures such as *Broken Window* and *OST-N* in Greenwich Village where I lived and *Saint in Frame* and *Mexican Family* on a visit to Mexico. When I asked the great André Kertész should I become a photographer, he said "Cher ami, tu y es déjà!" (Dear friend, you are one already!).

My professional career began in 1964 with reportage for *twen* magazine in Germany and *domus* in Italy on *Die Verlorene Generation* (The Lost Generation), the upcoming generation of creative people in Germany symbolized by my *Shadows of Children* on *Swings* and *Ballet Kiss*. This editorial exposure got me assignments from *Elle* and *Jardin des Modes* in Paris, the *Sunday Times Magazine* and *Vogue* in London, the *New York Times Magazine* and other publications in New York.

I was lucky in that my self-taught sense of design and doing what I call "existential" photography - trying to catch the *zeitgeist* (the spirit of the time and place) - appealed to some of the top designers and art directors of the 60s and 70s, including Massimo Vignelli, Milton Glaser, George Tscherny, Will Hopkins and Alan Fletcher, as well as to clients such as Knoll International, IBM, SONY, Colonial Penn and other corporations. Among the portraits I shot were those of artists Andy Warhol (in his notorious Silver Factory), Josef Albers, Christo, Barnett Newman and Henry Moore, gallerist/artist Betty Parsons, architects Norman Foster and Luis Barragan, fashion designer Betsey Johnson, and British Prime Minister Harold Wilson and his cabinet.

In 1974, on an assignment from Pentagram Design London, I photographed *The Faith of Graffiti*, the first book on the spray-can graffiti phenomenon in New York, with an introduction by Norman Mailer. This led to my photographing and writing eleven additional books, including the best-selling *Design for a Limited Planet*, the first popular book on solar energy, the award-winning *This Land is Your Land* with Alex Naar as co-author, and in 2005, *Getting the Picture*, celebrating my retrospective exhibition at the Jan Cunen Museum in the Netherlands.

Reflecting on my fifty years as a professional photographer, I would like to quote the generous appraisal by the eminent art historian, critic and poet Corinne Robins: "*Jon Naar is an artist photographer with a lifetime of photographs behind him. He is a photographer of compositions that transform the streets of cities, the marks, the graffiti on trains and walls into an aesthetic experience. Photography can simply be evidence of what was once there - a record of place and change. But Jon Naar's pictures go further. The minute they exist, they reverberate and change upon reflection, upon that second and third look... Instead of holding us to the quick glance, his pictures stop us in our tracks and require the viewer to stop and look long and enter into the photographer's unique sense of time and place into, as it were, the era of his sensibility.*"

JON NAAR



## SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 Powerhouse Arena, Brooklyn, New York, *Keeping the Faith of Graffiti*
- 2009 The Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, New Jersey, *The Faith of Graffiti*
- 2008 Rider University, Lawrenceville, New Jersey, *Retrospective*
- 2007-8 Canadian Center for Architecture, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, *'73: Out of Gas*  
Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, *Andy Warhol*
- 2007 Cooper Union, New York, *Graffiti and Graphic Design*  
Museum of the City of New York, New York, *Graffiti: Art or Vandalism?*  
University of Texas, Houston, Texas, *Jon Naar Meets Luis Barragan*  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, *Artists, Designers and Architects*
- 2006 Gallery 36, London, Ontario, Canada, *The Art of Urban Identity*
- 2005 Knoll International, New York, *Jon Naar and Massimo Vignelli*
- 2005-6 Jan Cunen Museum, Oss, the Netherlands, *Jon Naar Retrospective*
- 2004 Rhinehart/Fischer Gallery, Trenton, New Jersey
- 2002 Sarah Morthland Gallery, New York, *Photographs from the 1930s-1950s*
- 1979 Moscow Book Fair, *America Through American Eyes*  
Levi Strauss Europe, *Contemporary U.S. Mural Art*
- 1977 Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 1976 Musee d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
- 1974 Circle Gallery, New York, *The Faith of Graffiti*
- 1967 Long Island University, New York
- 1966 International Center for Photography, New York
- 1965 Metropolitan Museum, New York, *Photography in the Fine Arts*  
Contemporary Arts Gallery, New York University, New York
- 1964 University of California, Berkeley, California  
Friedrich/Dahlem Gallery, Munich, Germany, *The New Generation*
- 1963 Galeria Coyote Flaco, Coyoacan, Mexico, *El Ojo de un Extranjero*

## WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

OST-N, 1957  
gelatin silver print

BROKEN WINDOW, 1960  
gelatin silver print

CHRIST AND THE TEACUPS, MEXICO CITY, 1962  
gelatin silver print

MEXICAN FAMILY, 1962  
gelatin silver print

SAINT IN FRAME, MEXICO CITY, 1962  
gelatin silver print

ALEXANDER LIBERMAN & BARNET NEWMAN,  
BETTY PARSONS GALLERY, 57TH ST.,  
NEW YORK, 1963  
gelatin silver print

BETTY PARSONS, NEW YORK, 1963  
gelatin silver print

DACHAU, 1963  
gelatin silver print

DACHAU WINDOW, 1963  
gelatin silver print

BALLET KISS, 1964  
(previously published as *Dance  
Rehearsal, Munich Ballet, Munich*)  
gelatin silver print

GUENTHER UECKER IN HIS STUDIO,  
DÜSSELDORF, 1964  
digital giclee print

OLIVIER MOURGUE AND HIS "LITTLE THEATER,"  
NEW YORK, 1964  
digital giclee print

All works lent by the artist. \*Indicates work illustrated in this catalogue.



**SHADOWS OF CHILDREN ON SWINGS, MUNICH, 1964**  
gelatin silver print

**STRASBOURG CHILDREN, 1964\***  
gelatin silver print

**ZERO GROUP, DÜSSELDORF, 1964**  
digital giclee print

**ANDY WARHOL IN THE SILVER FACTORY ON EAST 47TH ST., NEW YORK, 1965**  
(for *New York Herald Tribune*, now *New York Magazine*)  
digital giclee print



**BARRAGAN BLUE, 1965**  
digital giclee print

**BARRAGAN FOUNTAIN, 1965**  
digital giclee print

**BARRAGAN GREY, 1965**  
digital giclee print

**BARRAGAN ON ROOF, 1965**  
digital giclee print

**BARRAGAN RED, 1965\***  
digital giclee print

**EDIE SEDGWICK 1 (FACTORY GIRL), 1965**  
gelatin silver print

**EDIE SEDGWICK 2, 1965**  
gelatin silver print

**TARA BROWNE'S PSYCHEDELIC-PAINTED AC COBRA, LONDON, 1966**  
digital giclee print

**ALBINSON BARRELS, 1967**  
(for Knoll International)  
digital giclee print

**ALBINSON NINE, 1967**  
(for Knoll International)  
digital giclee print

**ALBINSON STACKED BUSES, 1967**  
(for Knoll International)  
digital giclee print

**ALBINSON STACKED CUPS, 1967**  
(for Knoll International)  
digital giclee print

**BUS STITCH I, 1968**  
digital giclee print

**DESIGNER OLIVIER MOURGUE IN HIS PARIS STUDIO WITH HIS FAMOUS BOULOU CHAIRS, 1968**  
digital giclee print

**POUR LA DEFENSE (FOR THE DEFENSE OF POLITICAL FREEDOMS), 1968**  
digital giclee print

**WILL AMERICA BURN?, 1968**  
(for *Saturday Evening Post*)  
digital giclee print

**HARRY BERTOIA IN HIS STUDIO, BALLY, PA, 1969**  
digital giclee print

**MARCEL BREUER IN HIS HOME, NEW CANAAN, CT, 1970**  
digital giclee print

**JOSEF ALBERS, ORANGE, CT, 1971**  
gelatin silver print

**MARINO MARINI, MILAN, 1971**  
(for *House Beautiful*)  
gelatin silver print

**126TH STREET TREE, 1973**  
digital giclee print

**155TH STREET STATION, 1973 (left)\***  
digital giclee print

**BASKETBALL, 1973**  
digital giclee print

**BUS + NUN, 1973**  
digital giclee print

**CRAZY CROSS KIDS, 1973**  
(previously published as *School Kids*)  
digital giclee print

**DICE 198, 1973**  
digital giclee print

**FRANK 136, 1973**  
digital giclee print

**GRAFFITI WRITERS, 1973**  
digital giclee print

**KIP JUMP, 1973\***  
digital giclee print

**RUBE, 1973**  
digital giclee print

**STAR III, 1973**  
digital giclee print

**STITCH-I, 1973**  
digital giclee print

**TRIBORO BRIDGE, 1973**  
digital giclee print

**WINE 9, 1973**  
digital giclee print

**ANDY WARHOL IN THE FACTORY AT UNION SQUARE, NEW YORK, 1974\***  
gelatin silver print

**CHRISTO IN HIS STUDIO ON CANAL STREET, NEW YORK, 1974**  
gelatin silver print

**ANDY WARHOL, 1976**  
digital giclee print

**PORTRAIT OF HARRY TORCZYNER, NEW YORK, 1982**  
(for *Connoisseur Magazine*)  
digital giclee print

**PAINTERS AT WORK IN TRENTON, NJ, 2005**  
digital giclee print

**TRENTON OLD STOCK BEER, 2005**  
digital giclee print

**KASSO, 2007**  
digital giclee print

**LEON RAINBOW, 2008**  
digital giclee print

**GARE DE BERCY, 2009\***  
digital giclee print

**NYPD, 2012**  
digital giclee print





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