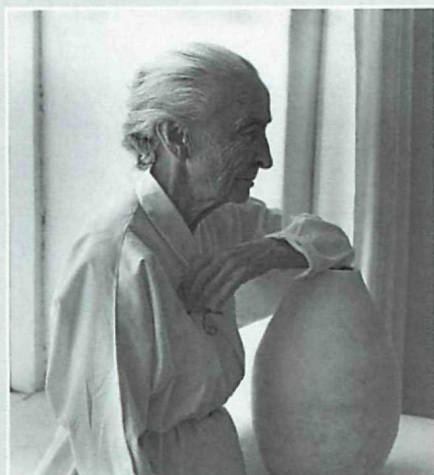


# A Contribution from the Heart

Since taking her first photography class in the 1970s, Carol Beesley has been in love with the medium. Best known for her colorful paintings of the



Laura Gilpin, U.S., 1891-1979  
Georgia O'Keeffe with Juan Hamilton Pot, 1953

American West, Beesley began collecting photographs more than 30 years ago.

"I love photography, but black and white photography had no permanent place in my voice as an artist," she says, "so I started collecting." Recently she donated a major portion of her collection to the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art.

Alan Atkinson, who curated the museum exhibit, "The Creative Eye, Selections from the Carol Beesley Collection of Photographs," categorized the works into: people, places and people in their places.

His choices not only showcased the collection's depth, but also treated museum-goers to a few surprises. Edward Weston's contribution was a male torso, not the traditional landscapes for which he is famous. The national icon of Yosemite was seen anew through the eyes of photographers other than Ansel Adams. And "people in their places" included an Henri Cartier-Bresson portrait of William Faulkner relaxing in a garden with his two dogs.

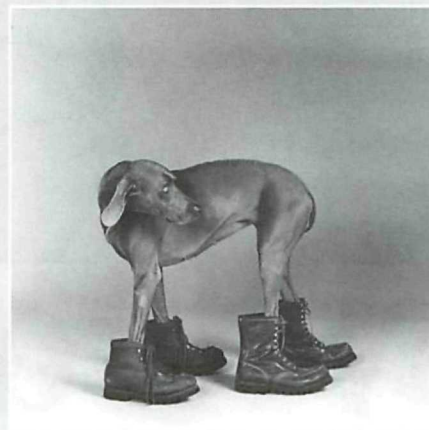
Another "people in their places" mo-

ment might extend to Frederick Sommer's jack rabbit carcass flattened into abstract expressionism by speeding cars. "It's very much like a Jackson Pollack color field painting," says Beesley. "There is an unbroken surface and a flat picture plane. No one point is more important than any other."

There are also moments of humor—William Wegman's Weimeraner, Fay Ray, in work boots, and urban disturbia illustrated by well-dressed mannequins enjoying cocktails while a house fire rages behind them.

In addition to important figures in the history of photography like Cartier-Bresson, Weston and Mary Ellen Mark, Beesley's collection includes works by lesser known photographers who utilize the medium in its truest sense—to freeze frame a moment in time.

Two such photographers are Oklahomans Dawna Wallis and Gary Harger. Each wields the camera like a



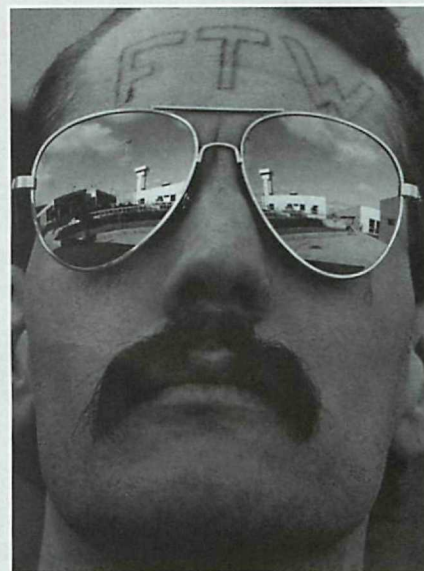
William Wegman, U.S. b.1943  
Fay Ray, 1988 (Fay Ray in Boots), 1988

mirror, creating revealing and unsentimental portraits of people in their corner of the world.

For Wallis, a former MFA student at OU, that includes members of a small town marching band and store clerks in Oklahoma City shopping malls. For Harger, a former inmate at the Joseph Harp Correctional Center, it is men gaz-

ing stoically from prison cells or standing in the relative freedom of the yard—with the omnipresent guard tower reflected in their sunglasses.

Harger met Beesley when he participat-



Gary Harger, U.S. b. 1953  
FTW with Mirrored Glasses, 1991

ed in a prison arts program and has since earned two degrees from OU. Beesley says someday she would like to have his entire photo essay for the museum.

Museum director Ghislain d'Humieres says the collection of 100 photographs is a significant addition to the museum's holdings. "Her dynamic collection not only enhances the permanent collection of the museum, but also is valuable as a teaching tool," he says. "Students relate to photography. It's a medium that is immediately accessible to them."

For Beesley, there is joy in each new discovery.

"This has been the most incredible journey for me. The discovery of photography and becoming just totally passionate about it," says Beesley. "I think I've always been on kind of an art journey, and photography is an important part of who I am."

—Lynette Lobban