

Embarrassment of Riches: Picturing Global Wealth, 2000–2010

MINNEAPOLIS
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A new photography exhibition at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) explores how contemporary media artists have depicted wealth over the last ten years. Organized by MIA curator of photography and new media David E. Little, "Embarrassment of Riches" upends the usual attention given to images of poverty in publications and museums; instead analyzing the cultural impact of wealth. Following a decade of unprecedented historical flows and fluctuations of wealth on a global scale, this exhibition is not a celebration of affluence and consumerism but an examination of the transformative effects of prosperity.



Martin Parr, *Cambridge, England*, from "Luxury" series, 2005 (printed 2008), pigment print, The Linda and Lawrence Perlman Photography Endowment 2009.42.2

The exhibition, which opens September 17, 2010, includes more than 20 photographs and a selection of video works by international artists such as Tina Barney, Luc Delahaye, Jacqueline Hassink, Sze Tsung Leong, Martin Parr, Robert Polidori, Alex Prager, Cindy Sherman, Alec Soth, and Eve Sussman, among others.

"These artists have captured the different ways that wealth manifests itself visually, from individuals who demonstrate their money publicly through fashion and social rituals to governments who transform cities through new architecture," Little said. "But as this exhibition will show, these works do not just document, they also comment on these societies and engage our own perceptions through compelling imagery as well as humor."

Throughout history, photographers have sought to document the effects of the economy, a key concern of journalism. But they have focused their attention and cameras almost exclusively on the plight of the poor or the socially disadvantaged. Most famous are Lewis Hine's documentation of child labor at the beginning of the 20th century and the Farm Security Administration's survey of the migrant and rural poor during the Great Depression in the 1930s, as well as the numerous images of poverty and famine produced by photojournalists up to the present day.

In the exhibition's three major themes—*Currencies; New Cities; and Rituals of Wealth and Fashion*—Jacqueline Hassink (Dutch) and Alec Soth (American) document the private spaces of haute couture. Cindy Sherman (American) impersonates the patrons who support her work and the art world while Alex Prager (American) stages the Hollywood poses of a generation influenced by cinema style. Artists Eve Sussman (American), Martin Parr (British), and Tina Barney (American) examine the social rituals in Los Angeles, Europe, and the Middle East respectively. Abelardo Morell (Cuban) reveals the speculative nature of value and the sheer quantity of goods that circulate within society. Luc Delahaye (French) investigates Davos and the behind-the-scenes financiers and politicians who fund commerce; and Sze Tsung Leong (Chinese) and Robert Polidori (Canadian) document the transformation of China and other emerging countries.

“Embarrassment of Riches: Picturing Global Wealth, 2000–2010” is open September 17, 2010, through January 2, 2011 in the MIA's expanded Harrison Photography Gallery. Since joining the MIA, photography curator Little has created a new series of innovative exhibitions, titled “New Pictures,” the first of its kind to examine contemporary photography across a range of traditions. Little has also arranged several recent important acquisitions of works by Noriko Furunishi, Martin Parr, and Boris Mikhailov, which expand the MIA's photography collection into contemporary art.

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ABOUT THE MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ARTS

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA), home to one of the finest encyclopedic art collections in the country, houses more than 80,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history. Highlights of the permanent collection include European masterworks by Rembrandt, Poussin, and van Gogh; modern and contemporary painting and sculpture by Picasso, Matisse, Mondrian, Stella, and Close; as well as internationally significant collections of prints and drawings, decorative arts, Modernist design, photographs, textiles, and Asian, African, and Native American art. General admission is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee. Museum hours: Sunday, 11 A.M.–5 P.M.; Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, 10 A.M.–5 P.M.; Thursday, 10 A.M.–9 P.M.; Monday closed. For more information, call (612) 870-3000 or visit www.artsmia.org.