

POMONA COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

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POMONA COLLEGE RECEIVES COLLECTION OF THOUSANDS OF PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS FROM WORLD WAR II ERA

Claremont, Calif., November 12, 2019 – An impressive trove of 1,200 World War II press photos – reaching from Dunkirk to Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima – has found its home at Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College, thanks to a generous gift from photography collectors Michael Mattis and Judith Hochberg announced today. The images serve as a hands-on pathway into the history of the war, the uses of wartime photography and topics such as censorship and propaganda.

The collection's range is vast in scope and geography, chronicling historical moments in military and political leadership, the active conflict of the war, as well the aftermath of the conflict which obliterated borders and created migration of displaced persons. It includes the work of well-known photographers such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, Joe Rosenthal, Mike Disfarmer and Alfred Eisenstaedt, whose work created the world's visual memory of the era. But, the collection also includes photos from anonymous or relatively unknown photographers revealing a wider universe of images from the time.

“With this generous gift from Michael and Judy, Pomona's Benton Museum of Art will become the repository for one of the largest non-governmental collections of conflict photography from the WWII era,” says Steve Comba, Interim Director and Registrar of the Pomona College Museum of Art. “It will be an incredibly rich source for students, faculty members and researchers.”

What sets these images apart is that most are original press photos bearing terse, type-written captions, stamps from wire services and, sometimes, crop marks and other scars from the hurried rush to press.

“Together image and text are primary sources for the study of the time and the attitudes that shaped the telling of those stories,” says Comba. “They also become available for rereading, reinterpretation in light of current understanding.”

Long-time benefactors of the College museum, Mattis and Hochberg started collecting photography as newlyweds in the early 1980s when they were doctoral students. More than 30 years later, their collection is considered one of the most comprehensive private collections of vintage photography in the United States, and one of the top photography collections in the world.

“This gift is one of the leading institutional collections of vintage WWII photographs covering all chronological phases and geographic arenas of this greatest of all conflicts,” says Mattis. “More generally, this important collection serves as a reminder that photography at a forward-thinking college art museum should not be restricted to "art for art's sake" but indeed can impact and cross-fertilize with a great many academic departments.”

Additionally, this gift will also be named to honor the tenure of Kathleen Stewart Howe, former director of the Pomona College Museum of Art and Emerita Professor of Art History, whose scholarship and connections have been the guiding force behind the museum’s photography collection’s expansion and influence.

The collection will live at the [Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College](#), which opens to the public in fall 2020. The Collection Study Room in the new museum will be named in honor of Mattis and Hochberg in recognition of their support for photography at Pomona’s museum and their contributions to the history of photography.

The museum plans to make the photography collection available for students, researchers and others, via their online repository in late spring 2020 as well as in person when Benton Museum of Art opens in fall 2020.

About the Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College

Opening fall 2020, Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College will provide a space for some of SoCal’s most compelling and experimental exhibitions. The 33,000-square-foot facility is located where the Pomona campus meets the lively Claremont Village and the city’s civic center. The museum is named after Janet Inskeep Benton, a 1979 graduate of the College and long-time supporter of the arts. The new building replaces the existing [Pomona College Museum of Art](#) which will remain open through May 2020.

For decades, Pomona College has played a key part in shaping innovative artists, including Helen Pashgian, James Turrell, Peter Shelton, the late Marcia Hafif and the late Chris Burden. Benton Museum of Art’s collection will include pieces from all of these alumni, and future exhibitions will carry forward the College’s emphasis on cutting-edge art in the Los Angeles region.