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Ryerson's Image Centre captures 40 years of photographic history with new exhibit

January 21, 2016 4:16 pm Views: 454

By [Jessica Maxwell](#)

From portraits in the '40s to vintage nudes and polaroids from the '70s, the Ryerson Image Centre (RIC) showcased 40 years in photos for its first exhibition of the year.

On Wednesday Jan. 20, "Ways of Seeing: Building the RIC Collection," was hosted by students in the film and photography preservation and collections management program. This is the first of three displays in the exhibition.

"Ways of Seeing" focuses on how the RIC's photographic collection has grown over the last four decades. It showcases not only the collection of photos in Ryerson's archives, but also the history of photographic development and technology from 1969 to present day. The exhibition includes works from popular photographers like Eugène Atget and Edward Weston alongside experimental editing techniques by Ryerson students.

Since September, 10 students were tasked with creating and building the exhibit. They were responsible for all aspects — from picking the images, to deciding on frames and displays, and adding or extracting colours. The students were also responsible for publishing a small book and running a Tumblr page about the exhibit. Gaëlle Morel, RIC's exhibition curator, and Sophie Hackett, the associate curator of photography at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), oversaw this exhibit, which is predominantly designed by students.

Morel, who has been working alongside Hackett on these exhibits for three years, said it's a great way for the students to understand the process of putting on a professional art event.

"It's a good experience, and now they know what's involved in creating a show, even if it's a small one," said Morel. "I think it helps them understand what field they want to work in because this is going to be their environment. It might not be here, but say, in a museum or in an archive."

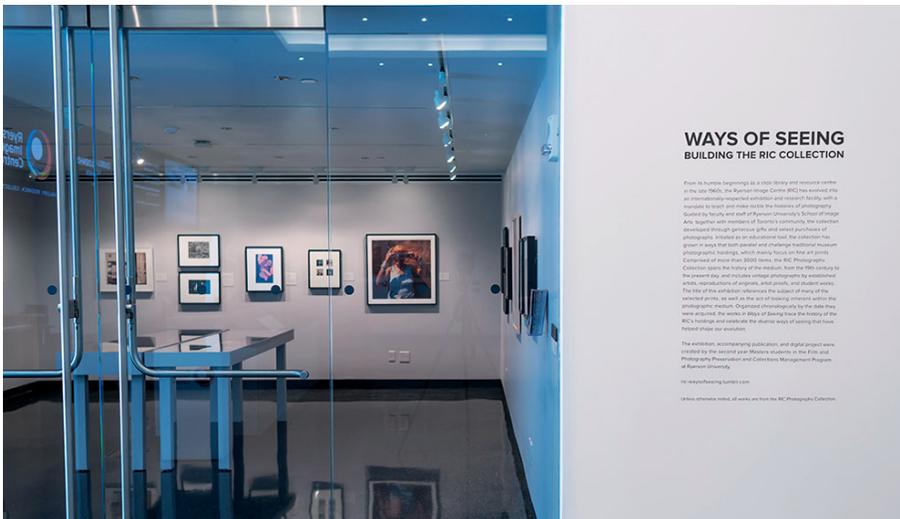


"Ways of Seeing: Building the RIC Collection" (installation view), 2016 © Larissa Issler Ryerson Image Centre (Courtesy RIC).

Alex Hakonson is one of the students responsible for the curation section of the exhibit and admitted that one of the greatest challenges was narrowing down 3,000 images to just 20.

"The first run was going through and picking what peaked our interests. We then looked at the stories behind them, because the overarching theme was looking at what was happening in the collection at the time," said Hakonson. "Honestly, we were photo narrowing right up until we were hanging them on the wall."

While it showcases a variety of historical images, the exhibit has even incorporated an interactive feature. A stack of over 100 scales sat on a table with a white light. The public was welcomed to put these small scales over the white light to view images and take ones they found interesting.



"Ways of Seeing: Building the RIC Collection" (installation view), 2016 © Larissa Issler Ryerson Image Centre (Courtesy RIC).

While Hackett has worked at both the AGO and Ryerson, she saw this as new way to experience these photographs and for students to display their work.

"I think one of the things I enjoy about seeing things happen here is that because it's a smaller institution with a smaller staff, they can be more nimble and they can accommodate something like a student show," said Hackett.

"I think it's not only good to cheer on fellow students, but to see another side of the Ryerson collection...It's exciting that we get to see a small chapter of the RIC's history and one that's forged in Toronto that is still going so strong," she added.

The "Ways of Seeing: Building the RIC Collection" exhibit runs from Jan. 20 to Feb. 28.

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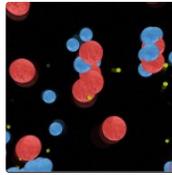
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Jessica Maxwell

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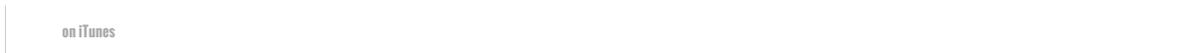
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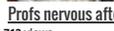
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