

## List GALLERY

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SWARTHMORE COLLEGE 500 COLLEGE AVENUE, SWARTHMORE, PA 19081



### **HENRY HORENSTEIN *SELECTED WORKS***

September 12—October 27, 2019

**Artist's Talk:** Thursday, September 12, 4:30 PM

Lang Performing Arts Center Cinema

**List Gallery reception follows: 5:30–7:00 PM**

**Partners: Thursday, October 24, 4:30 PM**

Film screening, discussion, and reception with Henry Horenstein

Lang Performing Arts Center Cinema

*Left: Cownose Ray, *Rhinoptera bonasus*, 2000, courtesy of the artist*

The List Gallery, Swarthmore College is pleased to present **Henry Horenstein: Selected Works**, September 12–October 27, 2019. Curated by List Gallery Director Andrea Packard and Assistant Professor of Art Ron Tarver, the exhibition features close up views from Horenstein's *Animalia* and *Humans* series, together with intimate portraits and figure studies taken along the famed Malecón seawall in Havana, Cuba. Together with Horenstein's award-winning documentary, *Partners*, these images invite us to broaden our definitions of nature, the human body, and intimate partnerships. Horenstein will lecture about his varied career on Thursday, September 12, 4:30 p.m. in the Lang Performing Arts Center Cinema. An opening reception will follow in the List Gallery, 5:30-7:00 p.m. This exhibition and an accompanying catalog have been made possible through a generous grant from the William J. Cooper Foundation. Additional support was provided by Swarthmore's Department of Art and Art History and Department of Film and Media Studies. All events are free and open to the public.

Although his manuals are used in numerous college and university courses throughout the United States and he has taught photography at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) since 1982, Horenstein's teaching and creative process are far from academic. The title of his recent memoir, *Shoot What You Love* (2016), celebrates the straightforward advice of his favorite teacher at RISD, the seminal photographer, Harry Callahan, who encouraged students to pay attention to their individual passions and develop a personal approach through open-ended experimentation, hard work, and attention to craft. Distilling such advice over more than four decades, Horenstein has photographed the people and subjects that fascinate him most, be they family members, country musicians, jockeys, or burlesque performers.

When selecting work for Horenstein's List Gallery exhibition at Swarthmore College, co-curators Andrea Packard and Ron Tarver took a slightly contrarian view. The obvious approach might have been to select signature works from the narrative portfolios, such as *Honky Tonk*, *Histories*, or *Racing Days*, that established his reputation. However, they were also interested in the way Horenstein's photography changed when he began *Animalia* (1995–2001), the first of three bodies of work that he jokingly refers to as his "midlife crisis works."

Horenstein began his *Animalia* series at a time when he felt he had exhausted the narrative subjects that previously captivated him. One day in 1995, while he was at a zoo completing an assignment for a children's book, he began taking photographs "for himself." While rediscovering his lifelong enjoyment of aquariums and zoos, he also wanted to avoid the color film and detailed habitats associated with popular wildlife photography. Instead, he began to zoom in on his subjects, taking hundreds of pictures in search of compelling viewpoints

In 2000, a year before Horenstein completed his *Animalia* series, he traveled to Havana, Cuba—a favorite destination for contemporary photographers because of its hybrid culture, restricted status for Americans, dazzling light, and colorful but decaying architecture. Using locally-purchased black-and-white Kodak Plus X film (ISO 125), he focused on swimmers, couples, clusters of friends, and solitary figures visiting *El Malecón*, the famed Havana seawall. Although he set aside the macro lenses used in his *Animalia* series and often selected more distant viewpoints, Horenstein's *Malecón* photographs continue to emphasize close cropping, abstracted spaces, and taut, geometric compositions. The List Gallery is pleased to be the first to present a significant group of Horenstein's *Malecón* images.



*Boy on Basketball Court, Malécon, Havana, Cuba, 2000, courtesy of the artist*

From 2004 through 2008, Horenstein continued the approach he developed with *Animalia* to more closely investigate that most daunting and often-studied subject, the human nude. In the resulting series, *Humans*, he zooms in on the bodies of both men and women, producing tightly-cropped and softly-lit images of eyelashes, breasts, underarms, bottoms, ears, teeth, genitals, and more. Using lenses that opened as wide as f/1 and f/1.2, he produced a shallow depth of field, bringing some parts of the composition into focus, while other areas blur. Over-processing the film to create a grainy atmosphere, he printed his images in sepia, suggesting a quality of timelessness.



Film Still, *Partners*, 2018, a feature-length documentary by Henry Horenstein

*Partners* (2018), Horenstein's feature-length documentary film, interweaves statements by numerous couples who volunteered to speak openly and spontaneously about their relationships. The featured partners include a polyamorous threesome, a man and woman whose arranged marriage led to a loving commitment, couples with significant health differences, and a man who considers his significant other to be a cat. Filming all of the participants sitting or standing against the same simple backdrop, Horenstein gives equivalent light, space, and authority to all speakers and emphasizes commonalities among diverse loving unions. *Partners* premiered at The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in May 2018 and won Special Jury Prize at the 2019 Amsterdam International Film Festival and Van Gogh Awards.

### **Artist's Biography**

Henry Horenstein studied history at the University of Chicago, and earned a B.F.A. and M.F.A. at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), where he studied with the legendary photographers Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind. Horenstein's work has been exhibited internationally and he has published over 30 books, including *Shoot What You Love*, *Histories*, *Honky Tonk*, *Animalia*, *Humans*, and *Close Relations*. His instructional books, including *Black & White Photography*, *Digital Photography*, and *Beyond Basic Photography* are used by thousands of colleges, universities, and high schools in foundational photography courses. Horenstein has also made several films, including *Preacher*, *Murray*, and *Spoke*. His most recent film, *Partners*, premiered at The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in May, 2018, and won Special Jury Prize at the 2019 Amsterdam International Film Festival and Van Gogh Awards. Horenstein is Professor of Photography at RISD.

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