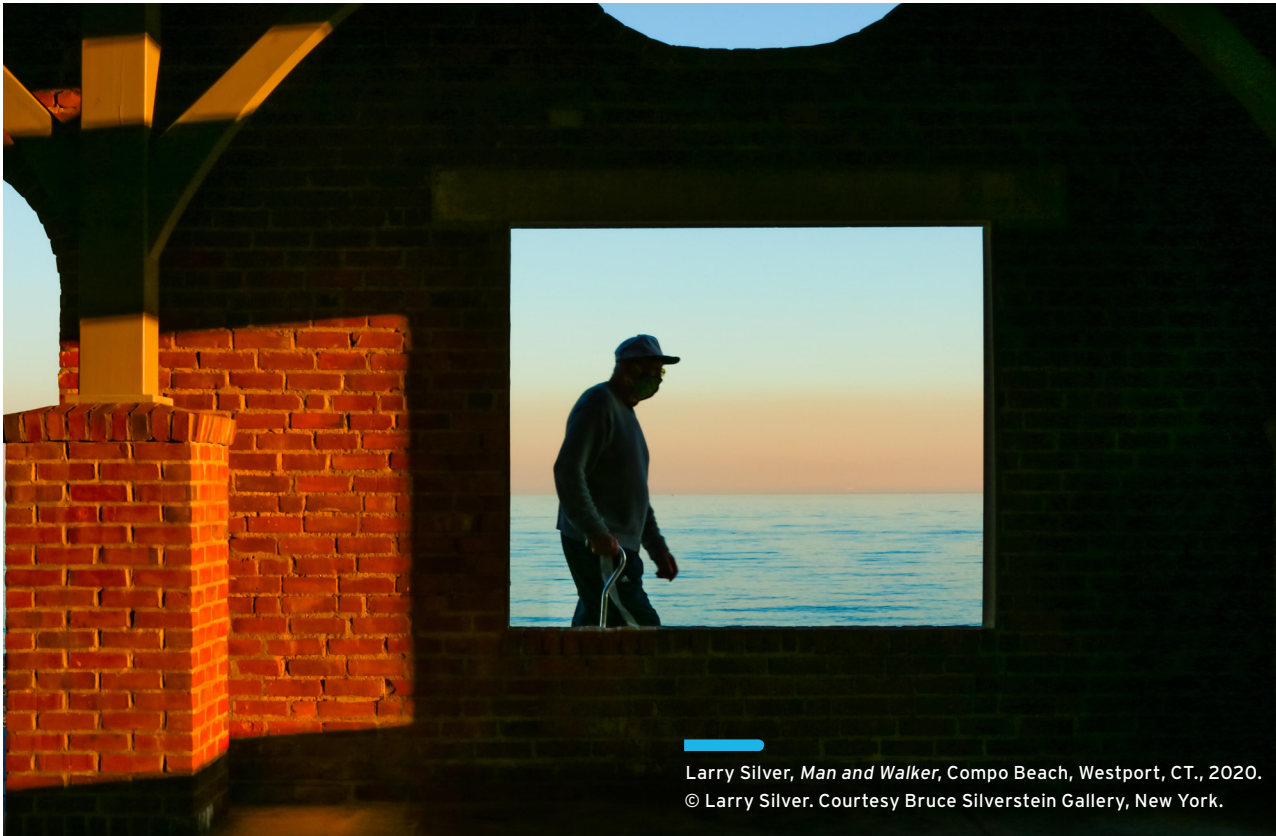


LIFELONG PROJECTS

INVALUABLE COWANS AND SILVER PHOTOS AT FAIRFIELD



Larry Silver, *Man and Walker, Compo Beach, Westport, CT., 2020.*
© Larry Silver. Courtesy Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York.

When New Englanders talk about summer getaways, few mention Connecticut as a destination point, seemingly unaware of its breathtaking shorelines and winding roads hugging its seawalls or the old-time camp feel based around its approximately 3,000 ponds, lakes and reservoirs.

Since 1973, when he relocated to Westport, Connecticut, from Greater New York, Larry Silver has been photographing and documenting his home state, in what he calls, "A lifelong project." Highlights from that work will be on view in "13 Ways of Looking at Landscape: Larry Silver's Connecticut Photographs," which will be on view from March 25 through June 18 at the Fairfield University Art Museum.

He dedicated himself to being a lifetime photographer as a teenager. At the age of 15, as a photography student at the High School of Industrial Art (now the High School of Art and Design) in New York City, which he attended from 1949 to 1953, Silver found himself captivated by "the influence of the New York Photo League – a group of photographers who combined personal expression and social activism to expose the political and social issues of the day." His own photographs from this time period have come to be invaluable for their documentation of Manhattan during those years.

The same can be said of his 1954 images from California's Muscle Beach, which provide proof that the Los Angeles destination was a real way of life in the middle of the 20th century and not a made-up term created for mass consumption.

Those experiences have served him well during his almost half-century living in Connecticut.

The Fairfield exhibition is curated by Leslie K. Brown, who specializes in the history of photography and modern and contemporary art, and who previously had curated a photographic exhibition on the landscape of New England for the Photographic Resource Center in Boston.

"After viewing his work, I was struck by Silver's focus – long term – on the Connecticut landscape as well as the poetic and lyrical nature of his photographs," Brown said.

"Silver is perhaps best known for his street photography, as a photographer associated with New York's Photo League, but since his move to Westport in 1973, his perspective, literally and metaphorically, shifted. This was a focus and facet of his work that I wanted to bring to the fore."

The show takes the viewer through almost a half-century of development in Silver's work. "When he first moved there – the earliest Connecticut images from the show are from 1973

SPOTLIGHT MUSEUM

13 WAYS OF LOOKING AT LANDSCAPE: LARRY SILVER'S CONNECTICUT PHOTOGRAPHS
MARCH 25 THROUGH JUNE 18

ADGER COWANS: SENSE AND SENSIBILITY
THROUGH JUNE 18

FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM
1073 NORTH BENSON ROAD
FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT

OPPOSITE PAGE:

TOP: Larry Silver, *Anytime Farm, Fairfield, CT., 1982.* © Larry Silver. Courtesy Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York.

MIDDLE: Larry Silver, *Three Kids on Dock, Westport, CT.* © Larry Silver. Photo by Paul Mutino.

BOTTOM: Adger Cowans, *The Cat, ca.1960s*, silver gelatin print. Courtesy of the artist and Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York. © Adger Cowans.

– his work was a little more matter of fact, although you can see the seeds of later explorations and inspirations,” Brown said. “Over time, his work grew more ethereal and abstract, but he still did explore urban landscapes, such as in Bridgeport, where his eye for form and shape still ruled.

“His work from 2000 is very experimental – including incredible darkroom experiments and close-up abstractions – which at some point deserves a show unto themselves.

“The most recent work in the exhibition is from 2020, with a few digital prints from other series printed just a couple weeks ago. For the 2020 color series, “Window at Beach,” he situated himself before an opening in a brick structure and proceeded to capture people as they walked past the “aperture.”

Brown said that the show is bookended by the modern-day “rückenfigur” image of the woman sitting at water’s edge, inviting you to look and stare, and a suite of four color pieces from the window series closes the show, hopefully inspiring visitors to go out and see Connecticut with new eyes.

Indeed, for those of you who normally only experience the state via its mega highways, Silver’s images of its agrarian and water-based lifestyle and economy will be a pleasant surprise, and his capturing of its quiet backroads and active boardwalks will not only make you want to see more of his work, but travel to see and experiences his subject matter first hand.

“Connecticut is a place that I personally haven’t gotten to know very well, until recently,” Brown said. “Driving around the area near Silver’s home, I am struck by how rural it is, stone walls are scattered about, and how it blends a variety of “-scapes,” fields and beaches.”

Towards the end of a YouTube video, “Larry Silver’s Connecticut,” the photographer notes, “The best years of my life have been spent in Westport. Raising my family and creating and documenting the rich fabric which is Connecticut!”

The Fairfield University Art Museum is concurrently exhibiting the works of Adger Cowans, a founding member of the Kamoinge Black photographers’ collective whose ongoing mission is to “Honor, document, preserve, and represent the history and culture of the African Diaspora with integrity and respect for humanity through the lens of Black Photographers.” The group was formed in 1963.

“Adger Cowans: Sense and Sensibility” features over 50 images from the civil rights movement, jazz musicians, landscape and Cowans’ artistic studies of the human form, water and light. Curator Halima Taha, PhD, has compiled a collection to show how he’s used his photography, “as a vehicle to articulate beauty within the human condition, and the world in which we live.” The images cover his career as a photographer of portraiture, landscape and film.

At a time when some states’ leaders are looking to rewrite their history books to fit their own personal and political agendas, and some feel threatened by the thought that “Black Lives Matter,” these images are an important documentation of a time that new generations need to learn about and a reminder that the Black history of the United States is all of our history.

If you’re not able to make it to Fairfield, the museum’s website provides the exhibition’s brochure along with an accompanying soundtrack, including music from John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, Bill Evans, Johnny Hartman and Miles Davis, also curated by Taha, that’s accessible at fairfield.edu/museum/adgercowans/.

