

CHAZEN MUSEUM OF ART
University of Wisconsin–Madison
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PRESS RELEASE
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Exhibition of Michael Kienitz Photographs at Chazen
On view September 8–October 28, 2007, Mayer Gallery
Opening Reception, Friday, September 7, 6:30–8:00 p.m.

The Chazen Museum of Art is pleased to present *Small Arms—Children of Conflict: Photographs by Michael Kienitz*, an exhibition of thirty-six photographs of children taken during some of the fiercest conflicts since the Vietnam War, in places such as Belfast, Lebanon, and Central America. The works will be on view September 8 through October 28 in the Mayer Gallery.

Michael Kienitz started making photographs as a student at the University of Wisconsin–Madison during the Vietnam War. A political philosophy major, Kienitz was particularly interested in what he saw at the time as “the revolution” outside the classroom windows. Seeing the political struggles on campus and studying revolutionary movements in books, he was motivated to investigate and document revolutions around the world. During the late 1970s, gripped by news of the ongoing Nicaraguan revolution, Kienitz traveled to Managua. In the northern city of Esteli, he saw charred buildings and military vehicles lining the streets, and Red Cross volunteers were forced to burn corpses with gasoline to prevent the spread of disease.

For the next 10 years, on assignment for *The Capital Times*, *The Milwaukee Journal Sunday Magazine*, and *U.S. News & World Report*, among others, Kienitz carefully observed how daily life continued despite the destruction and grief. As a freelancer he was able to branch out beyond capturing the dramatic war shots demanded by editors and pursue his own curiosity about the everyday lives of the people living in these embattled places. He was interested in the power of an image to create a connection between photographer and subject and then with the viewer, and the possibilities those connections might have to promote change. He ventured into neighborhoods and areas on the fringes of the main action, drawn to the children, in particular, out of interest in how they coped with and survived the adult-made conflicts that defined their lives. He was struck, over and over, by their determination, playfulness, hard work, and mischief.

In 2006, news reports of turmoil in Lebanon prompted Kienitz to reconsider his photographs from the 1980s. He was struck by the similarities between the photographs from the current conflict and his own images captured more than twenty years earlier in the same country. He assembled a collection of black-and-white photographs from a ten-year period of assignments, focusing on

children. The resulting exhibition, *Small Arms—Children of Conflict*, is both a testament to the resilience and fortitude of children and a powerful call to action for adults.

A duotone catalogue of the exhibition will be available for sale in the Museum Shop.

Preview lecture and reception: Friday, September 7. Lecture: 5:30 p.m., room L140.

Reception, 6:30–8 p.m., with the Tony Castañeda Latin Jazz Sextet, refreshments, and a cash bar. The artist will talk about his career as a photojournalist and relate stories of taking the photographs in this exhibition. He will discuss working in areas of economic and political conflict and reflect on why a photographer risks his life to tell a story with images.

Other exhibition programs:

- Lecture by Michael Kienitz: “From Pixels to Archival Photography.” Friday, October 5, 6 p.m., room L140. The artist will talk about how he transformed images shot with color film nearly 30 years ago into stunning 19-x-13-inch, black-and-white digital archival prints. Part of Downtown Gallery Night; the museum will remain open until 8 p.m.
- Saturday October 13, 6 to 8 p.m., Mayer Gallery. The artist will be available in Mayer Gallery for questions during the Chazen Museum of Art’s reception for Arts Night Out, a UW–Madison campus-wide event.
- Gallery talk by Michael Kienitz: “A Personal Look at *Small Arms—Children of Conflict*.” Sunday, October 14, 2:30 p.m., Mayer Gallery. In conjunction with the Wisconsin Book Festival, the photographer will talk about the events surrounding his photographs and why he often risked his life to chronicle the lives of children immersed in economic and political conflict. A signing will follow the gallery talk.

Generous local support for this exhibition has been provided by the Chazen Museum of Art Council, Great Big Pictures, Isthmus | TheDailyPage.com, Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission with additional funds from Endres Mfg. Company Foundation and the Overture Foundation, Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin, anonymous friend, Lee Cullen, Ken Goldberg, Stu Levitan, Tony D’Alessandro and Alison TenBruggencate, Paul Nichols and Joan E. Jacobson, Dick and Mary Zillman, Carol S. Pylant, Scott Hassett, Roberta Klein, Patricia Lew and Monty Schmidt, Rosemary Moore, Sarah O’Brien, Monty Schiro, Joseph R. Gallina, and Frank J. Jablonski and Mary J. McCusker.

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The Chazen Museum of Art is open Tuesdays-Fridays 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays 11 a.m.–5 p.m.; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to galleries and educational events is free. The museum is located on the campus of the University of Wisconsin–Madison and is accessible to wheelchairs from the Murray Street (north) entrance. Parking is available at the city of Madison’s Lake Street and Frances Street ramps. Evening and weekend parking is also available under Grainger Hall with entrance on Brooks Street between University Avenue and Johnson streets. The Chazen will provide sign language interpreters for associated programs by three-week advance request to Anne Lambert, Curator of Education, weekdays, (608) 263-4421 (voice). Information is also available by visiting our Web site at www.chazen.wisc.edu