

MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS

Becky Moores Center for Visual Learning

Merry Foresta



Photography by Andy Grundberg

Currently an independent curator and arts adviser, Merry Foresta was the founding director of the Smithsonian Photography Initiative from 2000 to 2010. Previously, she had served in the department of 20th century art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. She was named the museum's first curator of photography in 1982 and subsequently was appointed senior curator of photography in 1992. In 2000, she was appointed Director of the Smithsonian Photography Initiative, a web-based, multi-disciplinary project about photography in Smithsonian collections. During this time, Foresta also taught at a number of Washington, D.C. area universities and colleges.

During her tenure at the Smithsonian, Foresta built one of the world's premier collections of American photography. She has curated exhibitions and authored catalogues on a broad range of art and photography, including "Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray"; "Photography of Invention: Pictures of the 1980s"; "Between Home and Heaven: Contemporary American Landscape Photography"; "Secrets of the Dark Chamber: The Art of the American Daguerreotype"; and "American Photographs: The First Century." For the inaugural project of the Smithsonian Photography Initiative in 2003, Ms. Foresta authored At First Sight: Photography and the Smithsonian, which featured a broad sampling of photographs from collections throughout the Institution and organized "click: photography changes everything," the Smithsonian's first online exhibition and publication website devoted to photography.

Foresta serves an advising fellow for the arts at the Voinovich School of Leadership and Management at Ohio University, and works as an independent curator and adviser for the arts at various museums, archives and libraries. Recent projects include Artists Unframed: Snapshots from the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, published by Princeton Architectural Press in April of 2015 and "Irving Penn: Beyond Beauty," a retrospective exhibition, which opened at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in October 2015 and will tour throughout the United States through 2018. Yale University Press distributes a publication of the same title.