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Contact:
Julie Wilson
727-896-2667 ext. 252
913-226-6027 (c)
jwilson@mfastpete.org

Exhibition takes a timely look at self-portraits in a selfie-centered digital age

“This is Not a Selfie” brings wide-range of photographic self-portraiture to Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg

St. Petersburg, Fla. (July 31, 2018) – Long before today’s internet-shattering celebrity selfies, photographers used their cameras to create self-portraits that bend reality, push the boundaries of art, and encourage viewers to look at society in new ways.

This is Not a Selfie: Photographic Self-Portraits from the Audrey and Sydney Irmas Collection explores a broad range of approaches to the art of self-portraiture via the medium of photography. It will be on view at the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg from Aug. 25 to Nov. 25, 2018.

The exhibition, which features 80 photographs created by 66 artists, is from the Audrey and Sydney Irmas Collection at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). Audrey and Sydney Irmas, with their daughter Deborah, began collecting photography in the mid-1970s. They focused on collecting self-portraiture in the early 1980s, growing the most significant collection on the subject in the United States.

The exhibition includes compelling self-portraits from the past 150 years by a range of artists, including Cindy Sherman, one of the most influential contemporary artists; Andy Warhol, a leader of pop art; Diane Arbus, renowned photographer of marginalized people; Alfred Stieglitz, credited for introducing modernist art to America and promoting photography as fine-art; and Alphonse-Louis Poitevin, inventor of early photographic processes, whose c. 1853 work *Self-Portrait* is the oldest piece in the exhibition.

The works in *This is Not a Selfie* explore themes like self-reflection, performance and identity, from early 19th century experiments to contemporary digital techniques. For example, in French artist Yves Klein’s 1960 self-portrait *Leap into the Void*, the artist appears to be leaping from a second-story window, an effect created by combining the negatives from two separate photographs. This image was then distributed as fake news on newspaper stands throughout Paris, predating the viral distribution of photo-shopped imagery common now. In another example, American artist Anne Collier’s 2004 work *Mirror Ball* shows her blurred and fragmented reflection in a disco ball, focusing on the eye as visual shorthand for feelings and emotions.

The exhibition has also been on view this year at the San Jose Museum of Art and the Alyce de Roulet Williamson Gallery at the ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, California. The MFA its only Eastern U.S. stop.

“We’re thrilled to bring a large portion of this important collection from LACMA to our visitors, exploring the ways these artists have chosen to present themselves,” said MFA Executive Director Kristen Shepherd. “From straightforward self-portraiture to elaborately staged works, this exhibition provides a unique exploration of photography as an art form.”

Visitors will have the opportunity to create their own self-portraits while the exhibition is on view. Drawing inspiration from the works in *This is Not a Selfie*, they can use a fun house mirror, a disco ball

mirror wall and other projections to create their own self-portraits, which will be digitally displayed in the museum.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

The MFA at 255 Beach Drive N.E. has a world-class collection, with works by Monet, Morisot, Rodin, O'Keeffe, Willem de Kooning, and many other great artists. Also displayed are ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, and Native American art. Selections from the photography collection, one of the largest and finest in the Southeast, are now on view in a gallery dedicated to the medium. **Kristen A. Shepherd** is the Executive Director.

Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, until 8 p.m. on Thursday, and noon-5 p.m. Sunday. **Admission is only \$5 after 5 p.m. on Thursday.** Regular admission is \$20 for adults, \$15 for those 65 and older, Florida educators, college students, and military, \$10 for students seven and older. Children under seven and Museum members are admitted free. Groups of 10 or more adults pay only \$14 per person, \$6 per college student, and children \$4 each with prior reservations. The MFA Café is open from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday. Special ticket prices apply for entrance to *Star Wars and the Power of Costume*. For more information, please call 727.896.2667 or visit mfastpete.org.