**THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF JAMES JOWERS
IN THE EASTMAN HOUSE COLLECTION**

by

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Abstract

In 2007 and 2008, George Eastman House acquired the photographs and negatives created between 1964 and 1980 by the photographer James Jowers. This paper describes an applied thesis project, the primary objective of which was to catalog and rehouse this collection of photographs and negatives, in order to facilitate access and use of the collection. It also summarizes the research conducted into the life and work of the previously little known Jowers. The paper presents a biography of Jowers, a timeline of his exhibitions and publications, and discusses his role in the New York photography world and the influence of other photographers, namely his teacher Lisette Model. This document is intended to be a useful resource for future researchers, and to promote further interest in the work of James Jowers.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jamie Allen for introducing me to James Jowers and his work in the George Eastman House collection, and for providing me with support and guidance throughout the entire project. Thanks to my first reader Bob Burley for his feedback and insight, and to my second reader Alison Nordström. A special thanks to Eileen Inzauto for providing her firsthand recollections of Jowers and for her continued championing of his photographs, and to Jessica Johnston for her part in bringing the collection to the Eastman House and rescuing Jowers and his work from obscurity. And a very special thank you to my classmates for their support and friendship during these last two years.

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Introduction

In *The New York School: Photographs, 1936-1963*, author Jane Livingston describes the phenomenon surrounding a generation of New York photographers and later scholarship regarding the group. She writes, “Photography’s full maturation as an art form, or at least its acceptance by the established art institutions, can be argued to have occurred as recently as the 1960s. Thus it is not surprising that rediscoveries of certain forgotten individuals are a familiar part of the current scene in commercial galleries and art museums today.”¹

The ideas presented in this passage, rather coincidentally, serve to summarize and illuminate the subject of this applied thesis project and paper. The body of work that this project deals with is the partial archive of a photographer named James Jowers, who photographed New York City and the American South during the 1960s and 1970s. Though he was formally trained and represented by a well-known New York photo agency, Jowers did not make his living as a photographer, nor did he achieve the same sort of lasting recognition as other photographers of his generation. He photographed quietly and ceaselessly throughout his lifetime; the body of work in question is only a fraction of his photographic output.

Despite his obscurity, the work that Jowers produced did not suffer the same fate as the multitudes of pictures produced by amateur photographers born in the last century. Instead, the photographs and negatives were acquired by George Eastman House

¹ Jane Livingston, *The New York School: Photographs, 1936-1963* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1992), 259.

International Museum of Photography and Film in 2007 and 2008 (hereafter referred to as the Eastman House).

This body of work was selected from a backlog of work within the archive, old acquisitions that needed to be processed. The work is significant for a number of reasons: the photographer was formally educated and a student of Lisette Model, living and working in New York during a period of dynamic creativity and growth within the field of photography, and Jowers' photographs are an above-average example of the sort of work being made at the time. Also significant is the decision made by the Eastman House to preserve the work of this obscure photographer.

The primary objective of this thesis project was to catalog and rehouse the work of James Jowers in the Eastman House, in order to facilitate access and use of the collection. One half of the collection had been previously catalogued, while the other half remained uncatalogued and inaccessible. This project was conducted over the course of several months beginning in February 2011 and ending in August 2011.

The secondary component of the project was an inquiry into the life and work of Jowers, about whom little information was initially apparent. The purpose of this research was to construct an extended biography and to establish a historical context for his photographs. This research also resulted in a list of publications, collections and exhibitions in which Jowers' work was included. This document is intended to be a useful resource for future researchers.

James Jowers

The majority of what is known about James Jowers comes from two sources: a letter that Jowers himself wrote to the Eastman House in 2007, and Eileen Inzauto, a close friend who facilitated the donation of the collection to the Eastman House. Other information has been gleaned from the photographs themselves, as well as contemporaneous newspapers and journals. The following section utilizes these resources in order to construction an extended biography, as well as a description of Jowers' education, exhibitions, and publications.

Biography

James Jowers was born in rural North Carolina in 1939, and it is likely that most of his early life was spent there. In the early 1960s he served in the United States Army, where he became interested in photography and learned darkroom techniques. He moved to New York City in 1964, and for the next several years he lived at various addresses in Manhattan and Brooklyn while working as a night porter at St. Luke's Hospital. Because he worked nights, he had the opportunity to explore his new city during the day, with his camera in hand.

In 1965, Jowers enrolled in photography classes with Lisette Model at the New School for Social Research. Through Model, Jowers was represented by the Nancy Palmer Photo Agency in New York, and throughout the early 1970s his photographs were occasionally licensed for use in newspapers, magazines and textbooks.

Though predominantly based in New York, the pictures in the Eastman House collection indicate that Jowers travelled and photographed in North Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Maine. All but one of the pictures in the collection from 1976 to 1978 were made in Maine, which suggests that Jowers had either taken an extended vacation or left the city entirely.

In 1980, Eileen Inzauto rented an apartment to Jowers on her property in South Fallsburg, New York, where he lived for the next 20 years. Inzauto described Jowers as a private man who lived alone, although over the years the two became close through a shared interest in art, books, and Eastern philosophy and spirituality. In addition to photographing regularly, Jowers also worked with watercolors and acrylics.

Jowers lived with multiple sclerosis for an unknown amount of time, which, among other things, may have affected his ability to photograph and travel. However, he apparently continued to take pictures in and of Sullivan County for many years. Despite the fact that the photographs and negatives in the Eastman House collection stop in 1980, Jowers continued to produce work after this date. Those photographs and negatives, which include transparencies and other work in color, remain in the care of Eileen Inzauto.

In 2007, with the assistance of Inzauto, Jowers began to look for a permanent repository for his photographs. He first approached the Museum of the City of New York, where Curator Sean Corcoran suggested he contact the Eastman House, as the Jowers' body of work contained many images taken outside of New York City, and were not within the scope of what the Museum of the City of New York was collecting. Alison

Nordström and Jessica Johnston, Curator and Assistant Curator of Photographs, respectively, oversaw the acquisition of the collection in 2007 and 2008. In a handwritten letter that accompanied the donation of his work, Jowers wrote: “It is with great relief and gratitude that I relinquish my prints and negatives into your care. I sincerely hope they may be of some benefit to the museum.”² James Jowers died at the age of eighty in 2009.

Education as a photographer

Like many photographers of his generation, Jowers took photography classes with Lisette Model at the New School for Social Research in 1965. His correspondence to the Eastman House indicated that he considered her a close friend as well as a mentor, though it is unknown how long he was enrolled in classes, and how long the relationship continued.

Model’s influence as a teacher is well documented, specifically as it relates to her more famous pupils like Diane Arbus, Larry Fink, Peter Hujar, Bruce Weber and Rosalind Solomon. A full chapter is dedicated to Model’s teaching philosophies and methods in Ann Thomas’ exhaustive monograph.³

Model began teaching at the New School in 1951. Her first courses were “Photographing New York and Its People” and “The Function of the Small Camera in Photography Today,” both of which included mandatory field trips around the city, and the courses emphasized photography as an act of observation and discovery.

² James Jowers, letter to George Eastman House, January, 2008.

³ Ann Thomas, *Lisette Model*, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1990, 115-129.

In 1960, she began teaching the “Workshop for Advanced Photographers,” a small class that required an interview for entry. The course description reads like a manifesto: “The concern of this course is to abandon routine and imitation enabling the photographer to come to his own source of vision and expression. The camera is an instrument of detection. We are surrounded everywhere by images, most of them invisible to our eye because of conditioning...”⁴

Jowers enrolled in classes in 1965, when Model was teaching the advanced workshop. Thomas notes that Model’s teaching objectives and methods varied little over her 30 year teaching career, so it is likely that Jowers attended the citywide field trips and undertook shooting assignments that focused on “a face (not conventional); nature in New York; animals, zoos, people and pets; groups of people; statues; objects unanimated; museums; traffic vibrations of big city; Wall Street skyscrapers.”⁵ Certainly all of these things can be seen in his photographs. The influence that Model had on Jowers’ work is quite visible, particularly in his early photographs, both in content and style, and in their shared subject of the street.

In their discussions of art and photography, Inzauto recalls that Jowers cited two main influences on his work: Henri Cartier-Bresson and Edward Hopper. The latter may apply more to his watercolors and acrylics, though both Hopper and Jowers shared the similar subject of urban life. The influence of Cartier-Bresson on Jowers’ photographs is

⁴ “Photography, Spring 1977, The New School-Parsons”, 1977, 7.

⁵ Teaching Notebook 15, Lisette Model fonds, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada. (<http://www.gallery.ca/english/library/biblio/ngc0286.html>)

very evident, in the subjects of the street and the human condition, and in their shared attention to framing, point of view, time, and “The Decisive Moment”.

Exhibitions and publications

In his correspondence to the Eastman House, Jowers made it a point to note that his “efforts in photography have always been more as a vocation than profession.”⁶ Though he did not achieve the same sort of lasting commercial success or artistic recognition during his lifetime as some of Model’s more famous protégés, Jowers did occasionally publish and exhibit his photographs.

The first known publication of one of Jowers’ photographs occurs in Jacob Deschin’s column in the *New York Times* on December 24, 1967. The photograph (**Fig. 1**) is cropped vertically along the standing figure, and is published with a brief mention of a forthcoming exhibition in which “James Jowers, a new young photographer, takes a fresh look at old themes.” The photograph was selected as representative of the exhibition, though there is no information on when or where the exhibition was to be held.⁷

In the same column, on August 18, 1968, another photograph of Jowers (**Fig. 2**) was published with the caption: “STREET SCENE--This photograph by Jim Jowers is from his first exhibition, a two-man show on New York with Horst Schafer, and opening Sept. 3 at the Hudson Park Branch of the Public Library, 10 Seventh Avenue South.”⁸ A second mention of the exhibition occurs September 1, 1968. Although there is no

⁶ James Jowers, letter to George Eastman House, 2007.

⁷ Jacob Deschin, “Photography: Photographs in Books for the Armchair Traveler,” *New York Times*, December 24, 1967.

⁸ Jacob Deschin, “Photography: Low-Cost Sound Movies,” *New York Times*, August 18, 1968.

illustration, the exhibition is mentioned within the text of the column itself under the heading “Exhibitions.” In the column, Deschin mentions seven photography exhibitions at major public institutions: four in New York City, the other three in San Francisco, Washington D.C. and Rochester, New York.

Jowers was represented for an unknown period of time by Nancy Palmer Photo Agency, an independent picture agency on Lexington Avenue that also represented photographers such as Marilyn Silverstone, Raghubir Singh, Larry Fink, Norris McNamara, and Shelly Rusten. The agency licensed photographs to a variety of publications including *LIFE* and the *New York Times*, as well as non-fiction and text books.

Throughout the 1970s, Jowers’ pictures were occasionally included as illustrations for articles in the *New York Times*, *Forbes*, and in now-obscure sociology and psychology textbooks.⁹ Several of the 8x10 inch prints (for example, prints with the Eastman House catalogue numbers 2007:0280:0018, 2007:0277:0004, 2007:0278:0042) as well as many negative sleeves bear the agency’s stamp. One photograph provided by the agency to the Times in 1970 shows a young woman in a sari; this picture is not found within the Eastman House holdings. It may have been lost in the shuffle when the pictures were transferred back to Jowers when the agency closed in the 1980s, or it may have been removed by Jowers himself. In any case, it is further evidence of the incompleteness of the collection.

⁹ see Phillip Whitten and W. Lance Bennett, *The Study of Society*, Guilford, Conn.: Dushkin Pub. Group, 1973; Rodney Stark, *Social Problems*, New York, NY: Random House, 1975; Henry Clay Lindgren, *An Introduction to Social Psychology*. New York: Wiley, 1973; Ronald J. Wilkins, *Man and Woman*, Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1975; Herbert Goldenberg, *Abnormal Psychology: A Social/Community Approach*, Monterey, Calif: Brooks/Cole Pub. Co, 1977.

Publication of Jowers' work was not limited to newspapers and press releases. In 1968, five photographs (**Fig. 3-7**) were reproduced in a literary magazine called *Genesis: Grasp*, independently published and printed in New York by poets Richard Meyers (who would later be known as Richard Hell, an icon of the Downtown scene) and David Gianinni.

The photographs include a view of bathers at Coney Island; a couple on a rainy cobblestone street; Bethesda Fountain in Central Park; an abstracted study of a manhole cover and cracks in the pavement; and a birds-eye view of a man on the sidewalk. The pictures are published alongside poems, graphic works and a manifesto, emphasizing the importance of craftsmanship and art, with the declaration that "art is what places us above life while still immersed in it, it is hoped."¹⁰

The title page includes an address and an open call for manuscripts and artwork for future issues, though it is uncertain how Jowers came to be involved with the project, as this was the first issue of the publication. The notes on contributors does not describe his affiliation with the editors or other contributors, but rather states simply that "James H. Jowers is twenty-nine years old. He has been living in New York City for the past four years, and photographing the local terrain."¹¹

Perhaps most significant publication of Jowers' photographs occurred in 1975, when the editors of *Popular Photography* included him in their *Photography Annual*. This portfolio was presented alongside the portfolios of ten other individuals, including Elliott Erwitt, Ralph Gibson, Nathan Farb and Perry Riddle, and group sections featuring

¹⁰ Richard Meyers and David Giannini, "Manifesto," *Genesis: Grasp* 1 (1968), 2.

¹¹ "Notes on Contributors," *Genesis: Grasp* 1 (1968).

Eva Rubenstein, Raghubir Singh, student work from Columbia College and New Japanese Photography.

Jowers' portfolio is prefaced with a brief biography, likely penned by Jowers himself. It is telling in its language and tone, as if he is aware of and thankful for his position outside of mainstream society: "Jim is a 25-year-old free-lancer who lives in Brooklyn and takes pictures for himself. Subsequently, he sometimes sells them. After learning darkroom technique in the army, he studied in New York, and since 1965 has managed to escape the demands that shape the lifestyles of most professionals — at some sacrifice of the affluence they enjoy."¹²

The ten photographs published in the magazine were made in 1973, and include five pictures from the Eastman House collection (**Fig. 8-12**). Once again, the pictures published in the *Photography Annual* show that the Eastman House collection is not exhaustive; half of the photographs are not represented as either negatives or prints in the collection. The missing images include a man looking at a miniature model of downtown Manhattan; a high contrast, near-abstraction of two apartment buildings; the U.S.S. Maine National Monument covered in graffiti; and a view of person sitting on the bank the East River, below the Brooklyn Bridge.

The portfolio is cohesive, and the pictures emphasize shapes and forms of New York architecture; people are incidental. The pictures are reproduced according to size and format: four vertically-oriented photos are printed as full pages, four landscape-

¹² *Photography Annual 1975*, New York: Ziff-Davis, 1974, p 60.

oriented images are printed two to a page and the remaining two landscapes are printed individually.

The back of the magazine includes an index (“Notes on the Pictures”) that includes thumbnails, brief contextual and technical information for each image – where the pictures were made, and with what equipment, film, and exposure. This sort of attention to technical detail was characteristic of consumer camera and photography magazines at the time, of which *Popular Photography* was at the forefront. It seems likely that Jowers was a reader of these publications – at the very least, he was aware of them.

It is uncertain how Jowers came to be involved with the publication. It is possible that he had submitted the portfolio himself. *Popular Photography* seems to have accepted reader submissions to their regular issues, though it was not the primary focus of the magazine, and Jowers’ work did not appear in any of the regular issues in 1975.

If the photographers whose work was showcased in the *Photography Annual* were selected by the editors of the magazine, perhaps one of the editors noticed Jowers’ work on account of a small group exhibition that was held at the Midtown Y Photography Gallery in November 1975. The exhibition was part of the gallery’s regular schedule featuring emerging photographers. It ran for a month and also included photographers Joan Liftin and Barry Eckstein.

The December 1975 issue of *The New Yorker* features a review of the exhibition in the influential “Goings on About Town” section. Of the three photographers, Jowers garnered a particularly favorable response: “Jowers’ handsome, clean, orderly

compositions of street barriers, bicycles, umbrellas, manhole covers, trees, paths and lampposts evoke Kertesz's street abstractions, and Kertesz, too, seems to be involved in the mysterious surreal sights that Jowers glimpses during his urban peregrinations—in, for example, his picture of a man fussing with the swirling veil of his bride near the lake in Central Park.”¹³

James Jowers and photography in New York

The site of Jowers' most significant exhibition, The Midtown Y Photography Gallery, was one of a handful of galleries that regularly showed photography in the 1970s. A survey conducted by Lilian Schein and Carmine Lisella in *The New York Photographer* in 1972 (incidentally, the year the Midtown Y Photography Gallery began) highlighted eleven different galleries and non-galleries that showed photographs. The list included Exposure Gallery, Focus Coffee House, The Floating Foundation of Photography, Image Gallery, Neikrug Galleries, The Underground Gallery, and The Witkin Gallery. The Museum of Modern Art, absent from this list, had shown photographs with some regularity since the 1940s, and since the 1960s had been actively acquiring and showing work by contemporary photographers Diane Arbus, Garry Winogrand, and Lee Friedlander under the leadership of its curator John Szarkowski. Szarkowski was also responsible for the acquisition and exhibition of significant work by little known (at the time) photographers including Jacques Henri Lartigue, Eugène Atget, and E.J. Bellocq.

¹³ “Goings on About Town,” *The New Yorker*, December 1, 1975, 12.

The Midtown Y Photography Gallery was unique in that it was, at the beginning, little more than a single hallway in the Emanu-el Midtown YM-YWHA on 14th Street. The Gallery was started in 1972 by Larry Siegel (previously the director of Image Gallery) and in its first year featured work from well-known photographers like Berenice Abbott and W. Eugene Smith. The most significant function of the Midtown Y Gallery was as a showcase for unknown and emerging photographers. Jim Hughes, editor of *Camera Arts Magazine*, referred to the Midtown Y as a “noble experiment”, and praised the gallery’s mission and dedication to showing “work that needed to be seen without regard to its salability.”¹⁴

The Midtown Y Gallery held portfolio reviews and workshops in addition to presenting several exhibitions each year. The Gallery regularly issued open calls for photographs, and welcomed submissions. These open calls were issued for both group exhibitions and the smaller, two to three person showcases, though the group exhibitions usually seemed to feature photographers who had already exhibited with the Gallery.

As a struggling freelance photographer, it would be easy to imagine Jowers taking advantage of the portfolio reviews and other professional and creative services offered by the Midtown Y Gallery, and eventually being asked to exhibit. Jowers’ work was similar to the type of photography being shown at the Midtown Y Gallery – largely straight, black and white photographs made with a small camera, that combined social documentary concerns and modern aesthetics. As such, Jowers’ work exists now as a strong example of a style of photography that was ubiquitous at the time.

¹⁴ Jim Hughes, from the Midtown Y Photography Gallery 10th Anniversary Exhibition handbill, 1982.

The Collection

Description and analysis

The James Jowers collection at the Eastman House is comprised of black and white photographs and negatives, made between 1964 and 1980. The collection is an example of the style of street photography that was particularly popular in the United States in the middle of the 20th century. The majority of the photographs depict people within public spaces in New York City, though Jowers photographed outside of New York as well. A little under a quarter of the prints depict life in Louisiana, Mississippi, Maine, Boston and Washington D.C. Nearly all of the photographs in the collection dated 1970 were made in New Orleans, and the majority of the photographs from 1976-77 were made in Maine. The last photographs and negatives in the collection are dated 1980, and are of Prospect Park in Brooklyn.

Jowers' earlier photographs tended to focus on people on the street, both as individuals and in groups, with a particular attention paid to the many parks around the city (**Fig. 13-15**). In the mid-1970s, there seems to be a slight shift towards architecture and public space. In 1973, for instance, Jowers' attention was dominated by the colossal, newly-constructed World Trade Center towers juxtaposed with the older, more modest buildings around it (**Fig. 11, 16-18**).

The later photographs (many of the Maine photographs and all of the Prospect Park photographs), are devoid of people altogether, favoring trees, rural landscapes and graphic abstractions (**Fig. 19-25**).

The collection consists of two parts, brought in as individual gifts at different times. The acquisition was overseen by Curator Alison Nordström and Assistant Curator Jessica Johnson, and the donation came from Jowers himself, with the help of Eileen Inzauto. The decision to acquire the collection was based on the aesthetic merits of the photographs, as well as their historical and social significance. Jowers' photographs in the collection of the Eastman House serve to complement other holdings, particularly work of the same genre and style by Lisette Model, Gary Winogrand, Helen Levitt, Elliot Erwit, Lee Friedlander and Leon Levinstein.¹⁵ Additionally, Jowers transferred full copyright of his work to the Eastman House.

The first gift was acquired in 2007; it consists of 364 8x10 inch and 26 11x14 inch vintage silver gelatin prints on fiber Agfa paper. Accessioning, numbering, and cataloging for these objects had been completed in 2008, using The Museum System (TMS), an electronic cataloging software employed by Eastman House and many other major museums. At the start of this thesis project, the prints had not yet been rehoused, and remained in their original, deteriorating photo paper boxes.

The second gift was acquired in 2008, and consists of 165 4x6 inch black and white chromogenic photographs, printed by machine in 1999, and 600 strips of 35mm black and white negatives (2-6 frames per strip) and 32 120mm black and white negatives (1-4 frames per strip). All of the negatives are on Kodak Tri X Pan Safety Film.

The prints had been divided by date into five lots, and assigned accession numbers. The negatives were given accession numbers based upon Jowers' own ordering

¹⁵ George Eastman House, "Acquisition Committee Meeting, Photographs Collection," October 11, 2007.

and numbering system. These numbers were written in grease pencil on the individual glassine sleeves. Both the prints and negatives required rehousing, particularly the negatives, as the glassine had deteriorated and embrittled and would likely cause damage to the negative over time.

Jowers' devised a simple numbering system for his negatives and photographs. Each strip was given at least two numbers. The first number identified the entire strip, and the second number indicated the frame number from which a print was made. Each print included one or both of these numbers as well, which allows for the easy identification and location of the original negative (provided the original negative still exists).

Jowers' numbers also permit the examination of the surrounding negatives, and observe his shooting methods and editing process. This numbering scheme appears to have been put in place retroactively, after the creation of the negatives. It is somewhat random: consecutive strips of negatives are rarely from the same roll, nor are they even from the same year. Upon closer inspection of the negatives, it became clear that they were heavily edited down at some point, most likely by Jowers himself. Negative strips were inconsistent in numbers of frames, from two to six, suggesting that unprinted frames were discarded. In some cases, cuts were made through the middle of unprinted frames, and nearly every negative strip has a corresponding print.

However, many of the 11x14 inch prints do not have have corresponding negatives. The negatives for a small number of some of the earliest prints (**Fig. 26-28**) have been lost. There is further evidence that the collection was culled. The New York

Public Library Photography Collection has seven prints made by Jowers (including **Fig. 29-32**), three of which are not represented among the prints or the negatives in the Eastman House collection. The three missing pictures depict Chinatown in the rain (there is a variant in the Eastman House collection), old men reading newspapers in Chinatown, and a tree with billboards and a “No Parking” sign.

It seems likely that the editing and discarding of negatives took place around the time that the 4x6 prints were made, in 1999 and 2000. Because there are no exact duplicates between the vintage 8x10 inch prints and the later 4x6 inch prints, it appears that Jowers was re-examining his archive, selecting and having prints made of previously unprinted negatives, and removing the negatives as he saw fit, either because they were unprintable, unusable, of lesser quality or otherwise unworthy. This assumed re-examination took place as Jowers was getting older and perhaps assessing the fate of his photographs. Perhaps the culling of negatives was a practical consideration: an institution might be more inclined to acquire a streamlined, more manageable collection, trimmed of its superfluous bits. Perhaps it was a conscious decision on Jowers’ part to leave only the decent pictures intact, so that he was able to direct and cultivate his own legacy as photographer. Whatever the reason, the excision of unprinted negatives from the collection will unfortunately prevent future viewers and researchers from an full, in-depth understanding of Jowers’ work as a photographer.

Preservation considerations

The James Jowers collection contains silver gelatin on both fiber and resin coated (RC) papers, and silver gelatin negatives on a cellulose triacetate base. Silver gelatin prints are known to be extremely stable.¹⁶ The photographs in the collection that were printed on fiber paper show little physical damage beyond a slight cockling, and there is a slight yellowing around the edges and corners of the paper. It can be assumed that the fiber prints were archivally processed and washed when they were created, according to standard darkroom procedure. These prints are now stored in neutral enclosures; they should continue to show no chemical deterioration.

The RC prints in the collection may present the most problems in regards to deterioration and long term storage. These prints were likely made at a commercial photo lab, and the quality of the chemicals and facilities is unknown, as is whether the processing met archival standards. Some photographs show a green, purple or yellow cast, which indicates that these prints may have been processed as chromogenic prints. Chromogenic prints less stable and are more susceptible to fading on account of the use of dyes. Already some fading and discoloration is present in the materials, particularly the chromogenic prints. Other prints are more neutral, truer black and white prints, and show little fading. There is some wear at the corners of the prints.

The negatives present other preservation considerations. As in silver gelatin prints, the silver gelatin in negatives is relatively stable. However, the acetate base is

¹⁶ Bertrand Lavédrine, *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation*, (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2009), 144.

susceptible to degradation and vinegar syndrome.¹⁷ The negatives in the Jowers collection do not appear to show any signs of deterioration, although some negatives show an occasional slight silver mirroring on the emulsion side. It is recommended that acetate negatives be stored in a cool and dry environment with proper ventilation (e.g. 5°C, 20-40% RH)¹⁸; due to limitations of space in the Eastman House facilities, the negatives are currently stored in the main vault.

¹⁷ Ibid, 256.

¹⁸ Ibid., 283.

The Project: Methodology

The foundation of this thesis project was an applied practical project with a straightforward purpose: to catalog and rehouse the James Jowers collection, in order to make it accessible and usable for future researchers, exhibitions and publications. An extended biography and analysis of the work accompanies the project. The steps undertaken to complete this project are detailed in this section.

Cataloging

The catalog record is a vital part of the photograph's existence once it enters an institution. It allows for the object to be located in a collection, both intellectually and physically, while limiting unnecessary handling of the objects, thereby preventing damage.

The 4x6 photographs had previously been distributed into lots and assigned accession numbers. Lot level records existed in TMS, but individual objects had not yet been cataloged. Object level records were created so each photograph would be individually accessible. Cataloging was conducted according to the standards set out in the Eastman House *TMS User's Guide and Style Manual*. The most important fields were title, description, date, and inscription, and these fields were populated by information derived directly from the prints themselves. On the backs of the majority of the prints are handwritten notations that indicate dates and negative numbers.

Jowers' notations also indicated the depicted locations, neighborhoods, intersections or landmarks; these notes were considered to be titles. The negative

numbers assigned by Jowers were entered into the “Maker’s Number 001” field in the Notes tab of TMS. If it is ever necessary for the museum to create a new print or scan, the appropriate negative can easily be located by searching this field. It also enables the researcher to determine quickly if the museum has a print from a particular negative, and vice versa.

In the process of cataloging, the description field became increasingly important. Identifying a picture by the location is a common practice of street photographers (just as common is the lack of title altogether.) The titles given by Jowers, while geographically precise, are in other ways unspecific. A photograph titled “Avenue C,” for instance, does not speak to the content of the picture; it gives no indication of the beatifically smiling, gloriously fat woman who is the subject of the photograph (**Fig. 28**).

Other important historical and contextual information, such as publication history and other collections that hold similar or duplicate prints, was included in the “Notes” section of the “Notes” tab.

Rehousing

Prior to this project, little effort had been undertaken to assure that the photographs and negatives in the James Jowers collection were properly stored. The 8x10 inch photographs remained in their original, deteriorating Agfa paper boxes, and the negatives had been stored in glassine negatives sleeves sealed with non-archival

adhesive. While glassine was once widely used, it has since fallen out of favor for long-term, archival storage; deterioration was evident in these sleeves.¹⁹

Over the course of several weeks in May and June, the collection was rehoused. The photographs were put into individual, appropriately sized clear mylar sleeves to prevent abrasions. The 8x10 inch and 4x6 inch prints were put into eight TrueCore Dropfront Boxes (9x11x3 inches); a special housing was made to accommodate the 4x6 prints and prevent shifting within the box. The 11x14 inch prints were put into one TrueCore Dropfront Box (12x15x3 inches.)

The negatives had to be removed from their original glassine sleeves and transferred to clear archival quality polyethylene sleeves. This process was somewhat more time consuming and arduous. As previously described, Jowers included negative and frame numbers on the individual glassine sleeves, and the Eastman House marked each sleeve with an accession number. These numbers had to be transcribed to the new sleeves. Once the numbers were transcribed, the corresponding negative was removed from the glassine and inserted into the new sleeve. Each negative sleeve holds seven strips, which were finally housed in an archival box binder.

Record clean-up

Cataloging for the 390 8x10 inch photographs from the first gift was completed in 2008. Upon review, various errors and inconsistencies were present in the records. For instance, as previously discussed, titles for the photographs were derived from the

¹⁹ For a detailed explanation regarding glassine, see Henry Wilhelm and Carol Brower, *The Permanence and Care of Color Photographs: Traditional and Digital Color Prints, Color Negatives, Slides, and Motion Pictures*, (Grinnell, Iowa: Preservation Pub. Co, 1993), 459-467.

inscriptions made by Jowers on the back of the photographs. For photographs in New York, Jowers indicated neighborhoods, streets or intersections, using shorthand and abbreviations for, it would seem, ease and brevity, and not any creative, conceptual or conscious purpose.

The previous cataloguer transposed these inscriptions verbatim as a “Title on Object”, which often resulted in messy and erroneous titles, with incomprehensible abbreviations and incorrect spelling, punctuation or capitalizations. Titles such as “Pike st. + E. B. Way” (Fig. 33), “Boudry [sic] + Canal st.” (Fig. 34) were edited for clarity and accuracy; the new titles became “Pike Street & East Broadway” and “Bowery & Canal Street”, respectively.

The decision was made to correct these 390 records in order to create a consistency of language and style throughout the collection, and to conform to the current standards set out in the Eastman House *TMS User’s Guide and Style Manual*.

In addition to editing existing catalog information, some new information was added to these records, including publication information (when pertinent) and generic and proper subject attributes. Occasionally, information was missing from the necessary fields (description, date, size) and in one or two occurrences, the photograph had not been cataloged at all. These oversights were corrected, and resulted in complete catalog records.

Research and Literature Review

Because James Jowers is an almost unknown figure, conducting research into his background and his efforts in photography was challenging, and required somewhat unorthodox methods. The Google Books project has digitized and indexed the full text for millions of books and magazines, and allows for highly specific searches -- search results turn up every instance of a specific search term in the text, no matter how minor or obscure. The ability to search the full text was invaluable, and without this tool I would not have been able to locate the various textbooks in which Jowers' work was included, nor would I have initially been made aware of Jowers' exhibition at the Midtown Y Photography Gallery.

Both the *New York Times* and *The New Yorker* online archives have similar, searchable full text indexes, and turned up information on Jowers' exhibitions, as well as evidence of his photographs used as illustrations.

Jowers' photographs can be solidly classified as street photography. In order to understand his photographs this context, I looked at different texts dedicated to this style. of photography. *Bystander: A History of Street Photography* provided an social and artistic history of the style, with sections dedicated to various practitioners and movements. *The New York School: Photographs, 1936-1963* was a more specific survey of the genre, focusing on a photographs made in particular time and place including Model, Robert Frank, Helen Levitt, and Sid Grossman -- photographers that Jowers would have likely been aware of, and potentially influenced by.

I visited the Manuscripts and Archives Division of The New York Public Library, which houses the Midtown Y Photography Gallery Records. This collection contains individual folders for each exhibition presented from 1972 to 1996, and while the folder specific to Jowers' exhibition was missing, the rest of the collection provided information into the history, operation and objectives of the gallery, as well as the significance of the gallery in the New York photography scene during that time. An essay by Stephen C. Pinson (curator of photography at the NYPL) and published in a booklet for the exhibition "Making the Scene: The Midtown Y Photography Gallery, 1972-1966" was another extremely informative resource.

I consulted several sources regarding Lisette Model as a teacher, specifically the chapter "Model as Teacher 1949-1983" in *Lisette Model*, which relies on Model's teaching notebooks and interviews with students and colleagues to describe her unique teaching methods and style, and her influence on her students. Also useful were chapters on Model in Peter Bunnell's *Degrees of Guidance: Essays on Twentieth-Century American Photography* and essays by Max Kozloff and Shelley Rice in *The Education of a Photographer*.

A.D. Coleman's columns in the *Village Voice* and *The New York Times* from the 1970s were extremely useful for getting a sense of what was going on in photography, specifically in New York, at the time. A small, short-lived magazine to which Coleman contributed, *The New York Photographer* edited by Carol Leand, was another enlightening, first-hand account of the New York photography world.

Eileen Inzauto, who knew Jowers for 20 years, was able to elaborate further on his life and personality, providing a more vivid and three-dimensional portrait of the man. The knowledge that Jowers did in fact continue photographing after 1980, for instance, was an important revelation, and changes how the group of photographs in the Eastman House collection is viewed.

Conclusion

With the completion of this project, 165 new catalog records have been created, 390 catalog records have been edited and cleaned up, and over 1,000 objects have been transferred to stable housings. The process of thorough, in-depth object level cataloging has increased access to this unique collection, in a way that will enable researchers to enter the collection from a number of access points (maker, location, date, content of the photograph, etc.) The rehousing of the collection is an effort to stabilize and preserve the materials and ensure their continued existence.

Creating access to a photographic collection is only one part of the process. To justify a photograph's presence in an archive or museum collection, the photograph should be useful, and it should be used, so as to not languish in obscurity. Through exhibitions and publications, people are able to engage with and experience photographs as they are meant to. The Eastman House has already made a small portion of the work visible to a large audience via Flickr, and will hopefully continue to expand upon the ways in which the work can be seen and used in the future.

Jowers' photographs fulfill a number of roles; they are documents of New York and its people, as well as evidence of a student's engagement with photography, his growth within the field and cultivation of his own personal vision. These photographs are also objects of artistic and aesthetic value, worthy of contemplation and appreciation. It is my hope that the research conducted into the life and work of James Jowers will serve to promote further interest into his photographs.

Appendix: Images

Figure 1
Tompkins Square Park, 1967
10 x 8 in.
2007:0274:0046

Figure 3
Avenue B, 1966
10 x 8 in.
2007:0274:0022

Figure 2
East 2nd Street, 1967
8 x 10 in.
2007:0274:0028

Figure 4
Avenue A & 7th Street, 1967
8 x 10 in.
2007:0274:0059

Figure 5
Central Park, 1967
8 x 10 in.
2007:0274:0065

Figure 6
Coney Island, 1967
4 x 6 in.
2008:0008:0021

Figure 7
Coney Island, 1973
8 x 10 in.
2007:0276:0038

Figure 8
Fulton & Water Street, 1973
8 x 10 in.
2007:0276:0042

Figure 9
Battery Plaza, 1973
 10 x 8 in.
 2007:0276:0043

Figure 10
 [Man standing on one way street], 1973
 8 x 10 in.
 2007:0276:0058

Figure 11
 [World Trade Center], 1973
 10 x 8 in.
 2007:0276:0065

Figure 12
Financial District, 1973
 4 x 6 in.
 2008:0012:0006

Figure 13
Central Park, 1964
 10 x 8 in.
 2007:0274:0001

Figure 14
Tompkins Square Park, 1965
 8 x 10 in.
 2007:0274:0010

Figure 15
Washington Square Park, 1965
 8 x 10 in.
 2007:0274:0011

Figure 16
 [World Trade Center and surroundings],
 1974
 10 x 8 in.
 2007:0277:0012

Figure 17
Pace College, 1974
 10 x 8 in.
 2007:0277:0025

Figure 18
[Broadway], 1975
 10 x 8 in.
 2007:0277:0032

Figure 19
Prospect Park, 1980
 8 x 10 in.
 2007:0277:0035

Figure 20
Prospect Park, 1980
 4 x 6 in.
 2008:0012:0030

Figure 21
Prospect Park, 1980
 4 x 6 in.
 2008:0012:0031

Figure 22
Topsham Maine, 1977
 8 x 10 in.
 2007:0279:0017

Figure 23
Parker Head Maine, 1977
 8 x 10 in.
 2007:0279:0018

Figure 24
Maine, 1977
 10 x 8 in.
 2007:0279:0021

Figure 25
Maine, 1977
 8 x 10 in.
 2007:0279:0022

Figure 26
New York, 1965
 4 x 6 in.
 2007:0280:0006

Figure 27
14th Street, New York, 1965
 14 x 11 in.
 2007:0280:0008

Figure 28
Avenue C, 1965
 14 x 11 in.
 2007:0280:0009

Figure 29
Lower East Side, 1967
 8 x 10 in.
 2007:0274:0069

Figure 30
World Trade Center, 1974
 10 x 8 in.
 2007:0277:0004

Figure 31
North Carolina, 1966
 14 x 11 in.
 2007:0280:0010

Figure 32
5th Avenue and 59th Street, 1966
 8 x 10 in.
 2008:0008:0009

Figure 33
Pike & East Broadway, 1973
 10 x 8 in.
 2007:0276:0029

Figure 34
Bowery & Canal Street, 1966
 8 x 10 in.
 2007:0274:0015

Appendix: Publications of James Jowers photographs

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