

NUEVA LUZ STUDY CENTER

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RESOURCE GUIDE

Welcome to Nueva Luz Study Center, En Foco's Information Hub

Nueva Luz Study Center (NLSC) is En Foco's hub for information about its rich history. It includes access to the digital database and programming to make these resources accessible to a wide array of people. This guide introduces you to *Nueva Luz*, what to find in the Archives, how people are using the content, and what's coming up.

What's *Nueva Luz*?

What's in the Archives?

How are people using the content?

What's coming up?

- [All Nueva Luz issues](#), from 1985 to present, are digitized and searchable by artist, writer, and curator.
- Info on over 400 [artists](#), writers and curators with vibrant voices and distinct points of view who have been featured in *Nueva Luz*.
- Exhibitions, commissions, and panels activate the Archives as a resource.



June, 2023

Welcome to the NLSC, an archive, a legacy, and a testimonial to the artists and culture writers who have appeared in this publication since 1985. For many, it is the only public record where their art can be experienced, and is now digitized and permanently accessible to all.

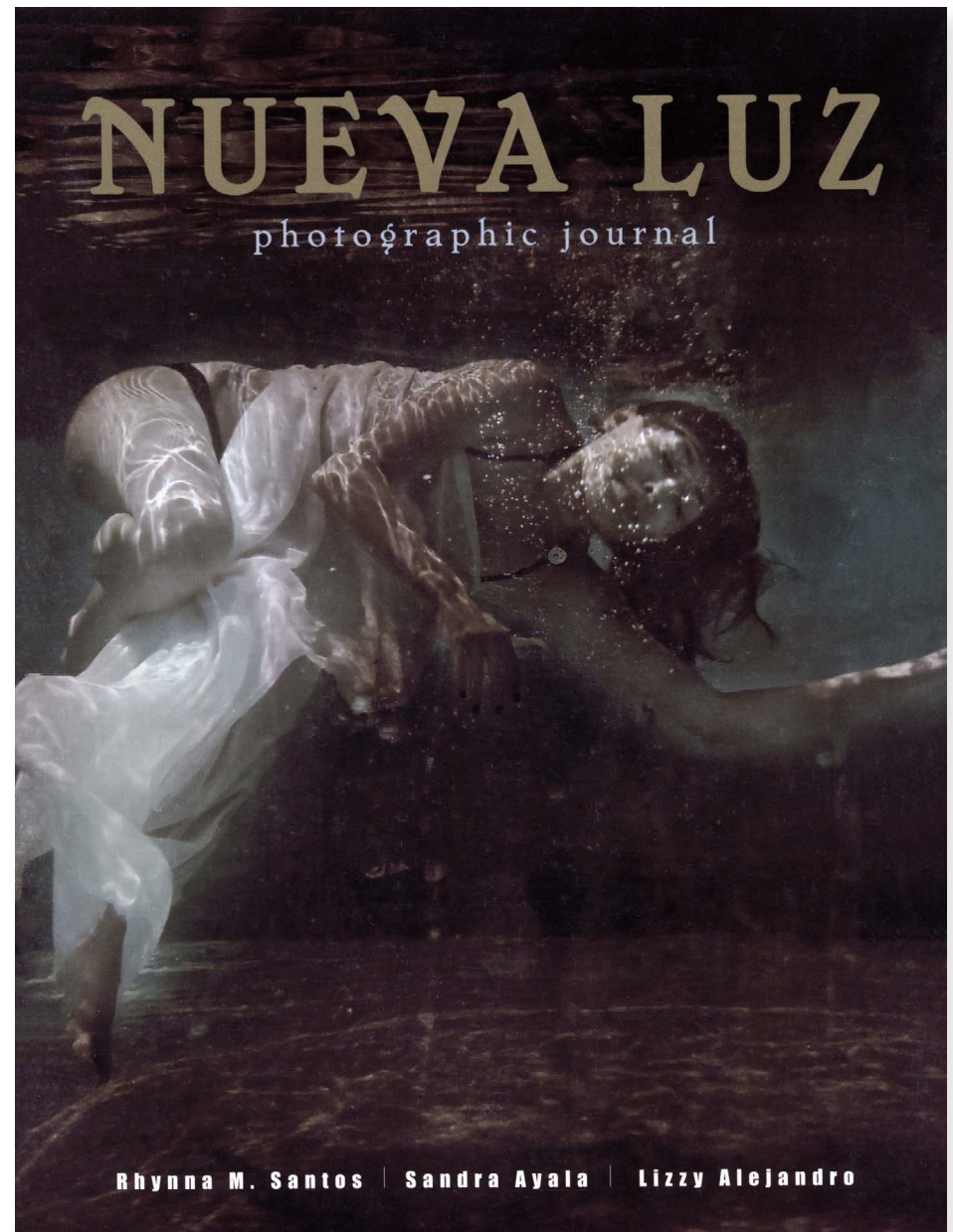
Perhaps more importantly, and with a greater sense of urgency, the NLSC is one of the very few community archives available to the public at large. This scarcity, intentional or otherwise, reflects the forgotten histories of our communities, artists, and local organizational anchors.

Not only do we want you to experience En Foco's extraordinary legacy of its artists in this publication, but we also hope that it will serve as a catalyst for others to preserve their histories. Access to our histories will have a "trickle-up" effect on our cultural and academic institutions that decide what is or isn't available to the public.

Enjoy the NLSC experience and let us know what you think.

Bill Aguado

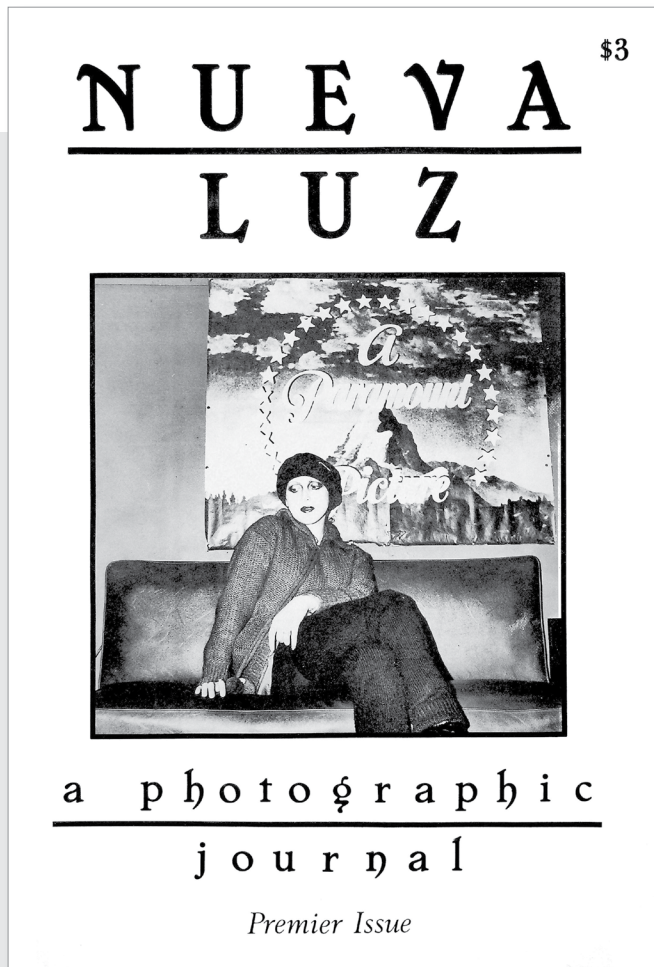
President



Nueva Luz, Vol 20 #1, 2016. Courtesy of Nueva Luz Study Center.

What is *Nueva Luz*?

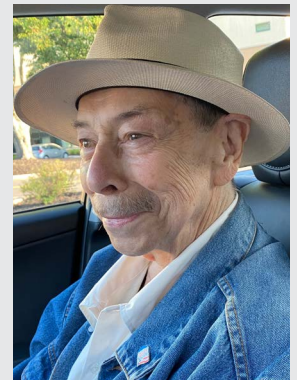
First published in 1985, *Nueva Luz* is produced twice annually and highlights the work of contemporary photographers with essays by fellow cultural writers. *Nueva Luz* is a valuable cultural, social, and political document—an evolution of voices from diverse backgrounds. The Nueva Luz Study Center has been formed to make the Digital Archives more accessible and activates the material through programming.



Nueva Luz, Vol 1 #1, 1985. Nueva Luz Study Center.

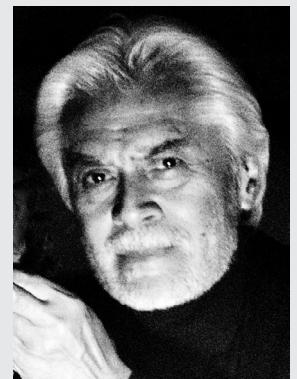
"It is possible that as the twenty-first century approaches, a new American aesthetic will evolve from the infusion of fresh and fertile energies bursting out of the nation's constrained corners."

—Editor **Charles Biasiny-Rivera** from commentary in first issue.



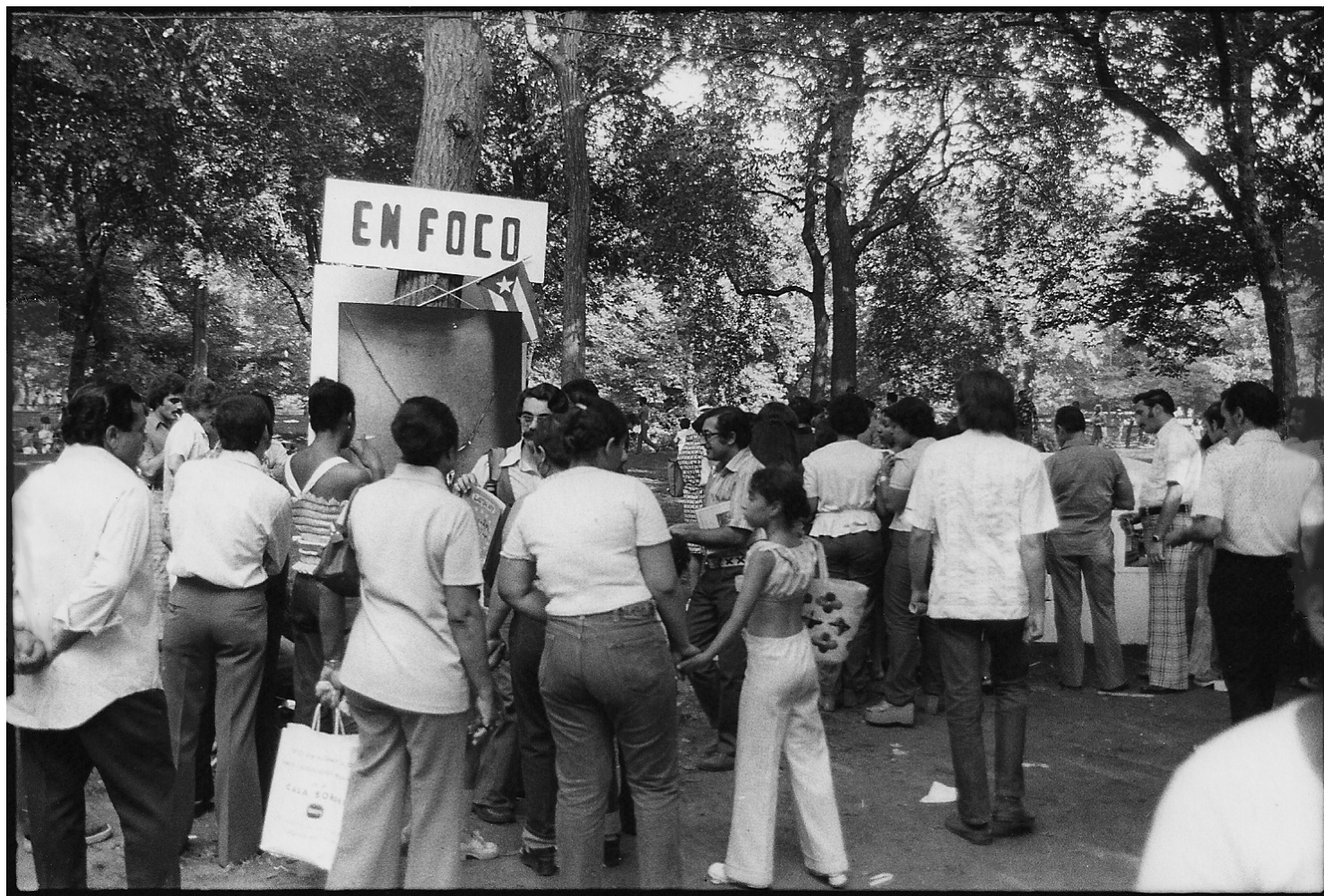
"*Nueva Luz* is a photographic journal that addresses itself to the search for statements by photographers who have developed a reflective stance vis-a-vis their culture . . . The photographers featured herein have committed themselves to the real work involved in making imagery. This is an opportunity for them to express a point of view."

—Designer and Art Director **Frank Gimpaya's** statement from the first issue in 1985 remains true today, nearly four decades later.



En Foco was started in 1974 by a collective of photographers from the Puerto Rican diaspora who were struggling for recognition as legitimate artists and access to support systems. They brought Latino artists into communities and schools to serve as mentors, and established a Street Gallery and Portrait Studio to share Puerto Rican culture throughout the Bronx.

The impetus to preserve and digitize the valuable archives came at a pivotal moment in 2017.



Archival image of En Foco's early traveling exhibitions at the Puerto Rican Festival of 1974. Courtesy of Nueva Luz Study Center.



"In 2017, En Foco was at a turning point and we were struggling to keep the lights on. I sent our intern Claire Dorfman to the basement storage to make an inventory. She came back with a magnificent superstar list of En Foco's history. This was the "Big Bang" moment for me. The trove of archival material spoke about history, spoke to our community in the large sense—artists whose perspective is based on issues of community, especially the lack of support or equity."

—**Bill Aguado**,
President
Executive Director (2016–2022)

"As the Collections and Archives Manager, I deal with everything that En Foco has boxed up and is collecting dust, because it's just chock full of history. En Foco started soon after I was born, I get to see all these photographs of things that happened, or people that were actively recording life while I was growing up. . . . En Foco has been recording it, capturing it, and putting it into *Nueva Luz* since 1985."

—**Valarie Irizarry**,
Collections and Archives Manager

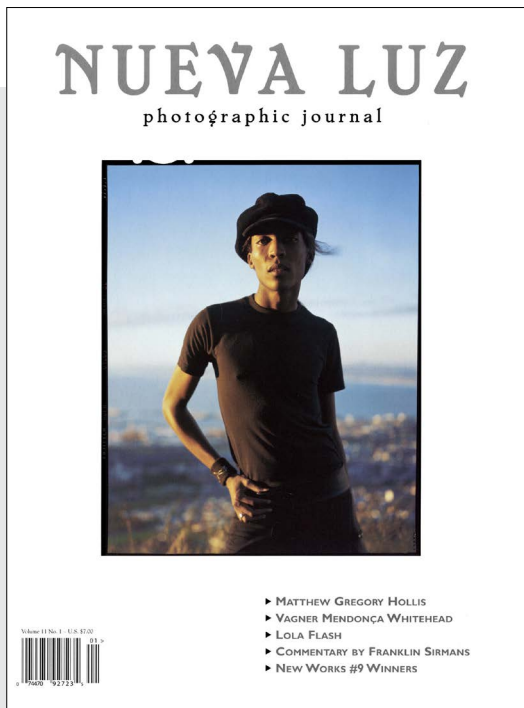


What's in the Archives?

The list of artists who have been published in *Nueva Luz* is impressive. For many of them, appearing on its pages marked a pivotal point, offering artistic validation and a platform to amplify their voices.

[Check out the list of artists, curators, and writers](#)

Each issue includes editorials that connect to the time period as well as essays about themes and artists by guest curators and writers. From 1997 to 2009, the “Critical Mass” section sets the context with additional commentary, information about En Foco's exhibitions, as well as listings for opportunities and open calls.



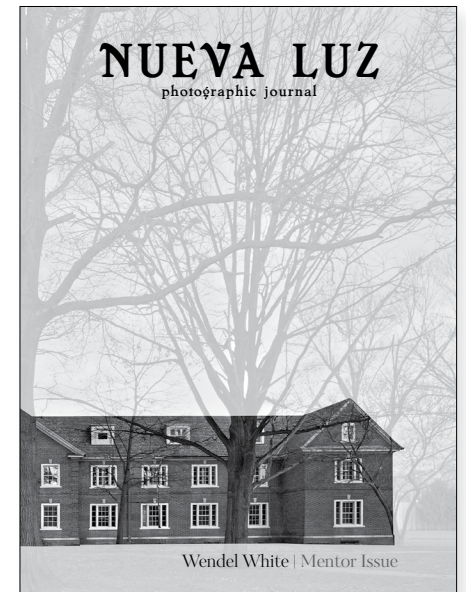
Nueva Luz, Vol 11 #1, 2006.
Courtesy of Nueva Luz Study Center.

“Supporting these artistic forerunners gives our communities the opportunity to see themselves, their lives and experiences documented with dignity, truth and respect. In subtle and not-so-subtle ways, we have been changing the face of photography, even if it’s one artist at a time.”

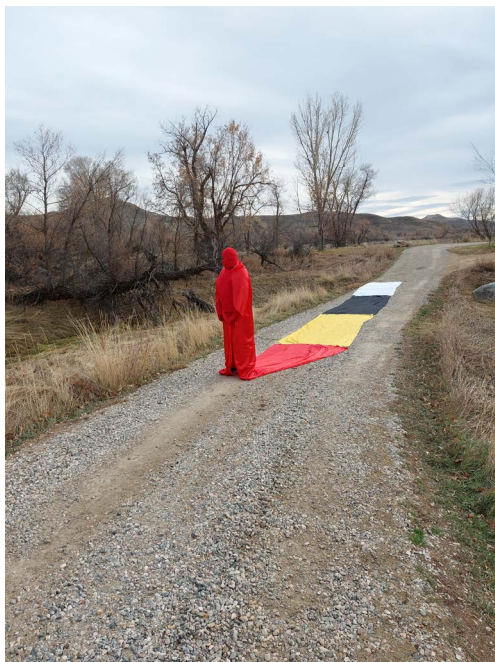
—Miriam Romais,
from her first editor's statement in 2006 (Vol 11 #1)



Mentorship issues bring back previous *Nueva Luz* photographers to present their work and be commentators. Vol 26 #2 showcased Wendel A. White's eight-year project *Schools for the Colored*, a profound depiction of racism and educational apartheid in the North. Dawoud Bey's essay "Excavating Histories" chronicles the limits of educational opportunities present for enslaved people as well as those who were free. Bey cites anti-literacy laws beginning in the 1740s to present-day de facto education policies.



Nueva Luz, Vol 26 #2, 2022. Courtesy of Nueva Luz Study Center.



Dennis RedMoon Darkeem, *Protect your medicine*, 2022, inkjet on canvas.
Courtesy of the artist.

Fellowship issues are a way that En Foco supports emerging photographers. Since 2016 Photography Fellowships have been awarded to artists who receive a stipend, are included in an exhibition, and are featured in *Nueva Luz* with an essay by a curator or writer.

"*Nueva Luz* gives voice to creators of color a platform to share diverse cultural connections and the space to tell the stories of today. As a participating artist, I feel I'm now part of a Bronx legacy of photographers, part of a large community, and history of amazing creators."

—Dennis RedMoon Darkeem,
(Vol 26 #1)



How are people using the content?

The Nueva Luz Study Center is a locus for programming, offering educators, researchers, curators, artists, and the general public opportunities to engage and be inspired by the magazine's rich material and cultural history.

Exhibitions

Memoria Impressa: Posters from the En Foco Archives chronicles En Foco's history from 1979 to 1995 through its exhibitions and public programs. These programs were made in collaboration with photographers, curators, and cultural institutions in New York and Puerto Rico. Curated by Skowmon Hastanan, archives consultant, and Valarie Irizarry, Collections and Archives Manager.

Special Projects and Commissions

In 2022 En Foco piloted the commissioning program by inviting 2019 fellowship recipient Aaron Turner whose work appeared in the fellowship issue (Vol 21 #1) and Dos Mundos (Vol 24 #2) to develop a project using the Archives. He is exploring the work of Anthony Gleaton (Vol 4 #3, 1994).

With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, three projects will be commissioned in 2023–2024 that respond to a theme, artists, or artwork. These projects will be featured in the fall 2024 issue of *Nueva Luz*. A [call for artists](#), writers, and scholars is underway.

Importance of Community Arts Archives

En Foco organized "Preserving our Heritage, The Importance of Community Arts Archives," a panel for the College Art Association Conference on February 15, 2023, with panelists Bill Aguado, President of En Foco, Nelly A. Rosario, Associate Professor in the Latina/o Studies Program at Williams College and Assistant Director of Writing for the MIT Black History Project, and Danny Peralta, Executive Director of En Foco.



Intercambio, 1995, poster.
Courtesy of Nueva Luz Study Center.

Nueva Luz as a Teaching Tool

Nelly A. Rosario, writer and Associate Professor in the Latina/o Studies Program at Williams College, regularly assigns ekphrastic writing prompts where students draw inspiration from photography published in *Nueva Luz*. She recognizes the positive impact that community archives have had on student research, their value as records of social and political change, and how they facilitate active dialogue among artists and writers who are absent from the contemporary canon. Rosario is also Assistant Director of Writing for the MIT Black History Project.

Alameda Chapman wrote this poem while a student in Rosario's class. She responds to Tiffany Smith, *Portrait of my Future Self*, (2017) which appeared in the 2019 fellowship issue (Vol 23 #1).

Pretending to be a Real Puerto Rican by Alameda Chapman

In a faint morning dew
a hand tugs the back of my neck
now face to face with empty window sills
and the way no one calls us anymore
peeking through the banana leaf
sometimes I pretend I know how
to impress my grandmother
I will do her dance and sing her songs
so she can say America did not ruin me
orange rinds and sugar cubes
I hate to tell her it did



Tiffany Smith, *Portrait of my Future Self*, 2017, Digital Photograph.
Courtesy of the artist.

What's coming up?

The NLSC is a work-in-progress that involves researching and digitizing En Foco's historical archives that span five decades, comprising exhibition material, written material, and other ephemera. Here's what's in the works.

- Provide digital access to over 600 permanent collection photographs and information on over 200 exhibitions since 1974 that include traveling, museum collaborations, thematic, and pop-ups in public spaces.
- Grow the Archive with artists, writers, and curators each year.
- Build a network of like-minded institutions and serve as a model for other community organizations to develop their own archives.



We encourage you to use the Nueva Luz Study Center



"Nueva Luz is a place and space where through its publication and circulation we get to know the most provoking, original, critically and technically complex works. For teachers, conversations can happen about social studies/humanities: home, identity, social justice. It is also a resource to learn beyond the classroom. For activists it's a space where where sharing ideas, dreams, and essays can reinforce or complement conversations about change, agency, and solidarity. For community organizations it's a model to expand conversations around culture, legacy, engagement through art. For others it encourages learning about the power of an image, an idea."

—**Juanita Lanzo**,
essayist (Vol 20 #1) and curator (Vol 24 #2)



We invite you to let us know if you are using or have used En Foco's archives as a teacher, student, scholar, or artist in your practice. We would like to feature examples in the future and can offer you a free subscription as a gift.



Nueva Luz, Vol 24 #2, 2020. Courtesy of Nueva Luz Study Center.

Acknowledgements

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This guide was organized by Jennifer McGregor, NLSC consultant.

About En Foco

En Foco, Inc. is a non-profit that supports U.S.-based photographers of African, Asian, Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander heritage. Founded in 1974, En Foco makes their work visible to the art world, yet remains accessible to under-served communities. Through exhibitions, workshops, events, and publications, it provides professional recognition, honoraria, and assistance to photographers as they grow into different stages of their careers.

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