

# Cleveland

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## Foundation for Art

Edited by Linda Feagler

Most corporate annual reports barely receive a second glance before their recipients toss them into the circular file. Not so with those generated by the Cleveland-based George Gund Foundation. Since 1990, the philanthropic organization has complemented its yearly facts-and-figures summations with black-and-white photographs taken throughout the city. From Nov. 17 through Jan. 26, the Cleveland Museum of Art will showcase them in *A City Seen: Photographs from The George Gund Foundation Collection*.

Over the years, 12 artists commissioned to shoot images for the annual reports were given specific topics on which to focus, ranging from Cleveland neighborhoods to the Cuyahoga River to urban gardening. Each photographer took it from there. Which is why, says CMA curator of photography Tom Hinson, there are no clichéd shots of the Cleveland skyline among the 148 photos featured in the exhibit.



"It was a brilliant concept to use fine art photographers and give them free rein over their subject matter," Hinson says. "As a result, the artists came up with wonderful new bodies of work that bring new insights into the city."

For 1994's "Arts Institutions" theme, Linda Butler captured the play of light and shadow off the surface of a Baldwin piano at the Broadway School of Music & the Arts and the graceful architectural curve of the Severance Hall boxes.

In 2000, the Gund Foundation showcased the Free Clinic of Greater Cleveland. Through his images, Nicholas Nixon focused on the array of emotions present on patients' faces. "Despite their pain, their fatigue and resignation, [patients] seemed willing to be themselves in front of a reasonably polite stranger," Nixon recounts in the exhibit catalog.

Douglas Lucak ignored the grit that's so much a part of the "urban landscape," opting instead to present a backyard garden in the Clark-Fulton neighborhood and the majestic spire of the Old Stone Church on Public Square. His work appeared in the foundation's 1999 missive.

"The philosophy behind our annual report is to make it more human, not just filled with pictures of happy grantees," explains foundation executive director David Bergholz. "When you pull all these photographs together, you get a sense of the city. Yes, Cleveland is a comeback city with all those good things. But it's also a very down-to-earth workingman and -woman's kind of place.

"I think if you look at all 12 of these portfolios—both the ones that are about people and the ones that are about place—you'll see what the city really looks like," he adds. "Together, it's not glossy chamber of commerce and it's not the deep depths of despair. It's a mix that says, 'Hey, Cleveland is a complex place full of a diverse set of people and institutions, and by God, there's beauty and art in all of it.'"

On Nov. 16, from 2 to 5:30 p.m., the Cleveland Museum of Art will host "Views of Cleveland: Dialogues in a City Seen," a symposium featuring the participating photographers. For more information about programming, call 1-888-CMA-0033 or visit [www.clevelandart.org](http://www.clevelandart.org). —Linda Feagler

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**Clockwise from top: Photos by Linda Butler, Nicholas Nixon and Douglas Lucak are featured in *A City Seen: Photographs from The George Gund Foundation Collection*, on exhibit at the Cleveland Museum of Art.**

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