

PHILLIPS

PRESS RELEASE

High Voltage: Contemporary Photographs from the Collection of Fred and Laura Bidwell to be Sold in Phillips' New York Photographs Sale on 11 October

Featuring Works by the Most Prominent Names in Contemporary Photography, Including Hiroshi Sugimoto, Hank Willis Thomas, Zanele Muholi, Lee Friedlander, and Stephen Shore, Among Others



Zanele Muholi
*Bona, Charlottesville (9781), from
Somnyama Ngonyama, 2015*
Estimate \$20,000 - 30,000



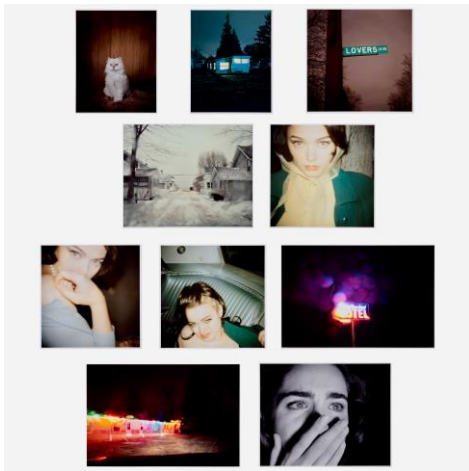
Hiroshi Sugimoto
Lightning Fields 128, 2009
Estimate \$40,000 - 60,000



Hank Willis Thomas
Baron of the Crossroads, 2012
Estimate \$25,000 - 35,000

NEW YORK – 25 SEPTEMBER 2023 – Phillips is pleased to announce *High Voltage: Contemporary Photographs from the Collection of Fred and Laura Bidwell* to be featured in a dedicated section within our 11 October Photographs auction. The offering includes 40 works showcasing the diversity of contemporary photography with artists such as Kehinde Wiley, Dawoud Bey, Zanele Muholi, Hank Willis Thomas, Andrew Moore, Paul Mpagi Sepuya, and many others. Collectors and philanthropists, Fred and Laura Bidwell founded the Transformer Station in the Hingetown neighborhood of Cleveland, Ohio, that has become a premier exhibition space for contemporary photography and art. *High Voltage* offers a glimpse into the Bidwells' collection and exhibition program at the Transformer Station. The Bidwells gifted the Transformer Station to the Cleveland Museum of Art earlier this year. Proceeds from the works in Phillips' auction will support the Bidwells' active philanthropic endeavors.

Fred Bidwell said, "Laura and I are excited to show a slice of our collection and give an opportunity for other collectors to be a part of the lifecycle of these incredible photographs that we've loved throughout the years. Photography has never lost its fascination for the two of us with its unique ability to capture a moment of reality and time. Our collecting journey was always about the things we loved, that lightning strike moment when you see something that resonates so clearly within you. That energy is felt throughout these works, the tension between the material and the conceptual being felt in each piece, and it is our hope that this energy can go on to capture the minds of others as they did for us."



Todd Hido

Excerpts From Silver Meadows, circa 2013
Estimate \$12,000 - 18,000

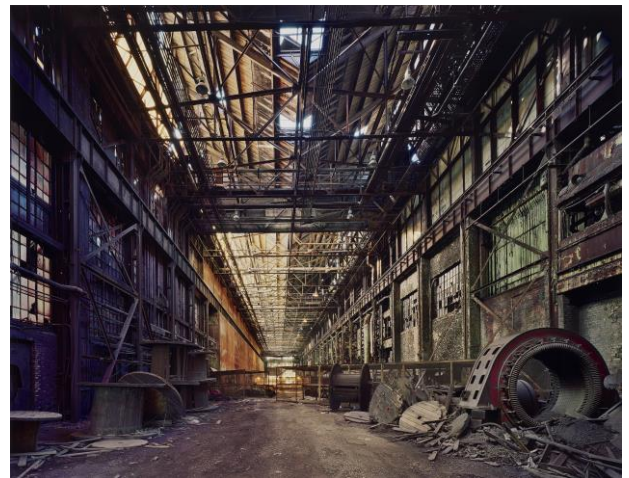
Sarah Krueger, Head of Photographs, New York, said, "Phillips is honored to work with Fred and Laura Bidwell. Through their important work with Transformer Station and FRONT International, they have pushed the boundaries of photography in the public sphere, enriching the cultural landscape and providing access to the best of contemporary photographic practice in the Midwest and beyond. The Bidwells' vision and support have enabled the photography community to flourish, fostering creativity and innovation. Their enduring passion for this extraordinary medium leaves an indelible mark, inspiring future generations of photographers and enthusiasts."

Central to the collection is Hiroshi Sugimoto's monumental *Lightning Fields 128* (illustrated page 1), which transforms raw electrical energy into photographic form. The series has its origins in the photographer's fascination with 18th and 19th century experiments with electricity and reflects Sugimoto's deep knowledge of photographic history and technique. The *Lightning Fields* photographs are made without a camera in the darkroom, and electricity is both the source of illumination and the 'object' whose form is captured photographically. Rendered here in a

bravura large-format print, the image delivers a distinct visual charge and, as such, was foundational at the Bidwells' Transformer Station exhibition space.

Featured on page one, Zanele Muholi's *Bona, Charlottesville (9781)* is a key example from their *Somnyama Ngonyama (Hail the Dark Lioness)* series. In this celebrated body of work, Muholi occupies the role of both subject and image-maker in a way that is distinctly their own, challenging stereotypes and provoking the viewer to reconsider expectations about beauty and societal roles. A major survey of Muholi's work is planned for 2024-25 at the Tate Modern.

Baron of the Crossroads, from Hank Willis Thomas's signature *Crossroads* series, explores the complexities and ambiguities of race (illustrated page 1). The image features fellow artist Sanford Biggers in the character of Elegba, the Yoruba deity, trickster, and protector of travels and crossroads. In Thomas's rendering, the Baron is both black and white simultaneously—neither wholly one or the other, and seemingly possessing the attributes of darkness and light. With his use of a selectively-filtering film laminate called Lumisty, Thomas intensifies the experience of looking at the work which shifts as the viewer changes position.



Andrew Moore

The Rouge, Dearborn, Michigan from Detroit Disassembled, 2008
Estimate: \$25,000 - 35,000

Earlier this month Thomas was awarded the prestigious 2023 United States Department of State Medal of Arts.

Dawoud Bey's evocative study of Lake Erie enshrouded by darkness is from the photographer's 2017 *Night Coming Tenderly, Black* series, a project commissioned by FRONT International and headed by Fred Bidwell. Shot exclusively in Cleveland and Hudson, Ohio, Bey recreates the experience of fugitive slaves as they made their way along the Underground Railroad to freedom in Canada prior to the Civil War. Lake Erie would have been the last obstacle that many escaped slaves encountered.



Dawoud Bey

Untitled #25 (Lake Erie and Sky) from
Night Coming Tenderly, Black, 2017
Estimate \$20,000 - 30,000

The Bidwells' have long been intrigued by photographic works that are unique, and this theme is prevalent throughout the lots on offer. This includes fellow Ohioan, Todd Hido's unique assemblage, *Excerpts from Silver Meadows* (exhibited at Transformer station in 2014), and works by Adam Fuss, Richard

Learoyd, Chris McCaw, Alison Rossiter, Matthew Brandt, Christopher Bucklow, and multi-disciplinary artist Wilmer Wilson IV. Wilson's *Rate Who Rate You*, 2016, will be his auction debut. Whether unique or editioned, each work from the Bidwell collection is arresting, appealing and *High Voltage* – speaking to the couple's personal background in advertising, their impactful vision, and dedicated focus on living artists.

Following the sale on 11 October, a select offering from the Bidwell Collection will also be included in the April 2024 Photographs auction.

Fred Bidwell serves as Executive Director for FRONT International. Launched in 2018, FRONT International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art is a free, public, contemporary art exhibition comprising artist commissions, performances, films, and public programs that takes place across Cleveland, Akron, and Oberlin every three years. The third edition of FRONT will take place in 2025.



Hendrik Kerstens
Shopping Bag, 2008
Estimate: \$20,000 - 30,000



Paul Mpagi Sepuya
Darkroom Mirror Study, or Aperture (0X5A3449), 2017
Estimate: \$7,000 - 9,000



Lee Friedlander
New York City, 1966
Estimate: \$4,000 - 6,000



Matthew Brandt
Big Bear, CA A2, 2012
Estimate: \$8,000 - 12,000

Auction: 11 October 2023 10am & 2pm EDT

Auction Viewing: 432 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10022

Click here for more information: <https://www.phillips.com/auctions/auction/NY040323>

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