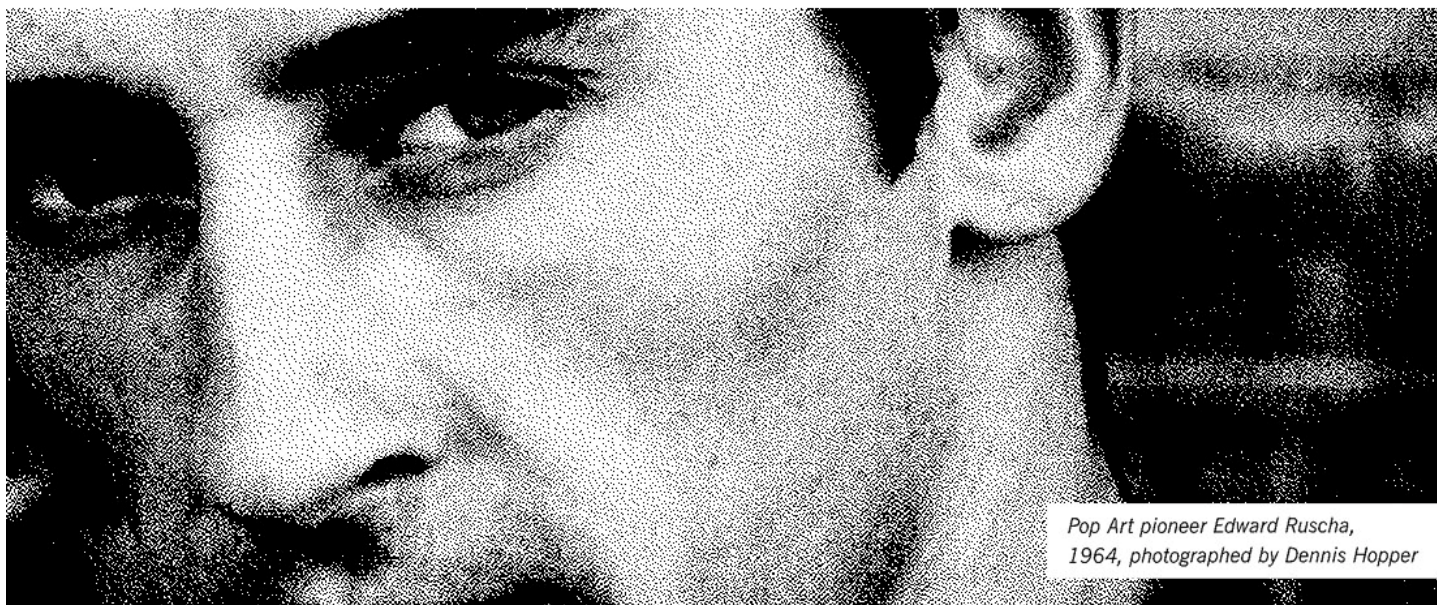


MODERN ARCHIVE



*Pop Art pioneer Edward Ruscha,
1964, photographed by Dennis Hopper*

WE ARE LIVING IN THE MOST DOCUMENTED ERA IN HISTORY, BUT WHEN THE SOCIAL NETWORKS BECOME VIRTUAL GHOST TOWNS, WHO WILL SELECT WHAT'S WORTH KEEPING? **RAVI SOMAIYA** DESCENDS INTO THE DUSTY WORLD OF THE COLLECTOR AND ASKS: WHAT DOES THE ARCHIVE MEAN IN 2009?

WITH PREVIOUSLY UNSEEN IMAGES BY **DENNIS HOPPER**, **THE VELVET UNDERGROUND**, **STANLEY KUBRICK** AND MORE

Back in the early 1970s, Dennis Hopper was holed up in a house in Taos, New Mexico, drinking a case of beer and a quart of whiskey a day, supplemented with a drugs stash that Hunter S Thompson himself would get the fear over. He was also armed to the teeth to protect himself from the CIA, who he believed were after him. Inside the house with Hopper were thousands of contact sheets and negatives from pictures he had taken throughout the 1960s – he had bought a camera in the late 50s (having been urged to do so by James Dean, whom he had befriended on the set of *Rebel Without A Cause*), and had carried it around his neck at all times ever since. Over the years, Hopper documented the love-ins at San Francisco and the nascent civil rights movement, with the kind of access that only a burgeoning film star and artist can get. He was present at the birth of Pop Art and captured its rise, with intimate portraits of Ruscha, Warhol and Lichtenstein among others. Apart from his photographs, Hopper also had artworks he had bought directly from those artists and others in his Mexican hideout – including the first Campbell's soup can Warhol ever silkscreened – and it's safe to say that the whole of this incredible archive was in danger as he slowly went insane in the southern sun.

One day there was a knock at his door. It was Walter Hopps, then curator at the Pasadena museum and a friend of Hopper's. He and Tony Shafrazi, a gallerist in New York who had helped to discover the likes of Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat, had hatched a plan. "They realised that Dennis was going mad," says Jessica Hundley, a writer and filmmaker. "Without Dennis knowing, Walter took all his negatives and contact sheets and as much of his art as he could fit in his car and gave them to Tony to store."

That archive forms the basis of a book Hundley is working on with Hopper, who is now grateful for his friends' intervention. The images and stories in *Dennis Hopper, Photographs 1961-1967* are both intimate snapshots of a unique life, and a collection of historical artefacts important enough to attempt stealing from a heavily armed and dangerously paranoid man.

Hopps and Shafrazi are not the only ones who have sensed the importance in a set of images, or reels of footage, or paintings or manuscripts. The allure of the physical archive – those sagging boxes and spare rooms packed to the ceiling – still endures in an era drenched in YouTube and Facebook and Flickr... but why? And how exactly, for example, is Johan Kugelberg, the obsessive Swedish collector of items from the birth of hip hop in the Bronx to death metal fanzines, any different to the old homeless man on my street who collects scraps of material in a cloth bag?

"An archive is meant to communicate with a public," says Kugelberg of the thousands of posters, show flyers, books, magazines, records, cassettes, oral histories, photographs, clothes, paintings, sculptures and other miscellaneous items he has accrued, including a collection of unseen photos of The Velvet Underground. His hip hop collection has already formed the basis of the book *Born In The Bronx*, which chronicled the formation of this new type of music. "The history of popular culture is based on the initial gatherings of important artefacts by enthusiasts," he says. "Without those enthusiasts, we would know far less about the early history of

Below: Jane Fonda, Malibu, 1965.
Opposite (top to bottom): Bikers, 1967;
Biker Couple, 1961. Dennis Hopper:
Photographs 1961-67





Above: Photographs of anonymous young Americans, from American Photobooth, Näkki Goranin.

Left: Bruce Conner (in tub), Toni Basil, Teri Garr and Ann Marshall, 1965. Dennis Hopper: Photographs 1961-67



jazz, blues, soul, gospel and so on. So it's fair to say that I started out of necessity. It just needed to be done." That collection is now in the library at the illustrious Cornell University – "next to illuminated manuscripts and an actual draft of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address," he adds, with justified pride.

Näkki Goranin collects and archives picture strips from photo booths. Her work, which spans more than half of the last century in America, has been collected in a book, *American Photobooth* (the foreword is by a David Haberstich, an archive curator at the Smithsonian Institution). "They are a form of art and self-expression that anyone could afford," she explains of her decade-long obsession. "There's no artifice, there's no self-consciousness – because there's no photographer there, people relax and let their soul come into their face."

Goranin, like most archivists, is passionate about her work. She has scoured flea markets, auctions and eBay. She has gone through the phonebook to find people. On one occasion, she even paid a frail old man to climb into a skip to recover a valuable tranche that was too far away for her to get at herself. "I hope that when I leave this world," she says of her collection of 3,000-plus strips, "to leave my pictures to a museum or an institution. I'm not collecting for monetary reasons or my own pleasure, although I do enjoy it. I feel like I'm the caretaker of an important part of photo history that no one else cared about. I'm saving something that will go on and on for future generations."

But sometimes there is no Näkki Goranin or Johan Kugelberg or Walter Hopps to grab a piece of history before it is categorised as such. The dancer Vaslav Nijinsky is reputed to be the greatest of the 20th century. He had a nervous breakdown when he was just 29, in 1919. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia and never danced again – which makes an archival omission even more acute. The fashion photographer Adolf de Meyer photographed one of his ballets, *The Afternoon Of A Faun*, but no footage exists of his work – a gaping hole in the historical record.

Last year, according to a story in the *New Yorker*, Nijinsky fans were awed when what appeared to be a lost video of the dance prodigy was posted on YouTube. And then shocked when they discovered that a French artist, Christian Comte, had used CGI to stitch the stills into a moving record. "It is a disservice to the art world to present this digital creation as genuine film of Nijinsky. Please stop this charade," wrote one. The digital, clearly, is not always good enough.

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*The Velvet Underground performing in the underground film "Venus In Furs" by poet and filmmaker Piero Heliczer (pictured centre, playing saxophone) in his apartment at 450 Grand Street, November, 1965. Filmmaker Barbara Rubin is dressed in a nun's outfit and Maureen Tucker (prior to joining the band) is dressed as a mourning bride. Heliczer describes the plot of the film as "Where a nun and a nurse go to hell because of their sinful life at St Vincents Hospital". All copies of the film seem now to be lost. Photographs by Adam Ritchie from the forthcoming book *The Velvet Underground – A New York Art*, edited by Johan Kugelberg*

"THE HISTORY OF POPULAR CULTURE IS BASED ON THE INITIAL GATHERINGS OF IMPORTANT ARTEFACTS BY ENTHUSIASTS"
— JOHAN KUGELBERG



Comte did not respond to an email in time for this article. But Goranin agrees that an original, primary object has more power to evoke a time and place than its binary equivalent. "It's like when you see an image of a painting and then the actual painting itself," she says. "I love Facebook and I look at pictures on it all the time. But images in any electronic format go by very fast. You go from one screen to another and you don't pick up the subtleties. When you actually have the original in your hand you experience it fully; you can focus on it and think about it. I really believe there is power in that."

Hundley, whose collaboration with Dennis Hopper will be published in a tactile, large-format book by Taschen, agrees. "There's something to be said for the physical contact," she says. "You get a real sense of the stream of consciousness and memory we discovered when Dennis went through the pictures."

Johan Kugelberg is more pragmatic. He admits there's little difference between an MP3 and a 12-inch, a Polaroid and a JPEG. But he fears that obsolete digital standards will soon render entire sections of history as no more than computer errors. "At the moment, every archive, university and museum are staying up all night chain-smoking over the future of digital archiving and permanence," he chuckles. "I think electronic media are fine, as long as the physical object survives somewhere. But try glancing at Flickr or cranking up the MP3 once the plug is pulled. If you want a proper wet-fish-slap as far as how problematic this actually can be, I suggest you try to open a Protocols file from the late 1990s." As Kugelberg found when he attempted to do just that, context is vital to an archive. Hundley noticed something when she was going through Hopper's pictures. "He had a small role in a Western shot in Durango, Mexico in 1965 called *The Sons Of Katie Elder*. He took a lot of



"I HAVE SEVERAL WARHOLS. SELF-PORTRAITS. BLUE JACKIES. REVERSE GOLD MARILYNS. JEFF KOONS'S BUNNY..."
 — ELI BROAD

THE ULTIMATE COLLECTOR

LA-based writer **Richard Metzger** meets local billionaire art collector **Eli Broad**

The 76-year-old, billionaire real estate developer Eli Broad carries himself like a much younger man, and is excited to talk about the recent reversal in fortune at the once troubled Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Polite but impatient, he's full of energy. He speaks with the confidence that several billion in the bank tends to bring, but also with the authority that his place in the art world hierarchy confers. "We've raised over \$57 million in six months, with \$15 million in matching funds from (The Broad) Foundation," he enthuses. "This is the biggest turnaround of any cultural institution in recent memory."

The success of Broad's charm offensive on behalf of MOCA is also an indication of Broad's deep love of his adopted hometown. For MOCA to fail – its finances were becoming perilous before he stepped in to lead the fundraising late last year – would have been an embarrassing black eye for the city and its status as a mecca of contemporary art. In November, a weekend-long gala, MOCA New – with highlights featuring key works by Mark Rothko, Robert Rauschenberg, Jackson Pollock, Ed Moses, Jasper Johns, Andreas Gursky, Mondrian and many others – will unofficially relaunch the museum, underscoring its significance to the residents of Los Angeles, arguably the world's creative capital.

Broad ranked 93rd on *Forbes* magazine's 2009 Billionaires list with a net worth of \$5.2 billion. His philanthropic work, however, should rank him towards the top of a different list – Broad's charitable largesse is nothing short of legendary. In recent years, the Broad Foundation has made a multimillion-dollar endowment

to Harvard and MIT for important medical research. He makes clear that the foundation doesn't just engage in activities centering around art and art education, but that this is only one part of what his foundation does.

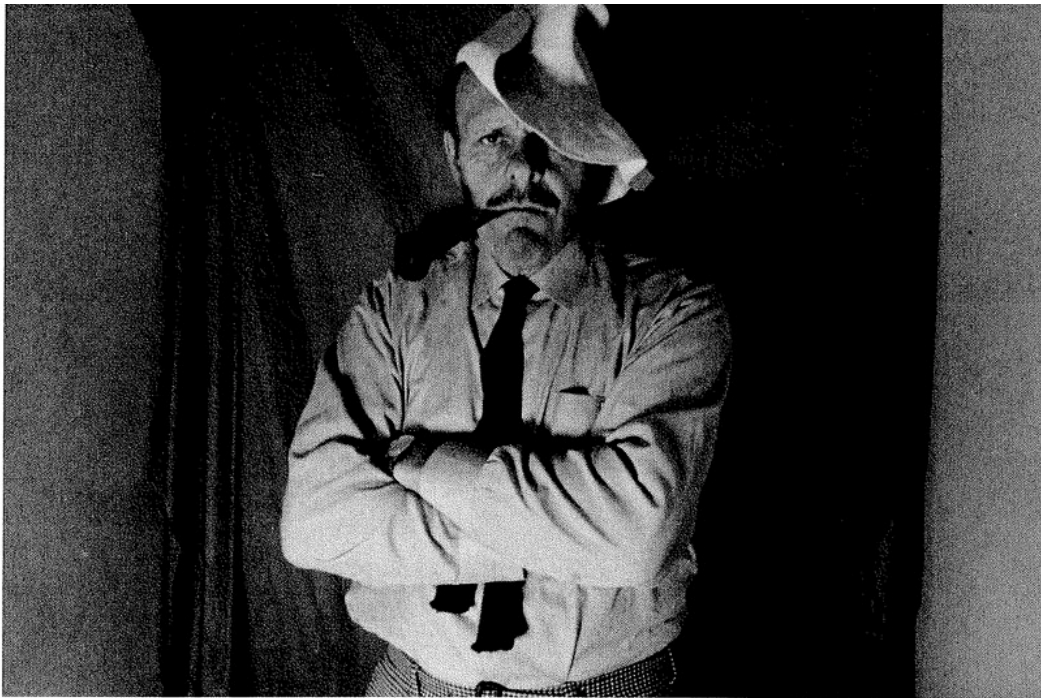
Having said that, it's really his amazing art collection I'm most interested in. So, if push came to shove, what's his favourite piece in his vast collection? "Oh, I get asked that question all the time and I can't answer it," he says. "It's like trying to choose your favourite grandchild. Can't be done." Okay, so which of his vast collection of modern art masterpieces does he choose to live with in his own home? "I have several Warhols. Self-portraits. Blue Jackies. Reverse gold Marilyns. Two paintings by Chuck Close. Jeff Koons's bunny. That was at BCAM, but we missed it too much. Three pieces by Ellsworth Kelly in the bedroom. Cy Twombly. We've got two significant early Calder's, and in the driveway the first thing you see is a David Smith sculpture."

Still more pieces from his fabled collection are housed at the Broad Contemporary Art Museum (BCAM), including pieces by Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons, Robert Rauschenberg, John Baldessari, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Damien Hirst, Chris Burden, Cindy Sherman, Mike Kelley and Jean-Michel Basquiat, not to mention a three-storey installation by Barbara Kruger, and two immense metal sculptures by Richard Serra. BCAM cannot, however, hold everything and there are plans afoot for another Broad museum in the heart of Beverly Hills. "Why should all that amazing work remain in storage?" he says. "There needs to be a place to exhibit it all, so that people can see it and enjoy it."

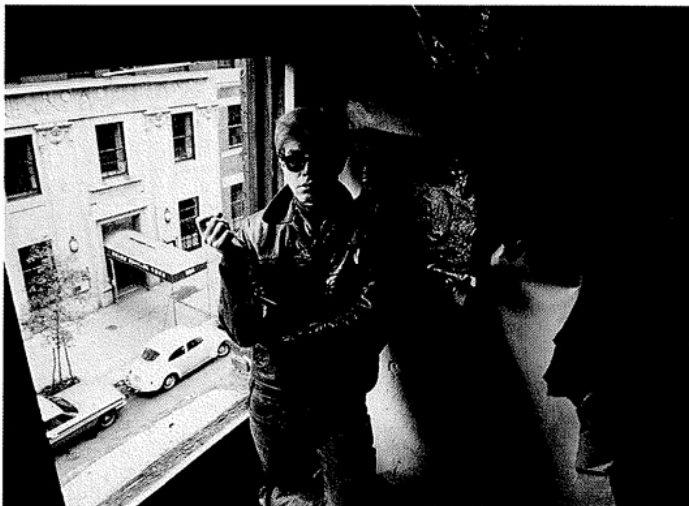
moca.org



This page (clockwise from top left): Balloon Dog (blue), 1994-2000, Jeff Koons, Broad Contemporary Art Museum, photography Weldon Brewster; costume stills from Stanley Kubrick's legendary unmade film Napoleon



This page (clockwise from top left):
Terry Thomas, New York, 1969;
Roy Lichtenstein, New York, 1967.
Andy Warhol in his 47th Street studio.
All images courtesy of Steve Balkin



documentary footage of the landscape and the town. When you look at these photos, you can see images from *Easy Rider* (the iconic 60s biker movie directed by Hopper). He developed his eye and kept all these pictures and they played into his aesthetic."

It is a story that is repeated in almost any archive of significance. The Kubrick archive housed at the University of the Arts in London is more than just paper and artefacts – it gives an unprecedented insight, says Jan Harlan, its original curator, into the creative world of a pained and painstaking artist. "He spent weeks, months, figuring out how to light with candles for *Barry Lyndon*, for example. It has inspired many students," explains Harlan. The same is true of Alan Lomax's folk music collection at the Library of Congress. This travelling historian recorded many early blues and folk songs at the turn of the last century, which have since inspired everyone from Miles Davis and Brian Eno to Moby.

But the final cultural and historical record is, of course, made of more than one person's experience. Steve Balkin is a photographer and artist who lives on the Upper East Side in Manhattan. Balkin, 71, is a similar age to Dennis Hopper, 73. He does not have the recognition or money that his more successful contemporary boasts. But what he does have is his own archive of the birth of Pop Art. Balkin studied at Pratt in the 1960s. He partied with Warhol and Lichtenstein too, on the other coast to Dennis

Hopper. They posed for portraits and snapshots in his New York apartment, as they did for Hopper in California. And in a bright orange AGFA box, held shut with bungee cords, he keeps some of those enormous prints and contact sheets of images. They have almost never been seen before. Warhol poses under natural light. Lichtenstein sits and stands next to his own artworks at one of his first shows.

Like Kugelberg and The Velvet underground, or Hundley (who spent two years working on a project with Hopper that should have taken four months), or Goranin (whose next book will look at tintypes – early photographs printed on iron sheets), Balkin knows that his collection has importance and value. That it is an archive. "I'm not getting any younger," says Balkin. "My wife passed away and my kids have no idea who I was or what I did. I'm just worried that I'll die and someone will just throw out all this stuff I have collected, without knowing what it is."

Dennis Hopper: Photographs 1961-67 will be published by Taschen in November; *Napoleon The Greatest Film Never Made* images supplied by The Stanley Kubrick Trust, reproduced with kind permission of the copyright owner, used with permission of MGM; *The Velvet Underground – A New York Art*, edited by Johan Kugelberg will be published by Rizzoli. *American Photobooth* is published by WW Norton