

Gordon Baldwin (1939-2020)

The photography community has lost a beloved colleague. Gordon Corcoran Baldwin, a highly respected former curator of photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, passed away peacefully on November 9, 2020.

Erudite and poised, Baldwin was equally admired for his wisdom and wit, tact and taste. After receiving his undergraduate degree in history with distinction from Amherst College, Massachusetts, in 1960, he attended Harvard Law School (1960-62) and the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University (1963-65), and was a member of Andy Warhol's Factory. For the next fifteen years, he forged a career as an artist specialized in architectural drawings, which were featured in numerous group exhibitions and five one-person shows, including a 1976 exhibition at the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco. He was awarded residency grants from the Wurlitzer Foundation of Taos, New Mexico (1974, 1976); the American Academy in Rome, Italy (1977-78); and the Brimacombe Foundation of Bolinas, California (1982).



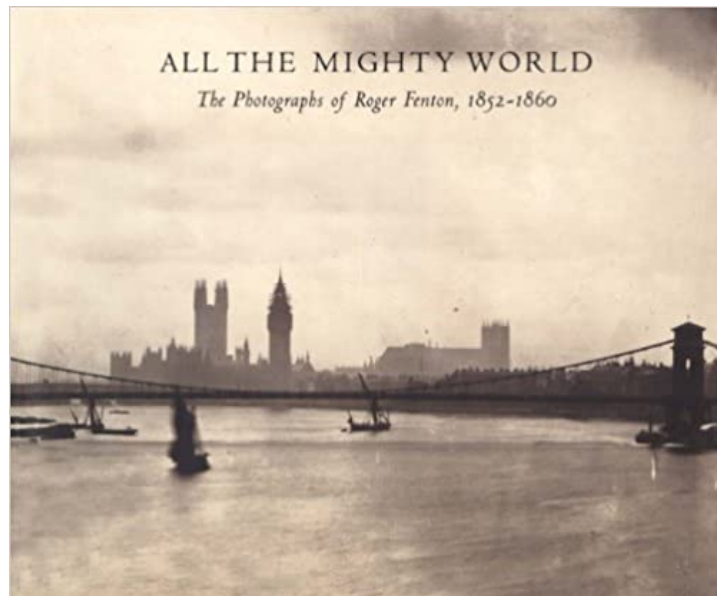
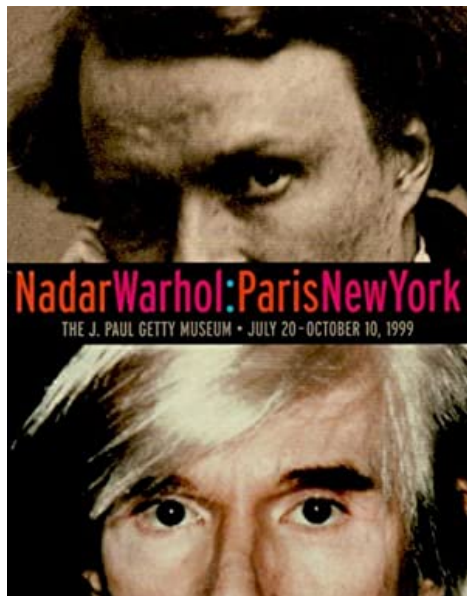
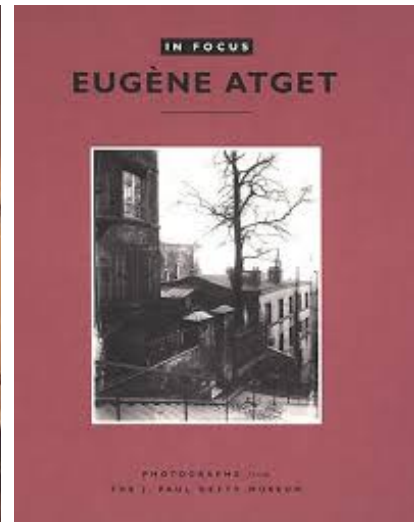
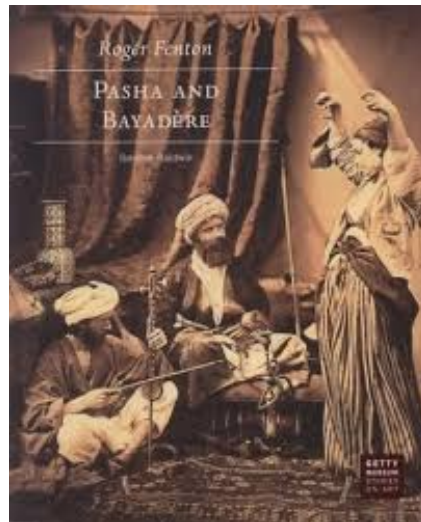
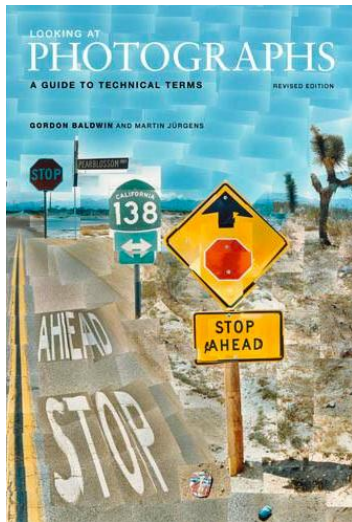
Gordon Baldwin (American, 1939-2020), *Bach's Eighth Fugue*, 1976, pen and black ink on architectural parchment, 32.5 x 29.8 cm (12 13/16 x 11 3/4 in.), Museum purchase, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts Endowment Fund.

In 1984 Baldwin was hired as a consultant by the J. Paul Getty Museum, located then in Malibu, California, to inventory, pack and/or ship two collections that were formative in the foundation of a newly established Department of Photographs, those of Sam Wagstaff, Jr., in New York and Arnold Crane in Chicago. Over the course of the next 21 years, Baldwin transitioned from Registration Assistant to Curatorial Assistant, Study Room Supervisor, Assistant Curator, and, finally, Associate Curator. This last position was one that he held from 1994 until September 2005. While at the Getty, Baldwin curated or co-curated eleven exhibitions, focused primarily—though not exclusively—on nineteenth-century photography: *Procession to the Fallen Gods: Photography in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (1987), *Gustave Le Gray* (1988), *Grave Testimony: Photographs of the Civil War* (1992), *Fame and Photography* (1993), *Roger Fenton: The Orientalist Suite* (1996), *Jean Gabriel Eynard: A Life in Daguerreotypes* (1998), *Nadar/Warhol: Paris/New York* (1999), co-organized with Judith Keller), *The Man in the Street: Eugène Atget in Paris* (2000), *Gustave Le Gray, Photographer (1820-1884)* (2002), *Recent Acquisitions: Eugène Atget, Brett Weston, William Garnett, Milton Rogovin* (2004, co-organized with Brett Abbott, Judith Keller, and Paul Martineau), and *All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852 – 1860* (2005). He also contributed substantial research and expertise to exhibitions on Julia Margaret Cameron, Lady Hawarden, Manuel Álvarez Bravo.

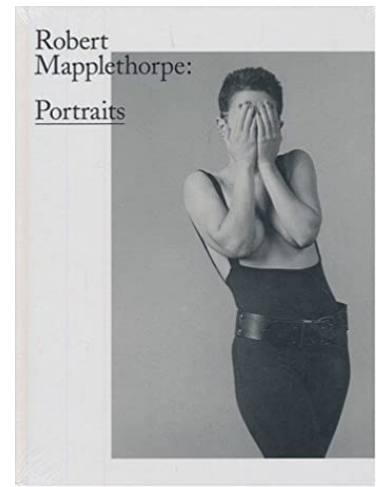
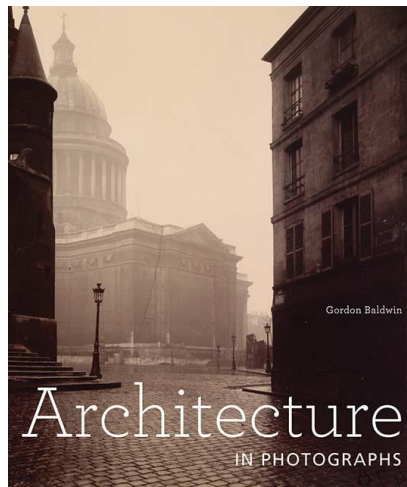
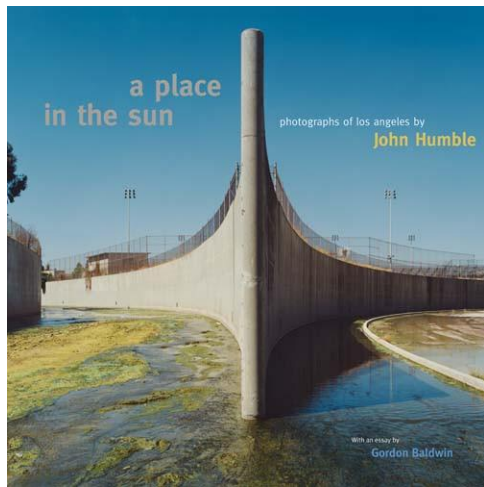
Upon learning of Baldwin's passing, Weston Naef, the founding curator of the Getty Museum's Department of Photographs, commented that "his wisdom, tact, taste, and expertise were priceless in the formation and operation of the DoP." Judith Keller, who served as associate curator, curator, and senior curator in the

Department of Photographs from 1986 to 2017, noted, “His humor, grace and integrity were a vital part of my years at the museum. We were all lucky to have such a colleague.” Jim Ganz, the Museum’s current senior curator of photographs, remarked, “Gordon’s role in establishing the international reputation of the Getty Museum’s Department of Photographs cannot be overstated. And his scholarly contributions to the field will live on through his many publications.”

Baldwin’s publications for the Getty Museum and related exhibitions include *Looking at Photographs: A Guide to Technical Terms* (1991), with a revised edition co-authored by Martin Jürgens (2009), an essential resource for scholars and students of the history of photography; *Roger Fenton: Pasha and Bayadère* (1996), within the Getty Museum’s Studies on Art series; *Nadar/Warhol: Paris/New York: Photography and Fame* (1999), co-authored by Judith Keller; *Eugène Atget* (2000), within the “In Focus” series of monographic studies of photographers in the Getty Museum’s collection; *Gustave Le Gray, 1820-1884* (2002), the English edition of the catalog for an exhibition organized by the Bibliothèque nationale de France that traveled to the Getty Museum; and *All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852 – 1860* (2004), an exhibition jointly organized with the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Following his retirement from the Getty Museum in September 2005, Baldwin relocated to Palm Springs, California, where he worked as an independent curator and remained in touch with professional and personal colleagues in Los Angeles, on the East Coast, and abroad. He contributed texts to the Getty Museum's publications *A Place in the Sun: Photographs of Los Angeles* by John Humble (2007) and *Architecture in Photography* (2013). In 2009 he curated the exhibition *Robert Mapplethorpe: Portraits* with catalog for the Palm Springs Art Museum that traveled to the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, and the San Jose Museum of Art. He was an emeritus member of the Print Council of America and served on the Photography Collection Council of the Palm Springs Art Museum.



Baldwin is survived by a niece and several cousins. Palm Springs residents and friends David Knaus, Mark Ingram, and Matthew Leslie have overseen his care in recent years as he succumbed to dementia. He spent his last week in hospice after an extended stay in assisted care. The Palm Springs Art Museum will be establishing a memorial fund in Gordon Baldwin's name and will be accepting contributions to support the acquisition, conservation, and preservation of photography at the Museum. Plans for a memorial are forthcoming.

