

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**WELLIN MUSEUM OF ART AT HAMILTON COLLEGE PRESENTS THE FIRST SOLO  
MUSEUM SURVEY OF PHOTOGRAPHS BY RHONA BITNER**

**On view September 9 – December 9, 2023, the Exhibition Will Feature Seven Photographic Series  
by Bitner dating from the 1990s to Today**



Rhona Bitner, *94-114-CNAC*, 1994, from the “Circus” series, 1993–2001

**Clinton, NY**—Rhona Bitner’s sumptuous photographs depict the physical and material domains of music, dance, and the theater, among other subjects. The exhibition *Rhona Bitner: Resound* marks the artist’s first museum survey. This retrospective will feature work from seven series of photographs spanning the last three decades. Included will be original Cibachrome prints from the 1990s and newly produced chromogenic and digital prints ranging in scale from the intimate (4 ½ x 6 inches) to the heroic (40 x 55 inches). The exhibition is curated by Tracy Adler, Johnson-Pote Director of the Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, and will be on view from September 9 through December 9, 2023.

Much of Rhona Bitner’s photographic practice focuses on the spaces, people, and objects related to performance—from popular music and the circus to ballet and classical theater, among other subjects—to create images that evoke personal and collective memory.

The following projects will be featured in the exhibition:

- “Circus” presented in two arrays of multiple images depicting traditional European and American circus acts at the end of the twentieth century.
- “Headshot” six photographs that capture a 360-degree view of the toy clown her father brought to the hospital on the day of the artist’s birth.
- “Listen” a 13-year-long odyssey which took her to over 400 venues across the United States to locate and photograph the inner architecture of American popular music.
- “Pointe” her most recent project, for which she has photographed the worn toe shoes of prima ballerinas in extreme closeup presented at a heroic scale.
- “Stage” in which classical theater interiors anticipate the curtain rising as the show begins, or falling as it ends.
- “Tour” which considers the worlds of live performance and fandom.
- “Ghost Light” featuring images Bitner made in the emptied streets of her hometown, New York City, over the 77 days of lockdown in 2020.

Explains Adler, “Rhona has the distinction of being the only artist to be included in three group exhibitions at the Wellin. With this one-person survey, our audiences will gain a deeper understanding of the breath of her photographic practice through the display of several series from the last thirty years. What I admire about Rhona is that she has continued to grow and explore as an artist throughout her creative career, and now she is finally receiving the recognition her work deserves.”

“Her photographs transcend the archive to attain a deeper and personal connection to the spaces, people, and objects she photographs,” continues Adler. “As an artist, she follows her own passions, and it has led her to many places to tell many stories. She has often remarked that her images are about ‘what is there and what’s implied.’ Those implications are for each of us to discern, drawing from our personal experiences and individual journeys. She is sharing—often in exquisite detail—what she has found along the way in the hope that we connect with her subjects on our own terms.”

Adds Bitner “I am grateful to Tracy Adler and the Wellin Museum for their unfailing support and faith in my work over the past years, and I am honored by the recognition they extend with this exhibition. With the opportunity to see a broad selection of my projects I hope viewers will be able to imagine themselves within the spaces and situations the work depicts, and that the photographs will spark their own memories and experiences. This synergy is the pulse of the work.”

### **About Rhona Bitner**

Rhona Bitner (b. 1960, New York City; lives and works in New York City and Paris) has participated in exhibitions at Galerie Italienne, Paris (2022); the Daegu Photo Biennial, South Korea (2018); Fondation Bru, Venice (2017); Musée du Louvre, Paris (2015); and Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2012), among other institutions in the US and abroad. Her book *Listen* was published by Rizzoli in 2022. Bitner’s work is in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida; Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, Clinton, NY; the Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville; Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum, California State University, Long Beach; Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris; Fonds national d’Art contemporain, Paris; Centre national des arts plastiques, Paris; and Bibliothèque nationale de France. Bitner is the recipient of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2020), New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Photography (2010), and has been an artist-in-residence at Ucross Foundation, Clearmont, Wyoming (2019) and the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program,

New York (2010). She is currently a fellow at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts in New York. Bitner received a BS degree in studio art from New York University.

### **Listen: The Stages and Studios That Shaped American Music**

*Listen: The Stages and Studios That Shaped American Music* is a book of photographs by Rhona Bitner, published by Rizzoli New York, 2022, with a forward by Iggy Pop, afterword by Jason Moran, and texts by Natalie Bell, Greil Marcus, Jon Hammer, edited by Éric Reinhardt. Hardcover / 272 pages / 9.5" x 10.25" / 300 color and b&w photographs and illustrations.

Prompted by the closing of New York's famed CBGB, Rhona Bitner embarked on a thirteen-year journey to photograph 395 venues across twenty-six states and eighty-nine cities—the studios, concert halls, arenas, high schools, bars, ballrooms, prisons, and fields where the most memorable songs were inspired, recorded, performed, and listened to. Featuring Jimi Hendrix's recording studio, Elvis's Graceland music room, Aretha Franklin's family church, the Georgia auditorium where fourteen-year-old Little Richard was discovered and Ray Charles, Otis Redding, James Brown, and Sam Cooke took the stage, and the high school where a young Bob Dylan first performed, While Bitner recorded these sites empty and silent, the reverberations of fabled tunes still echo from within their walls.

"Bitner's photographs give us a phantom history of American sound from Duke Ellington to the White Stripes, but what you hear depends on the room tone within your own mind." – Jeff Gordinier, New York Times, December 2022

### **About the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art**

A teaching museum on the campus of Hamilton College in Clinton, NY, the Wellin invites visitors to discover the arts and form unexpected connections through groundbreaking exhibitions, a globally representative collection, and engaging programming. The Wellin Museum opened in 2012 with Tracy L. Adler as its founding director. Its 30,537-square-foot building was designed by Machado Silvetti and features a 27-foot-high visible archive, over 5,000 square feet of exhibition space, and other amenities that foster common exchange and learning. The Museum collection includes over 7,000 objects representing a broad range of cultures, historical periods, artistic practices, and movements. Through its exhibitions, public programs, and educational outreach, the Museum promotes interdisciplinary approaches that are vital to a liberal arts education. <https://www.hamilton.edu/wellin>

The Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art's programs are made possible, in part, with funds from the Daniel W. Dietrich '64 Arts Museum Programming Fund; the Johnson-Pote Museum Director Fund; the John B. Root '44 Exhibition Fund; the Edward W. and Grace C. Root Endowment Fund; and the William G. Roehrick '34 Lecture Fund. Additional support for this exhibition has been provided by the Daniel W. Dietrich '64 Fund for Innovation in the Arts.

### **Social Media**

Join the conversation on social media by tagging @wellinmuseum and using the hashtags #WellinMuseum, #BitnerWellin, and #ResoundWellin

### **Full Image Caption:**

Rhona Bitner, *94-114-CNAC*, 1994, from the "Circus" series, 1993–2001

Fujiflex print mounted on aluminum

8 x 10 in. (20.3 x 25.4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist ©Rhona Bitner / ADAGP, Artist's Rights Society, New York

**Media Contact:** Meg Blackburn, [meg@blackburncreative.com](mailto:meg@blackburncreative.com)