



## Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology

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### Deborah Luster Named

### 2015 Robert Gardner Fellow in Photography

**(March 5, 2015, Cambridge)** The Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, is pleased to announce the selection of the 2015 Robert Gardner Fellow in Photography. Following an international search, the Gardner Fellowship committee awarded the Fellowship to American photographer **Deborah Luster**. The Fellowship carries a \$50,000 stipend to begin or complete a proposed project followed by publication of a book.

Deborah Luster is best known for her photography of prisoners incarcerated in Louisiana. Ten years after the murder of her mother, Luster was one of a group of photographers funded by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities to document the state's northeastern parishes; she found and photographed the East Carroll Parish Prison Farm and then spent the next five years photographing at three Louisiana prisons. Allowed to present themselves as they wished, Luster produced images as wallet-sized photographs that she gave to the inmates (some 25,000 prints) and tin types for gallery display and publication in *One Big Self*:

*“Louisiana incarcerates more of its population than any other state in the Union. The United States incarcerates more of its population than any other country in the free world.”*

—Deborah Luster, *One Big Self*

*Prisoners of Louisiana* (with poet C.D. Wright, Twin Palms Publishers). The *New York Times* named *One Big Self* as one of the top ten photography books of 2003.



St. Gabriel, Louisiana  
doc # 335957  
dob. 8.23.63  
pob. Mississippi  
sentence. 4 years  
3 children  
work. housekeeping



Zelphea Adams  
doc # 404954  
dob 12. 19. 71  
pob New Orleans  
sentence. 25 years  
3 children  
work. housekeeping

Mardi Gras Parade

Luster followed this work with an examination of contemporary and historical homicide sites in New Orleans. Published in large format, *Tooth for an Eye: A Chorography of Violence in Orleans Parish* (2011), Luster presents the images with the bare facts of violence. According to independent curator and arts writer Merry Foresta, "..., by approaching cityscapes through a disorienting context of homicide, the work leaves the particular incident—killings, killer storms, disintegrating city (which would make the entire project sink into commonplace horror)—and instead concentrates on the signs, graffiti, architectural whimsy that trace human effect. In the best of the images there is a combination of chance and choice that creates a kind of sympathetic testament to hope. Overall, the archive suggests permanence of culture in the face of overwhelming loss."



Luster presents the images with the bare facts of violence: the place, the date, the victims and their ages, the injury, the crime. “1000 North Claiborne Avenue, Roosevelt’s Black Pearl. September 9, 2004. Johnny “Lee” Stovall (53,) William “Bill” Lindsey (41), Glenda Lockett (45), Diana Variste (48). Multiple gunshot and stab wounds. Restaurant robbery.”

Luster was then offered an opportunity to return to Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola and photograph a Passion Play to be performed by inmates from Angola and Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women in St. Gabriel.

Building on her deep experience in and connections with officials and inmates in Louisiana, for her Fellowship year, Deborah Luster continues her investigation of violence, place, and prison, with a study of Angola as place. Angola lies on 18,000 acres of the lower Mississippi valley first inhabited by Mastodons and later the Tunica Tribe; it takes its name from the antebellum Angola plantation that produced cotton and sugar cane and served as a slave-breeding farm. The site of the prison has been witness to slavery, Civil War, Reconstruction, Black Codes, convict leasing, Jim Crow, the Trustee System, segregation and mass incarceration. She proposes to spend her Fellowship year documenting Angola’s year-round schedule: the archaeological sites, the

Portage of the Cross, the Mississippi prison dock, antebellum structures, inmates in the fields, the prison structures and signage, Death Row, and other locations.

Deborah Luster (1951– ) lives and works in New Orleans, Louisiana and Galway, Ireland. Her work is held in major collections throughout the United States including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the Smithsonian, Washington, DC. She has been the recipient of numerous awards for her photography including the Dorothea Lange–Paul Taylor Prize, Center for Documentary Studies, Duke University (2000); the Baum Award for Emerging American Photographers (2001); the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (2013); and the Michael P. Smith Memorial Award for Documentary Photography, Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (2015). Luster is represented by the Jack Shainman Gallery in New York City.

### **About the Robert Gardner Fellowship in Photography**

The Fellowship funds an “established practitioner of the photographic arts to create and subsequently publish through the Peabody Museum a major book of photographs on the human condition anywhere in the world.” The Fellowship committee invites nominations from experts around the world; nominees are reviewed and selected by a committee of four. The Fellowship provides a stipend of \$50,000, and is unique in its dedication to funding professional documentary photography.

The Fellowship was given by Robert Gardner, award-winning documentary filmmaker and author, whose works have entered the permanent canon of non-fiction filmmaking. Gardner’s works include the documentary films “Dead Birds” and “Forest of Bliss” and books *The Impulse to Preserve: Reflections of a Filmmaker* and *Making Dead Birds: Chronicle of a Film*. In the 1970s Gardner produced and hosted “Screening Room,” a series of more than one hundred 90-minute programs on independent and experimental filmmaking. The series, considered an invaluable historical record of modern cinema, has been transferred to digital format for archival preservation by The Paley Center for Media in New York City. Robert Gardner received Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees from Harvard University and was director of the Film Study Center from 1957 to 1997. He was also founder and long-time director of the Carpenter Center

for Visual Arts and taught the Visual Arts at Harvard for almost 40 years. Gardner is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. His most recent book is *Just Representations* (Peabody Museum Press and Studio7Arts 2010), a collection of Gardner's short prose pieces about film and anthropology. In April 2013, Robert Gardner was awarded the James Smithson Bicentennial Medal by the Smithsonian Institution. He passed away in 2014.

### **Robert Gardner Fellowship Recipients**

**2007 Guy Tillim** (South Africa). Tillim's Fellowship took him to five African countries, documenting grand colonial architecture and how it has become part of a contemporary African stage. An exhibition of his Fellowship work, *Avenue Patrice Lumumba*, was shown at the Peabody Museum in 2009, and was published in *Avenue Patrice Lumumba* (Peabody Museum Press and Prestel, 2009).

**2008 Dayanita Singh** (India). Singh's Fellowship work began as a visual diary and later evolved into "photographic fiction." Her Fellowship work was shown in the 2011 Peabody Museum exhibition *House of Love*, and was published in a book of the same name by Peabody Museum Press and Radius Books.

**2009 Alessandra Sanguinetti** (USA/Argentina). Sanguinetti continued a multi-year profile of two girls living in rural Argentina and their wider social networks for a project called, "The Life That Came."

**2010 Stephen Dupont** (Australia). Dupont created a study of cultural erosion as well as a celebration of the Melanesian people in *Stephen Dupont: Papua New Guinea Portraits and Diaries*, currently on view in the Peabody Museum. A companion two-volume publication, *Piksa Niugini*, was published by Peabody Museum Press and Radius Books (2013).

**2011 Miki Kratsman** (Israel). Kratsman continued a project begun years ago to create a portfolio of photographs that explore how the medium of photography can be used to turn an ordinary moment in a person's life into a suspect one. Kratsman presents Palestinians as targets as though viewed from the perspective of a soldier; as *shahids* or martyrs as portrayed on neighborhood posters or placards; and as "wanted men." His volume, *The Resolution of the Suspect* (Radius and Peabody Museum Press), is due out Fall 2015.

**2013 Yto Barrada** (Morocco/France) Barrada is working on “A Hole is to Dig,” which engages the complex terrain of paleontology in her native Morocco. Barrada is exploring the topic from multiple human perspectives, from scientists, museums, and cultural heritage professionals, to those who collect fossils, and those who plunder and forge them.

**2014 Chloe Dewe Mathews** (United Kingdom) is documenting the lives of people who live on the shores of the Caspian region, examining their relationship to the resource-rich but volatile lands either side of the sea.

### **About the Peabody Museum**

The Peabody Museum is among the oldest archaeological and ethnographic museums in the world with one of the finest collections of human cultural history found anywhere. It is home to superb materials from Africa, ancient Europe, North America, Mesoamerica, Oceania, and South America in particular. In addition to its archaeological and ethnographic holdings, the Museum’s photographic archives, one of the largest of its kind, hold more than 500,000 historical photographs, dating from the mid-nineteenth century to the present and chronicling anthropology, archaeology, and world culture.

**Location:** The Peabody Museum is located at 11 Divinity Avenue in Cambridge. The Museum is a short walk from the Harvard Square MBTA station. **Hours:** 9 A.M. to 5 P.M., seven days a week. The Museum is closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day. **Admission** is \$12 for adults, \$10 for students and seniors, \$8 for children, 3–18. Free with Harvard ID or Museum membership. The Museum is free to Massachusetts residents Sundays, 9 A.M. to noon, year round, and Wednesdays from 3 P.M. to 5 P.M. (September to May). Admission includes entry to the Harvard Museum of Natural History. For more information call 617-496-1027 or go online to: [www.peabody.harvard.edu](http://www.peabody.harvard.edu).

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To view more images of Deborah Luster’s previous work: [www.deborahluster.com](http://www.deborahluster.com)