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## Suspended Moments

### Photographs from the David S. Rosen Collection

by Stephanie Douglass

From the January, 2015 issue

There's nothing like children to make us wish that life had a pause button. With their tendency to disappear in crowds or climb worryingly high trees or simply grow up, kids

embody both the chaos we'd like to forestall and the delight we'd like to savor. As for some parents I know, they just need a sec to stop and catch their breath.

We are given this chance to linger awhile and take in the richness of childhood in the UMMA exhibit *Suspended Moments: Photographs from the David S. Rosen Collection*. In more than two dozen black-and-white photographs, the exhibit presents us with a range of subjects—boy and girl, urban and rural, preschool through adolescent. There are images of discovery, joy, and anxiety captured by remarkable photographers including Dawoud Bey, Helen Levitt, Bruce Davidson, and Sally Mann.

*Suspended Moments* pays tribute to the late David Rosen, a photographer and collector who left the UMMA a bequest of more than 150 photographs in 2013. Rosen was also a U-M Medical School faculty member and pediatrician specializing in the treatment of adolescent eating disorders. He clearly understood the complexities of being young, and his own photographs in the exhibit demonstrate his artistic gift for capturing nuanced expressions. In *Becky and Craig, Chicago* (1995), an adolescent girl rests her cheek on the head of a boy embracing her. She wears an inscrutable look on her face and makes unflinching eye contact with the camera. Her gaze imparts the confidence of both an invitation and a dare.

There are moments of wonder, such as *Fireflies* (1992), Keith Carter's photo of two boys standing in a swamp and peering into a large jar. There are moments of vulnerability, such as Rita Bernstein's *Michaela and Collin* (1998), in which a boy aims a bow and arrow (plunger-tipped) at the head of an unsuspecting girl. And there is the moment that reveals a stark reality in Bruce Davidson's *Black Americans (Girl with Doll)* (1962), of a

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black girl in a torn dress styling the thick, blond curls of her doll.

Also on display are a few photographs of still lifes and landscapes by Billie Mercer, Michael Kenna, Howard Bond, and Ansel Adams, who each explore the play of light, fog, and shadows on trees and fruit. In Mercer's *Dancing Pears* (1997), a cluster of pears with long stems and firm skin is illuminated from the side so that each fruit is half swallowed by shadow; the pears evoke the earthy, grounded expressiveness of a modern dance troupe. The only shortcoming of these photographs is their placement, like an afterthought, at the end of the exhibit. Those beguiling kids are a tough act to follow.

The exhibit runs through February 15. [AAO](#)

[Originally published in January, 2015.]

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