ALMINE RECH

Don't Forget to Call Your Mother

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At a time when photographs are primarily shared and saved digitally, many artists are returning to the physicality of snapshots in an album or pictures in an archive as a source of inspiration. Drawing its title, Don't Forget to Call Your Mother, from a photograph by Italian provocateur Maurizio Cattelan, the exhibition consists of works in The Met collection from the 1970s to today that reflect upon the complicated feelings of nostalgia and sentimentality that these objects conjure, while underlining the power of the found object.

Among the featured artists is Sadie Barnette, for whom photographs provide a portal to illuminate the forgotten history of the first Black-owned gay bar in San Francisco and her own father's life as her 2022 work Photo Bar powerfully illustrates. Like Barnette, many of the artists in the exhibition seek to fortify the legacy of family histories, to emphasize the importance of intergenerational relationships, and to consider the ways in which knowledge and respect for the past can inform our current moment. Some artists such as Sophie Calle and Larry Sultan explore their own narratives to reveal the construction of desire, while others including Taryn Simon and Hank Willis Thomas examine histories that have shaped cultural and political dialogue. For some, including Darrel Ellis who utilized family pictures to negotiate the trauma of police violence, the personal is political. Deploying various strategies, these artists consider how a collection of images—like a talisman or an altarpiece—build relationships across time and can transform our understanding of the present.

The exhibition is made possible by Joyce Frank Menschel.