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Contact: Rachel Somma  
Communications Manager  
75 Stuyvesant Place, Staten Island, NY 10301  
P: 718.483.7117  
[RSomma@StatenIslandMuseum.org](mailto:RSomma@StatenIslandMuseum.org)

**For Immediate Release**

## **The Civil War Pinhole Project - Photographs by Michael Falco charge onto the scene at the Staten Island Museum**

*Opening April 25, 2015*

**Event Date:** Saturday, April 25, 2015 Opening Reception

**Time:** 2:00pm– 4:00pm

**Location:** Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Place, SI, NY 10301

**Admission:** Free with Museum Admission

(Staten Island, NY – April 1, 2015) The Staten Island Museum, whose mission it is to explore the dynamic connections between art and history is at it again with their most recent exhibition, ***The Civil War Pinhole Project - Photographs by Michael Falco***. Falco's commitment to American stories and passion for Civil War history led him on a four-year battlefield to battlefield journey along the anniversary tracks of the American Civil War- 150 years later. The project, which began in 2011, has been recognized by the Library of Congress and accepted into the National Archive.



*150th anniversary of the Battle of Chancellorsville, Va. Photograph by Michael Falco. 2013*

Falco is, admittedly, a Yankee from Staten Island, but his boyhood fascination with the Civil War and his skill as a creative photographer have come together to capture a unique view of the past. This project connects historic landscapes, the large format pinhole camera process, and the descendants who painstakingly commemorate the battles of their ancestors. The issues of time, place, war, and perhaps the largest and most elaborate generational "performance art" activities in the country are captured on the historic Civil War Battlefields. Following the timeline of the "War Between the States" the images culminate in a grand poetic commemoration of the Civil War Sesquicentennial.

*"It's been an arduous and exhilarating trek across landscapes that remain, preserved by virtue of their terrible history, very much as they were 150 years ago—oases now from modernity, pristine and scarred as the great war left them, hallowed and haunting. The past is present on these battlefields," Falco explains.*

The loss of life and destruction during the Civil War was marked by these battles, generally near small towns with abundant fields. In Falco's four-year travels he traversed the hallowed grounds of Shiloh in Tennessee, Antietam in Maryland, Vicksburg in Mississippi, Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, and Manassa, Chancellorsville and the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. The blood spilled on these battlefields into the grass, knolls, and creeks sets them apart from modern development of the last century and a half.

What began as a strictly landscape project evolved once Falco had the chance to meet and photograph some of the reenactors, many of whom were walking in the footsteps of their great, great grandfathers', both Union and Confederate. Some even sporting original family uniforms.

*"Their uniforms brought a cohesion to the image ...rendering them as 'every soldier.' This image also introduced period characters into the 19th century landscape I was marveling at...Standing on the sidelines with the pinhole cameras watching and photographing thousands of reenactors as they participated in this event was a revelation," said Falco. "Seeing the war from the 'soldier's perspective' began to fascinate me." Leaning as he went, Falco eventually opted to don the period garb.*

### **Time through a Pinhole**

Falco's choice to shoot each image with a pinhole camera is significant. His set of seven wooden boxes, in various sizes and f-stops, were mostly designed by his brother Henry. Compared to modern cameras the pin-hole variety is a non-machine without a lens, viewfinder, or mechanics. Primitive even at the time of the Civil War, the pin-hole camera requires a tripod to achieve sharp focus, patience and a careful composing, and a little bit of luck.

There is no photoshopping or retouching. Disposed towards modesty, Falco shares,

*"I use my instincts and pray."*

What the artist senses, the pinhole sees. The camera's tiny, fixed aperture creates a soft, infinite focal plane—a canvas where details are obscured. The minuscule amount of light entering the camera requires a long exposure time that pushes the images into the ambiguous terrain between landscape and dreamscape. And so too, Falco's research into the Civil War soldiers' journals and memoirs describe the battlefields as dreamlike, and that is how they appear through the eye of the pinhole camera.

### **About Michael Falco**

Michael Falco is a freelance photographer who has worked for a number of publications including, the National Geographic, The New York Times, Harper's Bazaar, and W Magazines.

His first book, "Along Martin Luther King Travels on Black America's Main Street", published by Random House in 2003, is a collection of photographs spanning two years documenting life along streets named after Dr. Martin Luther King in America.

The Museum of Modern Art purchased one of his panoramic images of the Fresh Kills Landfill for its exhibit, "Groundswell: Constructing the Contemporary Landscape" 2005.

Selected by the New York City Art Commission he installed a 10 x 28 foot glass mural for the newly renovated Staten Island Ferry Terminal in September 2007.

In 2009, published, "Caddell Dry Dock: 100 Years Harborside", museum press, a chronicle of one of the last remaining ship repair yards in New York Harbor. An exhibit of the same name was mounted at the Noble Maritime Collection. His photographs are also in the collection of the Staten Island Museum, where his work was integral to the 2007 exhibition, "This Was Our Paradise, Spanish Camp: 1929 – Today".

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### **About the Staten Island Museum**

Founded in 1881 and celebrating its 134<sup>th</sup> year, the Staten Island Museum, New York City's only general interest museum, engages visitors with interdisciplinary exhibitions and educational programs that explore the dynamic connections between natural science, art, and history based on its diverse collections. The Museum serves over 219,000 adults and school children at the Museum and in the community. Located two blocks from the Ferry Terminal, visitors can embark on a voyage through time in the Staten Island Ferry exhibit; see rocks glow in the dark in the Hall of Natural Sciences; and experience the lives of Staten Island's first inhabitants. In Building H on the Snug Harbor Campus, visitors can explore the latest exhibitions in the History Center Gallery, or make a research appointment for the History Archives & Library. Staten Island Museum is owned by the City of New York and benefits from public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. For current exhibits, visit [StatenIslandMuseum.org](http://StatenIslandMuseum.org).

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### **Visitor Information**

#### **Staten Island Museum (St. George)**

75 Stuyvesant Place

#### **Hours:**

Monday – Friday: 11:00am – 5:00pm

Saturday: 10:00am – 5:00pm

Sunday: 12:00pm – 5:00pm

#### **History Center & Archives**

1000 Richmond Terrace, Snug Harbor, Bldg H

#### **Hours:**

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 10:00pm – 4:00pm

By appointment only.

Contact Cara Dellatte at 718.483.7122

#### **Universal Accessibility**

#### **Recommended Admission**

Adults \$5.

Students & Seniors \$3.

Members & Children under 12 FREE

#### **History Gallery Hours**

Tuesday – Friday: 1:00pm – 4:00pm

FREE