

# Education Night

Tuesday, September 27, 2016, 7pm  
Community Room, Five Star Residence

## Taking Your Picture Finding your Style; Finding your Subject

by Leah Bendavid-Val



I write and edit photography books. I'm interested in how photography shapes reality, how photographs work when juxtaposed and in sequences to enrich a subject and tell a layered story, and how words and photographs can enlarge each other (and why they don't always). I find the possibilities for photo books endless. I love all the ways to collaborate – with photographers, with designers, and with researchers.

My most recent book, published in Fall 2015 by Prestel in cooperation with the Library of Congress, tells the story of a unique photo collective and its mission to photograph America. The name of the collective, *Facing Change: Documenting America*, is the title of the book.

Prestel also published *SIBERIA: In the Eyes of Russian Photographers* (October 2013). For this book I compared photographs of Siberia by Russians with photos by outsiders and I considered the implications of the differences and similarities. My book and accompanying exhibition allowed me to bring Russian photographs made between the 1860s and 2011 to public awareness in the U.S. for the first time.

My other books include *Song Without Words*, the photographs and diaries of Leo Tolstoy's wife, Sophia; *Propaganda & Dreams*, photography made

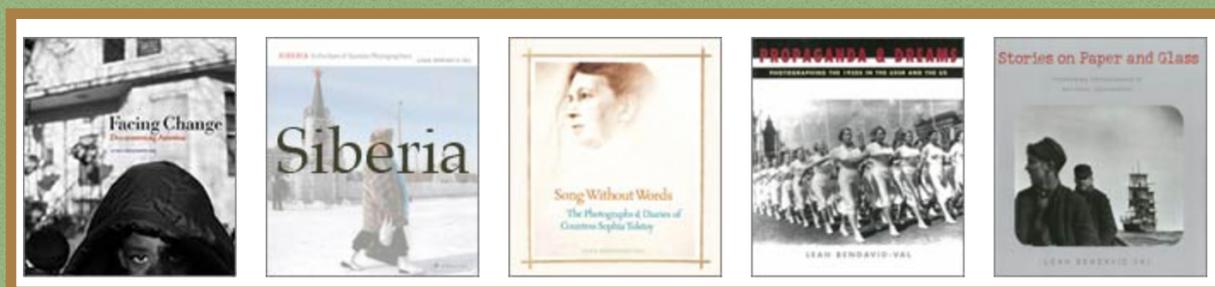
in the U.S.S.R. compared with photographs made in the U.S. during the 1930s; and *Stories on Paper & Glass*, a history of National Geographic photography spanning more than a century.

I was Director of Photography Publishing for National Geographic Books from 1990 through 2009. In 2010 I was invited to join the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars as a Senior Scholar. I spent three years there doing historical research for my Siberia project.

Among the many books I edited for National Geographic, two made the New York Times Best Seller list: *Image Collection* (2009) and *Through the Lens* (2000).

I curated exhibitions for the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC, the Pushkin Museum of Art, Moscow, and the American University Museum of Art, Washington, D.C.

There is a lot of important photography being done now, a lot out there to care about. I'm influenced by what I see online and in print and, personally, in the photography bookmaking workshops I teach.  
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Leah Bendavid-Val is former Director of Photography Publishing, National Geographic Books, and a Senior Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. She is the author of seven books on photography.