

Untitled from the "Plant Forms" series

(Sunflower)

Date
c. 1931-1937

Primary Maker
Silvia Saunders

Medium
Gelatin silver print

Description
Silvia Saunders—a daughter of Arthur Percy Saunders, longtime professor of chemistry and dean of Hamilton College—was an important cultural presence on the Hill. In 1925, after graduating from Radcliffe College, she worked in New York City as a commercial artist. At the onset of the Great Depression, in 1930, she returned to Clinton and began to make photographs of her father’s famous hybrid peonies. She went on to create an extensive series of images of plant life. She also took a large-format (5-by-7-inch) camera into the countryside surrounding Clinton, where she recorded elements of the landscape along with cemeteries and dilapidated buildings. In 1933, Saunders and her fellow up-and-coming photographer Walker Evans traveled to Saratoga Springs, New York, for a day of shooting. Her resulting pictures of the United States Hotel were published in 1934 in Lincoln Kirstein’s Hound and Horn, a short-lived avant-garde literary journal. Saunders returned to New York City around 1935, freelancing as a photographer for such magazines as Vogue (1936) and House and Garden (1937–40). These assignments took her to Mexico, France, and Great Britain. In 1947, she moved to New Mexico before returning, in 1951, to Clinton, where she remained until the end of her life. The Wellin Museum holds a collection of nearly one hundred of Saunders’s photographs, all of which were donated in 1969 by Grace Root, H1952, the widow of Edward W. Root, Class of 1905, H1952, or by the artist herself, three years after the Emerson Gallery mounted an exhibition of her work. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017)

Dimensions
Image: 4 5/8 × 6 5/8 in. (11.7 × 16.8 cm) Sheet: 4 15/16 × 6 15/16 in. (12.5 × 17.6 cm)