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RAY METZKER: PHOTOGRAPHY AS LIFE
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GEOFF WINNINGHAM: IN THE BEGINNING
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Or "Why not image," the former name of this magazine? What happened to it? Well, how were we to know, when we were naming the magazine a couple of years ago, that it would develop into such an obvious Northeastern institution? George Eastman House — had been using the name on its magazine for decades. The idea that they had it long enough, and now it was our turn, didn't wash. We had to change the name. But what to? Afterimage? Nice, but it’s in use by Nathan Lyons on his magazine (which he started when he left the aforementioned Image). AfterAfterimage? PostAfterimage? Images? With an "a"? Totally different name, right? Or should it be something completely different? Like X, or P? On the other hand, what about View, Insight, Critical Dialogue, Percep-
tivity, and so forth! Then on a sunny summer afternoon during a full in the Small Art Print Symposium going on here at Diverse Works Ed Hil and I began talking about the name over a pitcher of beer. Ed, who is half of the dynamic photographic duo known to the world as MAN, remembered a similar problem in some-
thing held once involved with and they wound up calling the thing Spot. I thought that was pretty funny.

This didn’t necessarily go down very well around the Houston Center for Photography, which publishes the mag-
zine. Consequently, an emergent emergency meeting name meeting before the very last one produced worse and worse names. At the last meeting, when SPOT had be-
en a near certainty, one more name came out that turned out to be the name of a new magazine from Dallas that was sitting in a stack on the table right in front of us. It was SPOT in a landscape. With the speed of light, Michael Thomas and Peter Boyle went to work on the new logo, Peter came up with a beautiful letter, BB. But BB looked like a perfect, solid, block circle. I showed it to Charles Schone, who is to my knowl-
edge the most accomplished designer associated with the HCP (having said that, I hope it’s true, we have over 500 members now, after all). He went ber-
serk. He hated the name, and he didn’t understand what all those letters were doing on either side of that terrific spot. He started sketching and then we pulled the s and t off the board, and voilà! The Spot. Nice.

But a magazine without a name? What about librarians? What if people call it DIO? Or BOOB? At the panic grew, Schone, who is not only imaginative, but very persuasive, led us through the Logic of This spot like a massaging, smoothing errant muscles. As we were capillating, we asked if we could have the word spot in little tiny letters way down at the bottom. For librarians, Sure, why not, he said. And at that moment the design of the whole magazine was born. Lots of little tiny letters.

Actually, the design wasn’t quite that simple. Thanks are due to Leah Hoffman, who guided us through the bewilding job of choosing a new typeface for the general text. And special thanks are due to Michael Thomas, who stayed with the project all the way through and insisted on simplicity and elegance, and finally helped us through to the first of this new, improved Image, now SPOT.

— Dave Crosley

SHARING RESOURCES
When strong forces in the art world slip into the hands of visionaries, it seems a terrible waste not to share them in some way with the photographic community. Bart Parker and Rita DeWitt were in Houston briefly in June. The duration of their stay allowed only for necessities: including showing work to galleries, where interest in viewing anything portentous ran from churlish to ethus-
astic (to my horror, some galleries aren’t even looking at new work). Their visit raises the issue of being able to generate honoraria and short notice gatherings. Parker and DeWitt are articulate and eloquent spokespersons for their work, and the ability to commu-
nicate the way the mind sees carries over into talk about the work of others. I benefitted enormously from the hours spent talking, examining, perceiving beyond topical commentary. The lesson is simple: some resources are too valuable to ignore. Provisions for spontaneous events must be established in every city, perhaps via a pre-arranged network of geometrically progressive phasing, if at all possible, a plan should be emergency before the weight of another visit, pre-
cended by little advance notice, is wasted.

— April Roper

We welcome comments and arguments about everything. Write, if you are so moved, SPOT, H44 West Aldridge, Houston 77006.
STABLE MARKET FOR PHOTOGRAPHS AT AUCTION

People who invested in stocks and collected some photographs in 1982 may be finding that their photographs are worth a lot more now than stocks. According to The Photograph Collector's Comparative Auction Index, photographs brought five percent less at auction this spring than last, but the prices seem to have settled after the big drop between the mild spring of 1980 and the subsequent crash that ended in the spring of 1983.

The index was designed to be compared to the Dow Jones Industrial Average and is issued semiannually. It uses a "market basket" of twenty-five auction print prices to track the strength of the photography market. Included are works by Ansel Adams, Arbus, Stettler, Edward S. Curtis, Irving Penn, and Berenice Abbott. A key dem in the index is Ansel Adams' Moonrise, which fetched $3,000.00 more at Christie's this spring than it did last fall.

An interesting facet of Abra-ham Lincoln sold by Winter Associates, of Plainville, Connecticut, sold for $2,500. It was included in the index, but if that same print had been at Sotheby's or Christie's, which are included in the survey, the index would have surpassed the 1980 high. However, said Robert S. Persky, publisher of The Photograph Collector, "The market is solid, but it is not as euphoric as to be compared with that of the 1979-1980 sales."

What will happen in the fall is anybody's guess, now that the J. Paul Getty Museum, of Malibu, California, has announced that it recently acquired nine major collections, including those of Sam Wagstaff and the 19th-century photographer. The total price of all the prints in the initial Getty buy is believed to be between $20 million and $30 million. The acquisitions budget of the Getty is the largest in the world, and Persky believes it's entry into the collecting of fine art photography will be a test for the market needs to carry it to new highs.

CLOUDS WITH DEPTH

Frank Davis is one of our basic artists and photographers. He is the one who brought art to science and technology. For Davis, this has been a nearly perfect marriage and has resulted in a set of photographs

the likes of which he claims the world has never seen before. It occurred to Davis some time ago that people had never seen clouds in three dimensions. "No human being can see distant clouds, or any distant object for that matter, in depth," he says. The average two-and-one-half inch spacing between a human being's eyes limits the parallax effect, by which we can perceive depth, to a relatively short distance, no more than a hundred yards or so. Much greater paral-

lax is required to see far objects in depth."

So Davis took his cameras, gear, and help - including photog-

rapher/architect John Lee Simon and Anthony Foundation President, Patricia Robinson to the Eastern Coast of the Yucatán to photograph clouds in serious 3-D. Ekacteria transparencies were exposed in two Hasselblad cameras placed approximately one mile apart. Synchronization of the two cameras required radio comm-

unication and was executed on voice command after the cameras had been focused and framed by sight description, compass head-

ing, and the common horizon. The two pieces of film must be exposed simultaneously to capture sharp images of moving objects, Davis says. "Clouds are particularly difficult because of their constant fluctuation. All the images were shot between five and six in the morning to take advantage of dramatic back-lighting and the early morning build-up of clouds which are common during the rainy season in the Caribbean.

The resulting pictures are most effectively seen as projections, viewed through polarized glasses, although they can be viewed in the old slide projector way as well. It is an astonishing experience to see clouds in 3-D for the first time. The closer one draws to the screen, the more the clouds seem to shift and move in the middle of the room.

The Anthony Foundation held a showing of the pictures in late summer and invited TV weather-

men and local forecasters con-

cerned with weather to see for the first time just how clouds work. None came.

THE RIGHT WAY TO DO PHOTOGRAPHY

Tired of being hopelessly conf-

used about the various rules and regulations of Contemporary Fine Art Photography, the members of the Houston Center for Photography will hold a day-long sym-

posium, Out of Sight & Out of Mind, this Saturday, November 28, from 6:30 to 9:30, at the Houston Center for Photography.

Guests at Frank Davis's cloud viewing

Dow Jones Index

The Photograph Collector's Cumulative Auction Index

3000

2500

2000

1500

1000

500

1975

1976

1977

1978

1979

1980

1981

1982

1983

1984

Photo Auction Index

Guests at Frank Davis's cloud viewing

Dow Jones Index

3000

2500

2000

1500

1000

500

1975

1976

1977

1978

1979

1980

1981

1982

1983

1984

Photo Auction Index

5

SPOT

VARIous NOTES

Carole Kornick has left Aperture. She is the person who actually had to oversee the editing and production of Aperture books. At one point last summer she was juggling seven-

new books at the same time, so her doctor suggested she cool off for a while to get rid of a chronic case of Sturm und Drang. Rumor has it that Aperture Guru Michael Hoffman is not the easiest person in the world to work for. Kornick told friends she had no plans except to rest and recuperate.

The last issue of this magazine contained a story about the making of a dye transfer and platinum series of portraits of The Best of NASA, which caught somebody's eye at Light Gallery in New York. Negotiations are under way for Light to represent the work, which is being produced by B3 Edelmann in Houston.

Art & Mammon: Houston's Foto Fest, a month of photography in the spring of 1986, continues to stir other moments. The fest's founders, Petra Benter and Fred Baldwin went to Paris this summer to show the organization that puts on the Paris month of photography. Baldwin says "New York" (not necessarily New York City) was trying to get the franchise, but the Paris group opted for Houston. And Hui is considering doing a biggest Photography work in the world on the theme of Paris for Paris and a Paris skyline for Houston.

David Portz has suspended work on a story about the move to plunge into the Guatemalan jungle in search of truth and Temples of Doom. While he sketches his glyphs, he's also planning to keep an eye out for the last few World's Weirdest Hippos in hopes of docu-

menting their penultimate demise.

Stephen Scheer will teach at Rice University's Media Center this fall with Geoff Winningham and Peter Brown. A former NEA Fellow, Scheer has taught at Yale, Cooper Union, and Pratt, and is known at various places including Kiva Gal-

lery,功力 photoed and published not long ago in the book New Work, New Color.

Taxes Gallery will show work by Cuyos Williams, Sally Gall, and Ed Sonneman, beginning October 23 and continuing until No-

vember 10.

Diverse Workings opening show six San Francisco Artists, will include work by photographer Steve Sel-

lers. The show runs from August 25 (opening at 7pm) to September 30. Diverse Works is at 214 Travis.

Fred Noonick will have an exhibi-

tion titled "Robert's Show" at the Alliance Francaise, 407 Main St., in Houston, running from October 4 at 7pm and runs through October 26.
People are seen today as wandering (if not lost) solitary figures, subject to a labyrinth of fancies, laboring under the imaginary quest for utopian freedom, afraid of their singularity (individualism), dependent on the now, and apprehensive of the future, stripped of charity, lamenting war but unable to live in peace.

I recognize the desire, the need to affirm. This requires reverence and a belief that there is purpose and meaning to our being. To make work and life meaningful is a struggle. Were we not to try, life would be sad and empty.

From the magnitude and intensity of the struggle comes the greatness we hope for.

I approach photography in the context of art, as a key to understanding. The need to make photographic images goes so deep that it is difficult to imagine doing anything else. Photography serves as the alter-ego, the "other" of my private dialogue. There is something in that light formed, silver-fixed image that causes me to respond with excitement.

Photography provides the means for speculation about meaning. I am not an objective reporter; I prefer to go further, to the unstated things of our existence. What I can't understand and grasp seems to lead me.

Art is man's action on commonplace material. To state something more than the material or the act, something must occur to make the object special. Just what that is and how it enters the work is always cause for wonder and endless speculation. Strong work startles us. We recognize the ingredients but we can hardly believe the result.

Something jumps, glows, fluctuates. It has tactility, flavor — so convincingly we say it is real.

Art must affirm. This is our treasure: our capacity to affirm human intelligence, sensitivity, inventiveness. Art is not a luxury; it is the clue for man's hope.

Somewhere in development the artist comes to a juncture with one path emphasizing self-importance and the other leading to passion concern for ideas. To follow the latter path calls for a divestiture of self, an emancipation, a drawing away from ego-centricity. That makes the going slower, more challenging. It becomes necessary to acknowledge the importance of honesty and forthrightness.

It is not a question of what one chooses to do, but how one does it; whether it is intellectual or emotional. But whether it is inventive, enriching, or calming. Does it touch central issues or play on peripheral issues?

Isn't the need to hold, to make visible, what we believe or wish to believe? The elusive search, the frustration of incompleteness or inadequacy, the failed attempt at seeing, catching, recognizing, knowing something that points to and reveals the nature or essence of our being — this attempt is an act by the artist: the artist is the message of that act.

Rage is about the world not being what it could be. The euphemism for this is passion. In the artist, it has to be more than anger; it has to be rage. The fire has to burn strong. What saves the artist is that he works cap the rage and channels it into something constructive.

If you have any intelligence, you realize that rage will destroy you, so you have to discover sweetness, to seek balance. Some things I point to but know not to dwell on them, for to dwell would be to sink and invite the viewer down. That is no solution and shows no sense of invention. Placing and yet playful, I am always conscious of those features.

The artist does not need to follow an event. Instead, he takes what is workable in his system of values and determines his own event, injecting and incorporating visual devices (confusing the space, eliminating detail, introducing ambiguity). The artist looks on objects and sensations as providing the raw material, and imposes a scheme upon it.

The artist dips holes to trip the viewer, climbing out is the act of participation. Sick work does not have the means to hold the viewer.

Photographic life alternates between periods of reflection and work. The questioning that goes on during reflection is — as it...
should be — unsettling. Working is the attempt to step off into space. The heat of intensity melts the bands of restraint.

Most significant work is the result of concentration, which implies a shedding of the non-essential. In the end, the mix of what remains gives character and meaning to the work.

There are a number of strong examples. Aaron Siskind's rocks and divers, Bill Brandt's nudes, Richard Misrach's cactiues, Arthur Simek's elongated landscapes, Marsha Burns' and Robert Motherwell's portraits. In each of these artists' series, look for the constants. Often you will see that they are obvious and simple. Then look for the way these constants have been worked, combined, added, and subtracted. Finally, consider the different meanings that result. Along the way, we discover how some small decision, a different attitude, maybe even an intrusion, adds a whole new dimension.

The more you are willing to invest in your work, the greater the clarity you will get in return.

Because daily living requires being positive, the tentativeness you have to maintain in working is formidable. For the sake of sanity we need certainty. To a great extent we fabricate and manipulate our lives to create new illusions of certainty. But working takes us into an area where we face uncertainty. Sometimes it's very frightening. Either courage or obsession brings us through. The toughest thing is to know when to be decisive and controlling and when to roll with the work and let it take over.

Often, as I am working, the developments inform me and that influences the next steps. Sometimes I want the work to do one thing but it proves unyielding and tells me to do something else.

As a creature in this world, I have to reach out and touch. That is a very deep motivation; to interact, to touch, to examine as a means of survival. Photography can take me out of the ordinary world.

Once I start touching, I start shifting. I begin to pull, trying to transform meanings.

Manipulation leads to discoveries. That which we retain is what we call our reality. That's what appears in the pictures. Without transformation, work would be a dull activity. Being cognizant of transformation, one senses the mystery and the joy of existence. All of our world has potential as material for our making. Excitement comes with seeing something in a new meaning that we previously either took for granted or overlooked. Imagination delights in leaps, change is cherished. Changing something into something else, something happens, we detect a spirit, elusive and fleeting, beyond the pale of knowing.

The elusive is what we seek. We seek it be it of the heart or the mind. The artist learns to live with uncertainty, for it is in meeting the unknown that spirit is exposed and tested.

Formalism implies gamership — how you move from A to B, how you capture the queen; it is separate from and only a container for the encoded life experience. What is contained is not always obvious — but that's part of the gamble.

Ultimately, the concern has to be for images with symbolic content. Frequently, encoded experience is the stuff for speculation.

From the series "New Mexico"

From the series "City Whispers"

"The artist digs holes to trip the viewer; climbing out is the act of participation. Slick work does not have the means to hold the viewer."

"The elusive is what we seek. It is of the heart or the mind. The artist learns to live with uncertainty, for it is in meeting the unknown that spirit is exposed and tested."
That images can affect us we can not deny, but how and why?

Eventually, one has to meet the notion of responsibility which is the point of all meaningful work. It is not enough, not fulfilling, to live the now as an isolated moment for the pleasure of self. Meaning grows when one begins to think of the future and the welfare of the collective.

The order of my working process: observation, questions, seeing the problem, concentration, obsessive examination.

The first part of the process is open ended, when I am scanning or simply looking. When I realize there are certain stimuli that keep responding to, that recour to my perceptual field, then I can begin to identify a pattern. What is really curious is how the clues appear in other areas such as what I am reading or discussing or noticing on the street.

The second part of the process then begins: structuring, I start to find myself of other elements, close the door around what I have. Then I begin to beat through to the decisive process, where playfulness becomes important, invention and play together. When it is finally time to invent, I am soaring.

A photograph seems to come on us on the wings of angels, it harbors magic. The unrelated assertion that photographs appear without antecedents, background and preparation which are the feet of serious work are overlooked.

Many artists and viewers are inclined to attribute to the artist powers of mastery which may exceed the fact. One of the fictions commonly cherished about photography is that images are made in a flash, a significant or great picture delivered with lightning speed. I like to refer to this as the Immutable Conception Theory.

It's easy to get lost if an aesthetic goes no further than technique or composition. It is something else to examine the work for the maker's concerns or values and how personal sensibilities are manifested. The self needs to be tested and new doors opened on the way to discovering the terms of personal aesthetic.

Many of those working in the medium are not taking the photograph beyond some kind of factual notation. Often, accompanying verbal description is far more exhaustive and animated than the photograph, which is an unconvincing visual experience. This kind of picture operates as a sign.

Art has other concerns. It must fit its way above the flood of overwhelming detail. It strives for larger meanings, it would peel away the husk from the seed. It is an embodiment of essences. Time and again I reject the self-consciousness that I find in so many photographs. It is more exercise to execute theories and follow prescribed methods, working each detail to the maximum, only to end up with a dead body. That the work will ultimately have a life of its own is the undeniable challenge of working.

Excitement is to be found in the suggested, in what the maximum of articulation can lead us to see. It is one thing to enhance the obvious; it is quite another to catch the elusive. Unnecessary detail is the death of a lot of photographs. The viewer can see and get involved with every detail, but the experience is only meaningful when there is work left for the imagination.

We are experiencing excessive traffic of the obvious, combination and recombination of expressions, adornment and embellishing knowns.

Today's snapshot genre of exploratory photography suffers from lack of imagination. The best that can be attributed to it is spontaneity. Conceptually it is a flat hat, something to which we are now thoroughly conditioned. The snapshot genre is weak, it is obsolete. The image is determined by little more than the presence of the photographer. More is revealed of the objects photographed than about the photographer, regardless of skill of the rendering.

Many of those photographers walking the streets, shooting from the hip, are interested in obtaining souvenirs. Their results indicate only change of time and place. The viewer is presented with things, but not things symbolic. As it occurs today, the snapshot is not pushing any frontier, it holds little power within the medium.

The key term is waste. Wasted time, wasted material, wasted effort, wasted people. Nothing depresses me more than human effort which results in nothing. I want to go in the other direction. Substance is my obsession.

Tragedy is failure in the face of possibility, the inability to communicate. For all the show of communication, the fact remains that one person does not fully understand any other. Tragedy is uncoached change, loss, or destruction accompanied by the belief that somehow it could have been prevented.

Other kinds of tragedy include:

- so much to give, but rejected
- preparing to do, but doing nothing
- aspiring to do good, but doing worse
- the attainable, unattained

Man-made barriers: duty, family, country, revolution, or boredom to hedonistic pleasure.

Antidote: nakedness/truth.

Work is of a constructive nature and requires ongoing attention. To be involved is a constant struggle to define and orchestrate a complex organism. It can be seen as an integrated activity.

Thoughts and decisions can take you deeper into quality. There is the dream of wanting to do something better and more meaningful with one's life and giving that dream form and a sense of order. When I look back, I see I was willing to gamble on the possibility of something better, that I could get just a little more nourishment if I made a decision.

The explanation of why we work is not simple. Some say: "I like beautiful things," or "I want to express myself," or "I know this about myself." I have to lay hands on, to seize and to build, to beat the stuff until it resonates.

I doubt if any work can really be called fun. Fun is the carefree and irresponsible, a light moment, a respite from our endurances. However, there is joy, full of body, which one encounters only from intense endeavor.

You stand out there with nothing on, with so much at risk. It is amazing that one proceeds, but one does.

If you are committed to working, you don't measure your successes by the rate or degree of acceptance. You make the work and people start looking and responding. In time, someone comes along who wants it. That is the natural process.
By Lynn McLanahan
Dianne Beii’s exhibition Works from ‘Various Fidjikuku Monsters’ and ‘Chambered Heads and Urban Cupids’ opens September 7 at the Houston Center for Photography

DIANNE BLELL. MODERN ROMANCE

As someone who looks at photographs all the time, it’s refreshing to be stunned by a photograph. I was first exposed to Dianne Beii’s work in an article in Newsweek that included a reproduction of her “Love Flying Saucer.” Quasi student, I was dazzled. The image is to use Beii’s own word, “loaded.” My next exposure to Dianne Beii was via the telephone to ask if I could see more of her work. When I hung up, I found myself stunned again. We had talked about Jupiter, makeup artists, warning gods, painted rocks, giants, ravines, and the kind of noses they need to have, and on and on. I was exhausted yet inspired by Beii’s energy and enthusiasm. The world depicted in Beii’s large Cibachrome prints is a world of dreams, ancient myths, modern angst, and whimsy. By recreating legends and ghost photographing them, Beii’s viewers are faced with the dilemma of reality vs. unreality. They are photograph, and what we see was actually there when she photographed the scene. Yet, as you take back and look again, her work looks like what we have come to expect from paint prints (old paintings), both in subject and composition. Dianne Beii’s work is like a dream, a scripted story, and we have come to expect from graphic novels (old paintings), both in subject and composition. Dianne Beii’s work is like a dream, a scripted story, and we have come to expect from graphic novels. Moreover, she has the ability to take a piece of paper and turn it into a work of art. Her methodical progress has led her to elaborate, splashes, and intricately romantic works.

Born in Los Angeles, Beii received her B.F.A. and M.F.A. from the San Francisco Art Institute. Her work has included theatrical gallery installations, slide projections, video pieces, and billboards. All of which fall into her conceptual scheme of “performance photography.” Her work began to focus more and more on fashion. Beii loves fashion; she has a background in it and had done some modeling and worked in the industry in retail outlets. She was drawn to incorporate fashion into her work because of the “impact” she feels it has on women. Borrowing clothes from fashion designers such as Oscar de la Renta, Mary McFadden, Nippon, and Fortuny, Beii set off on a series which she termed “Chambered Heads and Urban Cupids.”

“We don’t understand the world, but we see it in photographs. We see it in photographs. We see it in photographs.”

Young Woman Overtaken by Storm

Beii herself served as the model in carefully staged fashion dramas that, in their poses and settings, contain art historical references. Hair and makeup specialists as well as fashion photographers were used, and all participants are credited when the work is exhibited or reproduced. The first picture in “Young Woman Overtaken by Storm,” a series of three photographs, shows Beii, invested and powered by Mary McFadden, standing next to a supportive tree, arms raised up to a 19th century romantic painter Burne-Jones. Both Beii and tree are ravaged by nature as a roaring storm carries the eye to the final image where we find that the tree fared much better than Beii, her hair, her makeup, or her gown. Fleeting fashion is again alluded to in “Future Perfect” as Beii, gazed as a cupid in a La Caglaretto, gets her toes wet in the river surrounding Three Mile Island.

This series of socio-political fashion narratives led to Beii’s most recent series of works, which she calls Various Fabulous Monsters. She maintained her interest in the presence of the female form to evoke various re-visions of male and female reference. Her approach was to combined elements that have been borrowed from her personal collection and from other artists. The result is a series of images that are both humorous and serious. Beii’s work is a celebration of the female form and a critique of the way society has tried to control and limit it. She is interested in the power of imagery and the way it can be used to challenge traditional gender roles. Beii’s work is also a commentary on the ways in which we perceive beauty and desire. She uses these themes to explore the idea of beauty as a tool for control and how it can be used to manipulate and exploit people. Beii’s work is a way of redefining beauty and desiring in a way that is more empowering and less harmful. She is interested in the idea that beauty is not something that is given to us, but something that we create and shape for ourselves. She uses this idea to challenge the way we think about beauty and desire, and to encourage us to think more critically about the ways in which we define and experience them.
Because Biell’s work is about photography. Despite the fact that we are bombarded with set-up photographic images everyday, particularly in advertising, we still tend to want to believe that what we see in photographs is real. And, with photography, Biell can bring her zany world to life. “The photograph can provide reality that doesn’t exist at all. How else could I make cupids fly in the air? The legend is recreated. It’s really happening. It’s different from painting. Painting removes it: painting comes directly from the mind onto the canvas and therefore it’s still fictional, it’s liquid.”

The Polaroid 20”x24” camera and Polaroid’s program of bringing prominent contemporary photographers into their studios to use their instantaneous and luscious process has brought studio set-up photography back into the limelight in the past decade. Yet, in those times when the photographic pendulum seems to be swinging away from the set-up and the decorative back to the more socio-politically relevant, Biell’s work comes as a blast of fresh air. For the moment, her feet are firmly planted in the studio and she is restricting her subject matter to that dream world we all like to escape to once in a while. How deep can one delve into her work for content? There are allusions to feminist issues, but to be safe, one shouldn’t try to go too deep in that direction; rather, plunge into her unabashedly fabricated fantasies and relish her ability to infuse each one with “romance, wit, and poetry.”
In that first academic year we had a very rich program. We had a lecture series that included John Szarkowski, Nathan Lyons, Peter Bunnell, Robert Frank, Jerry Uelsmann, Frederick Sommer. I was not only getting to hear but to meet and deal with those people...
"It angered me that art was somehow taking tragic human experience and stylizing it. I didn't want to be associated with art. I wanted to look for my pictures wherever art didn't live."

WW: What was your philosophy about what you wanted the photography program to be and how has that changed?

GW: I don't think it has changed. My primary idea, partly dictated by the circumstances, was that we should really want a photography degree — this would not be a place you would come to become a technical or vocational photographer. Rather, we would have a course offering open to undergraduate students and others where they could learn photography in the context of other subjects. Undergraduates that we teach are very seldom art majors. And I enjoy teaching people of different ages. If there's been any big change in the past five to six years as the Media Center has really developed its continuing education program, it's to take it as usual to have someone age 40, 50, or 60 come in and say, 'I really want to learn from a graphi cal because I really want to do this for the first time.' And I really get excited about that. I would not want to be part of an art factory. The world of art is a lot less interesting to me than the other worlds around it.

WW: Was there a difference between your and Bill's commitment to community involvement?

GW: I'm sure there was, but I'm not sure I can verbalize it well. First of all, Bill was much more mature and had gone through as lot as an artist. I was about twenty-five when I began teaching at St. Thomas and had come out of graduate school with a strong sense that I couldn't let my own career drag and wanted to get on with it very intensely. Hollywood photography, a period of doing documentary films for the USA, and had all that experience behind him. He was at a mid-career time when he was examining that experience and what he wanted to do with all that knowledge and background. So that's very different. Second, I think James was a person with very keen sensitivity to social issues, and I've never really been like that. So we were very different in that respect. But the interest in photography was there for five or four years after we began, we found we had a tremendous amount in common: primarily that we both loved straight photography or filmmaking. We were in it for the will, and neither of us wanted to establish an art school, either in film or photography. We wanted to draw upon the public: James because of the social issues that came with those people. For me, because it brought new in-

fluenes, ideas and backgrounds into the mix. We both saw style, aesthetics, as something that should be felt but not seen in the work done. That style should be contained within the work in an invisible way. The term that I often use is that style should be transparent. James talked with Walker Evans. When we had a little show of Walker Evans from the Farm Security Administration files, James walked through it and understood entirely, immediately why I would love those photographs.

GW: Let's go back chronologically.

During the first five years, the photography program was largely supported by the de Menils. After five years, the university took on the commitment of supporting the Media Center. They signed back a bit. The character of the place changed after the first two or three years at Rice. There was that burst of expansion at St. Thomas and then at first at Rice. The first year at Rice we had a major exhibition, Photography into Sculpture from the Museum of Modern Art, and that occupied the whole building. It was photography that had become three dimensional, and had been put on three dimensional objects. Peter Bunnel was the curator for that show.

Then we started having major photography shows at the Rice Museum in which there were a few photographs back in 1971 or 1972. I remember they had an exhibition on the theme of the highway, and there were certain photographs in that show, Robert Frank's exhibition of the highway and so on. There were a few scattered photographs in their ex-

hibitions in the early 1970s. I think Mrs. de Menil and the people who worked for her really became aware of photography because of the shows we had at the Media Center. The first I can recall of a big show, and an amazing one, was the exhibition of Cartier-Bresson photographs in about 1974. That was the full set of photographs he gave to the Menil Foundation. 385 photographs, his selection of his own work. It was exhibited very quiet-

ly in the summer. I remember telling John Szarkowski about it and he said, 'It's very good.' But I was not even aware that Cartier-

Bresson had done this. And here we were next door with a really definitive set of his pictures.

Then we began a period of very slow growth which we have had since then, very slow. We are not supposed to do. Coming here to Houston was going against the grain. I am not supposed to go to most people in Chicago was "Stay and develop here. Nobody knows what you are doing." But in Houston I wasn't really bothered by the notion that people didn't know what I was doing. Now it's different, now I'm older and I do want people to know what I'm doing, partly because you only have a certain time. I think photography is very popular, with what you're doing and you want them to see it.

I think at that point in my development I was nourished and spurned. Now it's more that people were doing what I was doing, but by others from other fields. There was an exhibition at the Rice Museum called Some American History, organized in conjunction with Larry Rivers. It had work by a number of New York artists, commissioned to do something about the history of the black man in this country. I remember going into the show, and there were all these big paintings of things like Aunt Jemima with a machine gun, very white women in erotic stances with black men. Then there was a Larry Rivers piece that was a construction, with a white woman lying on an outdoor piece of plywood and painted. Hanging above her by black men, the black man who had been lynched. They were in very graphic hanging poses, just staring. I remember looking at it and thinking, somehow, that's very familiar. In that way, somehow it is obvious. There was so much style to it, cut plywood, painted on. It angered me that art was somehow taking human experience — really tragic human experience — and stylizing it. I couldn't figure out where I had seen this before. Then I remembered a book published in the 1960s called The Movement. Danny Lyon was a big contributor to that book. It was done by an anonymous photographer in Kansas, about 1936, of a lynching. All you have to do is look in The Movement and there it is. But the photography contained more. The four guys were hanging in the same posture with the same line. I would have seen it in the crowd of gawkers. A man with this kind of funny look in his eye, pointing. A woman with a baby walking by. When I looked at that photograph, I was somehow really angered. This is what art wants to be, but it can't be.

The consequence of that was, I didn't want to do photographs with art. So that kind of caused me to pull back from people in the art world, whether the painting, printers, photographers, or others. Photography has so much leverage, so much power over art. That experience really energized me. I think the realization made me know I wanted to look for my pictures wherever art didn't live.

GW: What about your gallery? How did it begin?

GW: I really wanted to have a place where people would come and look at photographs. We started in the fall of 1970. I called it "Latent Image," at 122 Bissomnt. I wasn't under the illusion that I was going to make any money at it, but I thought it might be fun. I think I took a partner, Jack Wetmore, who is in the printing business and interested in photography. There were all these terrific photographers who who didn't sell any art. Paul Caponigro had a show there. ArnoRELATED Adams had a show. There was a group show when we opened of American Salon, and Arthur Siegel, Harry Callahan, Ray Metter, and Charles Swedlund. Those were people I had much more graduate school at the Institute for Design. One could just write and say I would like to have a show of your work, and would you send me some work on consignment? The answer would be yes. When we showed ArnoAdams's Idaho it was '60. A few people bought them, not many. We sold a few of Caponigro pictures. We had a show of Elko Hoose, the Japanese photographer, and that sold very well. A daguerreotype show. An Arthur Siegel color show. A Len Krier show, a Frederick Sommer show. We had a large number of people at openings and a trickle in between. A few, very few, actually bought.

What I had in the gallery was 90 percent consignment work. I could write Siskind and he would send me ten photographs on consignment. Callahan would send ten photographs on consignment. There would be a certain number of photographs like the ten Robert Frank I had
bought. I bought ten Edward Weston prints for $25 a piece, printed by Cole Weston. They were for sale at $50 a piece.

'Some Museum of Fine Arts people would visit us, look around. One photograph was actually bought by them. It was very interesting what that one photograph was: a big print — 32x40 — of that magnificent picture from Apollo 15. I think it's Buzz Aldrin standing on the moon, slightly crooked, on the landscape. A big print. I bet that was the first photograph bought by the Museum of Fine Arts; I think it cost like $100-$200. That was the only sale we made to a museum or institution.

When we closed in May, 1971, eight months after we opened, we had to have an auction of all the prints that I owned because my note had to be repaid. I had reduced it only very little, I had Sinkid prints — you know when Aaron was teaching and I was there, you could buy a 16x20 print from him for whatever you had in your postoffice, $5 or $10. I bought him lunch, and you went away with a picture. It was a deal for both of us. That was before Light Gallery carried his work. Well, I probably had six or eight Sinkid pictures and they probably auctioned for $5 or $10. E.A. Carman, who was one of the curators at the Museum of Fine Arts and is now at the National Gallery, sat in the front row and just bought them up. I don't have the records but he must have bought 12, 15, 30 pictures in that auction — Frank, Sinkid, Callas. The price range was $10-$20. Bear in mind that they weren't selling for a whole lot more than that at the gallery. The Westons were marked at $30, maybe $40. And they probably auctioned for $35. Frank, I think, marked at $50, and they may have gone for $25. Lots of pictures, I'm sure, sold for $10-$15. About twenty or thirty people came to the auction.

WW: Did the papers review the show?

GW: John Scarborough at the Chronicle was alive and had developed an interest in photography and he reviewed a couple of the shows. No formal training, just a real bright guy.

WW: From the standpoint of your own career, has Houston been a beneficial place?

GW: I think my career, my development as a photographer has happened largely because I am in Houston. I can't imagine having developed anywhere else, partly because at every point that I wanted to do something, it was possible to consider doing it because of attitudes and opportunities that exist here. In those early years, there was the opportunity to bring in people. That was very helpful to me, that's the way I met Garry Winogrand and other people who were very important to me. Now if I had been stuck somewhere where there was nobody at all, that could have been disastrous.

WW: What about today for a developing photographer?

GW: I think it is an exciting, productive place. You have institutions exhibiting photography regularly, good work and big shows. There's a lot of work to be seen. There are a number of photographers you can draw on and learn from. And it's growing here in Houston. I don't know what's happening in New York or Chicago or Los Angeles, but my feeling is that we've got it as good as anybody, maybe better.

WW: For a developing photographer, what is the best advice on how to show work?

GW: I don't think there is any one way. My inclination is to say first of all, try not to push too fast. I think a lot of people feel that if they can't produce pictures that are salable to museums or collectible or publishable, then that's something wrong. The main thing is to try to develop a style, find a job or series of jobs in which you can exist and your growth can take place. Plan a longterm career and don't expect things to happen too fast.

It seems to me that photographers who develop in the most interesting ways are people who don't worry too much or get too preoccupied about getting the work published or getting it purchased or getting it shown. They just go about their work and they commit themselves to it. They let things fall in place. I have students who have been or are tremendously skilled, but that doesn't mean they can make a living at it or anything like that. It's not logical to assume that they are going to produce work that will be collected by museums or published by fine art magazines or exhibited in galleries in a few years. Even if that happens, it won't support them. So my suggestion is learn the skills you can support yourself with and then let your career develop in a slow, organic, natural way.

WW: For a developing photographer who wants to show you a portfolio, what impresses you?

GW: One is the development of style, even if it is closely related to some other major photographer’s work. That is part of getting past just wanting to be a beginner — you begin to know what you want your photographs to look like. Not that they won't change, but you're beginning to get a sense of that. The other thing is the ability to locate subjects that are very interesting. You know, that's just critical. If someone comes to me and shows me pictures of something that I never thought to photograph, I'm impressed. That's a good mind.
"That all the surprises are up front is a relief, because the images stay put in the mind, taking on new forms and attitudes, ultimately leading toward the religion of success."

Shakespeare or the theatre of the absurd (Beckett) come to mind in the Silent Fires series: the viewer is often confronted by a narrator in the foreground, gesturing frantically to expect the worst. Yet one goes away unconvinced, because the characters' anguish is anonymous, ambiguous, the relationships between principals layered and ambivalent. That all the surprises are up front is a relief, because the images stay put in the mind, taking on new forms and attitudes, ultimately leading toward the anticipation, the religion of success. Silverthorne cites the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice as the origin of Silent Fires. When asked about other influences, Silverthorne mentions Ichneuthe, Calahan, Rembrandt, Mozart, and Bobbie Lee Jones, among others. Certainly the cast of characters in Silent Fires is reminiscent of sculpture in the thrones of decay. The quality of movement from life to death neutralizes the sexuality of the image. The presence of the body, the decapitation of the body, the "horror vacui," the horror vacui, the dynamism of the body, the dynamism of the void, the dynamism of the empty.

There is great serenity in the staging of these guileless dramas. The beauty of the image is that it is non-judgmental. With the inexorable as a premise, the burden of the image as instructive is lifted.

"Since 1971 I have worked primarily with the nude figure. While photographing dead animals, female impersonators, wrestlers, prostitutes, and landscapes, I began a new project in 1971 to which I devoted most of my time for the next two years: photographing in a state museum."

"That is — the enormous importance of two."

—Jeffrey Silverthorne

I did not begin exploring Mr. Silverthorne's work under the influence of these, or any other prefaces. Nor was I surprised at the tone (peaceful), centered, in command of the origin of the work he used when I questioned him at length. Yet I remain somewhat at a loss to reconcile the macabre aura of violation with the overall feeling of placer resolve in these dense, rich, autobiographical illustrations. I return, time after time, to the themes of death and futurity, which range in expression from barbarous utterances to the lovesickness of subtle spirituality. The pictures acknowledge but do not embrace the darker side of the death, so that the aging of a body, the decrepitude of age, the "vicious, howl, kiss" can be overcome, translated from the literal to a more palatable metaphor. The classical elements (the photographer's directional posture, the model's pose of disinterest, fruit and pedastals, romance, an indirect acknowledgment of sexuality, a reference to "hominess," monologue versus dialogue, pedagogic intent versus observer participation) distance and editorialize the sensationalism that moves through these images.

To Silent Fires: with the inexorable as a premise, the burden of the image as instructive is lifted. Some of the sexual ambiguity has an emasculation edginess to it, the whimsical Gods interfering and intervening beyond the play's stage directions. This potential of control empowers the madness of futurity. Equal time is given to male and female nudity. Questions are increasingly posed. The morgue pictures present a peacefulness in death, whereas the living elsewhere seem anachronistic. The benefit of age, the body falling into disarray, that the soul grows more serene and elegant. Yet the contradictions and paradoxes are difficult to acknowledge. Boundaries are easily broken, but they are devised nevertheless. In one image from Silent Fires, a woman is held motionless within a cage, a captive angel. Only an angel would stay still. The pedestal on which the models perch are made of marble at all — it is shaky, old, made of wood. The peas (ubiquitous throughout Silent Fires) inhabit a far more secure and comfortable place than they rest. All activity is purgatorial: the end has been written. The same feeling is found in the Waking Room series, precursors to Silent Fires, although more documentation and less dramatic devices find their way in. Interpersed throughout the years of imagemaking are photographs of enormous calm and simplicity, necessary intervals to the maintenance of such an intense, constitutional piece.

After weaving quite a spell over the pictures we discussed, Mr. Silverthorne brought up the formalistic theme of hope, the wish for all things to right themselves. His denouements turn out happily in the long run, despite the odds. The many years and pictures that are the result of an intelligent quest cannot readily be denied in an article of ideas. Yet after spending time with Silverthorne's photographs, it is easy to feel the power and beauty of his determination, and the understanding of a grander design is a natural conclusion of the experience of the pictures. In the Houston community in wishing Mr. Silverthorne a warm welcome, and a most successful year.
By Gay Block
(The following is a discussion of the recent work of Barbara Norfleet, whose photographs were shown at the Houston Center for Photog.
raphy during July)

BARBARA NORFLEET
SOULS OF THE RICH

“The group of photographs proves that human beings in every strata have their own sets of problems and celebrations, that having great wealth may be costly, that everything has its trade-offs and great wealth is no exception.”

Have you ever wondered what life would be like if you had more leisure time and money than you knew how to spend? We all know that there exists a class of people who are so fortunate. In a way, they must be terrified of the outside world, afraid of envy or that other people will take from them what they have. So they insulate themselves at their private clubs or at gatherings at each others’ estates. With a great deal of money, Barbara Norfleet has gained entry into some of their social functions and photographed with precision and insight what she calls “The Hidden Upper Class in America.”

When I look at these pictures I am overwhelmed by their clarity and nearly see at once the many dichotomies in the subjects: they are arrogant and brazen at the same time that they are afraid and vulnerable. Their lives as depicted are at once exciting and dull, the people are both good and bad, happy and sad, having fun and enduring routine, habitual social rituals. Their homes are beautifully furnished, full of people but cold and uncomfortable. They are isolated from the large world, but connected to one another, albeit superficially. They have a tendency to delude themselves with false emotional connections between them. The details of these pictures, the careful attention to dress, posture, and body postures of the people and their environment are the clues to Norfleet’s passionate interest in her subjects and it is her passion for content in art which makes the pictures the exciting documents that they are.

During the month of July, 25 of these photographs of America’s aristocratic and entitled graces of the walls of HCP. The pictures are actually prints, made on the spot. We have seen many photographic essays of the very poor in America, but this is not just another photo essay. Norfleet’s saying, “In the pictures, we see coyness and self-assurance, mostly in the young men, as in “3 Brothers” Cambridge Boat Club,” and “Arriving at the Ritz-Carlton for the Windsor School Prom.” In some we see depth and intensity as in “Chilton Club, Boston, MA.”

A young woman stands in front of a huge antique tapestry, by a large floral arrangement. It appears to be in an entrance hall and Norfleet has photographed it from about knee level, looking up. The woman is posing, standing directly into the camera, but she shows us in one photo a dog-walker waving in her very formal, manicured gardens and in another, young boys in formal riding attire sitting smugly with two elegant older women in an antique buggy. In the photographs of lawn parties, the people are elegantly dressed, the men always have on ties, the children are quite properly dressed. We can see the rules which govern their lives; Norfleet has circumvented the rules and found a way to reach the human beings. It is her ability to expose human qual-
ities in these snapshot candid of social events that evokes my strong response to these photographs. There is one photograph, “Pri-
vate House,” New Providence Is-
land, the Bahamas, of a black maid whom Norfleet said she encountered in the act of clearing the bathroom. A wet young man in a brief bathing suit smirks at her through his glass door. She laughs, embarrassed. A subse-
quently photo shows the maid sit-
ing on the young man’s lap, this time he’s dressed in white slacks and knitted shirt. Norfleet explains, “I saw the bathroom scene and grabbed it fast. Then the young man asked, ‘Oh – you want a picture of me and Rosie?’ and he came inside, got dressed, sat down and posed Rosie on his lap.”

One man who had been raised by black women servants, perhaps by that black woman servant, would have been able to recognize that drama with comfort and even a kind of love and re-
spect. And Rosie understands his gestures, or at least tolerates him; she laughs in both photographs and everything seems very natural and comfortable.

There is one curiously ambigu-
ous photograph, “Wedding Re-
ception, Lincoln, MA, 1982,” of a beautiful white woman in maid’s uniform serving at a wedding rece-
ception. She could easily be one of the guests, judging from her appearance, but she is clearly the maid on this occasion. She is so composed and so resolutely probi-
blematic thinking of her as a servant. I wonder what kind of people would have servants who look like that.

In some of the faces, we see coyness and self-assurance, mostly in the young men, as in “3 Brothers” Cambridge Boat Club,” and “Arriving at the Ritz-Carlton for the Windsor School Prom.” In some we see depth and intensity as in “Chilton Club, Boston, MA.” A young woman stands in front of a huge antique tapestry, by a large floral arrangement. It ap-
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Does anyone else think they ‘are just as moneyed’ or is it just their pretentiousness that makes them seem elevated? They are just as moneyed; they are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed. They are just as moneyed.
and photography in the Visual and Environment Studies Department at Harvard University. For twelve years she has been curator of photography at the Carpenter Center for Visual Arts at Harvard; she founded and now directs the Photographic Collection there. She has curated many exhibits and authored important publications while there. She is a wife and the mother of three grown children. In her curatorial work as well as in her own photography, she is fascinated by the possibilities of what we can learn from photographs of people. Whether they are posed studio portraits or informal candid, she knows that photographs are visual communication to be read with as much depth and understanding of human construction as the best Henry James novel. And she seems to me to have a deep understanding of human beings, their lives, and the visual clues which promote understanding. "The Hidden Upper Class in America" proves to us that human beings in every strata have their own sets of problems and celebrations, that having great wealth may be costly (no pun intended), that everything has its trade-offs and great wealth is no exception. Can aristocrats remain vitally engaged in life, performing the kind of tasks which make us feel proud of ourselves even if they aren't required to be productive? Does a life of indulgence devoid of almost all personal yearnings preclude intense feelings and therefore cause life to be somewhat flat and meaningless? I believe Norfleet has posed these questions and made important discoveries. The photographs do not make us envious; we are not asked to criticize or judge her subjects. They are true reflections of the universality of the human condition in yet another unexpected arena.
To do business with world politics on a symbolic, rather than documentary level is no less effective when the horror acted out is dreamlike, recognizable."

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**By April Rapier**

The politics of 1984, of sex and sexuality, of repression, imposition of will, and death as a power play, of racism and hatred — in short, the perversion of vision against conscience and desire — lead ultimately to an intellectual end, a cry for help that has no voice. These intelligent and concise Paul Hester's sequence of images, "We Are Seduced By... Su Voto Es la Differencia".

The nine categories he structures the pictures around seem neutral enough at first, yet are loaded politically and emotionally. One gradually begins to sense his outrage — a conceptual metaphor born of the absurdity of hopelessness. How can anyone be fooled by all this — be seduced by the repellet — we wonder, as the question echoes over and over. Hester's premise, if it can be condensed so readily, is that once aware of the seduction, one is empowered to act against it. The vote is the symbol of power, even though that, too, necessitates a compromise. The pictures tell of a now-inevitable pattern of horror from which wisdom must be extracted; otherwise, civilization's atrocities will be condemned to being forgotten.

To do business with world politics on a symbolic, rather than documentary level is no less effective, when the horror acted out is dreamlike, recognizable. The metaphor for seduction/repression can be drawn from many sources, but most often from the dynamic between people. The use of male and female nudes, falling again, and again upon the tension that nudity creates, can be seen in two ways; nudity as vulnerability, or the release from taboo, the strength that comes when a concept is no longer a red flag. This intensity draws attention to every detail within the frame — we question props, veins bulging, scratches on the floor, light directed toward genitals, as well as the principals themselves, with the same objective scrutiny that is traditionally followed by an embarrassed laugh. Physical evidence within the pictures can be found in mirrors and reflections, Reagan masks, surprise and distraction, sleeping bag cocoons, entrapment, bondage and blindfolds (the tools of the interrogator and executioner), and showmanship — devices that make us question our assumptions. In spite of a certain absurdity to the pictures, poses, masks, and wrappings, we are engrossed in the absolute seriousness of the message. The images are terribly complex and powerful; many interpretations are available and encouraged by the interplay between the myth of a collective history of political horror, and the reality of what seems all too familiar yet remains unchangeable.

Paul Hester and his work are virtually inseparable. He is an anomaly in Houston, a city of noise and confusion; he maintains a quiet profile, yet has an artist's sensibility. The political overtones of his pictures, once rather raw and cruel, have grown refined and sophisticated. The intent remains clear. Once a photoeducator, attention is naturally drawn to him as a resource, someone with a solution, not an excuse. His commercial work is primarily architectural; he has bridged the gap between his commercial and fine art photography in that neither suffers in excuse of the other. One senses his regard for the historical aspect of photography: he once organized a display of city archive pictures, and often uses a panorama camera, a relic of great beauty from the more cumbersome days of pack mules and glass plates and portable studios. All aspects of his photography are labors of love. He has achieved and continues to maintain a fine reputation in the art world, and is published and exhibited regularly. He was recently included in an exhibition entitled Exposed and Developed: Photography Sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American Art. He was awarded the Thomas Watson grant, and is a three-time NEA Fellowship recipient. Yet the focus of his interest and output is local, his sense of community strong.

For many years, his work was experimental and more personal, a private statement open to interpretation. He recently made a more definitive political declaration in the form of an exhibition he coordinated at the Houston Center for Photography regarding nuclear disarmament. His work is that showed evoked enormous internal controversy at the HCP. His was a courageous move, one that further politicized his stance. One hopes that there is no turning back. The force of a goal that became crystallized in this most recent portfolio, whereas many rarely behind causes with footwork and words, pictures backed by ideas prove to be powerful in the allegiance of belief and action.
WE ARE SEDUCED BY

PERFORMANCE

SU VOTO ES LA DIFERENCIA
A review of the 1984 HCP Members' Exhibition shows an interesting trend. The exhibition is not without its meritorious, but several unpleasant trends seem to be emerging. The most disturbing trend I noticed was the intentional use of sequential images with a narrative in mind, rather than focusing on the individual images themselves. The exhibition is under the best of circumstances, and it gives me no pleasure to admit, after much consideration and discussion, that the overall tone of the show is to be found lacking.

The exhibition is dominated by student-caliber work. There are many underexposed and overexposed images, as well as the forcing of an underdeveloped viewer into premature conclusion. This show is not without its meritorious images, but several unpleasant trends seem to be emerging that require no data. There is a lot of vivid imagery, do image-rich picture-taking that feels forced, the result of a determination to take advantage of each and every photo-opportunity. There is no mention of it. Some of these documents are simply treated too well, given too much importance. These are born of a motivation that is difficult to take seriously. One has the sense that homage to well-tested ideas is being paid without proper credit.

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part of a series; we would doubtless benefit from its exhibition in entirety.

Beth Israel Goldberg's picture entitled "Simsi Indian Himalayas" is a refreshingly simple and unpretentious bit of secret smuggling. It imparts the feeling of seeing sacred things not meant for any but the holiest eyes. Therein lies the difference between tourist and traveler. Similarly, Barth Schoenitz's "Cemetery Sequence K73" is the definitive picture in a rash of cemetery invasions. His is not an overly reverent grave robbery; he points up the eccentric rites with which people decorate the graves of their loved ones. He doesn't pass judgement, and this gives one the tender chuckle of recognition.

Phillip Holland's painterly, evocative "Trenches Three" (it is unfortunate that he chose such a glib, distracting title) is a wonderful image with an understated punchline. The colors are rich; we are in no danger of doubting its veracity. The sum of elements in this image confirms our confidence in the integrity of the photograph.

We take with us an impression of this mysterious image composed of mundane elements. Quite satisfied.

The consensus seems to be that the members' exhibition is a sacred concept; I agree for the most part. There are a number of theories as to why participation was low this year; but the most significant one is the coinciding of fellowship award appointments — deadlines were nearly simultaneous. That the fellowship review received more portfolios than the members' exhibition is sad commentary indeed. If lack of interest continues to weaken the concept, amendments or incentives need to be initiated in order to encourage a more general participation and enthusiasm, without which a dangerous precedent is perpetuated. The selection process itself is a democratic one, with members voting to rate the top portfolios and single images. Members may vote whether or not they submit pictures; the number of members who voted was very low as well. Perhaps if members really want this to be a serious exhibition some consideration should be given to another method of choosing the work.
"They are members of every race and notion of the earth. They are of all ages, of all temperaments, of every imaginable economic or social or not-so-economic occupation. Each is incorporated in such an intense and various context, that the 'normal human being' of the world has never known before. Let us speak particularly, but not exclusively, as a thumbprint or a snowflake. Each wears a pair of glasses through which he sees himself, his world, or the world that he sees himself. What is evident to them is uniquely subtle uniforms and altogether of their being. Each comes in a different pocket of frustration. At the ends of his hand, in his eye, in the theater, in the theater-in-the-woods, in the world upon a creature for whom the name immortal soul is child and the metaphor"

James Agee, Introduction to Many Are Called

Photography is burdened by an expectation of disembodied views of the world. Portrait, advertising, architecture, even landscapes, all photographers all labor under the demand for perfection. The obsession with the ideal is responsible for the lingering remains of the picturization in photography and a faddistic concern for The Perfect Print.

Concurrent with this urge is a craving to capture a better-make-believe world. Even a fleeting picture, another hope that photography can contribute to change beyond the factual. Activists from Lewis Hine to Dorothea Lange are interested in presenting social conditions exposed by photography could be reformed.

These impulses have formed a trouble-making mixture in the work of Robert Adams. He loves the land, both the mountains and the plains, and he admits to having an Ansel Adams phase on and off. He is in search of accuracy and typicality and has led him over the past twenty years to take pictures not of national parks but of land that is being used and developed.

Robert Adams’ work first achieved prominence in 1974, with the publication of The New West. Subdivided into “Prairie,” “Fractals and Mobile Homes,” “The City,” and “Foothills and Mountains,” the pictures point out all the ways that we usually try to escape when we travel or photograph. The urban, the pastoral, the industrial, the careful attention paid to all these blemishes. A thoughtful equilibrium is achieved in each picture, and for the first time, an almost exaggerated respect for accuracy and typicality has led him over the past twenty years to take pictures not of national parks but of land that is being used and developed.

”Adams has admitted the weakness of objectivity. He foresees that there is nothing that cannot be known, that he cannot photograph."
There would still remain the never-resting mind.
So that one would want to escape.
To what had been so long composed.
The imperfect is our paradise.
Note that, in this bitterness, delight.
Since the imperfect is so hot in us.
Les in flowed words and stubborn sounds.
—Wallace Stevens, The Poems of Our Climate

The questioning of things as they are is the beginning of our understanding. Robert Adams has questioned our beliefs about what is worth photographing, or to put it another way, what is worth caring about. He questions us clearly on that account, and in large measure by his ability and willingness to relate these loving observations to the threat of nuclear war. I admire and applaud his strength on all levels. My reservation is one I am trying to answer for myself: How do we photographically place these questions in the political arena?

"Less than ever does a simple reproduction of reality tell us anything about reality. A photograph of the Knapp works or AECs yields almost nothing about these institutions. Reality proper has slipped into the functional. The reduction of human relationships, the factory, let's say, no longer reveals these relationships. Therefore something has actually to be constructed, something artificial, something set up." —Bertold Brecht

"Perhaps the effort to explain why he was taking these pictures was too great, too impossible. How does one say, 'Because I love you,' to a total stranger?"
By Peter Yenne

Depressing as the world situation is today, it still inspires wonderful photography. The last few years have brought us Susan Meiselas' powerful book on Nicaragua, followed by an even better group effort on El Salvador (recently shown at the Pace/MacGill). In a parallel development, three current films feature photographers as central characters—_Under Fire_, _Circle of Deceit_, and _The Year of Living Dangerously_. The "committed" photographer, something of an endangered species during the 1970s, is obviously making a comeback. Gilles Peress, a French photographer working for Magnum, may not look like Nick Nixon or Mel Gibson, but he is clearly a successor to the likes of Robert Capa and Don McCullin. Like them, Peress shoots in black and white, but the world he lives in, as Nixon and Gibson quickly discovered, is getting grayer and grimmer.

Telex Iran in_The Name of Revolution_ is the amazing record of five weeks Peress spent in Iran in 1979/80 during the siege of the American Embassy in Tehran. It is a big book, filled with images as intricate as the rugs that were Iran's second most famous export. Fittingly, for a Magnum member, Peress' style is indebted to Cartier-Bresson and Josef Koudelka, with more than a casual nod to William Klein and the late Garry Winogrand. This is a wide-angle view of Iran, indeed, fragmented by the piercing rays of the low winter sun, energized by a people in revolt. Peress is an artist as well as a journalist, and the book shows it. He is interested in pictures for their own sakes, and the photographs are full of visual puns, bursting with information, and strong in contrasts of light and shade. The impressive range of visual strategies in _Telex Iran_ reveals a quick, resourceful and inventive eye. Peress likes to break up the picture frame, reducing mass movements to individuals. Often, people are seen through screens and windows, or from passing cars and trains, reinforcing the feeling that Iran is still "out there", impenetrably foreign and remote. Yet Peress manages to break through his alienation and get close to his subjects—with stunning results.

The country that emerges from these photographs is bleak and mysterious, an agitated, contradictory place, filled with high emotions and sadness, where few things are what they seem.

GILLES PERESS: CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

"The country that emerges from these photographs is bleak and mysterious, an agitated, contradictory place, filled with high emotions and sadness, where few things are what they seem."
By Sharon Stewart

The exhibition Gilbert & George was organized by The Baltimore Museum of Art and was shown at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston this summer. It will tour to the Norton Gallery of Art, West Palm Beach; The Milwaukee Art Museum, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Art does not imitate life, nor life art with Gilbert & George, two, but offer an overview of the world’s come to live as one. To them, life is art. And the life begins in 1972 when they were students at St. Martin’s School of Art in London. They chose to be a living sculpture and have remained as subject center in their real art, films, poetry, paintings, drawings, bookworks and photo-objects. Sixty-seven of the latter are presented in Gilbert & George, their first American retrospective, which opened this summer at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston, and organized by Brenda Richardson of the Baltimore Museum.

These photo-objects are each comprised of a network of 24x20 black framed photo segments making a whole image/ enables a semblance to stained glass cathedral windows. I say allegory because initially their photo-objects were groupings of individual photographs comprising a story told. Through an evolution involving color and theme the allegory returned. But that is the truth behind the story one does not forget the youth left it leave. In this exhibition we finally find Gilbert & George’s intended but not in their own words to our world during 1974-

By April Rapier


GILBERT & GEORGE: POMPOUS PANDEERING

"Their life is delved from intense introspection and transposed through sexuality, militarism, religion, alcoholism, mental mania, social strappings, floral omnipresence, and youth — don’t forget the youth lost it leave."

BLACK PHOTOGRAPHERS

"The time span was enormous, the historical period complex, and the accompanying range of emotions spoke of an aesthetic comparable to any other place or time."

Blacks have been in the mainstream of photography from its beginnings. It is hypothesized that Jules Lion (French), working in New Orleans, might have brought the daguerreotype to the U.S. Prior to the publication of Louis Daguerre’s book in 1839. No aspect of life, no technique was omitted, although opportunity for study was minimal. The accom-

FALL 1984 27
The second biennial photograph auction for the benefit of
HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

will be held on
Saturday December 8, 1984

at
Paradise Bar & Grill
401 McGowen at Brazos

Table sale begins at 11 am — Auction begins at 1 pm
Food and drink available from 11 am on

Photographs by nationally known photographers
as well as members of the Houston Center for Photography

Photographs for auction will
be on exhibit at

HOUSTON CENTER FOR
PHOTOGRAPHY
as will
A Tribute to Ansel Adams

November 28-December 7
Opening: Wednesday, Nov. 28, 6-8 pm

Please contact the Center (713-529-4755) if you wish to donate work to the auction. The auctioneer is Howard Zar, formerly of Sotheby Park Bernet, New York. A catalog will printed and will be available at the Center. To have your work included in the catalog, we must receive it no later than October 14, 1984. Please mat prints.

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