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Our relationship is satisfactory.
Edgar S.



Edgar looks splendid here. His power and strength of character come through. He is a very private person who is not demonstrative of his affection; that has never made me unhappy. I accept him as he is.

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Regina Goldstine

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The three-year fund drive goal is \$180,000. To date, \$145,000 has been pledged. 529-4755.

From the series **The Poor and Privileged of San Francisco**, by Jim Goldberg. More on page 17.

FEATURES

PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS — A SPECIAL SECTION.

Diane Arbus, Anne Noggle, Larry Fink, George Tice, Cindy Sherman, Frederick Sommer, Marion Post Wolcott, British Photography: Health Hazards, Commentary in Photography: California, Todd Webb, George Foss, David Hockney, and more.

Social Change and the Struggle Against Art, by Paul Hester. The uses and misuses of photography intended to bring about change.

Jim Goldberg: Rich Folks, Poor Folks, by April Rapier. In which both rich and poor seem unable to contain themselves.

O. Winston Link: Strange Visions, by Dave Crossley. An obsession with trains produced a powerful social document.

EXHIBITIONS. Reviews by April Rapier.

Ten Europeans: Abstract Dreams. A show of contemporary European photography at Benteler Galleries.

Gail, Sonnenman, and Williams: Two Up, One Down. Sally Gail, Eve Sonnenman, and Casey Williams at the Texas Gallery.

Peter McClelland: Irresistible Fun. A look at some water towers and the inside of McClelland's brain. At the Houston Center for Photography.

Boulevard Show: A Little Tired. This stalwart Houston annual exhibition didn't work out quite so well this year.

DEPARTMENTS

MESSAGES

About Paris and naked women and so forth, by Dave Crossley.

NOTES

News, tidbits, and unsubstantiated rumors.

CALENDAR

Exhibitions, lectures, workshops, competitions, events, clubs.

STAFF

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NEW PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS A SELECTION

CAMERAWORKS (David Hockney). 117 color photomontages, 53 B&W illustrations. Knopf. \$50 Sale Price: \$37.50

DIANE ARBUS: MAGAZINE WORK. 141 B&W photographs; text by Thomas W. Southall. Aperture. \$35 Sale Price: \$26.25

NEW COLOR/NEW WORK (Sally Laetia). 168 images by 18 New Color artists. Abbeville. \$24.95, paperback.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE SOUTHWEST (Ansel Adams). 109 duotones. New in paperback. \$25 Sale Price: \$18.75.

plus RECENT MONOGRAPHS about

Bill Brandt	George Foss	Helmut Newton
Julia M. Cameron	John Gutman	Irving Penn
Louise Dahl-Wolfe	Hoest	Cindy Sherman
Larry Fink	Ray Metzker	Weegee

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MESSAGES

nudes in all these shows, huge billboards on the Champs d'Elysees of a substantial and barebreasted woman advertising a film (which excited some dry critical discussion on television, conducted in front of a copy of the picture, of course), breasts poking out from countless magazines, gentlemen in cafes sipping coffee and admiring the breasts of the day in the newspaper, a series of self-portraits by an anorexic nude, and in a giant image at an exhibition a nun with one bare breast offered forgiveness and peace.

This presents a problem for us here at SPOT. We presents a problem for us here at SPOT: first to check out the event because we'll have one like it here in Houston in the spring of 1986, and second to do a special section in the magazine on the work we would see there. Twice in the past our printer has refused to print the magazine because we were proposing to publish pictures containing nudes. These have been expensive and nerve-wracking experiences. Wandering around Paris made it clear we would have to print the spring issue of SPOT somewhere else.

It also made us wonder what would happen at Houston's month of photography (which, curiously, is being called Foto Fest). Would we be surrounded by pictures of nude women and bugs and animals? What sort of 'themes' would be developed? Oil and Space? Sun, Sand, and Seal? These are worrisome questions that have to be answered in a way that will keep the thing from tipping toward chaos and boosterism. On the other hand, maybe if the theme was Breasts, everybody in Paris would come here and the town would bust out in a lot of hoop-la-la.

— Dave Crossley

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Although many questions were raised and many issues dealt with at the recent regional Society for Photographic Education conference in Amarillo, the recurring question to me was "Where's everybody from Houston?" I began to wonder why our city is so poorly represented at regional and national SPC conferences, held annually. At these meetings, resources are shared, ideas tested, networks and friendships established. They are terrific opportunities to see photographs in all stages of development: students display portfolios alongside the work of NEA fellowship recipients.

Among the SPE's 1500 members are people representing every aspect of photography: there are photo-historians and iconographers, teachers, strictly commercial as well as fine-art oriented photographers, and students. The dynamics of such a diverse group are exciting and unpredictable. Our regional meeting (South-Central) had as its keynote speaker Barbara Crane, who talked eloquently about a lifetime of work, its attendant joys and difficulties. Another speaker was Joseph Jachna, who had a concurrent exhibition of his work at Amarillo College. Each showed a retrospective of slides. It is one thing to be familiar with the work of a well known artist; it is quite different and more satisfying to see the work traced through a progressive history by that artist.

At another recent regional conference, in the Northeast, Houston Center for Photography President Gay Block was a program speaker. She is currently in a Boston exhibition entitled *Four Photographers: Personal Associations*.

She began her talk by saying, "I grew up fat and rich," thereby charming a slightly jaded audience. She treated them to a rather different sort of presentation, one devoid of guile or pretension. The result was refreshing and revealing.

It is unfortunate that the finer things in life aren't free, or even cheap — SPE national membership is forty dollars. But for that you get a subscription to the SPE magazine *Exposure*, and the opportunity to mix and mingle with our nation's large photographic community. The conferences involve travel, lodging, and investment of time, but the experience is well worth the effort and expense. For information, write: SPE, Box 1651, FDR Post Office, New York, NY 10050.

— April Rapier

NAKED IN PARIS

Paris is a wonderful place to have a huge photographic extravaganza. When Lynn McLanahan, the executive director of the Houston Center for Photography, and I went there for the Mois de la Photo (month of photography) in November, we found ourselves in a magical city of lights, good food and wine, and lots of breasts.

Our purpose there was to see as many of the 99 photographic exhibitions as possible, and we astonished ourselves and the organizer of the event by taking in about 60 shows in only six days. What we saw was a wild mix of social documentaries, conceptual work, fashion and movie portraits, bug and animal pictures, and lots of breasts. This breast business was a little confusing for us, two innocent Americans from a puritanical city in Texas. It seems that whenever Parisians have anything to communicate, they do it with breasts. There were an uncommon number of



Visionary Joe, on the alert. Photo by Paula Goldman.

UNSUBSTANTIATED RUMORS, AND OTHER FABLES

continued strength in grim reality: Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Beirut. There will be a nationwide shortage of romantic moments in the lives of migrant workers, wards of the state, and the terminally ill: look for a lot less sensitive treatments of these subjects. Depth of field softening toward March.

The promised arrival on a few points. Underwater camera sales are up 40 percent: not so with dive equipment or charts. The intelligent observer concludes either the rise of bathtub baby pics or that a lot of rigs are being dropped overboard by fumble-fingered hacks. The latter sounds right to me, so less live fish. Morgues are clamping down on corpses, and other morbid fascinations are suffering reversals too. So I'll stick my neck out — in early '85 we will neither be surprised, nor shocked. The conservative tide will wash in more nostalgia, a de-emphasis of the big picture and a tendency to view things in black-and-white. As for social consciousness, no one wants it, really. Get the picture?

— Visionary Joe

GOING FOR THE GOLD

The envelope, please. (Gosh, this is exciting.) Ahm, and the winners of the \$25,000 National Endowment for the Arts Visual Artists Fellowship for photographers this ground are... Lee Friedlander and Nathan Lyons! Well, two worthier fellows probably couldn't be found.

And in the \$15,000 runner-up category — my gosh, there are 33 of them. Here's some names everybody will know: Danny Lyon (social documents), Robert Mapplethorpe (anti-social documents), Susan Meiselas (El Salvador/Nicaragua), and Richard Misrach (color magic), not to mention Marilyn Bridges, Walter Chappell, Robert Fichter, Barbara Norfleet, Gilles Peress, Richard Prince, and Don Rodan.

Meanwhile, at the \$5,000 level, let's applaud 39 more photographers, including Judy Coleman, Grover Gatewood, Skeet McAlay, and Laurie Simmons.

That makes a grand total of 74 American photographers receiving NEA fellowships to the tune of \$740,000, not a bad share of the total \$2.7 million given to all visual artists. Let's see, 30 of those 74 photographers live in New York, but that has no significance, does it? After all, people in California got twelve, which leaves 32 for the other 48

states. Anyway, we're talking quality here, not regionalism. Aren't we?

MIRACLE OF SCIENCE

Here's a prediction that merits some open-mouthed staring into space: "Although it will take several years, we believe that conventional paper prints are destined to become artifacts and, as collectibles, substantially more valuable than today." That comes from The Photograph Collector, in an article about electronic image recording. Because Canon actually used its electronic camera at the 1984 Olympics (the color images were transmitted by telephone to a Japanese newspaper), the editors of the Collector predict that these strange still cameras are soon to be upon us. The Canon camera stores information on magnetic disks that hold 50 images. Getting prints is still a hassle, although Sony has a still vaguely secret hard copy printer. Canon is working on ways to transmit images directly into engraving equipment or color separators, bypassing hard copies altogether. The Collector is making the great leap of imagination that envisions a day not far off when prints become a thing of the past, so that the ones being made now would theoretically become valuable cuneiforms.

VARIOUS NOTES

Beaumont Newhall has been awarded one of those wonderful McArthur Foundation Fellowships. They're big (usually six figures), tax-free miracles that just drop out of the sky on totally unsuspecting good people, one of which he clearly is.

In Paris, New York, and Los Angeles this fall, fashion and portrait photography was everywhere. At the Paris *Mois de la Photo* in November, fashion and movie star pictures were widely shown. Irving Penn had the biggest exhibition of the season in New York. Francesco Scavullo has a new book and a big show in both New York and LA. Horst and Louise Dahl-Wolfe have exhibitions. Therefore, what?

Nine billion color negatives were exposed in 1983, or so Kodak says. That's 9,000,000,000, twenty per cent more than in the previous year.

An item in *The Contact Sheet*, the newsletter of the Texas Photographic Society, asked people to submit resumes for the "First National Photography Resume Exhibition." What could that mean?

Ray Metzker's family, lots of his friends, many alumni from his alma mater, and hundreds of other people swamped him at the opening of his retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The exhibition is apparently a stupendous success, both for him and for the MFAs curator of photography, Anne Wilkes Tucker, who spent six years getting Metzker organized. Van Deren Coke, Michael Hoffman, and a host of other photography personages were on hand for the various social surroundings.

Kevin Clarke and Jim Goldberg were in Houston in November to talk about their work at the Houston Center for Photography. Clarke showed up a week early, disappeared, and came back again (without his increasingly famous red couch). Goldberg was shown around town by HCP Executive Director Lynn McLanahan, who arrived at his lecture 30 minutes late, after having been searched by customs officers upon her return from the Paris Month of Photography. She took him to Gilley's, the "cowboy bar," and stayed there until midnight (7am Paris time), then took him to the airport at 6am (1pm Paris time), then went to teach her photography class at the University of Houston. Paris to the Houston airport to Gilley's to the Houston airport to the classroom, with

four hours of sleep. Thus are the brains of our photo workers reduced to Spam.

Okay, this is going to seem a little bit astray, but try to conceptualize. A drug journal recently reported on a new Canadian drug, an antidepressant called Anafanil. In four case studies of two men and two women, three out of four reported the following side effects: intense sexual experience and orgasm instantly achieved at yawning. Now what does this portend for gallery viewing? Will we start throwing boring parties? Will we begin forcing ourselves to stay up late?

The Friends of Photography's Ruttenberg Fellowship has gone to Robert Dawson for his documentary project "Water in the West." The \$2,000 award goes to support unfinished projects. Last year, Jim Goldberg received it for his work on the poor and privileged of San Francisco (this issue, page 17).

The week from December 10 to December 18 might as well be Gordon Parks Week in Houston. His exhibition will open at Pembroke Gallery, at least two (Leobold and The Odyssey of Solomon Northrop) and maybe three of his films will be shown, he'll give a lecture, and there'll be a television interview on Channel 8. The opening is December 13, from 7-9.

At long last, recognition for pinhole enthusiasts is on the way. Lauren Smith, who has already published two books on the subject, is planning an exhibition and another book and asks pinhole artists everywhere to submit ideas and work to him at 5980 Whittingham Drive, Dublin, Ohio, 43037, telephone 614-764-1656.

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WINTER 1984

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DECEMBER

Through Dec 8, Houston Center for Photography. 1441 W. Alabama, "National Juried Exhibition" by Anne Tucker, curator of photographs at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; also Richard Ross' and Charlotte Land' Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat & Sun 12-5. **Dates to be announced.**

Moody Gallery. 2051 W. Gray, "Gallery Artists." Tue-Sat 10-5.

Through Jan 15, Bentele Galleries. 2409 Rice Blvd., "Contemporary European Photography." Tue-Sat 11-5.

Through Jan 29, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. 1001 Bissonnet, "Unknown Territory: Photographs by Ray K. Metzker, 1957-1983." Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-6, Thursdays 'til 9pm.

Through Feb 10, Pembroke Gallery. 1639 Bissonnet, "Gordon Parks." Tue-Sat 10-6.

11 - Feb 6, Diverse Works. 214 Travis, "Black, White, & Color I." work by New York photographers Allan Ludwig, Geno Rodriguez, Hiromitsu Morimoto, and Alan Kikuchi-Yingya. Tue-Sat 10-5.

19 - Feb 26, Bentele Galleries. 2409 Rice Blvd., "Stefan de Jaeger, Pierre Cordier, and Floris Neuss." Tue-Sat 11-5.

11 - Feb 10, Lawndale. 5600 Hillman, "Then, Now, and Then . . ." work by University of Houston alumnae. Tue-Sun 12-6, Thur 'til 9.

Through Jan 10, Heights Gallery. 1463 Oxford, "Roadshow" photographs by Tracy Hart. Mon-Thur 11-5, Sat 2-6.

February

Through Feb 10, HCP. 1441 W. Alabama, "National Juried Exhibition" by Anne Tucker, curator of photographs, Museum of Fine Arts, also Richard Ross' and Charlotte Land' Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat & Sun 12-5.

Through Feb 2, Pembroke Gallery. 1639 Bissonnet, "Gordon Parks." Tue-Sat 10-6.

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24 - March 24, Contemporary Arts Museum. 3216 Montrose, "Photo Collages by Owen Morris." Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun Noon-6.

5-28, Harris Gallery. 1001 Bissonnet, "George Krause." Tue-Fri 10-6, Sat 11-5.

15 - March 31, Houston Center for Photography. 1441 W. Alabama, "Aron Siskind and Linda Connor." Wed - Fri 11-5, Sat & Sun 12-5.

EXHIBITIONS ELSEWHERE

IN TEXAS

DECEMBER

Through Jan 6, Aron Carter Museum. Ft. Worth, "Edward Weston in Mexico." Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-3:30.

7 - Jan 6, Allen Street Gallery. 401 Commerce, Dallas, "Community Show" by senior citizens and students K-12. Wed - Fri 12-5, Sat 10-4, Sun 1-5.

11 - Jan 5, Afterimage. 2800 South, Dallas, "Photographs of Georgia O'Keeffe by Todd Webb." Mon - Sat 10-5:30.

Through Dec 21, San Anto-

nio Art Institute. 6000 North New Braunfels, "Video Installations," diverse video works by artists residing in Texas, Mon - Fri 11-5, Sat 9 - noon.

JANUARY

8 - Mar 2, Afterimage. 2800 South, Dallas, "William W. Parkin," platinum & palladium prints. Mon - Sat 10-5:30.

11 - Feb 17, Allen Street Gallery. 401 Commerce, Dallas, "John Ward" and "Jim Bartlett & Sarah Carson." Wed - Fri 12-5, Sat 10-4, Sun 1-5.

12 - Feb 10, Laguna Gloria Art Museum. Austin, "Photographs by Gordon Parks."

18 - Mar 3, Aron Carter Museum. Ft. Worth, "Cervin Robinson." Photographs. Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-3:30.

FEBRUARY

22 - April 7, Allen Street Gallery. 401 Commerce, Dallas, "Reed Eastbrook" and "Portraits: A Group Show." Wed - Fri 12-5, Sat 10-4, Sun 1-5.

WORKSHOPS/CLASSES

DECEMBER

Nov 27-29, Dec 1, HCP. Underlying Questioning. Video. Metzker, instructor, co-sponsored by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in conjunction with Metzker's 25-year retrospective exhibition at the MFA: an intensive thought-provoking workshop to discuss some of the fundamental issues confronting photographers. What's the value of what anyone is doing? How should one go about doing it? \$80 HCP and MFAH members, \$100 nonmembers. Call 529-4755 for details.

Nov 30, Dec 12, HCP. Large Format Photography. Michael A. Smith, instructor, \$80 nonmembers, \$100 nonmembers, call 529-4755 for more details.

JANUARY

Houston Center for Photography. will be offering a full schedule of spring/summer 1985 classes and workshops. Call 529-4755 for details.

21, Glassell School. Spring semester begins, registration Jan 9-10, wide range of class offerings, call 529-7659 for details.

3, Art Institute of Houston. full range of day and evening classes, call 523-2564 for details.

FEBRUARY

16, HCP. A Day with Aaron Siskind and Linda Connor, will include the artists discussing their work in the concurrent HCP exhibition, general discussion, and portfolio reviews, call 529-4755 for details.

LECTURES/EVENTS

DECEMBER

3 Museum of Fine Arts. Brown Auditorium, 1001 Bissonnet, 7pm, Ray Metzker, a guiding light to many photographers through the years, will discuss his thoughts and approaches to photography and life. Co-sponsored by MFAH and HCP and in conjunction with Metzker's 25-year retrospective at the MFAH.

4, Blaffer Gallery. Univ. of Houston, off Cullen Blvd., Gallery lecture by Petra Bentele in conjunction with the exhibition "Sub-

jektive Fotografie." 12 noon.

8, HCP Photograph Auction. at the Paradise Bar & Grill, Brazos at McGowen, table sale begins at 11am, auction begins at 1pm, food and drink available. Photographs from all over the country will be auctioned. Work will be on exhibit at the HCP Nov 28 - Dec 8. Catalogs available at HCP. Absentee bids accepted. Call 529-4755 for details.

11-16, HCP. Photography for Children: a hands-on program to teach children about photography with short demonstration sessions and an installation of all their work in the 50-foot span of HCP front windows. Call 529-4755 for details.

11, Rice University. Hamman Hall, "Gordon Parks." 8pm.

12, Rice Media Center. Showing of Gordon Parks' film "Leadbelly" with Mr. Parks present for questions. 7:30pm.

JANUARY

9, HCP. 1441 W. Alabama, "Slide Night," a presentation in slide format of work from all over the country. 7:30pm.

FEBRUARY

14, 21, 28, and Mar 7, Women's Caucus for the Arts. The Firehouse Gallery, 1413 Westheimer, Revising Room. New Feminist Video: a four-part series from The Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston includes work by Barbara Broughie and Eleanor Antin. Call 528-8306 for details.

LECTURES/EVENTS ELSEWHERE IN TEXAS

DECEMBER

1, Allen Street Gallery. 401 Commerce, Dallas, "Edward Weston: The Man and His Work," lecture by Sandy Pans. 10am.

5, Allen Street Gallery. 401 Commerce, Dallas, "Interpreting Contemporary Photography," lecture by Dr. Reinhard Ziegler, 7:30pm.

12, Allen Street Gallery. 401 Commerce, Dallas, "John Ward." 1pm.

16, Allen Street Gallery. 401 Commerce, Dallas, "Aron Siskind and Linda Connor," lecture by Fred Herring, 7:30pm.

23, Allen Street Gallery. 401 Commerce, Dallas, "Creative Uses of Filters in B&W Photography," lecture by Fred Herring, 7:30pm.

FEBRUARY

23, Allen Street Gallery. 401 Commerce, Dallas, "Reed Eastbrook." 2pm.

26, Allen Street Gallery. 401 Commerce, Dallas, "Commercial Photography Symposium" keynote address by Greg Booth, 7:30pm, the symposium runs thru March 26 with presentations on product, fashion, and architectural photography with a closing panel discussion, call 214-821-8260 for details.

COMPETITIONS

Submit Slides. Allen Street Gallery, 401 Commerce, Dallas, SASE, resume, deadline Jan 5, for exhibition "New Faces" scheduled for May/June 1985, send to Allen Street Gallery, 401 Commerce, Dallas, Texas.

Submit Slides. The University of Texas, Arlington, 515/13 slides, \$20/4 slides, \$25/5 slides - 5 max, \$800 in awards, juror: Duane Michals and Terry Allen, for exhibition "PhotoFlow 7" to be held Feb 14 - March 10, 1985, deadline for entry: Dec 1, send to PhotoFlow 3, Box 9089, UTA, Arlington, Texas, 76009, (817) 273-2881.

Submit Slides. the Los Angeles Center for Photographic Studies is looking for work of emerging artists doing experimental photography which expands the traditional ideas and pushes the boundaries of straight photographic modes for an upcoming exhibition. Limited to 2-dimensional work. Deadline for slides: Jan 1, please send with SASE to LACPS, 814 S. Spring St., Los Angeles, CA 90004, call (213) 623-9410 for further details.

CLUBS

American Society of Magazine Photographers. (ASMP). Meets 6:30pm 1st Monday of each month in the Graphic Arts Conference Center, 1324 West Clay. An international association whose "members work in every category of published photography." Visitors welcome. See schedule for monthly meetings. 521-2090.

Houston Chapter of Association for Multilmage. meets 3rd Thurs monthly, Stever Sandifer 667-9417.

Association of Students in Photography. Houston Community College, 1300 Holman, for HCC students, meets 8pm, 1st Mon of each month, call 521-9271, Randy Spalinger, for details.

Baytown Camera Club. meets 7pm 1st and 3rd Mon monthly at Baytown Community Center, 2407 Market, Baytown, call 424-56, Vernon Hagen for details.

Brazoria County Camera Club. meets 7:30pm 1st and 3rd Thurs monthly at Continental Savings & Loan Assn., Lake Jackson, Tx., call (409) 265-4569 Don Benton for details.

The Houston Camera Club. meetings 7:30pm 1st and 3rd Tues monthly at Baylor College of Medicine, DeBakey Bldg. Room M-12, Texas Medical Center, competitions, programs, evaluations, call 665-0639 Gwen Kunz for details.

The Houston Photochrome Club. meetings 7:30pm 2nd and 4th Thurs monthly at St. Michael's Church, 1801 Sage Road, Room 21, call 453-4167 John Patton for more details.

The Houston Photographic Society. meets 8pm 2nd and 4th Tues monthly at the Bering Church, Mulberry at Harold, programs and critiques, call 827-1159 for details.

The Photographic Collectors of Houston. meets 7:00pm 4th Wed monthly in the basement of the Museum of Science in Hermann Park, public welcome, "meetings feature auctions, buy-sell-trade, show and tell, and lectures," call 795-7455 Leonard Hart for details.

1980 Photographic Society. meets 7:30pm 1st and 3rd Tues monthly, 1981: meets 3rd Thurs monthly, 1982: meets 3rd Thurs monthly, Cypress Wood Drive & Stuebner Airline, call 522-1861 or 353-9604 Dave Mahavir for details.

Society of Photographers in Industry. meets 3rd Thurs monthly, Sonny Lookers Restaurant, 9801 S. Main, 6-10pm, cocktails, dinner, speaker, visitors welcome, call 795-8835 Dave Thompson for details.

A special section on many of the new photography books.



Mrs. T. Charlton Henry, fashion luminary, in her Chestnut Hill Home in Philadelphia, by Diane Arbus.

DIANE ARBUS: ALIVE AGAIN

Diane Arbus: Magazine Work. Edited by Doon Arbus and Marvin Israel. Published by Aperture, Milerton, New York, 1984. \$35.00.

Diane Arbus: A Biography. By Patricia Bosworth. Published by Knopf, New York, 1984. \$17.95.

Diane Arbus. Photographs by Diane Arbus. Published by Aperture, Milerton, New York, 1972. \$19.50.

By Edward J. Osowski

In a period only slightly longer than a decade, from the late 1950s to her death in 1971, Diane Arbus produced a body of work — individual photographs and group essays — that summarize the nervous, alienated, irrational poses we now realize define America at mid-passage in the 20th century. That many of her images shocked us then with their directness and severity, with their "apocalyptic" overtones as one colleague has suggested, is no surprise. What is a surprise, however, is how many of these same photographs continue to demand our attention now, to engage us on two levels — the emotional and the intellectual — and attest to Arbus' ability to move beyond the poses and restraints of her time.

The 1967 exhibition *New Doc-*

uments at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, included, in a room by themselves, thirty photographs by Arbus. Her biographer, Patricia Bosworth, describes Arbus' participation in this exhibition as "probably the high point of Diane's life." In interviews and critical pieces that year the name Diane Arbus became a media commodity. In 1984, with *Diane Arbus: A Biography* by Bosworth and *Diane Arbus: Magazine Work*, a publication by Aperture and an exhibition circulated by Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas (to which Arbus' Esquire photographs have been donated), Arbus again becomes a figure for study. Bosworth's book appeared briefly on the "Bestseller List" of the *New York Times*, certainly not a place where one would expect to find a work dealing with an American artist. More surprisingly, film rights to the book were recently sold. That David Bowie, the rock singer, kept the book by his bed for night reading this summer, as he told an interviewer from *Vanity Fair*, proves beyond a doubt that Arbus is "in" right now.

What draws us to Arbus now and what was behind her particular vision? What was it that led her to photograph certain thematic groups — "eccentrics" (her term), families, celebrities? One turns to Bosworth's *Diane Arbus* hoping that these, and other questions, will be answered. But Bosworth's work suffers from an excess of information and a failure to organize this information

into any coherent pattern.

The reason for this Boswellian documentation may be quite simple. Arbus' two daughters, Doon and Amy, her ex-husband, Allan, and her close friend, Richard Avedon, all refused to cooperate with Bosworth. Doon Arbus, in fact, insisted that "the work speaks for itself" and denied permission to reprint any of Arbus' photographs. Bosworth, thus, could not write an insider's view or a critical study. Bosworth attempted to compensate for those refusals by securing the assistance of a huge group of people, including Arbus' brother (poet Howard Nemerov), her sister and mother, as well as colleagues and mentors (John Szarkowski and Lisette Model), classmates, baby sitters, neighbors, models, and students. The number of "voices" Bosworth quotes is truly staggering and one can only guess at the work involved in tracking down some of her sources.

Born in 1923 to a wealthy family, Arbus was raised as a "Jewish princess," one friend confided to Bosworth, but romantically and defiantly threw over the comfortable life her parents wanted for her when she married Allan Arbus in 1941. With her husband, she formed a team of fashion photographers who were much sought after in the 1950s by magazines like *Seventeen* and *Glamour*. She grew disenchanted with this fashion world and, as her marriage failed, evolved into a creative artist.

While *Diane Arbus: A Biography* is filled with all kinds of information, it presents a tone, disguised as "neu-

tral," in which any single detail is no more important than any other. So we learn that Arbus was fascinated by her body smells and menstrual cycles; that, as a student riding to school on the subway, she forced herself to stare at the men who exposed themselves to her; that the apartment she and Allan Arbus shared was almost totally white; that she consumed her last meal (a roast chicken) with friends "ravenously"; that, as a teenager, she used to stand on the ledge outside the living room windows of her parents' apartment and dare fate, enjoying the thrill of knowing how close she was to danger. That Arbus lived constantly on the edge, that "terror" filled her life, and that she was drawn to "the perverso, the alienated, the extreme" precisely because she was this herself, are conclusions Bosworth leads us to but draws back from making herself.

If we grant Bosworth the creative freedom to include any details she wishes, then the neutrality of her tone might be acceptable. Not so neutral, however, is the manner in which Bosworth describes Arbus' death by suicide in July, 1971. It is Arbus' death that establishes her as a cultural icon, that makes her a Vincent Van Gogh for our times, that joins her with other famous dead from the 1960s and 1970s — Sylvia Plath, John Berryman, Anne Sexton. This is how Bosworth voyeuristically describes the scene of Arbus' suicide:

He found Diane dead, her wrists slit, lying on her side in the empty bathtub. She was dressed in pants

and shirt — her body was already in a state of decomposition." On her desk her journal was open to July 26, and across it was scrawled "The last supper."

No other message was found, although Lisette Model claimed to have received a note but refused to divulge its contents. There is also a rumor that Diane had set up her camera and tripod and taken pictures of herself as she lay dying. However, when the police and coroner arrived, there was no evidence of camera or film.

Notice how easily Bosworth slides from "fact" to "rumor," how she panders to certain extreme tastes, how she makes it possible for us to believe that Marvin Israel, who found the body but refused to talk to Bosworth, may have confiscated film before the police arrived. And what are we to make of the note Lisette Model supposedly possessed? Bosworth, in her effort to lead us to conclude that Model, who cooperated with Bosworth and whose influence on Arbus is ably considered, is somehow denying us access to the "truth."

That there is no "truth" to Arbus is the only conclusion one can draw from Bosworth's book. Diane Arbus recognizes this fact. The foreword she co-wrote with Marvin Israel to Diane Arbus: *Magazine Work* assigns Bosworth's book the role of the revealer. Diane Arbus was well aware that Bosworth's book was about to be published when she wrote, "In the twelve years since its publication, the Aperture monograph Diane Arbus has remained the foundation for all critical and popular assessments of her life and work."

The success of any biography of a creative person can be judged, finally, by whether we return to the works of the artist to consider them anew. On these terms Bosworth has succeeded. One turns to Diane Arbus: *Magazine Work* and to Diane Arbus, the earlier publication, not for clues or for signs that suggest that the photographer would eventually kill herself. (Bosworth refers to the period when Arbus' creative period reigned as the "Dark World" and tracks down individuals who recognize now, through hindsight, that two or three years before she died, Arbus was heading in that direction.) Instead, one looks at Arbus' photographs to appreciate her "style," found in her sense of the unexpected, of the incongruous. How oddly "domestic" are the nudes she photographs, for example. Yet visiting a nudist camp was, for her, "like walking into an hallucination without quite being sure whose it is," she wrote.

When she fails, it is either because her "vision" is limited by her subject or because her moral-cultural superiority gets in the way. The demands of making a living explain some of her subjects — the group of children modeling clothes or the famous (Mae West, Charles Atlas, Jacqueline Susann, Marguerite Oswald) which appeared in *Magazine* like Horner's Bazaar, *Esquire*, and *Sports Illustrated*. In many of these one is struck by the fact that Arbus has nothing fresh or original to offer.

What one senses repeatedly in Arbus' photographs is how she distanced herself from her subjects. The quick snapshot style that she cultivated resulted in rolls of film being shot and, perhaps, one image that could be printed. Several times Bosworth refers to Arbus' style as "documentary" and "journalistic" as her photographs examine, but do not interpret, the world. A less accurate description could not be found. For the photograph "Jacqueline Susann: The Writing Machine" she posed Susann and her husband Irving Mansfield in bathing

suits. Susann, her hair glamorously shaped, shows a lot of leg and not much writing talent as she sits on her husband's lap. A television console is to their left and a sofa, on their right, enters the viewer's space. Rocco drapes behind them suggest that this is the setting for the evening. Bosworth would have us believe that this means nothing. But in Mansfield's description of the session with Arbus, he makes it clear that, after wooing and courting them, Arbus wore the couple down with her nagging, cajoling, and unrelenting probes. It is clear that she intends for this couple to be held up for our criticism and contempt. That her approach was to assault, that her subjects frequently felt tyrannized by Arbus, emerges from interviews with Clay Felker, Viva, Germaine Greer, and others.

Arbus found magazine work attractive (in 1967, for example, she earned \$5,000 for one two-week assignment for *The New York Times*) but also limiting. Thomas Southall's excellent essay in Diane Arbus: *Magazine Work* charts the ups and downs of her career in this genre. Editors refused to print her work and she gave her assignments which failed to interest her but which she took because she needed the money. That her style was not always unique becomes apparent in the new Aperture collection. We see her paying homage to or imitating Walker Evans, Richard Avedon, and Duane Michals, among others. Arbus longed to have the freedom to publish extended essays like Robert Frank's *The Americans* and several examples are included in the new collection.

Where Arbus remains successful is in capturing the secret territory in which dreams turn into nightmares, where innocence is tinged with corruption, where those who most need protection are most open to attack. An interest in fashion photography drew me repeatedly to Arbus' work on children, clothing for the New York Times and Horner's Bazaar. Her vision is almost Wordsworthian — these children are the carriers of innocence. But they are troubled also. Like "Identical Twins" from the earlier publication, one is wrong, asking, "A child bites her fingers, another stares out blankly, a third runs toward the camera, her hair and dress disheveled."

In pictures concerning the family, Arbus expresses her worst fears of the tyranny of the nuclear look. At a Woman with Her Baby Monkey, "Triplets in Their Bedroom," and "Jewish Giant" (from the earlier publication) or "A Young Brooklyn Family" and "A Family on their Lawn" (in both publications) to appreciate Arbus' fears and her sense of "what if." Something is wrong, she is telling us, and there is no comfort to be found in the family institution, which is supposed to be our protection from a cruel world.

Diane Arbus' most successful subjects are heavy with meaning, stand up under close examination, and express her feelings as well as ours. That she chose subjects in extremis, or pushed plant subjects into dire or revealing situations, was part of her effort to get at meanings beneath the surface. She wrote this to accompany her group of photographs *The Full Circle*: "These are the few singular people who appear like metaphors somewhere further out than we do, beckoned, not driven, invented by belief, author and hero of a real dream by which our own courage and cunning are tested and tried, so that we may wonder all over again what is verifiable and inevitable and possible and what it is to become whoever we may be."

(c) 1984 Edward J. Owenski



Myself as Guggenheim Fellow, by Anne Noggle

ANNE NOGGLE: AN ENGAGEMENT WITH TIME

Silver Lining. Photographs by Anne Noggle. Text by Janice Zita Grover. Foreword by Van Deren Coke. Published by University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, N.M.

By Charles Schorre

I usually like to feel a photographer, drawing, or painting, seldom reading about them until I've reacted in my own sweet time, sometimes never reading about them. The work of Anne Noggle and this book in particular happened to me the other way around. I felt compelled to find out something about this work and the person who made it.

What few things I'd seen of Noggle's made this a weird and negative impression on me — I guess you could even call it magic — that I had to find out if she was more than some strange mid-life life-exhibitor. ("Myself," 7AM, 1977; "Face-lift #3," 1975; "Stonehenge Decoded," 1977.) When I first saw a reproduction of "Face-lift #3," I felt that Anne Noggle was for some slow self-destruction process.

Female body parts, the female as heroic figure, re-viewing the usual from an uncommon vantage point, seeing something for the first time their pictures in their vision all your life — these are some of my interests, but this stuff of Noggle's really was some discomfort to me. She knocked me down right in my own path, it took this book to get me cheering for her.

In her foreword, Van Deren Coke says, "I first encountered Anne Noggle (encountered is the right term, for the word most does not accurately capture the essence of the experience) when I was chairman of the Department of Art at the University of New Mexico.... What is consistent and, I do believe, unique about her pictures is their humanism combined with her frankness about aging. These are the things Anne Noggle seems to get down more incisively than the other photographers I can think of."

She is on her own trail and she's making up the map as she goes along. Her remark that "We have to create our own world — a kind of secret place," is nothing new, but for I think it was

really something. What she is doing is so authentically hers because authenticating Anne Noggle is what she is doing.

Janice Zita Grover, in her essay, notes that "the facts of Noggle's wholly separate careers — as a flyer and as a military officer, as an artist beginning a career only in middle age — seem to have played decisive roles in empowering her to do the particular work she has chosen."

But the most enlightening information comes from Noggle's essay, "Seeing Ourselves," (taken from a speech delivered at the Portland School of Art, in Maine). Noggle says, "I have been thinking about you... and about what I could tell you that might come back to you at some time when you especially needed it. In truth I didn't know whether to talk about art or peanut butter sandwiches. They both feed us. The real feast is life and since I've lived the grime part of mine I thought I'd ruminate about how I've gotten from there to here."

She came to photography through crop-dusting, the Air Force and Paris in World War II, and art history in New Mexico. "I was in this plane in World War II and intentionally spun it. It was way out of rig and wouldn't stop spinning, and I tried to get out and found the centrifugal force too strong to even move so I decided that if I were going to die, I would die trying and then did everything they had told us not to do with the controls and the plane came out of the spin just sort of tumbling around in the sky. And how I shook after I landed, and no one else even noticed the miracle of my being still here on earth."

I feel that her work and how she must be going about this work are a continuation of that spin-out.

"Living, in itself, doesn't have a value for you as an artist unless what you have thought and done — the fight and delight and the grin in and children and morning light and all the rest — ride in your insides and ferment and come together," she writes.

"I photograph people, most often older women, focusing on the tension between the iron determinant of age and the individual character of the subject. I try for images that get beneath the surface into that unchanging arena of the human psyche, formed in early life, which grows into maturity but does not relinquish its basic character throughout one's life. That deepest self, discernible only to one who is patient, watchful, and perhaps older oneself. The image I see is of youth betrayed by age, of spirit strong but

fragile with time. I want to show who the people in my pictures are, and how damned difficult it is as each of us in our time becomes them."

At the end, Noggle says "The nineteenth century romantic ideal of the individual as the source of creativity took as a central metaphor the Aeolian harp — a wind harp that creates its own music. Postmodernism avows that the individual artist can no longer be seen as a creator but merely as a participant in the intellectual rumination of the times. If that is true, perhaps seeing ourselves is no more than a game. But the idea that everything that can be done by the individual has already been done is nonsense."

To look straight into a face and find the pulse of what it is to be human, that is what fuels me, that is the sum of my mind and my longing. I am always aware of our unceasing engagement with time and space — our ultimate limitations — translated into life and death. How wonderful it is to have meaning in our work — to have a life work that sustains us as we sustain it by our willing labor, and every now and then a reward like getting to be here in your time and space and having a chance to communicate with you."

I hope someday to meet Anne Noggle. I'd like to talk with her and photograph her hands and face. I do not feel that Noggle will ever commit suicide.

In his book Walker Percy, on American Search, Robert Coles writes "So it is that the mind is awakened. We begin looking, if not searching. And it is like this: [Percy says] There is the 'I,' the consciousness which is confronted by the thing and which generates the symbol by which the conception is articulated. But there is also the 'you.' Symbolization is of its very essence an intersubjectivity. In other words, we don't only come to terms with the world by adapting to signals of various kinds... we also gain what Percy calls 'possession' of the world by using symbols, and the second kind of knowledge is existential because what is comprehended has become part of ourselves, is in us, does not require signals, however indirect or unobvious, but has been 'made' by us, exactly as a poem comes up with its symbols, using his words suggestively, so as to convey meaning. Percy believes such mental activity cannot be further reduced: it is what uniquely characterizes human beings — and it is what he calls a hermeneutic, a way of looking at and comprehending something, in this case the existential 'facts' of our daily lives."

LARRY FINK:
A QUESTION
OF ATTITUDE

Social Graces. Photographs by Larry Fink. Published by Aperture, Milerton, New York. \$25.

By Dave Crossley

Just for a little bit of overstatement, let's say that Larry Fink's photographs are so wonderful it seems almost ridiculous that anybody else should even be trying. In this book, he has combined two series, one the six-year "black tie" project of photographing wealthy people at elegant social affairs, the other the continuing project of photographing the working-class people of Martins Creek, Pennsylvania, where Fink lives.

Fink started making the black tie pictures with a decidedly bad attitude. "I began to photograph society benefits in New York, fueled by curiosity and my rage against the privileged class—its abuses, voluptuous folds, and unfulfilled lives. I wanted to illuminate and lose myself in the dark spectrum of glitter," he writes in the book. He describes a night-marish routine of forcing himself to go to these terrible affairs to see his "political enemies," their surfaces shining with desire, his run for the bar, and the ensuing madness as he is dragged around the room by his camera and flash. The pictures his camera made him take are so crisp and clear and rich in their tonality that his insistence he made them while fueled by drink seems hardly credible. But how else could he have melted into the outrage? All these hooded eyes, the grim glares, the nearly unconscious drunkenness amid the misplaced



At Sabatine's Eleventh Birthday Party, April, 1980. Larry Fink.

cummerbunds and starched shirts. To see the young women, so beautiful, so poised, and then look at the older ones and know about their sickness and decline and project that future for these sparkling young debts, well, a little drink is needed.

Not that the people of Martins Creek turn out to be pictures of health and spiritual well-being. We have a good deal of fat here, actually blubber flowing out to the edges of the frame. One is tempted to view this group of people the way Fink did, with lots of love and forgiveness and romanticizing of their simple but well-meaning lives. While he dislikes the rich, he keeps his distance from them. He never seems to know them, yet he admits he despises them. On the other hand, he gets to know

these Martins Creek folks very well, learns plenty that is loathsome about them, yet he won't get his dander up about them. He describes neighbor John Sabatine's stories as "a combination of heinous racism and pure fantasy." He says Sabatine will "frighten you, betray you, befriend you, and shake you up however he can." Sounds like a nice guy. Like a rich, corporate monster.

I was surprised at how much I disliked the people in the Martins Creek pictures, and at my ambivalence toward the people in the black tie pictures. Like Fink, I imagine that I dislike the latter in principle (for their smugness) and like the former in principle (for their soulfulness). But if the truth be known, Fink's affluent enemies, most of them anyway, are more



Tavern on the Green, New York City, October, 1976, by Larry Fink.

appealing than the beer- and spaghetti-stuffed folks of Martins Creek. It is a problem of civilization. I know these Martins Creek people. They're macho and without taste, they know few restraints, and if the older men told the younger men to go kill black people, they'd probably do it, and love it. The game that many of the socialites play is different, one of psychic warfare, attempting always to elevate oneself, particularly at the expense of others, a lesson taken again from the elders, who have discovered this astonishing secret to success. Curiously, among this group, many of the women look more dangerous than the men, who perhaps have simply learned to hide their ambitions behind the blank neutrality of the poker player.

Obviously, these are more sweeping, ridiculous overstatements. In-

nocence, or at least compassion, is evident in the faces of some players in both groups. In a picture labeled "Joseph Gasparetti's Baptism, Martins Creek, Pa., 1979" there is a boy who is so clearly destined to be a saint and to bring peace and order to his wretched village that one wonders whether they will soon be absolved and cured of their meanness. In the other group, I know at least three of the people, and have no reason to question their goodness, which suggests that goodness might also reside in the hearts of many of their colleagues. What is difficult to bear is the boiling up of my own resentments and fear, and allowing that bile to guide me in these hasty judgments against all of these people. One has to clear that away, and books like Larry Fink's surely help.

GEORGE TICE:
IS LINCOLN
RELEVANT?

Lincoln. Photographs by George Tice. Published by Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1984. \$37.95

By Paula Goldman

George Tice has undertaken a great search for the tangible evidence of the memory of Abraham Lincoln across America. Inspired by Carl Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln*, Tice found Lincoln to be "the ideal man, a model for all men, especially Americans." Whether Lincoln's ideal continues to function today becomes the subject of these photographs.

Two-thirds of the beautifully executed 8x10 view camera images present Mr. Lincoln's likeness as public monument. As a heroic figure in a public place, he is meant to be a reminder to society of greatness achieved through moral integrity. The statues vary greatly. Some are neo-classical, in the standard government monument style; others are naive. Some have been erected in memory of dead soldiers or individuals, but most seem to honor the memory of Lincoln himself ("with malice toward none").

The images are carefully and artfully composed. Tice makes conscious juxtapositions between the old elegance of the monuments and, in the urban areas, the surrounding decay. The statues are often dwarfed by large buildings and demeaned by litter. People are rarely present; the

atmosphere is desolate. These statues are anachronistic; is Lincoln an unsuitable symbol in 1984? Honest Abe may truly be forgotten, superseded by the urban sprawl. In only one situation, in a city park in Chicago, do humans use the statue more than do the birds. Lincoln seems comfortable with a child eating ice cream at his feet.

In Bunker Hill, Illinois, Lincoln is upstaged by a Shell Oil sign that is more recognizable than Lincoln himself. In Boston, he looks ridiculous emancipating a kneeling slave in between a 5-hour laundry and the House of Pizza. Photographed from behind, a weary, seated Lincoln covered with graffiti in Newark, New Jersey, gazes across the street toward a Burger King.

The remaining third of the photos show Lincoln's absorption into popular culture. (Lincoln Cinema, Lincoln Cats, Lincoln Douglas Savings & Loan, Lincoln Motel with Abe's Disco). One photo features a Lincoln Continental. In the entertaining foreword, Tice recalls finding a penny at the Lincoln Auto Center in Lincolnwood, Illinois. "Lincoln was everywhere."

Tice is enamored with Lincoln's heroic image, and his prevalence in the nation's iconography. He views the homages with affection and irony. But the question remains, does Lincoln's image represent anything to people today? Does Abe's Disco still conjure up the Emancipation Proclamation in people's minds? Or is Lincoln just such a likeable hero that America feels comfortable with him in all facets of daily life?

Charlestown, Illinois, 1983, by George Tice.





Untitled Film Still #35, 1979, by Cindy Sherman.

CINDY SHERMAN: DRESSING UP

Cindy Sherman. Published by Pantheon Books, New York, 1984 \$16.95

By Sharon Stewart

Cindy Sherman has come to the artworld a phenomenon unto herself. She has been deemed a photographer and a self-portraitist, labels she rejects although her body and a camera are her media, her mind's memories her messenger. It is from a self-avowed curiosity that she has to look in the mirror and not recognize her-

self. She has played dress-up since she was a young girl. Sometimes she would dress up in front of the mirror for three hours and then just disassemble the guise, but sometimes she would take her new self to a party. We the readers have been invited to quite a party of 89 personae in this book.

The first presented are her black and white *Untitled Film Stills*, many of which I first viewed in their mural form at Houston's Contemporary Arts Museum in 1979. Their hugeness drew me in, making me feel part of the scene. Understandably some of that sensation is lost in the smaller book reproductions, but I still have fun being with her stereo-

typical 1950s females: Motel Molly, Seashore Sonia, City Cathy, Vacationing Velma, Housewife Helen. Then there are those rather situationless women who haunt and perplex me by their blurred obscurity or their lack of perceptible locale. There is an introspection that we understand to be inherent in the nature of this type of work, but it seems so much more insistent in these particular pieces. It is insightful to remember that up to this point these photographs were taken by Cindy's friends and in some cases, her father.

With a turn to color in the 1980 *Untitled* series several significant changes came about. In her studio Cindy began to photograph herself in front of rear screen projected scenes. She brought her imaginary world as close as possible, back home so to speak. However, these two elements did not jibe well and she abandoned this mode marking the beginning of the dissipation of her situational context.

Next in 1981 she made the *Horizontals*, a series initially commissioned by *Artforum* magazine, although the project was never published there. Still present is the 1950s styled woman, but she is more a girl devastated and scared. The camera angle is more acute, the lighting more harsh, and the expressions more forlorn. There is a kind of destitute destiny for these characters, many of whom have literally hit the floor.

Now Sherman had become a tremendous hit in the art world. Everyone wanted to know just who this Cindy Sherman really, really is. Cindy, tell us. Perhaps the closest thing she offers are these 1982 *Untitled* pictures of just Cindy looking straight at us wearing the classical red draped cloth, no makeup, no wigs, no props. There. All done. And it's back to the matter at hand, dressing up.

These final *Untitled* images play to very little middle ground. Cindy has gone wild with the garish



Untitled #118, 1983, by Cindy Sherman.

makeup and funky lighting, using gels to cast mood hues. Here she is baring the polarities of life as well as the current androgyny. Either the characters are happy and mischievous or there is a devastated weariness about them.

Cindy Sherman has commented that she has drawn her characters from old European films, fashion photography, and that ubiquitous baby sitter, the TV. All these are hype media, handing us hyper-reality that is in actuality nonreality. We look at these images daily as a relief from our daily images. There are those who live their lives through these provided images; checking their status vis a vis their latest acquisitions and consumptions. And yes, we do create our

own reality and there are multifarious means for doing such. Truly living life, seeing the balance of the world, demands a rare perception that comes to those who have it not by miracle or magic, but by continuous probing and intense introspection.

Cindy Sherman has spent her twenties looking inside and outside herself and she has led many people along with her. She looks at herself, we look at her. And we have seen ourselves more than once in her over three hundred selves. She has evolved as these selves by spending her time alone, because of the ultimate control it brings. The irony of this state of solitude is that from it a magnificent vision has been created.

FREDERICK SOMMER: CLARITY OF THOUGHT

Sommer: Words and Images. Published by the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona. Two volumes in one slipcover.

By April Rapier

The set of art and writings by Frederick Sommer is the first book to be published by the Center for Creative Photography, and is the prototype of a concept devoted to "an artist's integral participation in the content and design" (quoting CCP director James Eneart's preface). The volume entitled *Sommer: Images* is a comprehensive retrospective of a lifetime of searching through the nature of creativity in a manner as intellectual as visual. The volume entitled *Sommer: Words* condenses years of that process, so dear and imperative to Sommer's philosophy, of verbalizing imagery.

He is not unique in this, as discussing one's art has become an absolute in most circles; it is inexcusable to Sommer, however, to avoid or to be unable to honestly and completely under-

stand and convey the resulting insights. This premise assumes an enormous and absolute commitment, easily accessible in the photographs. The writings are

extremely personal, at times poetically structured ramblings, and — because of this — mostly unintelligible or nonsensical. Yet, in conjunction with the photo-

graphs, glimpses of ideas strike home with familiarity. It is not easy reading, however. As an educator, his dogmatism is benevolent. His writings make it

clear that definitions are comfortably unrestricted. The pictures are an altogether different matter. The relentlessness with which he pursued his sensibilities doesn't seem to be well represented in this collection. The groupings (for example, the *Cut Paper* series) are a bit repetitive. In accordance with the book's concept, Sommer selected the representative images, but the selection as a whole seems circular rather than linear, a bit exclusive of some logical discoveries and steps. It all fits together perfectly, perhaps too perfectly.

Intellect and intent aside, the photographs are magnificent. They have the force of being understood as they were created, and project a cohesiveness that cannot escape notice. The images, made from 1939-1981, do not try to exclude the trends that formed his passage through the art world. Many of the photographs are identifiable as belonging to a collective consciousness of the formative years of photography as art. The objective notion that sets them apart lies in their undisguised tribute to clarity of thought; they are vulnerable and triumphant, their beauty unapologetic.

Circumnavigation of the Blood, 1950, by Frederick Sommer.



POST WOLCOTT: NEW INSIGHTS

Marion Post Wolcott: FSA Photographs. Introduction by Sally Stein. Published by *The Friends of Photography*, Carmel, California. \$16

By Gay Block

The *Friends of Photography* has published the first monograph of important Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographer, Marion Post Wolcott. It contains 33 black and white plates, a fine introductory essay by Sally Stein, and a chronology of Post Wolcott's life and work.

The Stein essay accomplishes just what an introduction should: it deciphers certain of the photographs, clarifying all the possible symbols to support the premise of Post Wolcott's strength and uniqueness. This makes for exciting eye-opening reading. Stein shows the ways in which Post Wolcott dealt with the sociological and political themes of her time in a very specific way... she still appears to be an anomalous member of the FSA, one whose distinctive interests constitute an unsentimental provocative departure from the dominant themes of FSA photography. These themes include the "custo-

many myths of American democracy: the concept of the integrity of the individual; the concept of responsible leadership; the belief in self-government; the concept of individual liberty and of opportunity." However, she continues, Marion Post Wolcott's work embodies a "recurrent concern with such difficult and persistently divisive issues as class and race." The text explains and the pictures prove that Post Wolcott was concerned with drawing human issues as they existed and did not try to give hope, as did some FSA photographers. Stein illustrates this with FSA project director Ray Stryker's statement about Russell Lee: "I always felt Russell was saying, 'Now here is a fellow who is having a hard time, but with a little help he's going to be alright.' And that's what gave me courage."

From Stein's essay, and from excerpts of letters between Post Wolcott and Stryker, we can infer a rebelliousness in Post Wolcott, "both in her manner and in her photography, which Stryker must have found unnerving." Stein reports that Post Wolcott did not experience the same freedom as the other photographers on the FSA team, the freedom she needed to follow her instincts with sensitive subject matter.

However, the reason that I am most grateful to the *Friends of*



Negro entering movie theater by outside entrance to upstairs colored section, Belzoni, Mississippi, 1939, by Marion Post Wolcott.

Photography for publishing this book is that it includes many important images heretofore buried in FSA files. Stein concludes, "...the most distinctive photographs of Post Wolcott challenge

us far more than many of the typical FSA images.... They prompt us to consider what other avenues might have been pursued by a 1930s documentary project. No less importantly, they

provide us with succinct, though fragmentary, insights regarding some of the issues that were not directly addressed by the New Deal, and that remain in large measure unresolved today."

BRITISH PRIMITIVES: PUREST AND BEST

The Golden Age of British Photography, 1839-1900. Edited and with an introduction by Mark Haworth-Booth. Published by Aperture, Milerton, NY. \$40.00

by Muffy McLanahan

It is a little bit of magic realized of natural magic. You make the powers of nature work for you, and no wonder that your work is well and quickly done.

—William Henry Fox Talbot, 1839, the year he invented his "photogenic drawings".

The Golden Age of British Photography is a large, beautifully printed book which is the result of an exhibition organized by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the Alfred Steglitz Center, The Philadelphia Museum of Art.

A brief biography introduces each photographer, six British photographic authorities contribute essays on specific artists, and throughout there is a lively historical narrative describing the period. The occasional repetitions cause no annoyance and merely serve to restate a point or fact. Of the 209 photographs reproduced, 186 are trinitones and the rest are duotones. The calotypes possess strong brown tones, the albumen prints are rich in detail, and one is able to sense the lustrous quality of the platinum prints.

As the introduction to the book points out, "In photography, as in other fields, the primitives, who had little guidance except their own promptings of what might be realized, remain among the purest and the best." And if their photographs are not enough to draw the reader into the text, the stage-setting account of collector Chauncy Hare Townsend's life, portrayed in many of Charles

Dickens characters, will surely do the trick.

While discussing the various methods used by the early photographers, the authors point out the social and economic factors that influenced the photographers' work. At the time of photography's invention (1839) there was a critical turning point in the Industrial Revolution in Britain: the High Victorian age of materialism gave rise to modern capitalism, while at the same time, the changing class structure saw experimentation in liberalism and democratization. Learning became fashionable. Territorial gains offered exciting exploration. These early photographers saw it all through their lenses. Like Roger Fenton, many worked hard to advance this "scientific medium" and struggled to have it recog-

nized as art.

A number of the great photographers, such as William Henry Fox Talbot, Roger Fenton, and Frederick Evans, began and ended their careers in other fields, but their contributions to the photographic world were invaluable.

The longest essay in the book is on Peter Henry Emerson whose electric and often impulsive writings accompanied so much of his insightful photography. He lectured on his soft-focus principal calling the sharp-focus style "an impersonal mathematical plotting by the lens of objects before it." This he later repudiated when he became disenchanted with photography.

The Golden Age of British Photography is a scholarly, well-researched capsule history of the period from 1839 to 1900, which manages to retain a light, artful

touch. There is no pseudo-intellectual, weighty dialogue contrived to confound the reader. There is a genuine and successful attempt to entertain as well as educate. Its greatest success, however, is the photographic collection gathered from the Victoria and Albert, London; The Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Royal Archives, Windsor Castle; the Royal Photographic Society, Bath; the Science Museum, London; (the first photographs were exhibited with machines); and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.

After traveling to the Victoria and Albert and The Philadelphia Museum, the exhibition will appear at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (May 18-August 4, 1985); the Minneapolis Institute of Arts; The Pierpont Morgan Library; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

HEALTH HAZARDS: A NEW REFERENCE

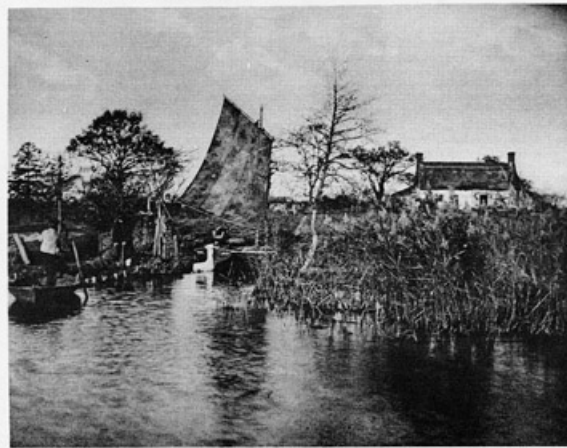
Overexposure: Health Hazards in Photography. By Susan Shaw. Published by *The Friends of Photography*, Carmel, California. \$24.95 hardcover. \$14.95 softcover.

By Barry Morrison

Overexposure: Health Hazards in Photography is a book everyone doing darkroom work should know about. It reveals possible dangers that we all expose ourselves to every time we utilize the photographic chemicals available today. Perhaps you have a slight headache or feel some difficulty breathing after a session in the darkroom. You may discover that inadequate ventilation is giving you those headaches or sinus problems you thought were caused by pollen. This book goes into detail about symptoms and possible health risks as a result of exposure to photographic chemicals, be they black and white, color, or non-silver processes such as platinum and palladium printing. There are lists of different kinds of chemicals used in photography and possible hazards as well as precautions about using them.

The author of this book, Susan Shaw, has a Master of Fine Arts degree and a Master's Degree in Public Health, Environmental Sciences and Nutrition, both from Columbia University. She is presently an environmental health and nutrition consultant in private practice in New York. Shaw became interested in art hazards when she discovered that many of her patients were artists who had developed health problems due to exposure to some chemicals that they were using. The purpose of this book is not to scare anyone about working in the darkroom, but to make one aware of the potential hazards existing. The book is very comprehensive and could be considered a complete reference work.

A Broadmont's Cottage, 1886, by Peter Henry Emerson.



COMMENTARY IN AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Observations: Essays on Documentary Photography, edited by David Featherstone, Untitled 35. Published by the Friends of Photography, 1984. \$12 paperback.

By David Portz

Observations is the thirty-fifth among the Untitled series, a group of books published by the Friends of Photography and distributed to its members at the rate of four a year. The series has included many monographs and picture-laden commentary, and only rarely volumes that are primarily text, such as this one. Observations is a collection of nine essays on the development of American documentary photography, written by noted art historians and critics. While three of these essays deal with theoretical matters, the majority are devoted to observations on photographers who have shaped documentary photography as a tool for social change and as an art. Photographers treated include Eugene Atget, Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Paul Strand, Margaret Bourke-White, Helen Levitt, W. Eugene Smith, Robert Frank and Larry Burrows. The book is an extremely partial survey of documentary photography up to the time of Burrows's death in the Vietnam war.

Beaumont Newhall's essay, placed first in the book, suggests that documentary photography is distinguished from other photography because it is concerned with the human condition and because it provides commentary, if not in the picture itself, then through accompanying text. Mr. Newhall's attribution of humanistic intentions to documentaries is juxtaposed with the second essay, by Bill Jay. Mr. Jay, after reading over 100 novels containing photographers as characters, seeks to confirm, à la Susan Sontag, that photography is popularly conceived as an "aggressive/sexual act." After proving this to his own satisfaction, Mr. Jay closes his essay by suggesting, with quoted authority, that in Sontag's creation of any work of art is closely similar to the commission of a violent crime. Then he wonders whether the act of photography is especially

violent.

Maria Morris Hamburg describes Atget as everything to everybody: a surrealist for the surrealists, a fine art man for the aesthetes and for Walker Evans, the photographer who foretold the documentary uses of photography. Ms. Hamburg finds that Evans and his contemporaries emulated Atget not only for his "clinical," straightforward style, but for his "principled stance" of "uncontested honesty" toward the subjects he photographed — a moralistic intention to set the world down right.

Anne W. Tucker follows with a well-tailored discussion of four depression-era photographers and the way they selected and presented their photographs to function as sociopolitical facts. Dorothea Lange is credited by Ms. Tucker with being most faithful to the goal of effecting social change. Lange was careful to collaborate with a social scientist and provide factual comment with her photographs. Paul Strand, while having similar intentions, allowed himself to be distracted from his social message by attention to form, beauty and craftsmanship. Strand used "the beauty of the print, as much as if not more than emotional engagement with the subject. . . . [to make] the viewer acknowledge its importance." Ms. Tucker places Walker Evans, who never strove to be a social protest artist, as the most extreme among the four in giving priority to art over politics. The formal order and "ironic clarity" which characterized Evans's photos, however, gave them "that basic directness and bleakness echoing perfectly the mood of the time."

At another extreme among these documentarians, Ms. Tucker places Margaret Bourke-White, who dramatized and rearranged the subjects of her photos for magazine viewing. Her agenda for dramatic and commercially viable photographs led her to eliminate competing and contradictory facts from her pictures, creating instead easily read appeals to her viewers' emotions. Bourke-White also monkeyed with captions and quotes, and hid behind the credence of more respected documentarians of her time.

Alan Trachtenberg reexamines the photographs in Walker Evans's book, *American Photographs*, in order to determine what conclusions America is contained there. Following the book's publication in 1938 — and according to Mr. Trachtenberg, even to the present — observers have



Crippled Vietnamese Boy, 1971, by Larry Burrows.

considered the photographs an inventory of American reality circa 1930s. Mr. Trachtenberg concludes from his examination of the first five photographs of the book that Evans reinvented in America with a particular history and culture represented by emblems such as autos, racism, patriotism, and war. Evans consciously showed the craft of documentary photography being used to gather and save the constituent parts of a fictive nation.

The most stimulating essays are those, like the next three by Kozloff, Johnson, and Johnstone, which chart careers and discuss the qualities of specific works. Max Kozloff considers Helen Levitt's *A Way of Seeing* to be exemplary in the tradition of street photography. The book contains pictures taken in New York City ethnic neighborhoods during the heat of summer, when people gathered outside. The recurrent depiction of people touching enabled Ms. Levitt to shape from disparate street events

a book of resonating kinships. Kozloff praises Levitt's use of spaces in the photograph to "carry an empathetic charge"; for example, a picture of children playing communicates their total absorption in the game. Though the pictures have a mid-1940s chronology, their "emotional time-zone" is capable of extending even to the present day. Among the achievements of the book as a documentary work, it gathered external gestures that attached human value to an interior life, the psychological and emotional interrelationships of people.

William S. Johnson treats two drivers of the 1950s, W. Eugene Smith and Robert Frank, who each struck off from the homogenized reality of picture magazines to attempt to articulate a more realistic personal vision. Robert Frank completed his attempt with the book *The Americans*, which showed the underside of American institutions and society and yet projected his subjects' resistance.

endurance, and faith. Eugene Smith, by contrast, aspired to deliver a documentary work on Pittsburgh that would capture all the city's aspects and effect a revolution in photojournalistic realism. Smith came to regard himself as a failure; his work was never published in its entirety nor did it achieve perfection in his eyes. Nevertheless Johnson credits both Frank and Smith with opening the way for other photojournalists to commit themselves to projects of major scope.

Larry Burrows, the last photographer specifically discussed in *Observations*, is praised by Mark Johnstone for his commitment to portraying the Vietnamese people. Many of his photographs about their occupations and customs were never seen in life or other magazines in which Burrows' war photographs appeared. Johnstone analyzes Burrows' use of color photographs and techniques of composition to awaken conscience in his viewers, by subtly disturbing their aesthetic sensibilities. By focusing on individuals affected by the war, Burrows also contributed to the evolution of documentary techniques.

Estelle Jussim, relying greatly on the prior work of Jacques Ellul, calls "pre-propaganda" that photographic information which merely forms a pool of data in the mind. The pre-propaganda lurks in the conscious and subconscious mind of its recipient, confirming or contradicting that person's preconceptions. To Jussim, propaganda is that information which produces action by the recipient. The final concluding photograph which relies so heavily on the correlating pre-propaganda received before: Jussim illustrates this notion by crediting news photographs for the gradual adjustment of American attitudes toward the Vietnam War from the idealistic support of democracy and freedom to a horror at the human costs. She consoles the documentarian who only provides pre-propaganda, because it is important too.

There were not too many surprises found in these essays, but many are excellent reading which stimulate reexamination of documentary work. I would note the incredible strength retained by Walker Evans's circa 1938 work. There were not too many surprises found in these essays, but many are excellent reading which stimulate reexamination of documentary work. I would note the incredible strength retained by Walker Evans's circa 1938 work. There were not too many surprises found in these essays, but many are excellent reading which stimulate reexamination of documentary work. I would note the incredible strength retained by Walker Evans's circa 1938 work.

CALIFORNIA, CALIFORNIA, CALIFORNIA

California Crazy: Roadside Vernacular Architecture. By Jim Heimann and Rip George. Published by Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1984. Paperback, \$8.95

Outrageous L.A. Photographs by Robert Landau. Text by Robert Landau and John Ashdough. Published by Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1984. Paperback, \$12.95

California From The Air: The Golden Coast. Photographs by Baron Wolman. Published by Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1984. Paperback, \$12.95

By David Portz

Some books by a glance in the bookstore get all the attention they deserve. Chronicle Books of

San Francisco seems to make a specialty of these books that ride the long wave of California jingoism. *California Crazy*, for example, collects photos of those roadside stands once endemic to the West Coast but now mostly gone: buildings shaped like pumpkins, for instance, or hot dogs, or ice cream cones, coffee pots, or airplanes. Another section of the book gathers photos of the buildings that utilized non-European, traditional motifs, such as the Mayan Theatre or Grauman's Egyptian. The introduction fails to clearly define the term for the style of these relics, Programmatic Architecture, but succeeds in relating their history, their dispute among the high art crowd, and their revival under the advocacy of architect Robert Venturi. For a chapter in U.S. architectural history, or perhaps a chapter and its sequel, this book is worth a glance.

If looking at *California Crazy* is equivalent to looking at twenty minutes of MTV, then *Outrageous*

L.A. is equivalent to standing in line ten minutes to see a Brooke Shields film. Outrageous asserts that Los Angeles are voluntarily odd, and while that may be true,

the pictures don't prove it. There is nothing outrageous about palm trees, brightly painted walls, or night shots of neon signs. The presentation relies heavily on

hackneyed captions, and the photos provide new ammo to reactionaries still growing over the mindless seductions of color. Better books within the class of *Crazy* and *Outrageous* are why you aren't a trifle more eccentric. "Wouldn't you be less stiff and more fun if instead of stodgy values like beauty or truth, you felt the human rhythms of the sensational present?" *California From The Air* asks no such questions: only "Why don't you own a plane?" Its aerial photographs show natural coastal features, plus the impact of man: refineries and shipyards, reformed communities and beachside condos, amusement parks, and surfer havens. Interviews further sweeten the book — nineteen persons offer coast-related comment — including an oceanographer, lighthouse keeper, coast guard officer, and a photographer — Ansel Adams. There is a love of the land and the sea communicated through this book — but it is still only bookstore viewing. Buy a photographic classic instead.

Zep Diner, by Delmar Watson.



**TODD WEBB:
ON O'KEEFE**

Georgia O'Keeffe: The Artist's Landscape. Photographs by Todd Webb. Published by Iwalete Press, 1984.

By April Rapier

Although the official title of Todd Webb's *Georgia O'Keeffe: The Artist's Landscape* is descriptive of what lies within, the reader is greeted, upon removing this handsomely bound book from its slipcase, by "O'Keeffe" only, in large black letters on white cloth. This strikes me as a very familiar introduction, and I am immediately alerted to the possibility that liberties are being taken. In fact, Webb and O'Keeffe are old friends, and, in Webb's words, the book is a collection of "snapshots of a friend and her surroundings . . . she encouraged it." This is a provocative way to initiate a voyage into Ms. O'Keeffe's habitat, her sanctum. What intention prompted such a promising and potentially enormous undertaking? There simply is no indication of closeness in the images, although the bibliography (part of a vast listing, in large typeface, of a selected resume — a pretentiously laid-out addendum) certainly hints at it.

Sadly, the collection has a solemn, after-the-fact feeling to it, in part because only six of the images were made after 1969. The gaps betray an homage without the intimacy of continuity. It is the Southwest landscape — Webb's "revelation about the space, color, and simplicity" — that dominates the pages. In a recent interview on National Public Radio, he talked about the years it took to be able to handle the harsh light, so different from that in the East; yet even that critical element is down-



O'Keeffe in Juan Hamilton's Studio, Baranco, N.M., 1981, by Todd Webb

played disadvantageously. The reproductions are not top-notch; that, however, isn't excuse the overall dullness of the pictures. Their empty dullness seems to portend age and frailty. Ms. O'Keeffe never saw the Southwest as barren — her interpretations were filled with color and life. Although Webb carefully documented her terrain, her haunts, a lifetime's worth of paintings, her presence is not clearly felt. The ubiquitous skulls and bones, slashes of light, clean lines referred to do not conjure up her strength. It is an artist's rendering.

It is through the images of her living and studio spaces that the most precious and valuable information is imparted: those places

where she has spent time have absorbed a great deal of her energy and character, and thus have the clearest voice. The details of her life are presented as posed tableau, and this does justice to the care with which she arranges her physical world. One senses the sparseness, but does not translate it as meager. Many of the pictures seem not unlike what I would imagine her own sketchbooks to be filled with. Although she has been obsessively photographed over a lifetime, she remains enigmatic, a bit more sculptural than lifelike.

Ms. O'Keeffe's participation strikes one as the occasional, good-natured indulging of an old friend, a distant friend. As she ages, one is tempted

to be sentimental, but her stance discourages this, as do her surroundings. As Webb photographs her movement through the desert, the unforgiving terrain seems to acknowledge her passage. Yet, she is always walking across or away from the film plane — she doesn't seem aware of Webb. The might of communication is omitted. The pictures that approach intimacy seem only invasive, or at worst, apologetic. Given the opening statement in her book of paintings entitled *Georgia O'Keeffe*, ("Where I was born and where and how I have lived is unimportant. It is what I have done with where I have been that should be of interest."), the difficulties may not be entirely the photographer's fault. The most powerful image in the book, plate 40, is also the most subtle, and least intentionally dramatic: a glimpse of her admiration for Juan Hamilton's sculpture, expressively touched by a hand that appreciates com-

pletely. (It is also Webb's favorite.) She is placed in front of a picture window, and the vista easily transforms into a painting in the viewer's imagination.

It is to Webb's credit that the portraits in no way emulate Steiglitz's long study of Ms. O'Keeffe. On few occasions since that era has she chosen to present herself to the camera. Fleeting passes cannot help but show her magnificence and strength of will. But the feeling that she is determined not to give herself to the photographs results in their reduction to furtive glimpses; there is a stubbornness to the pictures that is circular and curiously self-fulfilling. There is valor in Webb's attempt, and fatigue in Ms. O'Keeffe's patient resistance. The result is representational, neutral. However, any record of her life is of absolute value. Her self-containment compels; unwillingly, our curiosity is satisfied.

**GEORGE FORSS:
STREET PEDDLER**

New York/New York: Masterworks of a Street Peddler. Photographs by George Forss. Presented by David Douglas Duncan. Published by McGraw-Hill, New York, 1975.

By Debra Rueb

New York/New York is a book of black and white photographs made by George Forss, whom David Douglas Duncan discovered selling prints one day on the sidewalks of Manhattan. Awestruck by the masterful images he saw of New York City, Duncan spent four years collecting and arranging the photographs and writing the text for this book.

George Forss is a simple and

poor man who taught himself photography with some instruction from his invalid mother, whom he lives with and cares for. Forss prints at night and by day sells his photographs on the sidewalk for \$5 to \$11 for mounted prints. Forss' work of New York City is compared by Duncan to Ansel Adams' work in Yosemite. Forss has attained a mastery of his craft; he has juxtaposed form and content, line and light to achieve a vision of New York that transcends all others. The photographs show the experience of the city in the buildings, streets, and rivers. Through double exposure he creates a feel of the hustle of the city and the people, though he never focuses on photographing people.

This book is a true Cinderella story of a modest man's discovery and success in bringing his vision to the eyes of millions.

**DAVID HOCKNEY:
A CHALLENGE**

Camera Work. Photographs by David Hockney. Introduction by Lawrence Weschler. Published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1984.

By Michael Thomas

Thus speaks our subject-author, the artist and born-again photographer:

"Today people don't draw that much. They use the camera. My point is, that they're not truly, perhaps, expressing what it was they were looking at . . . to share the experience, to make it vivid to someone else." (My italics)

It seems an endless, cyclical argument to make in the way of discussing artistic expression by comparing artist to photographer. Yet David Hockney has for that very reason discovered, or should I say, re-discovered, the artistic significance of photography as a valid art form.

Hockney began using photographs as a means to study layouts for paintings in 1972. Since then he has produced over 120 volumes of studies, and recorded countless photographic works. Yet throughout such an intensive and ongoing process, Hockney has seemed to uncover more than just a wonderful photographic collection of personal worth. He has in fact brought the photographer a challenge worth considering. It was impossible for Hockney to merely shoot one

photograph of a particular subject. He felt untrue to his intentions in that subjects would become less real than his memory to paint them would require. Perspectives seemed incorrect and the artistic vision of reality was thus incomplete. Hockney's explanations seemed to point to a list of modern photographic concerns facing both aesthetic and technical issues, one of which is that the time experienced through the lens during conception never equaled the same time within the final print. The more time spent to make the photograph the more time it would express.

Hockney's final works are photographs of different views combined to make one composition that comes as close to the ideas within his paintings as possible. In some instances as many as 187 separate photos are combined to produce one work. The result of such an artistic emotion not only brings the viewer closer to the actual subject or event through a forced examination, but provides insight with an actual view into the artist's personal life as well. I feel confident in saying that, if nothing else, the plates of photographs within this book clearly speak for themselves. Not only is the book a challenge to a new way of seeing within this medium, but a challenge to include the viewer as a participant within the final step of an artistic process.

Clearly, after reading the text one also feels an unfinished quality to Hockney's ongoing fervor. The

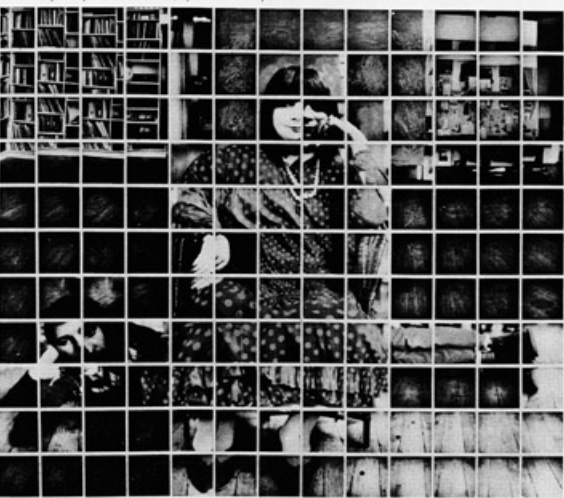
final plate of the book, #177, reinforces that idea by presenting both drawing and photograph together within one composition. Hopefully this is a clue to future work.

Following the final plate is a full

two-page spread of color negatives. In an almost personal way Hockney seems to include these in order to reinforce the idea that his photography is primarily used as a tool. Yet I would highly recommend the

examination of each plate along with careful consideration of the text to anyone concerned about the future of modern photography.

Ann and Byron Upton, London, 1982, by David Hockney



BRIEFLY NOTED

Unknown Territory. Photographs by Roy K. Metzker. By Anne Wilkes Tucker. Published by Aperture/The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. \$25 hard cover, \$15.95 soft cover.

Looking at Metzker's life work is ample proof of his influence. Spending much time with this book (or the retrospective exhibition it accompanies) is bound to reveal how many photographers have worked in the Metzker style. Metzker is a meticulous worker who has done little to toot his own horn. Anne Tucker has done him and the field a great service by organizing and presenting this work of twenty-five years.

What Metzker has to say in his "Notations" should prove to be an inspiration to many confused photographers. He is a man for whom photography is the same thing as life.

(A review of this book and the exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston will appear in the Spring issue of SPOT.)

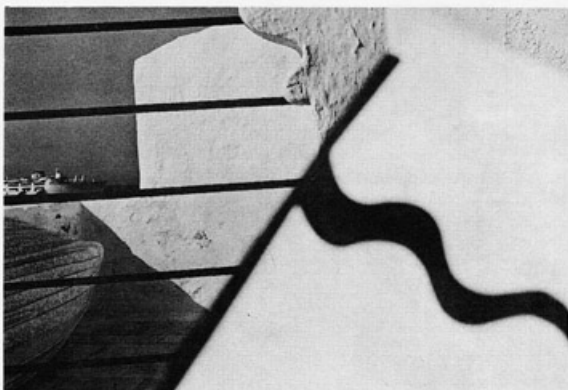
Irving Penn. By John Szarkowski. Published by The Museum of Modern Art and distributed by The New York Graphic Society/Little, Brown and Company. \$60 hard cover.

There's a little scope to this book, published in conjunction with Penn's retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. One flounders around looking for succession to Steiglitz, Stiechen, Strand, and Weston, and more often than not the suggestion is made that Penn is one. Or might be if Penn were not so reticent. Szarkowski says, "Penn's private, stubborn, artistic intuitions have revised our sense of the world's content. His essential work is Spartan in its rigor, in its devotion to the sober elegance of clarity, in the high demands that it makes of us regarding pose, grace, costume, style, and the definition of our selves." In any event, Penn has done it all.

Eleanor. Photographs by Harry Callahan. Edited and designed by Anne Kennedy and Nicholas Calway. Essay by James Alinder. Published by the Friends of Photography, Carmel, California, and Calway Editions, New York.

In this collection of the many pictures Harry Callahan has made of his wife, Eleanor, it's clear how much he was able to draw inspiration from her. Over a period of

Four Dusek Brothers. New York, 1948, by Irving Penn.



Pictus Interruptus. Mykonos, Greece, 1979, by Roy Metzker

years, he made many successful images with Eleanor as centerpiece. It's interesting that the pictures begin to lose their personality when he includes in them their daughter, Barbara, and that Eleanor herself actually begins to lose her solidity after Barbara appears.

Beyond a Portrait. Photographs by Dorothy Norman and Alfred Stieglitz. Introduction by Mark Holborn. Published by Aperture, Milerton, N.Y. Hard cover \$20.

Of the forty photographs in this book, twenty-three are not portraits, which must account for the title. Everything's in here, helter skelter: "An American Place," Stieglitz's pictures from the window, the clouds, thirteen pictures of Ms. Norman, one of John Marin, another of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, moonflowers, and so on. There's much mysticism. In the introduction, Mark Holborn says of Ms. Norman, "It was Coomaraswamy who introduced her to the concept of the self perforce, such as the Chinese 'pi,' the jade disc in the center of which is a pierced circle. When pointed towards the heavens the vision focussed through the center drew the view to the point of light, so bridging heaven and earth." The Norman and Stieglitz images are interspersed without credits (except in a list at the back of the book) as if to say Ms. Norman was as one with Mr. Stieglitz. Holborn says, "the 'I' and 'you' of the relationship dissolved until she became his other self and the duality found its resolution." That must have been pretty unsettling.

Nicholas Nixon. Photographs from One Year. Introduction by Robert Adams. Published by Aperture, Milerton, N.Y. \$16

Nicholas Nixon's photographs certainly get started the right way: they are so smooth and appealing, one feels required



Race Street, Cincinnati, 1982, by Nicholas Nixon.

to spend time with them, and is fairly rewarded. Although he enjoys gathering groups of people together, usually on porches, there are no villains among his hundreds of characters, as Robert Adams points out. The photographs are taken with an 8x10 camera, which makes all the more remarkable the wonderful ease with which Nixon's subjects carry themselves. Nixon, like Larry Fink, explores precious veins.

Paper and Light. The Calotype in France and Great Britain, 1839-1870. By Richard R. Brettell, with Ray Buckton, Nancy Keeler, and Sydney Mallett Kilgore. Published by David R. Godine, Boston, in association with The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Art Institute of Chicago. \$35.

Two of many astonishments: to see across 131 years a "Fallen Horse on the île de la Cité" and to learn that, while Henry Fox Talbot made his first photograph in 1835 on a sheet of paper, with light appearing as dark and vice versa, it took him until 1840 to make the conceptual leap that the paper "negative" could be used to make a paper "positive." This was born the calotype and photography.

Kinsey Photographer. Photographs by Dorius Kinsey. By Dave Bohn and Rodolph Petschek. Published in three volumes by Chronicle Books, San Francisco.

This Kinsey fellow certainly is fortunate to have such a record of his work. The latest volume in this

edged as existing, as are many long deceased other luminaries, such as Lewis Carroll.

Reliquaries. Photographs by Steven Arnold. Published by Twentrees Press, Pasadena, California. \$20, soft cover.

Death and Resurrection, Skeletons Taking Tea and Tart, and so forth. A little strange drifting in the studio. Very theatrical.

Urban Notions. Photographs by Stephen Marc. Published by Ataxia.

Hard to figure. Urban street scenes, shadows, blurred figures. A sense of mystery attempts to be communicated.

Las Vegas, New Mexico: A Portrait. Photographs by Alex Traube with a text by E.A. Mares. The University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.

Thank God a book of sepia-toned Widelux photographs of Las Vegas, New Mexico, now exists.

Eye on America. Photographs by Michael Ruetz, with an introduction by William Least Heat Moon. Published by The New York Graphic Society/Little, Brown and Company. Boston. \$50.

So much of our time is being recorded in photographs and here is a lot more. There are eighty-five large color illustrations including seven three-page panoramic fold-outs. The introduction relentlessly refers to Robert Frank's *The Americans*, with which this book shares almost nothing. Still, they're pretty pictures. The book also incorporates the usual irritating convention of putting the captions all together on pages far from the photographs. Why is that?

Landscape Photography: The Art and Techniques of Eight Modern Masters. Amphoto. \$27.50.

Boy, these guys have all the filters figured out, and Franco Fontana has everything figured out. Luscious stuff, good enough for a Cokin catalog.

The Evolution of the Japanese Camera. Published by the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House.

There have been a great many Japanese cameras, haven't there? A lot of them are in here, including one that looks like a Coca Cola can. If you need to know about Japanese cameras, this appears to be the book for you.

Alternates. Photographs by Kazumi Kurigami. Published by Rizzoli. New York. \$17.50 soft cover.

Millions of strange, perhaps erotic, pictures taken to fulfill advertising needs. Advertising/fashion photographers should look at this.

— DC

The Building of the Panama Canal in Historic Photographs. By Ulrich Keller. Published by Dover Publications, Inc., New York. \$8.95 soft cover.

This is just terrific stuff. If you like this kind of stuff. Pure information, mind-boggling revelations about how things got done.

The International Center of Photography Encyclopedia of Photography. William L. Broecker, editor; Cornell Capa, editorial director. A Pound Press book, Crown Publishers, Inc., New York. \$50.

Six hundred and seventy-two pages. Thirteen hundred entries. Four hundred thousand words. The ICP has come a long way. Everything and everybody from Abbe, Ernst to Zworykin, Vladimir Kosma. In an appendix, many contemporary photographers are acknowl-

SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST ART

Books referred to in this discussion
of photography and social change:

On Photography. By Susan Sontag.
Published by Farrar, Straus and
Grosz, New York, 1977.

Photography and Reform: Lewis
Hine and the National Child Labor
Committee. Verna Rosever
Curtis and Stanley Malachuk. Pub-
lished by the Milwaukee Art Mu-
seum, 1984.

Thinking Photography. Edited by
Victor Burgin. Published by Mac-
millan Press Ltd, London, 1982.
soft cover.

The Concerned Photographer.
Edited by Cornell Capa. Grossman
Publishers, New York, 1968.

Nicaragua. By Susan Meselas.
Published by Bantam Books, New
York, 1981. \$11.95

Ways of Seeing. Based on the BBC
television series with John Berger.
published by the British Broad-
casting Corporation and Penguin
Books, 1972.

The Un/Necessary Image. Edited
by Peter D'Agostino and Antonio
Muniz. Published by the MIT Com-
mittee on the Visual Arts. Tanam Press,
New York, 1982. \$8.95 soft cover.

Art & Ideology. The catalogue of
an exhibition. Published by The
New Museum of Contemporary
Art, New York, 1984. soft cover.

Photography: Current Perspectives.
Edited by Jerome Liebling. The
Massachusetts Review, 1978.

By Paul Hester

"A capitalist society requires a
culture based on images. It needs
to furnish vast amounts of enter-
tainment in order to stimulate buy-
ing and anesthetize the injuries of
class, race, and sex. And it needs
to gather unlimited amounts of
information, the better to exploit
natural resources, increase produc-
tivity, keep order, make war, give
jobs to bureaucrats. The camera's
twin capabilities, to subjectivize
reality and to objectify it, ideally
serve these needs and strengthen
them. Cameras define reality in
two ways essential to the working
of an advanced industrial soci-
ety: as a spectacle (for masses)
and as an object of surveillance
(for rulers). The production of
images also furnishes a ruling
ideology. Social change is replaced
by a change in images. The free-
dom to consume a plurality of
images and goods is equated with
freedom itself. The narrowing of
free political choice to free
economic consumption requires the
unlimited production and consump-
tion of images."

— Susan Sontag, writing in *On
Photography*

The central problem for pho-
tographers who actively believe in
the necessity of social change is the
production and presentation of im-
ages that refuse to support the
status quo. The refusal to support
the status quo assumed the form of
documentation of particular social
conditions.

Our situation, however, is
continually interpreted for us by
television, newspapers, magazines,
and advertising. In order to chal-
lenge this dominant interpretation,
it has become necessary to invent
new forms of active refusal. Several
recent publications thoughtfully
explore the possibilities of pho-
tography for social change.

A new catalogue from the Mil-
waukee Art Museum, *Photography
and Reform: Lewis Hine and the
National Child Labor Committee*,
places photography and social
change in an historical perspective.
In it, the authors write: "Like most
reform organizations of the early
twentieth century, the NCLC began
its labors with research and pub-
licity in accordance with the widely
held idea that success in reform
work depended on the support of
public opinion. Reformers thought
that the way to bring the people
to their particular crusade was to
bombard them with facts exposing
bad social conditions and to edu-
cate them about the causes and
solutions of the evil... They knew
that only extraordinarily persistent
propaganda could wear away public
indifference. Moreover, they fully
understood that many people had
a significant economic stake in
perpetuating child labor."

Hine was employed by the NCLC
as a full-time investigator from 1908
to 1918. Unlike the way in which
we have come to think of his pho-
tographs and in contradiction to the
manner in which they are most
frequently presented, his pho-
tographs "were not independent
pieces of evidence, but supple-
mentary visual documentation...
They were integral parts of his own
written reports."

This small catalogue joins 75 of
Hine's photographs with the original
textual information which was in-
tended to expand the viewers'
understanding of the conditions in
which the visualized individuals func-
tioned. Two essays discuss Hine's
position within the larger issue of
reform movements in the early
part of this century and give details
of his working methods during his
employment by the NCLC.

The general attitude of the cat-



Dead Child in Rubble, Spain, 1936, by Robert Capa, who also says in the book *The Concerned Photographer* "and the fine hope more often than (sic) not ends like this."

alogue, however useful it might be
for publicizing these images from
the collection of the Milwaukee
Art Museum, is apparent in two
quotations:

"As they exposed the conditions
and consequences of child labor in
America, these photographs hu-
manized the laborers. For existing
the support of the middle class,
the primary group at which the NCLC
crusade was aimed, this human-
ization was vital. Hine composed
his photographs to allow middle-
class viewers to look through unfa-
miliar and sometimes brutal activi-
ties and surroundings to see that
the children of the poor were not

unlike their own.... In his ef-
forts... Hine revealed something
of his own soul in his photographs."

"Hine's position is now secure as
a master of photography in Amer-
ica and the creator of compelling
images of people at work and the
dignity of children in distressed
circumstances.... Hine's photogra-
phy summarizes the cruelty of child
labor, its ceaseless toil, and its
destruction of human potential.
Typical spinners like Mamie may be
gone, but the humanity in Hine's
child labor images remains with us."

In order to understand the (not
so) subtle transformation of social
reformer into master of photog-
raphy that has occurred here (and
in the work of numerous other
photographers), it is helpful to
investigate other recent books.

Thinking Photography is a pro-
vocative collection of essays. Of
particular interest in relation to
Hine is "On the Invention of Pho-
tographic Meaning" in which Allan
Sekula analyzes the popular apposi-
tion of "art photography vs. docu-
mentary photography" through a
photograph by Alfred Stieglitz and
one by Lewis Hine. His main thesis
is the way in which "the meaning
of a photograph, like that of any
other entity, is inevitably subject to
cultural definition.... In other words,
the photograph, as it stands alone,
presents merely the possibility of
meaning.... The romantic artist's
compulsion to achieve the 'condition
of music' is a desire to abandon all
contextual reference and to convey
meaning by virtue of a metapho-
rical substitution. In photography this
compulsion requires an incredible
denial of the image's status as
report.... The invention of the
'photographer of genius' is possible
only through a disassociation of the
image-maker from the social em-
beddedness of the images. The
invention of the photograph as
high-art was only possible through
its transformation into an abstract
fetish, into significant form."

Sekula's position is both an
analysis of the means by which
photography is enshrined into
esthetic objects and a critique of
the rhetoric of liberal reform: "The
celebration of abstract humanity
becomes, in any given political
situation, the celebration of the
dignity of the passive victim. This is
the final outcome of the appropriation
of the photographic image for
liberal political ends: the oppressed
are granted a bogus Subjecthood
when such status can be secured
only from within, on their own
terms."

In another essay entitled "Dis-
mantling Modernism, Reverting
Documentary (Notes on the Politics
of Repression)" that appeared in
Photography: Current Perspectives,
Sekula states even more succinctly
the problems of traditional ap-
proaches to reform photography:
"[Freud] Lander is aware of the
ease with which liberal documen-
tary artists have converted violence
and suffering into esthetic objects.
For all his good intentions, for ex-
ample, Eugene Smith in *Minomoto*
provided more a representation of
his compassion for mercury-poi-
soned Japanese fisherfolk than one
of their struggle for retribution
against the corporate polluter. I'll
say it again: the subjective aspect
of liberal esthetics is compassion

WHY THIS DOUBLE STANDARD?

One New England Corporation Owns Cotton Mills In Georgia and Massachusetts

In Massachusetts They Employ	In Georgia They Employ
Immigrant Children 16 years old and upward 10 Hours a Day.	Native Children 10 years old and upward 11 Hours a Day.

Below the images, the poster asks: "Do these Native Children in Massachusetts' Public Schools Receive More?" and "Do these Native Children in Georgia' Public Schools Receive More?"

What a Reflection On



Children rescued from a house destroyed by 1,000-pound bomb in Managua. They died shortly after. By Susan Meiselas.



58 Schoolchildren on daily commute to school neighborhood.



59 Neighborhood bomb shelter dug under street in anticipation of renewed air attacks, Managua, June 1979.



60 Children rescued from a house destroyed by 1,000-pound bomb dropped in Managua. They died shortly after.

Port of typical page from back of Meiselas book.

rather than collective struggle. Pity, mediated by an appreciation of 'great art,' supplants political understanding."

"When you look at a book such as *The Concerned Photographer* (which includes the work of Werner Bischof, Robert Capa, Andre Kertesz, Leonard Freid, David Seymour, and Dan Weiner), it is easy to see this process at work. Four of the six photographs had been dead at least ten years by the time of the book's publication. Images are reproduced one to a page and captions are relegated to the fine print at the back of the book. The caption is limited to, 'Dead Child in Rubble, Spain, 1936.' But where is the information about the fascist bombers from Germany and Italy that supported Franco's attack against the democratically elected government of Spain? Either it is assumed that people have the historical knowledge or else too much is avoided. The result is to deny any cause and effect; pity replaces political understanding.

Still photographs have tended to believe naively in the power and efficacy of the single image. Of course, the museological handling of photographs encourages this belief, as does the allure of the high-art commodity market. But even photojournalists like to imagine that a good photograph can punch through, overcome its caption and

story, on the power of vision alone. The power of the overall communicative system with its characteristic structure and mode of address, over the fragmentary utterance, is ignored." (Sekula)

In contrast to this reliance on single images, consider the book *Nicaragua* by Susan Meiselas. Although here, too, images have been produced one to a page and captions are again separate from the primary presentation, small black and white reproductions with captions accompany the chronology and text that make up one third of the book. A map places the names in relation to the whole of Central America and quotations from as far back as 1890 indicate the positions of American governments, peasants, workers, newspaper editors, housewives, President Somoza. Statistics of unemployment, literacy and health are presented alongside poems. Great effort has been made in order that we see the color of these photographs in a social context rather than as front-page headlines or the usual photographer's monograph. As John Berger has written: "These extraordinary photographs take us right inside a revolutionary movement and speak on behalf of its participants." Yet unlike most photographs of such material, these refuse all the rhetoric normally associated with such pictures: the

rhetoric of violence, revolutionary heroism, and the glorification of misery. Here we have the feeling of real people, members of a real community. And this community has reached an important moment in its history. By working in color, Meiselas has posed another difficulty for herself. Color photographs of this kind of subject inevitably give way to gore or to the aestheticization of violence. Here, instead, we have enormous control, a sense of the everyday, and a vitality rooted in an active community."

John Berger produced a television series in England several years ago which resulted in the book *Ways of Seeing*. It is a verbal and visual examination of the ways in which our seeing is affected by what we know or what we believe. Through photographs, paintings and advertisements he very thoughtfully challenges our taken-for-granted relationship to the conventions for representing the visible. We have learned to denigrate the social context for paintings and photographs in favor of the "higher values" of form and composition.

As Berger says about a portrait by the English painter Gainsborough, "...among the pleasures their portrait gave to Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, was the pleasure of seeing themselves depicted as landowners and this pleasure was enhanced by the ability of oil paint to render their land in all its substantiality. And this is an observation which needs to be made, precisely because the cultural history we are normally taught pretends that it is an unworthy one."

In his discussion of oil paintings as the celebration of private property, Berger examines publicity and advertising photographs as the last maddening form of that art: "Both media use similar, highly taste means to play upon the spectator's sense of acquiring the real thing which the image shows. In both cases his feeling that he can almost touch what is in the image reminds him how he might or does possess the real thing... But the oil painting showed what its owner was already enjoying among his possessions and his way of life... The purpose of publicity is to make the spectator marginally dissatisfied with his present way of life. Not with the way of life of society, but with his own within it. It suggests if he buys what it is offering, his life will become better... Glamour cannot exist without personal social envy being a common and widespread emotion. The industrial society which has moved toward democracy and then stopped halfway is the ideal society for generating such emotion. The pursuit of individual

happiness has been acknowledged as a universal right. Yet the existing social conditions make the individual feel powerless. He lives in the contradiction between what he is and what he would like to be. Either he then becomes fully conscious of the contradiction and its causes, and so joins the political struggle for a full democracy which entails, amongst other things, the overthrow of capitalism; or else he lives, contentedly, subject to an envy which, compounded with his sense of powerlessness, dissolves into recurrent day-dreams... Publicity turns consumption into a substitute for democracy. The choice of what one eats (or wears or owns) takes the place of significant political choice. Publicity helps to make and compensate for all that is undemocratic within society."

The *Un/Necessary Image* is described as a "volume of work by artists who are concerned with the public image generated by mass media, advertising, and communication systems. The title alludes to an existing dichotomy between public and personal significance, insofar as the meaning of the public image ultimately depends on the context in which it is presented... Utilizing methods ranging from critical analysis and commentary to forms of direct appropriation and deconstruction, the artists offer readings and re-readings of commonly recognizable information in the public domain." Among the works is an analysis of a corporate brochure advertising the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Information Center. "We are persuaded to become spectators of technology... Passive, in a theater of activity... The language used to convey us there is ostensibly objective, inviting, and offers amusement. Lulled into enjoyment, it does not threaten or challenge our behavior in the way that dissents from the status quo, or attempts to inform us that events or phenomena occurring around us are larger or more important. The tacit assumption that we are cooperating in our own demise is difficult to fathom when read in the armchair or at the kitchen table of our private lives."

An *art* of ideology was an exhibition by The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, in early 1984. Five curators were each asked to select two artists. The catalogue includes essays by each of the curators, reproductions of the artists' work, and statements by the artists.

In the catalogue, Lucy R. Lippard writes, "The word 'ideology' is used in the artworld interchangeably with the word 'political' to describe art from the left, as though the center and right were so secure in their dominance that they had no need of such things. I'll use this term as do the artists I've selected, in its activist sense, though I must admit I risk producing a model of subtle rebranding that also ascribes activism to the left alone. Bourgeois ideology — that propaganda so thoroughly encompassing us that we barely recognize it as such — is made to appear more passive, downy harmless... The activist definition is fundamentally critical. It analyzes what effects us in words and images — what it hides, and how it can be used to our own ends."

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh writes in the same book, "This position which [Fred] Lonider and Sekula assume in their work refuses to see artistic practice as being disembodied from the materiality of the social and political reality... and it insists on a dialectical critique and tries to dismantle the very centralizing institutions within which it is constituted, contained, and isolated as a disjunctive practice. It will be argued that this work lacks the essential quality that has defined art

throughout its history: the experience of disinterested pleasure... We should be grateful to those contemporary artists who currently receive the attention of the apparatus that they offer us such blatant and proud insight into the relations between 'aesthetic pleasure' and reactionary power... We recognize, after all, that it is our desires and our pleasures as they can be fulfilled by contemporary production which are the most secret and reliable agents of dominant ideology; like all other superstructural instances (the moral and the legal code, religious belief, family structure and the construction of sexuality), it is the attachment to aesthetic desire and aesthetic pleasure that guarantee the continuation of our archaic modes of perceptual and cognitive behavior."

Much of the inspiration for individuals quoted in these books can be traced to the writing of Walter Benjamin, the German critic and philosopher who was active in the 1920s and 1930s. The initial essay in *Thinking Photography* is a study of an address which he delivered in Paris to the Institute for the Study of Fascism in 1934, "The Author as Producer," in which he discusses the difficulties of being a writer without existing publications because of the difficulty to assimilate revolutionary themes without seriously questioning the basis of their own operation. He calls for a rethinking of literary forms in order to find forms appropriate to the new energy of the time. In particular he is critical of the New Objectivity movement as found in literature, painting and photography.

"It has become more and more subtle, more and more modern, and the result is that it is now incapable of photographing a moment or a rubbish-heap without transfiguring it. In front of these, photography can now only say 'How Beautiful...' It has succeeded in turning abject poverty itself by handing it a model, a technical, a perfect way, into an object of enjoyment... In many cases, indeed, its political significance has been limited to converting revolutionary reflexes... into themes of entertainment and amusement... Its characteristic feature... is the way it transforms political struggle so that it ceases to be a compelling motive for decision and becomes an object of aesthetic contemplation... It... becomes an article of consumption."

Benjamin goes on to discuss the need to be concerned with the means of production, that is, the process by which an individual's work acquires meaning within a socially conditioned arena. He closes with an example of art that refuses to support the status quo: "We already possess a model of this kind... Brecht's epic theater. His theater always works against creating an illusion among the audience... These conditions are, in one form or another, the conditions of life. Yet they are not brought close to the spectator; they are distanced from him. He recognizes them as real — not, as in the theater of naturalism, with complicity, but with astonishment. Epic theater does not reproduce conditions; rather, it discloses, it uncovers them. This uncovering of the conditions is effected by interrupting the dramatic process: but such an interruption does not act as a stimulant; it has an organizational function. It brings the action to a standstill in mid-course and thereby compels the spectator to take up a position towards the action... It sets out, not so much to fill the audience with feeling... as to alienate the audience in a lasting manner... through thoughts, from the conditions in which it lives."

JIM GOLDBERG:
RICH FOLKS,
POOR FOLKS

(The following is a discussion of the work of Jim Goldberg, who was recently shown at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and the Houston Center for Photography.



I LOVE DAVID. BUT HE IS TO
FRAGILE FOR A ROUGH FATHER LIKE
ME

Samy f Banks

Photographs by Jim Goldberg

"So many questions and possibilities surface. Wealth is as unbecoming as poverty — the poor are obese and dirty, the rich well-kempt, and both are ugly."

By April Rapier

Jim Goldberg, whose work was exhibited at HCP from October 19 through November 25 (with O. Winston Link and Janice Rubin), has been involved in an eight-year (ongoing) project photographing the "poor and privileged of San Francisco." He holds an MFA (1979) from San Francisco Art Institute, studied theology as an undergraduate; he is the recipient of an NEA photographer's fellowship (1980) and the Rutenburg Fellowship from the Friends of Photography (1983). Goldberg's exhibition record is impressive, including the OK Harris Gallery and the Museum of Modern Art exhibition *Three Americans* with Robert Adams and Joel Sternfeld. He currently holds a one-year teaching position at the University of Massachusetts. He is 31.

When asked to discuss the origins of the project and the force behind its continuing virtually uninterrupted for this length of time, it becomes clear that the impetus was political. Goldberg

mentions the need to address the stereotypes that accompany these loaded designations. Beginning with the residents of a home for indigents (although he says that as a starting point this is irrelevant, it would have to color somewhat his work with the privileged). Goldberg first photographed the subjects, then returned with proof prints for feedback. (Their formality gives the impression that they are treated less as people than subjects, providing a necessary emotional distance.) When a definitive image was arrived at, he returned again to gather statements of reaction. He then edited the statements and had the subjects write this studiously composed form in their own hand to be juxtaposed onto the final print. The impact is extremely powerful, the handwriting being quite influential and startling. Goldberg thus intends the viewer to look at clichés and preconceived notions and the way they are challenged. The photographs are revealing with regard to individual conditions; the dif-

ficulty lies in ascertaining the photographer's point of view, assumed, at least, to be non-judgmental. They are informative and emotionally weighted, yet Goldberg's neutrality leaves one with an ambivalent point of departure. It is not a question of a motive — compassion courses through these photographs. Could all eight years worth of inventory present such a terribly disturbing image? Both rich and poor seem unable to escape heavy-handed irony, all seem preoccupied with the same issues: money, health and aging, status, motivation, victimization, self-pity. Both sets of people deal with their issues categorically, oblivious to any reality norm. Stereotypes, after all, exist to reinforce personal opinion. Very few unilateral stereotypes have survived unchanged, having been over-examined into oblivion. The salient features here — wealth and poverty — become indistinguishable beyond overt symbols. (The use of black and white tames wealth and exaggerates poverty.) These circular conclusions at once confuse and

cement the images in our memory. To the extent that they incite and direct such vehement response, it is somewhat difficult to read beyond the initial shock of the image. The only upbeat experience lies in unearthing layer after layer, linking words and elements within the frame. So many questions and possibilities surface. Wealth is as unbecoming as poverty — the poor are obese and dirty, the rich well-kempt, and both are ugly. It is undisclosed as to what equalizes the two so thoroughly (in the manner of Diane Arbus), although Goldberg's subcategories (good and bad) are illustrated most frequently. If one isolates the words from the pictures, the general tone is one of insufferable inevitability. This renders emotional tone equivalent. Being privileged means troubles are limited to isolation, boat repairs, and "servants wearing spotted white uniforms." The poor are more concerned with survival. The rich make obligatory gestures toward poorer people, noting parallel concerns such as the "pursuance of health, happiness, and family fulfillment."



I Keep thinking where we went wrong.
We have no one to talk to now,
however, I will not allow this loneliness to
destroy me. I STILL HAVE MY DREAMS.
I would like an elegant home, a loving husband
and the wealth I am used to.

Countess Vivienne de Blayville.

ment," although their lives are seen as "less complicated." This particular opinion belongs to a woman who views the world as a scary place. In the image, her "personal world" has an uninterrupted penthouse view that resembles a cityscape mural — hazy, cold, not worth venturing into. The rich are isolated from horror; their interpretations of poverty are insensitive and quaint. There is no demonstrable opulence representing the wealthy, which adds an aspect of

parody to one's conclusions. Another possible conclusion is that the poor are emotionally shortchanged, and the rich are shrewd and unaware of how uncaring they appear.

Personal relations are equally unsatisfactory. It is here that pathos and sorrow are acted out. One wonders if the couples' revelations about each other are being voiced for the first time. That element of surprise isn't noted. One image inspires a particularly violent reaction, that of a couple embracing

while an infant directs its cries at the camera, an outsider. The caption reads, "Me and Bobby been together for two weeks and we're still happy." One has the sense of a dual joke being played, for it seems certain that an element of spoof exists, probably after-the-fact. This comes to mind again in Edgar and Regina Goldstein's portrait. The statement reads: "My wife is acceptable. Our relationship is satisfactory. Edgar G." "Edgar looks splendid here. His power and strength of character come through. He is a very private person who is not demonstrative of his affection; that has never made me unhappy. I accept him as he is. We are totally devoted to each other. Regina Goldstein." And as a postscript, "Dear Jim: May you be as lucky in marriage!" In the composition, Edgar looks at the camera; Regina looks at Edgar. Goldberg's portrayal is so sincere that at times his intentions seem vulnerable to ridicule from his subjects.

Another image, of a shirtless man gesturing uncomfortably (arms extended, backs of hands touching), his backdrop a chaotic blend of Disney/floral wallpaper, thick black glasses angled so that his eyes are blocked from view, is captioned, "To Jim. My life is personal, but I will tell you one thing I'm too fat — Samuel T. Davis." (The spelling and punctuation go uncorrected throughout.) The emotional maelstrom is the strongest demonstration of the portfolio's existence as politically unified. Its power is clarified by the number of issues (stereotypes to Goldberg, general human behavior in a broader sense) drawn in. Just as a stronghold is found, another surface in support. The attention and acclaim they continue to receive is well-deserved, because they are unforgettable.



When I Look At This Picture I Feel Alone

it makes me want to reach out to
Patty and make our relationship work.
Cowboy Stanley

Q. WINSTON LINK: STRANGE VISIONS

The following is a review of the exhibition *Ghost Trains: Railroad Photographs of the 1950s*, by Q. Winston Link. Organized by the Akron Art Museum, this presentation of the exhibition was at the Houston Center for Photography, October 19-December 2.

By Dave Crossley

At first glance, Q. Winston Link's photographs of steam locomotives, taken in the mid to late 1950s, seem to be simple, historic images of a simple, forgotten time. Ostensibly, they are about trains, but the environment is often more interesting than the locomotive. Many are strange juxtapositions in which trains pass behind curious foregrounds: a young couple snuggle together in a buick convertible at a drive-in movie as the Hot Shot Eastbound comes roaring out from behind the movie screen, which incidentally has a huge image of a Korean War-era jet on it; the same couple sits in the same car at a gas station while an old rural character pumps gas into their tank; and a train flashes by in the background, just yards away from the people, who are utterly oblivious to it; teenagers lounge, studiously posed, hair perfectly coiffed, at the edge of a municipal swimming pool, with a train etc.

There are kids in Old Swimming Holes with train, cows being brought home with train, old folks talking on porch with train, man gathering firewood with train. In this group of pictures, the trains seem almost incidental to the wonderful little vignettes, which Link has invented and — usually — photographed at night with hundreds of flash bulbs in multiple-bulb units tied together by as much as three-quarters of a mile of wire, powered by complex battery systems through even more complex electrical circuits, with camera (sometimes more than one) and bulbs fired by radio control.

Some of these pictures are very funny. Did Q. (for Ogle) Winston Link intend them to be funny? Or did his background as a commercial photographer, with such clients as

Texaco, Alcoa, and The BFGoodrich Company, naturally lead him to complicate his pictures with American Dreams and all the available technology of the time? Is this an artist who photographs a couple from the back standing on a porch watching the last steam passenger train pass in the distance? Or is it a studio photographer who has put flash units all along the tracks (the lights are visible as little black dots in many of the pictures), more near the camera to light up the porch, and yet another one on the ground somewhere in front of the couple to provide a rim light for the woman's hair? Why are so many of them shot at night? Is it because Link worked the same way one works in the studio, building light from blackness, instead of going out into the day to see what light there is?

Curator Carolyn Carr, writing in the catalogue (published by the Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia), compares Link's efforts to those of Carleton E. Watkins who, in an earlier time, lugged huge cameras up mountains to make pictures that could be made another way. For a picture called "Goose-neck Dam and No. 2," Link described formidable obstacles to photograph a train rushing along the far side of a river, with the water cascading off the dam all across the bottom three-fifths of the frame.

"It required 6 full days to set up and complete. The terrain on which we worked was exceptionally rough and hazardous at night. To get the flash units across the river we had to cross on a two wire span, one for your feet and the higher one for your hands. There were no boats or bridges nearby, so we had to get our own cable near the dam to carry the cruet and equipment to the west bank. The upland strata with water rushing between the plates of rock was so confusing at night that we set up guide ropes to get to the light stands and our camera. We had to build ladders in the trees to get to our truly cable. We were pleased to see the negative of our first exposure which, without any test or Polaroid (which did not exist then), was as we planned and calculated it to be."

One could dwell for a long time on the technical feats of Q. Winston Link. Trying to determine what he was seeing is another task. In the majority of his train pictures, the surrealistic element mentioned

Photographs by Q. Winston Link





above is absent. He has looked at locomotives as powerful, beautiful forces, always on the go or about to get going. Even when they're being washed, they seem ready to leap out of the top of the frame. When he confined his attention to the train itself, he produced better-than-ordinary images. But his strengths in this project were clearly elsewhere.

It was when he started fooling around with where the train was that his work became extraordinary, valuable to the culture. In the 1950s he photographed an America that sometimes was perfectly 1955, but sometimes was 1890, 1960, or 1930. In these latter pictures, the train seems out of its time. Surely the train could not have co-existed with so much bucolic innocence, so much apple pie. It is difficult to believe that the Little House on the Prairie America that Link sometimes portrayed was real in the aftermath of the Korean War and only a couple of years before Sputnik and John F. Kennedy. Ms. Carr points out that, in 1955, the year Link began his train project, Robert Frank began his own photographic survey, which resulted in the book *The Americans* — quite a different vision of the same America.

The Frank/Link dichotomy begs worrisome questions about reality. Frank's pictures suggested chaos and that premise was seized upon by many others who also began to communicate it. Link's pictures suggested, as Carr says, "community and ordered existence." Not many took up that torch. Today, the nearly unanimous urban view of life is surely Frank's; even the rural view of life "outside" is probably

one of chaos and despair. We have just experienced a very strange national adjustment of consciousness in which Ronald Reagan attempted to resurrect the Link dreams and accused Walter Mondale of being Robert Frank. Not much serious discussion went on about this matter, although *Time* magazine produced a gaudy "I Love America" cover story based on absolutely nothing but Mr. Reagan's insistence that America was "back."

What does that mean? What impels editors to head for America's "heartland" in times of great national stress? Is it a wish to be seen as egalitarian, universal? Or is it a sad desire to live in a different America, free of the need to be "sophisticated," "smart," to have simple values and escape global conflict? What if everybody held Link's view? Conversely, of what possible value is Frank's view? We shook our heads in amazement at the stupidity of the self-flagellators we witnessed in Iran in 1979. Yet at the highest academic photographic levels we applaud Lewis Baltz and Robert Adams and anyone else who portrays America as a spoiled, ruined landscape, peopled by fearful, ignorant demi-monsters — us.

We cringed at the idea of Positive Thinking, too rightist, too simplistic. Then in the 1960s and 1970s we learned about Consciousness, and how to raise it, and how its power could change the world. We were working on that, millions of us, Jimmy Carter spoke of the famous malaise, and we could have said yes, that's true and done something about it. Instead, we elected Ronald Reagan and dismissed the whole issue of changing

the world and concentrated instead on filling our pockets, while the President patted us and told us America was Back. And in the midst of these warm messages from Time and the President, what is our sense of consciousness? Do we really believe we are headed for "community and ordered existence"? Or are we back with

Frank, worrying about, as Carolyn Carr says, "spiritual desolation and psychic isolation?"

The point is that photographers, like other artists, other communicators, give us visions. For years we have been reacting positively to negative visions, and have used those negative visions to force corrections. But it seems inadequate.

Perhaps the Links of the world can never be taken seriously in their own time, and only later, too late, remind us of another view. But it would be encouraging to know that a sense of fulness and love of life and all it offers was being recorded with wit and a somewhat skewed eye today, if not for us, then for others, later.



1970/20

Mud Run to the Virginia Creeper, Green Cove, Virginia

TEN EUROPEANS: ABSTRACT DREAMS

The following is a review of the exhibition Contemporary European Photography at the Benteler Galleries, Houston, from September 8-October 13.

By April Rapier

The ten photographers in this exhibition (from Spain, Germany, Sweden, France, Switzerland, Great Britain and Austria) have in common their age (mid 30s to mid 40s), gender (all male: one woman), and the role of women in contemporary European photography, and extensive exhibition records. With regard to the content or style of the pictures, homage to a European photographic history is predominant. All the artists labor under the banner of conceptual art, the thread that is said to link the images together in spite of their diversity. Physically, however, they bear little resemblance to each other. A persistent view of the idea of one static, captive moment appears throughout the exhibit, surfacing in a plethora of abstract still lifes and hazy private worlds.

With the exception of work by Branko Lenart, Floris Neustuss, and Tom Drahos the fantasy of extraordinary beauty and softness is the key to unraveling the mystery of these images, should the viewer be inclined toward seeking answers. As a group they are exceptionally lovely, and one feels this is so quite by design. Regardless of the viewer's level of participation, questions are continuously posed by alternating a very strict reality of form with what we know to be devices of technique (and the attendant limitations).

Tony Catary's work is achingly pretty and sentimental yet the formally simple; the results are unexpectedly charged, both emotionally and physically. They seem, even on the surface, ready to explode, but the elements do not intentionally lead in that direction. The backdrops are intricate and painterly and there is a dominant interaction between foreground and background. The two are often physically linked. There exists a connection to more conventionally designed imagery, which adds to their impact. Incredibly, none of the motifs seems gimmicky. To a lesser extent, the work of Lenart uses the same artificial drama to convey the ordinary as mystical in this manner, isolated cultural symbols assume extraordinary proportions. Pinnies, all-pink bathrooms, bedrooms, kitchens — all brightly and falsely lit, not terribly exciting views of people's living spaces — take on an unreal quality, as though seen through a storefront window. The sum is incongruous with the parts. In perhaps the most dynamic image of the exhibit, one sees the interior of a painter's home, brimming with well-planned details. The inside is landscaped to resemble a jungle: many surfaces are reflective and indoors and out aren't clearly delineated. A large dog sits behind a pair of shoes in the foreground, and from this point attention migrates to the left of the image where a stuffed bird is forever frozen in flight. All the accessories, from knick-knacks to black leather



Tom Thorman

furniture seem simulated, a diorama demonstrating modern life (complete with man's best friend). Due to the use of both natural and artificial light, the spatial quality is foreshortened, one of many compelling factors. Three of the artists, Otmär Thormann, Rudolf Lichtstener, and John Goto have been influenced by the Czech photographer Josef Sudek; in all three portfolios reference to the dream state is highly visible. The notion of entry into a private domain (ostensibly not of inherent interest unless transcendent or stylized) is drawn upon again and again. One witnesses (possibly) another era unfold as memories stir, like the shift between waking and sleep. In Lichtstener's photographs, however, the inclusion of a disparate object as innocent as a roll of film can bring the overall ethereal quality abruptly to earth. In comparison to the others, this is a deliberate fall from grace. His use of multiple exposure has an air of discovery to it, unusual considering the general overuse of the technique.

Thormann goes slightly further, combining banal objects with menacing ones; they float and swim through soft lighting, leading the viewer toward a message. The message, though encoded, remains a mystery.

Nils-Udo's images are conceptually the most removed from his fellow exhibitors. He manufactured iconography — enormous sites that appear to be found sculpture (nests, flower and vine-covered shapes) — then documented his efforts. The constructions outside the photographs, which seem pretty straightforward in comparison.

The original Neustuss photographs are life-size, but in this exhibit the viewer must settle for smaller reproductions. It is likely that the

originals are as daring as the artist's statement claims, but these versions don't make much sense without the three techniques that "go beyond that of the pioneers of the photograph (Moholy-Nagy and Man Ray)": subject (whole human figure), the combination of photography and painting during the development stage, and alteration of color due to non-fixing. None of this is clear, with or without explanation, in the reproductions.

Drahos' series, "Memoires d'Egypte" is technically interesting but offers little beyond superficial punning. He plays progress against antiquity in these great-looking, wise little sight-gags. One in particular is overbearing in its witlessness, showing a paper envelope and a stone tablet of hieroglyphics side by side, solemnly surrounded by darkness. As one waits for more information, it is quickly clear that none is forthcoming.

Andreas Muller-Pohle has created a series of transformations, the journey being ultimately of more importance than the events contained within. The photographs become progressively blurred, and amorphous shapes imitative of human form replace crisp studies of line and shadow. The tones remain much the same as the harshness disappears. It seems not to matter that there isn't a clear notion of what is being transformed. Each image thoroughly addresses the idea without being limited to a preconception. The luminous light, moody subject matter, and Uelsmann-like treatment of perception emerge as light-hearted abstractions of everyday visions. It is not his intention, as he states, to "send specific messages, but simply to try to awaken certain emotions in those who observe my images — images which I intentionally im-

pregnate with certain sensations." The sincerity he seeks to achieve brings the images to a vigorous life of their own.

One must not try to understand or interpret the work of so different a continent from an exclusively American vantage point. It is this incomplete set of references that allow us to bring a freshness to the viewing of an otherwise inaccessible world of photography. Ms. Benteler offers the city an invaluable opportunity to participate outside of and thereby expand given parameters.

Floris Neustuss



GALL, SONNEMAN, AND WILLIAMS: TWO UP, ONE DOWN

(From October 23 through November 10, the Texas Gallery in Houston exhibited the work of Sally Gail, Eve Sonneman, and Casey Williams. The following is a review of that show.)

By April Rapier

It is an interesting coincidence that Sally Gail and Casey Williams, both Houstonians, present photographs made in Big Bend, yet treat an identical landscape so differently. A general theme of the show seems to be about movement outside one's normal realm and subsequent responses. Another element that resounds in all the work is that of a very formal, well-intended guiding of those responses. All three are dedicated artists: Gail and Williams have witnessed their subject matter beyond a first impression, through a purposeful vision that isn't compromised in favor of convenience. Sonneman comes up short in this group of pictures.

Any discussion of Williams' work must include the information that he was trained as a painter, in part accounting for the grandeur of his images. He jokingly says that these are studies for Western art, but there is a certain truth to the notion. He draws heavily on the tradition of the Western panorama with endless skies and mountains, most often imitated in cinematic matte shots. The size (four feet by four feet) and skill with which they are conceived and colored make them as much about painting as photography (other techniques support this as well). They are one to one reproductions, focused severely on a restricted foreground, with no depth of field used to allow for detail in the mid and background regions.

Most of the colors he reproduces are true, but impossibly so, just as a magnificent sunset seems artificial and overstated. He sparingly uses untrue colors, making the highlighting all the more effective. The colors used in his painting would, of course seem pretentious and stubborn and silly; used in these photographs they recreate perfectly the atmosphere of the land.

One result of the pictures' size is a softness of edge, which causes areas of the foreground to echo back into the image. This is supported by the blending of colors (I am unable to use the term hand-colored in reference to Williams' photographs, for they truly are more painterly). They speak of the awe of a first visit West, heralding the luminous vistas and geological oddities that initially so greatly confound us. Williams fuses a point and goes about the precise business of constructing an image in honor of it, including only that which makes sense of the unfamiliar (a painter's grave, leather straps binding scrub wood together to form a fence, barbed wire and imitative thorns on plants, cactus — ghostly signs of migration elsewhere). The occasional random inclusion thwarts out any rigidity of construction. The elements we associate with the desert take on a presence, no matter what their state of decay.

Few human remnants and touches are acknowledged, leaving room for great drama in, say, a dead branch or stalk. When evidence of humanity is included, the mystery is heightened: paper flies by, impaling on dead wire, but

how did it get to such a forbidding place? Any reference to television is strikingly out of place. The color and size reinforce a system of order, but the sand and rock and scrub terrain provide a foil for that cleanliness. The notion of intricate found sculptural shapes with their surroundings means so much more here, the clearest possible illustration of the concept. Shadows do not create depth — they are soft, considering the glaring heat and light. Nor do the great purple mountains hovering behind dominate. They remind one of an important presence, strength and power implied, blurred but undeniable. He softens and protects and neutralizes with larger-than-life colors and translucent light. It almost seems as though the images are manipulated — negative blending, perhaps, because when the plane divides horizontally, the halves or thirds are no longer anchored. This is further emphasized by uncolored areas within the print.

All the graves and fences and dead or dying growth seem to gesture in memory of human movement, their mourning postures permanent. There are few other sentimental signs. Entropy remains behind, all that is left. The Mexico series uses a far more directed attention to a starting point. One is constantly invited to step up to this edge and peer over or into what is much hinted toward, never to be seen. The colors used here are a bit more demonstrative, yet retain the ability to make absolute sense. The material itself is more exaggerated, especially in its flatness and shallow depth of field. One looks forward with great anticipation and delight to Williams' future work.

Sally Gall's exhibit coincides with the release of a calendar illustrated with her photographs of Houston, a very personal and transformative glimpse of what becomes an over-awareness of beauty. One is given access to the private world of landscaped boulevards, without any sense of voyeurism. In one image, an enormous tree bespeaks wealth and privilege as much as the small (relative to the tree) mansion in the corner of the frame. It is necessary to take hard, for there is no sensationalism (except for print quality, which is exquisite). For example, one notes in an image a joggling path extending to a vanishing point into the horizon, cutting through the center of a luxuriously tree-lined street, at once it occurs that the path is made of brick set in an intricate pattern. The extraordinary is presented quite matter-of-factly.

The city of Houston, an architectural dream, is seen without falseness or device. Even the softening, discussed below, refers to heat radiating off glass and steel. Its beauty can and does stand on its own. It is an extremely intimate and uncomplicated vision that carries the familiar environment beyond representational. She has continued to use the Diana Camera, known to create soft, halated perimeters and almost-sharp centers, and uses a more traditional camera as well; many times the sharper negatives are softened in the printing process to resemble Diana images. There is a delighted homage to Steiglitz in two pictures that reference to a building seen from below in both inclement and perfect weather.

In a sense, some photographs speak of a city substructure — a vertical plane bisected by a freeway, for example, with buildings on top and the bayou below. The foundations are neither firm nor flimsy. Her vision is characterized by fair treatment of all her subject matter. A deserted tennis court holds the same whimsical, fictitious or imagined quality found in her earlier garden series and has the compar-

able credibility of a painting. The images are all lonely — again more representative of the relation between painter and canvas than photographer as witness/participant.

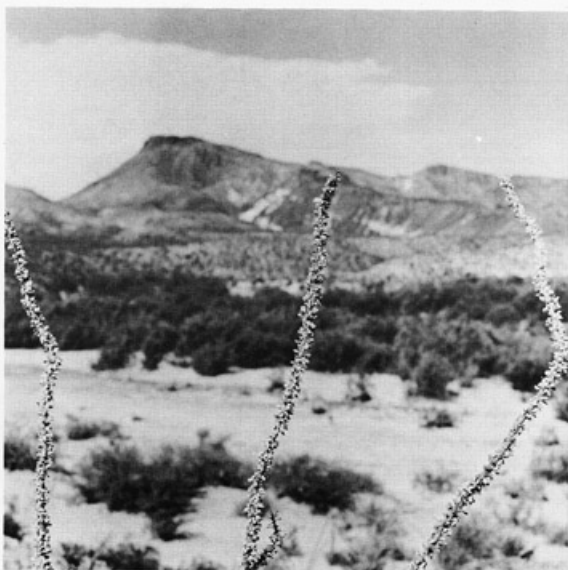
Gall integrates completely with her imagery. Another characterization of the city, an image which proves to be transitional to the Big Bend series, begins the reduction of man's structural efforts, shrinking the skyline to an architectural mock-up. The pictures of Galveston use the ocean and sky as a metaphor for nature's inevitable predominance over man. Clouds seem as structurally sound and physically integral as towering buildings. They have equivalent mass. In fact, the sky begins to actively affect and alter the landscape: the vastness of ocean and mountains is dwarfed only by the inclusion of sky, the one thing of greater magnitude. The step from city to desert is great.

The Galveston photographs function as interim discoveries. Man's efforts (over-developed peninsulas, cities on precarious sites) are reduced to insignificant strata that band the earth, compressed into just another geological vein. Human attempts at control seem absurd in these pictures — posts and piers extending beyond sensible limits, risking much to conquer. The clouds placidly bear witness to the madness of man's relatively inconsequential achievements.

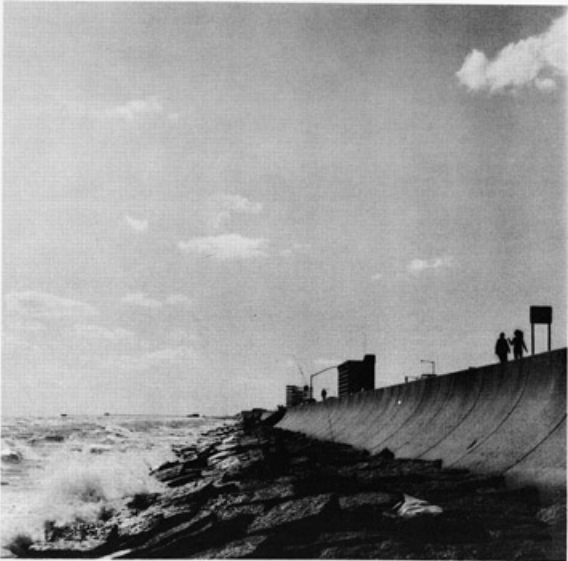
There is more abstraction incorporated in the Big Bend series, and at times, one is a bit hard-pressed to extricate meaning. The darkest images are the most difficult, not quite worth the effort. The way the mountains affect the sky recalls the imitative quality of nature: shadows form entire extensions on the terrain and mountain sides. Clouds, shadows, mountains switch places because their forms are so similar. There are elements of a classic landscape treatment without traditional use of planes. This examination of the relation between sky and clouds and mountains is rather like a puzzle, except that here the parts are interchangeable.

In spite of the preceding work that foreshadows things to come, Eve Sosenman's photographs seem here are a radical departure from the prodigious multi-frame images of the past. These were characterized by her unshakable presence within the image — she seemed always to be on the move, relishing each moment of the search, each encounter's potential. There is a hasty quality to the new work, (20x24-inch Cibachromes, most of which disregard technique, another annoying departure). Fredericka Hunter, the gallery's owner, quite accurately referred to their timelessness (the comparison being the sense of place in, for example, the older double diptychs that juxtaposed both black-and-white and color). But they are as didactic as timeless, blank and arrogant in their disinterested presentation of information.

There is one very intricate and fragile image ("Heart/Torso — Merida, Mexico") decorated ornately in the fashion of where she has ventured. Yet most of the impressions (and prints) are blurred, not thought through — the confusion and chaos of the traveler! Another outstanding image, "83 Giverny," resists falling victim to the garishness of a seductive locale. As individual images (without the reference of one another and concomitant influence), some make more sense — most especially "San Cristobal, Mexico, '83," a far more visceral than repose-designed picture. Most are notes regarding local humor and custom — the vantage point ordinary and uninteresting, objects unchanged by her experience of them.



Cosy Williams



Sally Gall

PETER MCLENNAN:
IRRESISTIBLE FUN

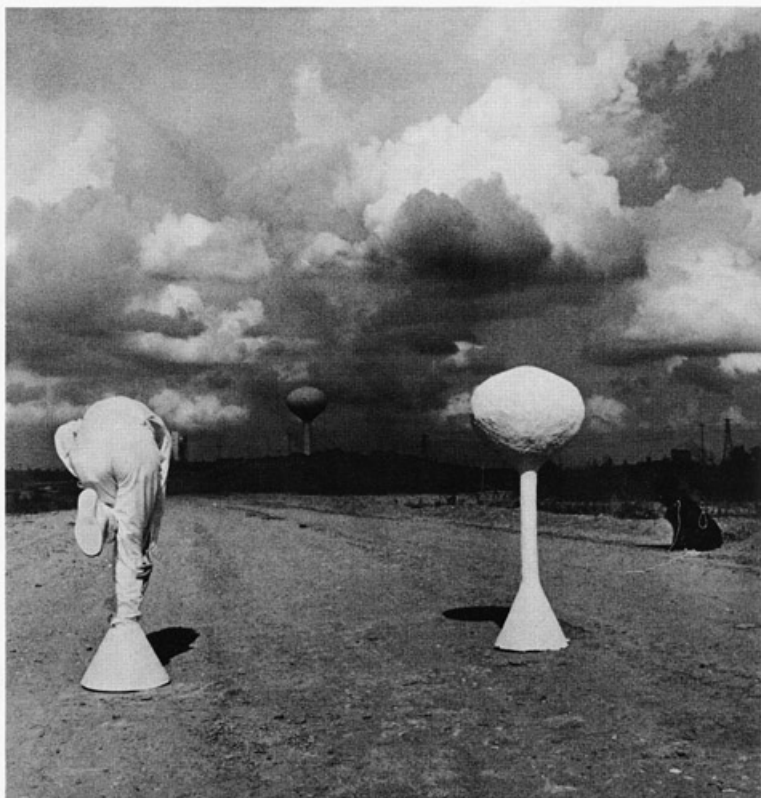
(The following is a discussion of *Watertowers*, a series by Peter McClellan, which was exhibited at the Houston Center for Photography September 7 - October 14.)

By April Rapier

Peter McClellan has re-defined the Houston landscape in his *Watertowers* series — not the one ordinarily associated with our sparkling, trendy architecture, but the landscape one most often tries to ignore — water towers with power plants and flat, empty stretches as backdrops — parcels of land that city planners would like to hide. That is, of course impossible, due to the monstrous dimensions represented. His new definition consists of recreating water towers in various sizes and approximations and placing them around town so that they interact with the real thing. He also photographs the recreations and his interaction with them and inserts cutouts into subsequent photographs.

This project has been going on for some time, an indication of the seriousness with which it was undertaken. The constructions are so technically competent that it is often hard to separate reality from his version of it. The best pictures rely strongly on fantasy, offering a creative concept, commitment (working with the project beyond its initial momentum), great humor, and a sense of the not-so-subtle surreal. As with any project of that duration however, one inevitably has the disconcerting sense that no matter how long and hard the images are examined, an inside joke critical to fully understanding the piece is missed. Because of the way the artificial elements are imposed on the "set," one tends not to leave anything in the frame unconsidered; even the miscellaneous bucket, broken bottle or hand-stand seem intrusive and open to misinterpretation. Perhaps it is the infrequent arbitrary gestures (shirt off versus on, for example) that frees them from being glib or self-conscious, the hazard of using artist as model.

Placement of the pictures in relation to one another is an important factor in this exhibit. Depending on the starting point, there is either crescendo or decrescendo to the action within the frame. One of the joyous aspects of the series remains constant throughout: just as one starts to look away, yet another bit of trickery pops forth. And McClellan's body and angelic face are used as cleverly as any of the devices — neutral expression, exaggerated reverence, nose as monolith on the horizon, hair as top of tower and body as base. Scale and relationship of elements form foreground to background constitute the most formal design elements, the best example being the picture of a tiny twig in the foreground dwarfing a tower (real, cut-out



Photographs by Peter McClellan

or papier-mâché) a great distance away. It is the addition of this magical realism that draws the viewer in. For example, the recurring dialogue between man and dog, the same patient dog on a long rope tied to nothing — a casual observer of the chaos; McClellan's precarious balancing act on the tower, reminiscent of flying too close or nearly falling (a blurry foot predestines the fall); the solemnity of green shorts matching exactly the looming tower's color; all elicit a complex reaction: funhouse antics combined with sophisticated trompe-l'œil. More and more alterations are made; sometimes the introduction of too many props into an over-saturated area seems last-minute and extraneous. One tower (in spite of size variations) or one cut-out too many can detract from the precision of the pictures, but the overall credibility isn't harmed by these small editing issues. It is easy to forgive irresistible conceptual fun its excesses.



BOULEVARD SHOW: A LITTLE TIRED

The fourth annual Houston Photographers Show at Houston's Boulevard Gallery (October 11-28), curated by Betty Walker, featured the work of James Andrews, Alice Doner, Jim Estes, C. Leigh Farmer, Paul Hester, Sally Horgan, Charlotte Land, Margaret Moore, Dale O'Dell, Debra Rueb, Sharon Stewart, and Jim Teibout.

By April Rapier

The original intention at this year's Boulevard show was to present portfolios in their entirety for exhibition; for reasons that remain unclear, response to the call for entries was minimal. As the field was narrowed, it became increasingly apparent to Ms. Walker that the selected portfolios themselves needed editing, which she did in the face of some complaint. This is not the only reason the show as a whole is of an indeterminate and noncommittal nature. Most of the work seems to have been motivated by a desire to exhibit rather than the passion that creates good or great art. Most of the images glow with the comfort of the familiar. There is little conceptual outreach to be found.

The artists bring other disciplines to their photography, which could be seen as beneficial; while this normally creates (and does in a few of these images) an expansiveness of thought and vision, here it mostly underscores a feeling of amateurism. The experimenting takes place as a reduction of ideas to their smallest components, a process which diffuses intentions. There is no sense of the equivocal — one must settle for the undecided, tentative, yet over-determined statement in most cases. There is no room for interpretive discourse; this more that anything else undermines confidence in the imagery. Stylistically, the work is flat, without effect. An exhibition of this size as a rule has a feeling of unity, if not formally, instinctively. It's not that the portfolios aren't arranged well — Ms. Walker has done a beautiful job with respect to visual continuity. There is a defiance that impels these images to a certain level, beyond which they are, as a group, quite tractable.

Once again, Paul Hester's intense, committed work dominates (see SPOT, Fall, 1984 for a more complete discussion). Although the pictures are from the same project seen in the last Houston Center for Photography's Members' Exhibition, this grouping is considerably different in its demeanor. He has, by way of switching gears a bit, added a number of images from the Theatre of the Absurd. The inclusion of less-mannered concepts (global/anal-analysis, master-baton, idolatry, falderal) brings one closer to his true feelings, while allowing for an ever-widening interpretation. Every act of debunking is done with consummate skill. This intrepid layering is suggestive, yet his motives are clear, his lethal blows precisely directed. There is great honor in being unable to make an overwhelming statement in art.

Sally Horgan states (in no uncertain terms) in her vitae that she finds the coastal landscape less than captivating. Its idiosyncrasies are another thing altogether, rendered enchanting by the perseverance she brings to the Coastal Prairie Landscape Series. This primer is an affectionate, good-humored document, photographed (and later experienced) with a sense of pe-

ripheral vision, rather as though one is quickly passing by. It is this sense of motion being stopped cold by a slight variance — not terribly exciting but unexpected enough to hold one's interest — that does not transgress from subtle to overstated. Its passivity helps not to build unnecessary expectations. These are playful vignettes that celebrate rather than ridicule a way of life. There is one problem that seems in conflict with the overall feeling of completion: the risky business of building an entire image around one element (especially singling out one color in a color photograph). One mustn't be too dependent, as an imagemaker, on an undeviable decisive moment. For example, one picture has two dominant, competing actions (that of a barbeque stand and a pond, complete with someone casting for fish). One is funny, the other is not. The actions cancel each other as a result. Also, the use of road-weary icons such as large arrows pointing outside the frame has lost its charm. The way in which color is manipulated is most appropriate. One begins to understand the relationship of a relentless sun and wind to an unprotected landscape, aging and washed-out. One joyous image, starring geese and a clothesline with socks hanging on it and not much else, must have made all the miles of searching worthwhile.

One has the distinct impression that Debra Rueb's work suffers most from the portfolio editing. I was so bewildered by three of the four pictures that I needed and requested an explanation from Ms. Walker as to their origins. It seems that any such area of controversy being converted into a photographic device deserves some form of explanatory statement, otherwise mockery is invited. The pictures are more sensational than revealing of intention or interpersonal dynamic. Documentary imagery such as this is due the courtesy of a more journalistic treatment. Once understood, it lost a measure of its sinister pervasiveness, and I was able to see beyond the people as posers. The one image that managed to escape the onus of freak show was "Expect a Miracle-Healer," which stands on its own as a most wonderful and memorable photograph. There is something quite grating about an obligatory baring of breasts — even given the circumstances of an annual lesbian retreat, the gathering of thousands of women. Without some basic information, the pictures seem far too emotionally upended to be accessible. With it, they seem cloying. Perhaps the unedited group speaks more clearly for this ongoing project.

Sharon Stewart's cerebral approach to imagery meshes well with her extremely empathetic sensibility. She seems not to be under any visual aegis, allowing an unbridled exploration without self-consciousness or regard for trend. She has asked for the participation of her models, beyond posing, in creating the pictures. They control the bunts of flash that highlight their bodies, nude in sensuous unrestricted movement. The relation between photographer and model is important to Stewart. As bonds form (as with her Ciba-chrome cityscapes) the images grow more complex and fulfilling. It is the sense that much of the picture is determined outside the control of either photographer or model that most intrigues. Spirituality is a vital element in her reverence. Her figures are photographed with such understanding because she began with George Krause's very good advice about working with nudes: start with yourself. Contained within shadow and light are a variety of gestures, reminiscent of In-



Sharon Stewart



Sally Horgan



C. Leigh Farmer

donian shadow puppet theatre. Alison takes hold and carries the moment. The only bit of obtrusiveness is the male model's pierced nipple and earring, violence in an otherwise secure moment.

Margaret Moore's portraits of the elderly, when they get beyond the pretense of politeness, are sad and tender and beautiful. One completely trusts that she is filled with warmth and regard for those she has encountered and documented (a project of extended duration). This enables one to accept at face value the tenderness that is being presented. The most questions, of course, arise from the image of a shadowy, scowling woman behind an overgrown fence. Hers is a frown of indifference, one that prevails upon certain limits of credibility. These images would also benefit from an accompanying text of sorts.

Jim Teibout's "Wild Wind Series" reminds one of the illustrations for a minimalist fairy tale: they are so chimerical and unrooted that to fully appreciate them one must dissociate with all else. Viewing them becomes an exercise. Upon closer inspection, the hand-coloring becomes indefensible. It distracts from the meditative quality of the pictures, and creates a dichotomy of feelings. The precousness of the found imagery is invalidated by the somewhat arbitrary although meticulous application of color. One is slow to acknowledge that it is there in the first place: the images are quite special without it.

C. Leigh Farmer's dog pictures are a charming eccentric dream unspurring beyond what they are. They are great fun, the best of a genre. No more, no less. Charlotte Land's rooftop image of rows of birds (vireos) watching a tied-up porpoise (like) uses a daring vantage point to create a marvelous moment.

Elsewhere, one finds that what is being looked for has already been defined, in the manner of a given. Popular design elements, devoid of emotion or point of view recur, often displaying good technique, to no avail. As such, it is no better or worse than what the overestimated visual world has to offer, a grave disappointment to the city with so many facets. One feels certain that the community is ready for a change — the more daring, the better.

THE SECOND
BIENNIAL
PHOTOGRAPH

AUCTION

for the benefit of
the Houston Center for
Photography.



Ansel Adams

The Auction will be held on Saturday, December 8, 1984 at Paradise Bar & Grill, 401 McGowan at Brazos. Included will be photographs by nationally known photographers as well as members of the Houston Center for Photography. Table sale begins at 11 a.m. with the auction starting at 1 p.m. Food and drink will be available.

An Exhibit of the photographs for auction will be on view at the Houston Center for Photography from November 28 through December 7. Opening Reception on Wednesday, November 28, 6 to 8 p.m. A catalog will be available. Also on view will be A Tribute to Ansel Adams.

**SATURDAY
12.8.84**

Houston Center for Photography
1441 West Alabama
Houston, Texas 77006
(713) 529-4755
Hours
Wednesday through Friday 11 to 5
Saturday and Sunday 12 to 5