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FALL 1985
VOLUME III NUMBER 3

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STAFF
Editor: Dave Croseley
Senior Editor: David Portz
Contributing Editors: Lisa Bertelsen, Ida Havens, Lynn McLainahan


Design: Dave Croseley
Production: Cherie Truss

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something of a problem for photographers whose work is stored in stock houses and advertising agencies and increasingly made accessible by video disk; some of these same faddish art directors are having notions about combining parts of one photographer’s image with parts of another photographer’s to produce a “new” image. Sometimes this is done without asking. It has occurred to more than a few people in the business that perhaps there are now enough images to make just about anything. We are witnessing the onslaught of recombinant imagery.

Obviously, these inventions will not displace the photographer who photographs new things and events. But other inventions might make their jobs very different. Calling for brand new skills. Not far away are cameras that store visions of reality in digital form on magnetic disks, and this information can be sent over the telephone lines to video monitors anywhere. This has already been tried, by a Japanese newspaper which had one of its photographers cover the 1984 Olympics in this fashion, and actually published some of the pictures. The next step is to send the digitized information directly to engraving devices which make plates without a print or a transparencies — or, if that matter, anything tangible at all — ever having existed.

New people have been invented, too. Nancy Burson has used images of world politicians and mixed them up in interesting ways in a computer and produced syntheses of people who are whatever she dreamed of, but who aren’t anybody at all. Reagan and Andropov’s faces were mixed according to percentages of who had how many nuclear weapons, and sure enough, the result is a terrifying creature who controls both the weapons. She has also mixed together ethnic features according to world demographics and produced a new universal being.

In all of this, we are dealing with digits, in its most apparent form. Digitized information is used in newspaper pictures, where the dots that form the illusion of continuity are visible even to the naked eye. Digital information is opposed to analog, or continuous information. A wave is an analog event, as is the drawing of a bow across a violin string; conversely, a watch ticks in digital fashion. Photographs are considered to be analog, although it can be argued that they are made up of tiny grains of silver, and for that matter these grains are made of even tinier bits, lots of them. The digits now in use in conjuring up images with computers on video monitors are grotesque compared to the fineness of the photograph’s components. But that is the digits growing rapidly, becoming too small to see, and thus present the same visual apportion as the so-called continuous photograph. At some point fairly soon the quality of video imagery is going to be indistinguishable from photographic prints, and then there will be hell to pay.

As it is, the “fine print” has lost some of its charm, partly because many people make them tend to photograph the same thing over and over again — onions, rocks, keep sand dunes, old barns, and so on — and partly because the “finer” the print and more artful the light, the more manipulated and “artless” the picture seems, especially in black and white. One might stop a minute and wonder why black and white photographs have been accepted for so long as representing reality, when a black and white world is an utter fantasy, except for those few individuals whose vision is entirely monochromatic. Our visual culture has been nurtured by color, lots of it, and by pottishillism, cubism, and abstraction of many kinds, so that images essentially made from dreams seem real.

The problem with all of this is that most of the computer work so far is either unaltered commodity or just plain tacky. Computer “artists” so far don’t seem to have anything to relate to us other than their enthusiasm. The same is largely true of what has been done with holograms; the technical aspects are all that is interesting. Perhaps we are just in the doodling stage. Getting involved in this new technology is still difficult and expensive. That will change fast, however, as we have seen with office computers. A new photographic world is upon us. If you don’t think so, read the short item on page 5 about the predictions being made in The Photographic Collector; the editors of that publication believe that all photographic prints will be “designated antiquities” by 1990. That is clearly bad language, since the understanding of the word antique has something to do with age, but the point is clear enough, and it is summarized in their projection that “A few traditionalists will use today’s technology and will be recognized as artists working in an ancient craft.” Perhaps this isn’t a great time to go out and buy a lot of new cameras.
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?  
A recent issue of Modern Photography contained a 1945 Lou Stoumen photograph of a couple sleeping on a subway. Aperture, the publishers of Stoumen's recent book, is conducting a search to discover the identity of the two. If either of them steps forward, he or she will win a dinner at the Algonquin Hotel; a copy of the book, and a print from Stoumen. Not long ago there was a similar effort to find the people in Alfred Eisenstaedt's photograph of a sailor kissing a nurse in Times Square on VJ Day. In 1945. Not to be done, the editors of SPOT desperately seek the names of the people in the above photograph, which we believe was taken about the same time. If either of them contacts the magazine, he, she, or it will win lunch at Houston's famous Luckyburger Stand, a blood-stained copy of Larry Clark's book, ‘Genetic’, and a chance to watch the today show with the Houston photographer of their choice. If the photographer who made this picture or writes, SPOT can not be held responsible for very much.

BRAVE NEW WORLD
The editors of the newsletter: The Photographic Collector believe that "all of the prints in your collection will be designated antiques by 1990." They predict this will come to pass because of technological advances, which will make ordinary silver prints unnecessary, at least for "the masses." Manufacturers working on new video cameras that store images on discs or tape, and Hewson, Sony, Konica, and Fuji, and Polaroid, Hitachi, and Mitsubishi have working devices for progressively scanning. Advancements in the field are now coming very fast. Mitsubishi already sells a black-and-white video printer that sells for $388 in the US; the device makes aphotograms of quality prints on thermal paper for about 8 cents a print. Head paper companies have developed a paper with "unexposed" cyan, magenta, and yellow for making color prints said to be nearly as good as instant photographic prints.  

Basically, how all of this will work is that the discs from the camera could be inserted into devices attached to video monitors for instant viewing, and for cropping, color changes, even extensive manipulation. Prints would be made on printers attached to the playback unit. No emulsions or processing would be involved. The Photographic Collector predicts that photographers who shoot slides will be the first to use this new technology.

MORE ON FOTO FEST
Houston's month-long Fotofest, to be held in March, 1985, is getting very complicated, which is to say it looks like it will be big. There will be at least 53 exhibitions of work from the United States, Japan, England, Germany, France, Canada, and Switzerland. An early count on lecturers and panelists includes Robert Frank, Bernard Faucon, Van Deren Coke, Ernst Haas, Andy Grundberg, Islamic photograph, Sam Wagstaff, Daniel Wolf, and Andreas Müller-Pohle. There will also be slide presentations of work from Hungary, Sweden, Lithuania, Spain, Japan, Belgium, Holland, England, Germany, France, and the United States. The lectures and symposia will be co-sponsored by the Houston Center for Photography (HCP). Concomitantly, the Association of International Photographic Art Dealers (AIPAD) will hold its annual fair in Houston, and the HCP plans to host a conference of Conferences from American photography.

CURSES, FOILED AGAIN
It was the middle of the night after all, and the liquor store was closed, so Texas State Game Warden Bill Lindeman was a little concerned about Kenneth Harding, who was sitting in his car in front of the Bracketville store, honking his horn. When he drove away, Lindeman stopped him and discovered that the man wasn't Harding's, but belonged to Houston photographer Sharon Stewart. Quickly, Harding was charged with being the "Monroe Bandit," which was wanted at least 15 rob- beries in Houston.
One of the last of those robberies was in front of a store that had no adverse effect on Harding. When she was warming up her car, about noon, Harding jumped in with a grilled cheese to- ther, made her get out of the car and lie down on her, then drove off with $1000 worth of camer gear that was in the back, including her great-grandfather's 357 X-ray camera. When the police discov- ered, none of the equipment was in it. The Catch-22: If Harding is the thief, his lawyer won't let him reveal where the equipment is, because that would be an admission of guilt.

STEADY AS SHE GOES
Time again to look at the prices of photography at auction compared to the Dow Jones Industrial Stock Averages 1967-85. This auction index, established and is kept current by The Photographic Collector, a wonder- ful newsletter which notes that the market has simply been stable for the last year. Theoretically, your stock portfolio could have kept pace with the Dow for the last ten years, it would be a good deal less than if your money had been invested. The newsletter also states that the most significant factor in the photog- raphy market is the number of collectors, which has not changed noticeably if as few as 500 new collectors were to join the fray.

VERSIV NOTES AND RUMORS
How's this for trouble: TRW ran an ad in American Society's newsletter and other publications that diamonds transparencies from their files at no cost. These images were, of course, provided by the Steed- millyarex (HCP). Concomitantly, the Association of International Photographic Art Dealers (AIPAD) will hold its annual fair in Houston, and the HCP plans to host a conference of Conferences from American photography.

An editor at American Society magazine has learned that photographers signing contracts ferret out "work for hire" wording and get it changed to something like "unlimited usage for XYZ company," which allows retention of copyright and prevents the company from getting the work away to others, but doesn't prevent the client from accomplishing what he or she intended, which is unlimited usage by the company.

Peter Plagens has identified, described, and demolished a photographic trend: "Clichéchrome slickness," as he calls it. Writing in Art in America he spoke of "oversized, overproduced, overelegant tongue-in-cheek homages to Ousterhout and Helmut Newton, little dolls mounted before cur- tain images of the Effel Tower and a bad Miami living room and a crap-slit out of focus, big images of dumby women with bad teeth, and lacquered borrowings from teen mags. It's New Wave Arnel Adams . . . ."

Morris Camhi, Susan Felter, and Anne Noggle had pretty good luck with their new print marketing scheme, called "The Houston FOTO Print-Fest." At Focus Gallery in San Francisco, they offered 600 prints, archival as possible and signed and so on, for $50 to $75, and the gallery peddled a couple of them. Most of the people who said these were their first gallery ac- quiritions. Apparently the "Popular" is buying "highly." People who have money and the money to buy the larger, limited edition prints.

The picture agency Black Star recent- ly sent the following warning to its photographers:
"As you know, X-rays can be a problem [for film]. Most airlines in most locations use low dosages. That means if you have lead shield protection or ask for extra protection you will have no problem. There are some airlines that use high doses of X-rays in some loca- tions. They are the following: British Airways in Great Britain, Cathay Pacific in Hong Kong and Bangkok, Philippine Airlines, Singapore Airlines, and all Concord flights. If you travel on any of these airlines, you must request hand inspection." You should probably always request it, however. Putting film through security machines has the same effect as putting it through one bad one, and high- lighters, in greater danger than low-speed.

McLean McLanahan is leaving her job as Executive Director of the Houston Center for Photography to move to Chicago with her new husband, who is going to graduate school. McLanahan hearted decided, what she'd do in Chicago, although she'll continue to work a couple of special projects for the HCP.

Considering how much money went to Lee Friedlander and the other photographers whose pictures of the naked Madonna were published in Playboy and Penthouse recently, it's probably a good idea to devote a lit- tle energy to nude studies. The wise photographer will utilize every- body in sight, just in case. Maybe that's why Houston photographer Gay Block talked the venerable Aaron Sokol into disrobing for a few pic- tures not long ago. Would Playguy be interested?

The Leoica world is a pampered one. Now E. Leitz Inc. is offering "Seminars at Sea," four cruises to various exotic places in the Southern Hemisphere. Walter Heun will be the instructor on two of the cruises and he describes as opportunities to "hone your photographic skills."

Affs has announced a new color paper that the firm claims could last 200 years if kept dry in the dark. The paper will be marketed as AgfaColor Type III.
By Estelle Jusim

Feet are feet, aren't they? Well, not the way Anne Noggle photographs them. It takes a person with a distinctly unbuttoned sense of humor, an unabashed notion of fun, and the physical agility to lie down on the floor with a camera to summon up such fantastic images of shoes, feet, ankles, knobly knees, and unadorned shins. Anne Noggle's crazy feet; you might call them, and what daring she had! It isn't every serious photographer who permits herself such flights of fancy.

What can pictures of feet — pointy in their minx-tee pumps, stubby in klutzy sneakers, mainy shoes, woollenly shoes, nondescript yet formidable toes — what can all these tell us? A surprising amount. By their shoes and the vanity of their pedal extremities shall ye know them. Would you be willing to host your skirt or roll up your slacks to reveal such an intimate part of yourself? I'm not sure I would. Toes are toes are toes, and no wonder we hide them in boots! There are probably only a handful, or should I say a footful, of people in this world who can boast of having truly admirable toes. And which of us has the metatarsal arch that would send a genuine aesthetic into a swoon? Or an ankle borne with the subtlety to inspire a sonnet?

Feet are what most of us keep determinedly on the ground, and all of us comprehend what it means when we say "He hasn't got a leg to stand on." Not all of Noggle's pictures of shod feet evoke amusement. Some of the series make me thoughtful, even sad. Human gestures and apparel are usually studied by cultural anthropologists, but Anne Noggle's pictures — all of them, not just this selection — are of such poetic intensity that they make us look a second and even a third time at the peculiarities of being human. We are the animal that walks upright, with the technical know-how to manufacture everything from moccasins to Nikes, and we have created enough fetishes about feet and their coverings to fill several encyclopedic articles.

Take a moment. Consider with great care what these pictures represent, and then ask yourself if you can ever again look a foot in the face.
in the coal mine, the oil field, or the slaughterhouse for a celebration of their dirtiness. Some are nearly irre- cording in their sense of theatre — one slaughterhouse worker seems to have stuck his head into the head of a skinny, bloody dripping deer with the tongue hanging out and the eye bulging. If Avedon wants us to know how grim are the jobs, even the lives, of many people, he has surely suc- ceeded at that. Even those who have been allowed to prepare themselves are covered with sequins and incred- ible combinations of patterns, of body-encasing tattoos. A few escape. A striking 13-year-old girl on the cover (whom Avedon has turned in- to a sombering woman), a young rancher from Montana, a couple of God-fearing Hutterites, are among the small band of souls who manage — and to be included — in the world of weathiness. Avedon has cast over so many of these subjects.

I’ve been on Avedon’s chordal swing for more than thirty years and during that time I’ve been immersed by the schizophrenia of his career, making some people beautiful, glam- orous, and ugly and fearsome beyond the reality which would be perceived by normal eyes in the act- ual presence of the people, where we make our living portraits to include — very much a matter of personal, personal personalities. When he first started making, with X-ray, Share, and photog- raphers of well known people, he seems to have denied that he was a “fashion” photographer who lived in a phony world, quick as work, he had that no, but he, you know, going on all the time, and just like you and me. That he has not always been very nice to the memories of famous people — remember his terrible picture of D.W. (Eisenhower) (Dwight Eisen- hower) has not discovered his almost unbelievable skill or his legendary control—

This project was a turning away from the famous. In the book’s afterword, Dallas photographer Laura Wilson, who traveled with Avedon, says: “From the start, Avedon chose men and women who work at hard, uneducated jobs, the people who are often ignored or overlooked. He searched for what he wanted to see and his choices were completely subjective.” In his comments about the project, Avedon has referred to Edward Curtis, and August Sander was clearly an influence. The work of these men appears to be documen- tary, but in fact is loaded with their ideas, their fantasies. Each photog- rapher employed staging and each carried imagined characters out of his subjects. Avedon suggests that Curtis was dealing in fiction and is quite clear that he thinks this is. In the foreword to this book, Avedon says, “A portrait photographer depends, upon another person to complete his picture. The subject imagined, in a sense is me; it must be discovered in someone else willing to become implicated in a fiction he cannot possibly know about. My concern is not his. We have sepa- rate ambitions for the image. His need to please his case probably goes as deep as my need to please him, but then we are not with him.” That’s a pretty wonderful idea, that a port- rait, constructed of these things, are a way to create fiction, and that we are not really finally looking at that person. On one hand this is a fabulous alibi for what sometimes appears to be a non-identity, and on the other it is an assertion that is far as a photo- tographer to make as for a painter, isn’t it?

Harold Brody thought so, writing his introduction to an earlier book, American Photographs (1977): “To make a photograph speak requires the coincidence of all sorts of facts — and processes of fact — but then the lying must begin and a photographic language which was not used by painters in their different games with time and truth and objects and faces. Only the conventional is com- prehensible, and the conventional is the subject of most photographs perhaps — the banal, banality itself. The singular, the strange is the human voice, only half comprehensible, an important and important moron, not an ideogram, not com- prehensible. So Billy Mudd, trucker, whose head and body don’t quite match, is Avedon’s human voice, a Val Kilmer, Curley, graver digger, whose nose is broken and moshapped, and the bald Franklin (shirtless and covered with bees), and Cloudy White, slaughterhouse worker, shows with the blood of a hundred head of cat- tle, not to mention all the people who are just ugly, pockmarked and scarred, or who are frustrated by their own evil, sometimes, or by their ignorance, literacy, or poverty, I suppose we are all like victims and so forth, but these people seem to have been pummelled about a little more than most. It is curious that Avedon has pro- duced a set of pictures that so clearly show his presence, when the says in the foreword, “These disciplines, these materials, the inherent limitations, in a sense, attempt to achieve an illusion: that everything embodied in the photo- graphic medium, happened, that the per- son in the portrait was always there, was present all the time. We were never encouraged to hide his hands, and in the end was not even in the presence of a photographer.” But almost none of them show that separation. Many of the people look frightened, or overwhelmed, under alien control. Avedon staged a few in-

in Montana, we met up with the Wheatcroft brothers, Richard and Brad. They drove us in their pickup truck, over dusty dirt roads that rumbled like a car- riage. We wound our way up, over the hills, through the wind that never stopped and a steady rain from the rain. We never had a chance for a drive in the pickup. Western drivers are im- patient with the endless space.

We stopped at a high butte which overlooked this great flatland. We walked through the fields. The Wheatcroft brothers picked up short of stormy, spreading them the rain. It was a storm. The clouds looked like a storm in a star-filled sky. On top of the butte was a misty cloud. A man, built by the second group of wanderers

By Dave Croxley

For five summers, beginning in 1979, Richard Avedon and his en- tourage toured the American West making portraits, supported by a commission from Fort Worth’s Amon Carter Museum. The project was ini- tiated by the museum’s late direc- tor, Mitchell A. Winder, and has now become a major touring exhibition (opening at the Amon Carter on September 14, and traveling on to Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Chicago, Phoenix, Boston, and Atlan- ta), and an elaborate book and cata- logue. Apparently Winder had the idea after seeing a 1976 portrait. Avedon had made of a ranch fore- man in Montana. It would be inter- esting to see that photograph now, in the presence of these pictures, which evoke a feeling reminiscent of the work of Daniel Arbus. Many of those pho- tographs from which Arbus were people who upon whom life had visited a terrible violence, in the form of physical or mental aberrations, or who had chosen a way of being that was not easily or lovingly grasped, at least not by anyone. As the book’s foreward, the per- sons in Avedon’s pictures are bored to be denizens of an underworld popu- lated by outsiders. A great many of Avedon’s sub- jects are either to be seen or are squirming away so included mountain area, inbreeding for gener- ations and deprived of all knowledge of the rules of the Taste Police, for whom Avedon works when he’s not doing projects such as this one. Many look as though Avedon had stormed their homes, and forced them up against the white seamless backdrop paper, their pants unbuttoned, hair disheveled, and their demeanor reflecting utter resignation before the passage of the camera. Critics seem to have been dragged from their jobs

In Jordan, Montana, we met with the Wheatcroft brothers, Richard and Brad. They drove us in their pickup truck, first, our über-dirty kids that go as up- wards directly from one point to another. Photog- raphing them was like shooting in the rain. We never had a chance to drive in the pickup. Western drivers are im- patient with the endless space.

We stopped at a high butte which overlooked this great flatland. We walked through the fields. The Wheatcroft brothers picked up short of stormy, spreading them the rain. It was a storm. The clouds looked like a storm in a star-filled sky. On top of the butte was a misty cloud. A man, built by the second group of wanderers

Richard Wheatcroft, rancher, Jordan, Montana. 6/19/88 and 6/27/83

The text accompanying the photographs was written by Dallas photographer Laura Wilson, who accompanied Avedon on his trips throughout the West. Her descriptions are printed as an afterword in the book (from which these are excerpted).
We saw firsthand the single biggest change taking place in the American West since the closing of the open range and the building of the railroads: the energy boom. In the 1970s energy companies were taking another look at out-of-fashion fuels like coal. Huge strip-mining operations scraped coal from surface deposits in Wyoming, Montana, and Colorado. Old tunnel mines were reopened; men went back in and dug deeper.

The Old Scrabbury Coal Mine in Gillette, Wyoming, was reopened in 1975 after having been shut for almost two decades. The workers were young, rough, and boisterous. They went underground cramped in small vehicles called "men-trips," scratched with griffins on the doors, seats, and roofs. After fifty feet, daylight disappeared. The "mantrips" continued down to a depth of 3,500 feet. There in complete darkness, the miners began their long walk to the "face," the seam where coal was being cut. Their commute lasted almost an hour and a half.

The men walked through "entry" tunnels no higher than five feet in many places. They walked bent over an rocky, uneven footing; water welled in from side walls. For the unaccustomed to the depth and blackness and cramped passageways, all visual bearings were lost; the light from the miners' flashlights did little good. We couldn't see. So we strained to hear, and the soundlessness of the tunnels was frightening. The air was fouled by coal dust, filling our nostrils and throats, covering our faces and clothes. The miners checked the oxygen in the air each hour. In old, worked-out areas of the mine, the miners didn't always get enough air. The lack of oxygen is as deadly as a poisonous gas. The miners call it "black damp." 

There are other dangers in tunnel coal mining. "Boot dust," for example, tiny particles of coal that accumulate in the cutting machine, works at the face of the coal seam. A random spark from the bit can ignite these particles, causing an explosion. "Bouncing" — a deceptively light-hearted term used by miners to describe the tremendous force caused by the earth setting — can start a cave-in from which no one escapes.

The young miners like the challenge and danger. They discount the odds of "knowing that some day you might buy it." A miner said, matter-of-factly, "It's not boring. I guess the danger has something to do with it." A face boss told us, "Miners are like sailors going to sea. They put themselves against the earth the way sailors go out to sea."

Then there are what one mine foreman called the "tender ones," men who grew up together, went to school together, whose brothers or fathers or uncles are miners, and who, right out of high school, could make top wages in mining. They like working together, watching out for each other. Roger Trim, a 25-year-old miner from Reliance, Wyoming, said, "I like it, I really like it down there. Nobody can get to you."
Los Vegas, New Mexico, is an hour's
drive around the southern edge of the
San se de Cristo Mountains from Santa
Fe. In the 1920s and '30s, while Santa Fe
grew as an artists' and writers' colony, Los
Vegas depended on dry land farming and
ranching. During the Depression the
town struggled to maintain itself. The
town square, once an oasis of tall live
oak trees surrounded by two-story brick
buildings, took on the shabby ap-
pearance of a place where opportunity
would knock only once.

Today, Los Vegas exists to support the
cultural agencies of New Mexico's San
Miguel County. It is also the home of the
state mental hospital. Founded in the
1940s, the hospital is a complex of red
brick buildings, all having the institutional
look of the period. Many of the patients
are Hispanic and come from isolated,
rural communities in New Mexico. We
photographed them in the spring of 1980
during Holy Week. Snow was still on the
ground. Daily temperatures varied from
35 to 50, making it too cold to photo-
graph outside. We set up the camera
and the white paper in the noon cafe-
ria facing the morning light flooding in
from a wall of windows. At 12:45 pm, men
and women filed in and took trays of
food to tables where they sat together.
Members of the hospital staff helped
them select foods and relax and talk to
one another. A woman entered the cafe-
teria, taking three steps at a time, then
stopping until she counted from one to
ten. She was in her mid-thirties and wore
a white blouse and blue pants. No one
interfered with her, but the time she spent
to take such precise steps was used up
most of her lunch period. Avedon asked if
he might take a picture. She wore, for the
portrait, a silver rosary around her neck.
After the sitting, she sat and talked with
us, quietly. The assistants took several
Polaroids to give to her. Avedon handed
her the most flattering one. She asked to
see the others, and looked carefully at
each picture. "Does this look like me?"
She held out a close-up of just her face.
In Omaha, Nebraska, and Amarillo, Texas, Awad photographed men whose faces were covered in red and purple. They work in meatpacking plants, slaughtering 300 head of cattle per hour. With rotating shifts of 100 to 140 men, the plants are in operation 14 to 18 hours a day. The cattle are driven from outside pens up a ramp to a narrow retainer. There, lunging and bellowing, each animal is killed by a "knocking gun" which shoots a pin into its head. Immediately a shackles' pin, wrapped around the animal's hind leg, jerks it into the air. The carcasses clutter along a rail in front of an assembly line of workers. First a great automatic scythe rips off the hide. Then a
LARRY CLARK:
OUTLAW NO MORE

By Ellen Wallenstein

The cover photograph of Larry Clark's book, Teenage Lust is a gorgeously lit rectangle of boy/girl flash on the seat of a car, her hand around his penis, his hand at her crotch, their tongues touching. The quintessence of teenage lust: hot stuff in the back of a car on the cover of a book.

The inside cover: a man and a woman seated at a table in a restaurant, his hand on her arm behind the water glasses. Between them is a cute young boy in a dark plaid shirt, over a white shirt with his name on it. All three look into the camera with tight-lipped grins, but no one is really smiling.

The frontispiece: a photograph of that same boy, in a white shirt, hate-nestly combing, holding up a Roy Rogers camera. He is locking out beyond the viewer. Under the photograph, handwritten letters, the subtitle of the book: An Autobiography by Larry Clark.

Most autobiographies are written pieces, with photographs used for illustration and/or historical purposes. In Clark's book, the photographs serve as text, while the afterword, a twenty-seven-page speed-egership of words, fills in all the biographical information and serves as the verbal glue that gives the images their cohesion.

Primary interest in this book stems from Clark's previous book, Tulsa, the stuff of which reputations are made. Tulsa, a tightly edited, visually beautiful and coherent photo-poem about the life of teenage speed freaks in the 1960s, was an underground classic among photographers, and made Clark a cult hero. Tulsa reads like a film: it is cinematic. Each image and placement of images is carefully thought out and consistent. From the cover photographs of the kid on the bed holding a gun, to the last limp image of preparing to shoot up, the book reads like a young outlaw's chronicle of a particular subjective reality. At one point in Tulsa does anyone look at the camera, and at that point it serves as a pause or interlude to the steamy drama taking place within the story.

Compared to Tulsa, Teenage Lust is a different kind of movie. It is episodic, rather than a continuum, a visual chronology helped out by hindsight and wisdom. It is also more directly confrontational with the viewer, and somehow objective despite its personal nature. As autobiography, it needs as a photographic journey through the drug-crazed beginnings of a new era on into the present with all its ambiguities.

The placement and chronology of imagery as well as the scrapbook quality of parts of this book (newspaper articles, legal notices, snapshots and Polaroid images, words) make Clark's experience somehow more tangible, further evidence offered up to us to prove an existence. The life it chronicles is involved in drugs, sex, voyeurism, and jail, as well as other good clean fun. Combined with the powerful afterword, it is a book about self-discovery and maturation. By putting together this book of visual and verbal reclamation that serves as an autobiography, Clark puts himself in touch with the man in him, as well as an overview of the boy he was.

What follows is an interview I had with Larry Clark about his book and his new life.

EW: How did Teenage Lust come about?

LC: I was in New York and I'd done the Tulsa book a couple of years earlier. A friend of mine said to me, "What are you going to do is sit around on your ass, sit around on your reputation?" and I said, "Yeah, that's what I'm gonna do." And then it was like a real challenge. So over a weekend I went and I took all my other negatives and other prints that were left over from Tulsa and I put them together. I laid them down in a dummy and probably about a third of Teenage Lust was put down.

About four years ago I quit drinking. When I got out of the penitentiary, I cleaned up completely. I quit all drugs. During that period I had to keep busy so the Teenage Lust book was my personal work therapy to keep me okay because I was really in bad shape. It was like life or death. I really worked, and I got so involved in it that I was afraid I was going to die. I said, "If I'm going to die I'll never get this book out." There was about a year and a half that I wouldn't fly if I had to go to Chicago or something I would take a train.

Plus I got married three years ago and we have a son who is one year old. So I stopped drinking. I did two books. I got a kid and a wife — I really made major life changes.

EW: Why did you decide to have the text in Teenage Lust?

LC: Aperture had a contract with me for this book, back when I first laid the dummy down. So I came to...
New York and I got with Aperture, with Michael Hoffman and Carol Komicak. They were very enthusiastic about the book and wanted me to complete it and they wanted me to do a test. I didn't want to do a test. I knew I would have to tell them I didn't want to do it. I wasn't interested in revealing this and talking about myself. But finally I did a test because the book was ready to be published and they said they wanted a test. We kind of had a Mexican standoff — we just looked at each other for a year. They wouldn't publish it and I wouldn't do a test. Finally I did it, which really helped the book a lot. I really made an effort. I was against it, but once I did it, I said that it had to be there just the way it was.

It got very scary because once I'd done the test I really saw what the book was and I said, "How am I gonna put this out?" I knew that the image that I was projecting through the book, even though it was right, was going to upset a lot of people.

EW: It did.

LC: Me too.

EW: How come Aperture didn't publish it?

LC: They eventually couldn't publish it. Until twelve months prior to publication, for 3½ years. Aperture gave me emotional support, they spent money, they spent quite a few thousand dollars (I don't want to say how much but quite a few thousand dollars) on it. It kept me going. But it was a little too rough for them. So I did it myself.

EW: Did you design it yourself?

LC: I designed the whole book. I did everything myself. So the book is exactly like I want it to be.

EW: You're on drugs when you were doing the text?

LC: No, I straight. I tried to do a text six months earlier. I was still smoking weed, and it was terrible. I found out I had to quit smoking weed, which I'd never done. But to do the text I had to, so I quit and then I was totally clean and then I was able to do the text. It was done on a portable typewriter.

EW: Strange Lust seems more voyeuristic than Tulsa. I know there was somebody there in the front seat; I'm aware of somebody shooting these things.

LC: In the Tulsa book, you don't know the photographer's there, as much as in Strange Lust, where you're aware of the photographer. There's a technical answer to that. I realized it when I was laying out Tulsa; no one in Tulsa looks at the camera. One picture of one girl looks at the camera. One reason you get the feeling of how it started, how I was there; I was one of "the guys." I was very close, and I was using a 50mm lens in the first half of the book and a 25mm lens in the second half, so I'm about this close to everybody. But no one looks at the camera. When I was laying out Tulsa, I found that to tell the truth, I didn't want to tell it, to get the feeling and to tell the truth, the pictures of the people looking at the camera had to be taken out. It just worked better that way. The pictures of the people looking at the camera screamed for a whole continuity, screwed up the feeling, changed everything. There are reasons for it, and when I did this book in 1977 I knew the reasons. Or I realize it now. I don't remember. But as a student of how a book is done, there's something to it.

I'm not explaining it well. I've forgotten why, but one reason this book works is because I did the dummy in different versions for myself. I took the pictures and moved them around, found the ones I had to throw away. The reason the book is good is that I realized I had to be ruthless and vicious in my editing. No matter how good the pictures were if they didn't work, they went out.

So I was left with only the pictures that worked. It's very hard on your other pictures when you can't use them. But I realized that if you can't use them, you can't use them, and that was one of my rules. Consequently, when I started the Strange Lust book, I had all these pictures of people looking at the camera that I couldn't use before. I was looking for a way to use those pictures. Just like I was saying. Here people looking at the camera that I couldn't use, here's pictures on weed, pictures on acid, whatever. I mean all these things went into it, and are part of book making. I think that there are photographers, millions of them, who can make photographs as good as I can, but I think one of the main reasons why these books work is because I was ruthless in my editing. I used them for a purpose and I used them to say what I wanted to say.

EW: Strange Lust is really romantic. In comparison, Tulsa seems rough.

LC: I think it's because the pictures are a little bit nice and pretty. I think that's because I'm a good photographer and I'm trying to do that. I had fought with that a lot. In other words, as I said in the book you had to make the people look good, it was a baby photographer long ago and I think my early training, on being able to see people and the people I shoot best, influenced me. You can bring out their good features or you can eliminate their bad features if you're good enough. If you're watching for that, you really care about showing the person like he or she would like to be shown. I think I'm able to do that with people. I couldn't do it any other way. If someone has a big nose I'm not going to make it look bigger. It's just a natural thing. I was trained that way. Being like a hotshot studio photographer who really makes people look good and being a street photographer is like being two photographers. Photographers may make people freakier than they are or accentuate the way people look; or maybe that's the way people really do look. maybe the people don't look like the way I make them look.

EW: I think people look the way
you think they look. And if you're ambivalent, then the photographs are ambivalent also.

LC: But it's still hard to make them look like you think they look. You still have the negatives back in the darkroom, and when you look at the prints, you say this is not the way I want them to look. So it's hard to make them look the way you want them to look.

EW: Did you have an idea in your head for the cover? Were you looking for this image?

LC: I was looking for the situation.

The image just happened. If you can get into the situation then the pictures will be there and then you gotta pick them out. But this just happened. We were driving back from the lake and it was happening in the back seat. I was pressed up against the windshield. This is the only frame I could get. It works. This is probably just about my best picture, photographically.

EW: What about the dog imagery? There's a lot of dogs in here, like this one from Florida.

LC: It was my dog, a great dog, a baby retriever, and I had to give the dog away. That was all. I had a girlfriend once who saw that picture and she woke up one morning and said "I got it! You want to fuck your dog!" I said no, that's not it. But it's a sexy picture of a dog, that's all it is. It was a picture taken on acid.

EW: Are these pictures on acid?

LC: Some of them are. It was late in the 60s, everyone was doing acid.

Plus we were putting paint all over ourselves and then laying out on big sheets of paper. At one time I was looking at the book technically as every photograph in the book is taken under the influence of some drug. Which doesn't make you take better photographs or anything but it's interesting to me that I was always fucked up. When I was taking all the pictures, there were speed pictures and acid pictures and downer pictures, and I was always drinking. At one time I was thinking about putting the book into sections like that. During that time I started seeing myself and that's how it became autobiography.

All these little things... The years were resolved. I would think about these things and then look at my photographs and really analyze myself, trying to figure out where I was coming from, who I was, why I was taking these pictures, and then at the very end it all came out in the text. I was figuring out why I was really the kind of person I was.

EW: Do you feel you were a different person?

LC: I'm still the same person but I understand. I understand what is going on and who I am and why I do the things I do. I wouldn't want to be running around the country like that, like a wild man, now. I'm very lucky. My friends kept dying on me and I thought, gee man, I'm the one that's forced to stay here and record this and do this, as stupid as that sounds I was obsessed by it. I mean there was a reason why these guys were strong guys but it was... time to go.

EW: Do you feel that while you were high your camera could be your straight man?

LC: Right. It always gives you a reason for being there. People are out there doing all these things but, if they don't have any reason, I mean I wouldn't want to be doing them unless I had my camera. It's very strange.

EW: How do you feel looking at those photographs now?

LC: Looking at my photographs now is a totally different experience than it was.

EW: Are you shocked in looking back that you were such a crazy?


EW: In 1968, I was a high school student in New York City. And that stuff was going on around me and I was affected by it, but not directly or confrontationally. But if I had been a part of twenty-five instead of a part of fifteen, maybe I would have photographed the 60s.

LC: I always felt and still do feel that the people who were involved in it, like the sixteen year olds, if somehow you could have made them good photographers, they would have done a better job of it. I did something different but if someone that was inside of it could have done it... Of course that comes from the Tulsa book experience and being a photographer and recognizing that there was something going on that I could photograph.

EW: I wonder if that has to do with the ultimate fantasy of going back and photographing as a grown-up.

LC: I don't think it did. I was still pretty young and pretty wild and crazy. I don't think it affected much. The photographs are pretty natural. I was able to kind of fit into the scene because I'm from Oklahoma and I knew a lot of the kids from the time they were little kids on the street. I find the motivations interesting and strange. I wonder if one was analyzed early if they would be able to go out and make the photographs, or would that stop one from photographing? I wonder. Because I was psychologically analyzing myself in these photographs.

When I did the text I was obviously putting myself back to the age of the time that the things were happening. I was talking about it because I wanted to say what I felt then. This text could have been totally different. I could have talked about my father like I understand now, like he's just a guy out there, you know, the poor guy. In the next, I thought I should go back to how I felt through the years and forget about looking at it now, with sophistication and understanding. So that's why some of it is cruel and rough. When I was talk-
ing about some of the violence I mean that how I feel. When you're on drugs that's how you feel. On the front page of the newspaper some kid says "Give me your bicycle," then you get an eyewitness account: they were just standing talking for thirty seconds, it looked like he punched him in the chest, and then he ran away. Then they go over and see he was stabbed through the heart and he was dead, right? No one understands that, but I can understand it because when you're on drugs you think you're right. It's like Billy the Kid and the Old West and Shootout at High Noon. You're right and the other side is wrong. You see it every day in the papers. I understand why that's going on. You might have to be pretty hip to drugs and everything to understand. I think a lot of people understand the text, but then, a lot of people take it straight and think I'm a thug. I've always liked looking back and seeing how differently people see my work. There's a kind of ambiguity in some of the work into which people can read their own story.

EW: Do you think that by photographing something like you did, that you fictionalized your past, fictionalized an idea or idealized something, so that it's truth but not truth?

LC: I've thought about that, but no, I don't think I have. All I've done is make people look good. It's really hard for me to put it into words, because I'm not real articulate, I'm not a poet. I wish I was. But that's a good question. You know, talking about these things, the drugs, the violence, the sex, and all that. I mean there was a lot of fun going on, but you might as well, it's hard for some of these people to accept this: that life is going on, it's fun, it's beautiful. And that all these other elements are in there. By showing it happening people will ask it and they just can't dismiss it like a bunch of freaks, 'cause these are people, they look like people, they like other people. I think the way you show the people has a lot to do with how others are going to take it.

EW: Tulsos seems a bit sleazy, the photographs are contrasty and the people look grizzly.

LC: But the people in Tulsa still look good. I mean, you should have been there and seen what everybody really looked like.

EW: What about the girl with the black eye?

LC: I made her look great, let me tell you. Because I wouldn't show anybody looking bad. I just wouldn't do that. I mean what am I trying to do here? I don't want to take advantage of anybody. I guess I do it in a way, but there's another element in there when you photograph sometimes — that rule, that you make people look good while they're doing whatever they're doing. If I photographed someone murdering someone right here, if it wasn't a good photograph, if the people didn't look just right, and if it wasn't a good composition, I wouldn't print the picture. I wouldn't care about it. I wouldn't let them publish it. Because the picture wouldn't be any good.

EW: What are you doing now?

LC: Well, I'd like to do is make a film and I'm working on this script, but I don't know how to make a film. So I have a lot of anxiety and depression because I think that I would like to make movies, I think the reason the books work as stories is that they're kind of cinematic in concept, but really felt like I could be in a film. For the last six months I've been working on an idea for a film. Now I realize that I might make a film one day and maybe I won't. But in the meantime I should probably do what I do best, and that's try to do another book. I should try to find a way to express the ideas in a film. To do it in another book seems impossible to me because it really is a subject for the cinema. Maybe that's the start of my project. I want to do a film and have to settle for a book, I'll get it done.

EW: What about video?

LC: I'm like, you know, raised on High-wood. I'm interested in the big screen, the 35mm and the whole thing. But I can see the process starting. I've been in the darkroom the last couple of days.

EW: What's it going to be about?

LC: I would like to make something less autobiographical but I think in a way everything is.

EW: Do a lot of people interview you?

LC: No, not many. I've got a wife and kid now, so I can't really be such a bum. I need to make some bread and butter. So there's new pressures that are coming up. I've given a few talks, maybe once a year or one every two years. I turn them down because it's just too uncomfortable to just show up and talk about you. My problem is once I say it once, I don't want to say it again. I don't want to give the same lecture, so when I give one, I always make it different. I never plan. I just go in cold and start talking. Anyway, the point was that now I've got a kid who's a year old and a wife and it's really expensive in New York, so there's all sorts of new pressures on me. All of a sudden, I'm forty-one years old and supposed to change. So you gotta have a credit card and you get all the shit. I never had a credit card until a year ago. People said, 'Wow! How do you live all these years?' I said, well, I just lived. It wasn't important. I wasn't worried about a house, I wasn't worried about a car. I wasn't worried about nothing. I was just out there. So I wonder what's gonna become of me.

Now I'm in a crisis period again because I really want to do some work while I have peoples attention.

EW: How much of your past is you now? How much of your 'outlaw' past is with the Larry Clark taking pictures in the world now?

LC: Well, there's a lot of my past with me, but about being an outlaw — I'm retired now. This would be a great time for a great quote but I don't have one. I don't know. It's a constant struggle.
HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

By Paul Wagner

The last pictures of a house that ex- isted for one woman.

All photographs by Paul Wagner

The dancers are all gone under the hill.
The houses are all gone under the sea.
T.S. Eliot, East Coker

On May 1, 1981, bulldozers began leveling the Delores Wieder Crabb Mitchell house, built 50 years earlier on a hill at the corner of Toon and Pine Valley in Houston's River Oaks. Several weeks before, having heard that it was to be torn down, I went to the empty house to take a final series of photographs. As I arrived at the old Italian wallnut doors I was struck by how well kept everything looked. The glass in the doorside lamp was clear, flowers bloomed in matching pots as far as the eye could see, the entryway, bricks were freshly swept. It seemed odd that although the house had been emptied and sold several months earlier, someone was still caring for it, keeping it fed and watered and polished.

Delores Mitchell, the former owner of the house, had not yet arrived to let me in, so I had a few moments to think. What kind of pictures was I going to take; and moreover, why was I really there? What did I expect to do, or to accomplish? A batch of photographs would certainly never save the house. I had only been to the house on two or three previous occasions. Delores Mitchell had been one of my most outrageous and stimulating teachers in college, but our acquaintance had become more infrequent as our paths diverged over the years. Several years after I graduated, she married Delores Wieder Crabb, as he said it, to care for her and keep her company through an extended illness. I had never met her, and the first night my wife and I came to visit at the house, she was too sick to receive. But the Spanish colonial house she had commissioned John Staub to build in 1935 captured our affection immediately.

Douglas led us that night through the entrance hall. Delores had furnished the house with beautiful Mediterranean antiques, and decorated it with art and antiques from all over the world. The 400-year-old doors into the dining room had been handmade in Florence. The tiles decorating the stairway were handpainted after scenes from Goya. Everywhere the eye turned was some new delight, some worthy wonder, some fresh fascination; and forming it all was the house, like a series of landscapes, extending and disappearing, on and on.

We went down into the one and a half-story living room with its turreted ceiling and ancient marble fireplace. A full-length larger-than-life-size fresco portrait of Delores, painted by St. Hubert, was mounted into the wall. And then we stepped out into the loggia. We were stunned. The garden was something out of a fairyland: a blue-green pink-yellow dream of plants and pools and the play of lights in the dark evening air. It too was a series of landscapes, one opening and leading on endlessly to another.

The night echoed with past laughter and lost romance, and I wondered what other evenings in earlier days might have been like, when Delores was well and, like the house, in brightest bloom. I thought of that evening as I stood again before the old front door and waited, pondering still what I was doing there. The house waited too, patiently, for me and for Douglas, and perhaps for a miracle.

Finally Douglas arrived and we went in. The bare inside of the house had been as beautifully kept as the outside: the glasswork gleamed, the woodwork shined, there was no dust. Without furniture the proportions of the spaces were even more apparent. I left it here that the charm of the house began, in the proportions.

This house was made to be lived in, by genteel people to be sure, but people nonetheless. For while gentility demands the appearance of perfect comfort, there is often something in perfection that is a little too stiff for comfort. But for John Staub, the style of a house was more than the way the house looked: it was also how the house felt. Houston architect Howard Barnstone noted that “Staub’s work is breathing...it speaks to a time when profit was translated into grace.” Staub’s philosophy was that “an elegant house need not be an ostentatious house; a simple, traditional design, richly textured and carefully proportioned, was more beautiful than the most magnificent palace.” (From The Architecture of John F. Staub by Howard Barnstone, University of Texas Press)

Some have said that a house is just a machine for living in, but I didn’t
realize that I didn’t think Delores had either. A machine is too utilitarian to be personal. And this house, while answering every mechanical need, was very personal. The house began to speak to me, to show that its superb design could be filled with anything or with nothing and still remain quietly elegant and powerful. Pictures began to arrange themselves for the taking. I realized suddenly that the photographs needed to be of more than the proportions and the embellishments, even if that was all that was left. I wanted the walls to speak to me, to tell me light-filled stories of the people who had come to the house in friendship and had left a part of their laughter and tears in the polish of the tiles and the glare of the lamps and the shadows in the hedges outside.

As I wandered through the house, setting up my tripod and photographing with the available light, I thought I could hear little snatches of conversation, the subdued afterripples of a good joke, the echo a roar makes after it bounces off a wall and silences a room. I sensed a surprising gaiety in the still air, and looked for images that moved in the viewfinder.

Outside in bright sunlight the effect was even more overpowering. The garden rose and fell, the hedges turned, the walk opened; each step had been planned to reveal or hide some new visual treat, some different facet of the house. I wanted a movie camera and a dolly and ac-
tressess and actors, and a screening about a bright, vivacious, attractive young woman who had traveled the world, fallen in love, and bought a beautiful home to live in... and then had taken the reins away from her.

Home is where one starts from.
As we grow older
The world becomes stranger.
The pattern more complicated
Of dead and living.
Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after.
But a lifetime burning in every moment.
And not the lifetime of one man
But of old stories that cannot be deciphered.
-- T.S. Eliot, East Coker

Delores died, and Douglas had other interests and needs. The house and gardens were sold and leveled. I am told an effort was made to re-trieve as many of the more valuable treasures from the builder’s path. -- St. Hubert’s fresco of Delores was removed and donated to a church near the University -- but other things like the Goya study of the dead girl were removed. Today the house did not survive. Their fate was sealed with that of the house, as if the fate of the woman was sealed with Delores.

The new owners are developing two new houses on the site. Whether or not the new structures carry any of the grace of the old remains to be seen.

I don’t know how much of my hopes these photographs have realized, but for those of us who haven’t a store of memories of the place, photographs are all that’s left.

MORNING, 1985, by Clarence White

THE LANDSCAPE:
IMPERIAL STUDY

Landscape as Photography, by Estelle Jussim and Elizabeth Lindquist-Gotkoff, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1985, $35.

By David Porte

Landscape as Photography is recommended reading, enjoyable reading, and it will probably serve as a basis for the discussion of landscape photography -- I have already noticed a few particulars in publications which could only have come from this book. The book’s contribution does not consist of its cogently developed ideas, but instead of its delightful particulars: the vivid quotations of vehement critics, the description of influences forming a school of photographers, the quaint manifestos of artists. These particulars provide a good basis for the non-scholarly discussion of photographic art, which is where the fun is. In fact, the blithest reader will probably get the most out of the book, without questioning the nature of those embellishments. Such a person can overlook the authors’ neglect of landscape photography’s current status, and their inexplicable attraction to certain lame ideas. It is understandable that art historians such as Jussim and Lindquist-Gotkoff are reluctant to write of present-day matters which are still being decided by artists and critics. Among the fee-
ble ideas that they have adopted is the purely rhetorical separation of propagandists and propagandagica (described below), which cannot be distinguished from one another as they occur, but only in the aftermath of their psychological effects, and then only with respect to a certain individual or group. The authors have also chosen to make their stand by asserting that all photography is to some extent conceptual, a daring defense of a point against which no one would argue. A gladstone reader should also forgive them for the naive bursts of social consciousness with which they sometimes end their chapters. This is a technique used by politically liberal writers to chisel readers -- an edifying downbeat to tell them the chapter is through. But the feminist and environmentalist messages are not the kind that will disturb you. If it is time to put the book down and go to bed. Perhaps more serious is the failure of the authors to include all of the ideologies significantly shaping photographic landscape art. Post-Modernism is sighted, though as a trend it now exists in a well-articu-
lated form, embellished and exten-
sively marketed by artists and their allies. For such omissions the authors make sure to apologize. In Some Afterthoughts, they mention as a footnote that they omitted the ideology that maintains that the art market is a determinant of what sort of images are produced. Though the book is composed of the ideologies that have governed the creation of landscape photographs, this one is not in their smorgasbord for buyers of their thirty-five dollar book. In fact the book refers mostly to photogra-
phers, philosophers, critics, and literary straight from the mainstream of the liberal arts curriculum of U.S. higher education. On the other hand, the controversial sources are neglected or belittled -- the sin-
gle-mentioned "Marxist" critic, for example, Herbert Marcuse, is only conversely cited. A not-so-
swallowing reader would perhaps prefer that more creative thinking would come from these writers, to complement the large display of admirably synthesized academic thought.

The authors seldom state a defin-
tion of their own, a cautious way to write, which disables serious discus-
sion of the authors’ thoughts. They instead quote the formulations of other authorities, and proceed in their discussion with no indication of their assent. For example they pass through the whole of their chapter named Landscape as Concept with only the definition provided by Joseph Kosuth “that the [Conceptual Art] is the inquiry into the founda-
tions of the concept art.” I don’t believe the book advances the careful thinking about photographic landscape traditions, but it serves as thought-provoking pleasure reading and a full bibliography for further reading. Each of the book’s chapters maintains an essay style: descriptions, hypotheses, and anecdotes are built around a theme — Landscape as Symbol for example, or Landscape as God. The authors disclaim any presumption that landscape photog-
raphers are comprehensively treated or that an accurate chronology is portrayed. Nevertheless the order of the chapters suggests the progressing aspirations of the genre: to reflect God, to portray fact, to gain accep-
tance as art, to isolate form, and more recently, to portray popular culture, investigate concepts, and change attitudes toward environ-
mental degradations. Though the book’s ideas are seldom extensively developed, one may by careful glean-
ing arrive at a generalized that stands for much of a chapter. Hence for each chapter I have isolated one Ma-
Landscape as Artistic Genre: MC. Landscape photography originated not only as a response to the desire for visual records, but also from the aesthetic ambitions of upper-middle-class Europeans who had begun to seek natural beauty as a spiritual activity, under the influence of Victorian aesthetics and German Neo-Patonism. C.D. William Henry Fox Talbot invented the paper print because he failed to produce on his honeymoon a view from a mountain with a camera obscura. Landscape as God: MC. Landscape photography was gradually transmitted from serving as evidence of a world wraithfully run by God, to a world designed by God to make soil from eroded mountains, to a world which was partly sublime (inspiring emotional terror not directly attributable to the apprehension of God), and partly beautiful (not even particularly pertaining to God, but suggesting instead a backdrop for fears and petty nymphs). C.D. Timothy O’Sullivan was dispatched along the Fortieth Parallel in 1867-68 to document the belief of Clarence King, his employer, that a God-sent catalyst tossed the terrain of the western U.S. during a punishment wrought on sinners.

Landscape as Fact: MC. One only takes facts from photos as one needs them. C.D.: A.J. Russell’s “Citadel Rock, Green River, Wyoming,” a photograph dated 1867-68, documents the construction of both a temporary and a permanent bridge in the foreground, and the presence of an engine, a water-tower, and a lowering bucket in the rear.

Landscape as Symbol: MC. “The essence of modern symbolisms seems not to be the one-to-one interpretation of allegorical, heraldic, or mythological symbol, but rather the creation of mood-evoking, ambiguous, timeless icon[s] so meaningfully experienced in a state of quasi-religious contemplation.” C.D. Pictorialists at the turn of the century, including Edward Steichen, were professional for photography as art, and emphasized the artist’s handcraft in their symbolic prints, scratching and smudging the negative and making exposures through gauzed lenses in an effort to make lyrical and poetic effects.

Landscape as Pure Form: MC. “Since it establishes as its primary goal the creation of beauty and the discovery of ultimate truth (often synonymous), the photograph of pure form has been condemned as merely providing an aesthetic experience removed from the arena of ethical and political concerns.” Douglas Davis claims that “the basic requirement of this ideology [formalism] is that no meaning of any kind can be allowed to pollute visual Integrity.” Critics like Davis are calling for renewed attention to content, insisting that formalism has run its course in all the visual arts. C.D.: Theosophists [members of a movement originating from Buddhist and Brahmanic theories and influential among turn of the century artists in the West] believed that “jagged lines represent rage, rings and vortices signify sudden emotions, and fear manifests itself in zig-zags.” Kinesiologists [those who study principles of mechanics and anatomy in relation to human movement] theorize that we respond to visual forms by an inductive action, inattentive and unconscious, consisting of repressed muscular responses.

Landscape as Popular Culture: MC. “Photo of random disorder and conflict between visual styles [for example, photographs of the strip shopping center, the subdivision, the cheap resort] ... may bring us to a more tolerable enjoyment of pop-cultural ingenuity, its humor, and the paradoxes of the highway culture.” C.D.: “The idea of country includes the idea of a tree, at least one.”

Landscape as Concept: MC. All photographs are conceptual. From those that are previsualized by the most meticulous artists, to the snapshot of amateurs who conform to their preconceptions of what is important to record. C.D. According to [Nathan] Lyons, Minor White had a tendency to illustrate a philosophy, while he himself was discovering a philosophy. Intent on broadening the concept of the instantaneousity of photography and relating to the flow of time rather than arresting time, Lyons works through a landscape recording “the present and the past while meta- morphically configuring the future.”

Landscape as Propaganda: MC. Photographs, without text, can only function as prepropaganda, rather than as propaganda, the latter identified as information which moves its recipient to action. “Pre-propaganda has the task of mobilizing our psychological responses, loosening the old reflexes, and instilling images and words in repetitive formulas.” According to [Jacques] Elul, prepropaganda, perhaps surprisingly, does not have a precise ideological objective, it has nothing to do with an opinion, an idea, a doctrine. It proceeds by psychological manipulations, by character modifications, by the creation of feelings or stereotypes useful when the time comes.” The authors suggest that with respect to environmental issues, the time for photographers to use their work as propaganda is now here. C.D.: “During the Great Depression, of the 1930s, [while] Hitler was preaching conquest, genocide and totalitarianism ... Henri Cartier-Bresson is reputed to have said ‘The world is going to pieces and people like Adams and Weston are photographing rocks?’ To which Adams is reported to have replied, ‘I still believe that there is a real social significance in a rock, a more important significance than in a line of unemployed.’” The authors of Landscape as Photography give Mr. Adams’ retort a sympathetic reading, suggesting that he meant to say that aesthetics are of greater importance than material human needs.

In another chapter of the book, the authors remark that the noted psychologist Abraham Maslow rated aesthetics just in the hierarchy of human needs. It is a measure of the inscrutability of the authors, perhaps apparent even to the biologist, that one can never sense how they compare the value of beautiful photography, with those of more urgent situations of human life.

BARBARA KASTEN: FLEETING LIGHT


By Ed Olsowski

There are two ways to look at Barbara Kasten’s first collection of photographs, Constructs. The first leads one to study these fifteen photographs, taken between 1980 and 1984, as photographs, as objects in themselves. And they certainly hold one’s attention for such study. Kasten has used a 20 by 24 Polaroid camera to record environments that consist of posts and columns, cones, spheres, mirrors, scintillating figures of shapes, and colors in silver or purple. She has used light to change the color of her subjects from red to blue, and vice versa. She has used her ability to change the color of her subjects from red to blue, and vice versa. She has used her ability to change the color of her subjects from red to blue, and vice versa.
and symbols that point at something beyond the mere object. Italy Calvino phrases it this way in “Cities and Signs,” one of the poems that appears here: “Rarely does the eye light on a thing, and then only when it has recognized that thing as the sign of another thing.” That “other thing” is the sense of wholeness that comes from the particular, to paraphrase Robert Hass. The photographs serve not as illustrations of the poems, but rather, taken together they point to another way of reading the world.

In the three-page essay that concludes Constitutes, Estelle Jasmin describes the evolution of Kasten’s “optical fantasies.” In Kasten’s manipulation of light and color, Jasmin locates the photograph’s appeal, which is correct, to a point, because the surface message of the photographs is about manipulating light — after all, that is what color is — to produce sensual effects. In this respect, Kasten’s debt to Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy is clear. But Kasten uses the very sensual qualities of his photographs as a point of departure to a deeper, more transcendent realm. It helps to think of Donald Judd and Sol LeWitt as influences here. Her formal, controlled, ordered photographs, in which each detail is considered, in which abstraction reigns supreme, are efforts to rescue things and the most fleeting of them all, light, from the world of flux. Her photographs are about the structure that lies beneath the surface where objects exist in the very essence of their being. Copyright 1985 Ed Ozeski

EISENSTEADT: COMIC VISION


By Anna J. Beasly

It's refreshing to browse through a book by a photographer who uses “only existing light and (trees) not to push people around.” Born in West Prussia in 1898, Alfred Eisenstaedt was one of the original staff photographers for Life. Sometimes called “the father of photojournalism,” he says his motto is “Keep it simple” — perhaps a reaction to those years of carrying around a lot of glass plates. The equipment may be simple, but the images are often rich in story and character.

This is a book that deserves a second look — and then a third. On my first passage through, I was impressed by the wealth of historical information there — about how people looked and lived, especially between the two world wars. The second time I looked at the book, the quality and depth of Eisenstaedt’s humor came through. He reveals a gentle vision of absurdity and human pretension. He shows us Prussian agricultural students with milking stobs attached to their bottoms. Prussian coaches learn to hold the reins while seated in rows in a classroom. Elderly men in business suits and stiff collars lie on the floor and play with toy trains.

The third time through, I began to form an image of Eisenstaedt’s personality. Beyond his professorial shyness and evident humor is the humility to publicize his mistakes. Sent to cover a royal wedding in Bulgaria, he became so engrossed with King Ferdinand (“with the longest nose in the world”) and the other celebrities he forgot to photograph the bride and groom. He is this sort of personal candor that tempers the pointedness of his comic vision.

The book has weak spots, some of them editorial. Some of the pictures of celebrities seem to be interesting only because of who the people are or because of some little story. Eisenstaedt tells about them. While the text often adds another dimension to an image that stands on its own, it is sometimes awkward, banal, or worse. There’s a syntactically monstrous sentence about a 1938 photograph of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor; that erroneous suggestion she was born in England. Then there’s Andrew Wyeth’s spotless Dalmatian dog — but maybe there’s a story there he didn’t tell us.

Agricultural school in East Prussia, 1934, by Alfred Eisenstaedt

Harzing at the United States Military Academy, West Point, 1936, by Alfred Eisenstaedt

Construct NYC-IX, 1983, by Barbara Kasten
Barbara Kruger: Staking Piles, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston April 27-June 23, 1985

By Sally Gall

Barbara Kruger’s work is an on-going commentary on the social meaning of gender, power, and money, a critique of how power is constructed between men and women, and how images work in culture.

The large works are constructed from photographic images appropriated from the mass media, usually fragmented, blown up, and always out of context, in combination with a text or “caption.” The images themselves carry little or no meaning: the meaning resides in Kruger’s juxtaposition of text and image. The text is usually prosaic and authoritative; these same adjectives could be used to describe advertising images. Kruger’s method of creating an image does not come from mass culture, through the use of a mass generated image, the large size which makes obvious billboard/poster references (including the visible dot screen) but more specifically from Kruger’s eleven years working as a graphic designer for Modernista and a few other Condé Nast publications.

The text is the easy readability of a poster or billboard — she is mimicking the familiar look and style, but using it in something quite different. Herein lies the most interesting and problematic aspect of the work. There is a contradiction between the seeming immediacy of the work (billboard type, large size, reduction of color/halftone to basic black and white) and the ambiguous and multiple possibilities of meaning. By mimicking the look and feel of total immediate readability of mass culture imagery her work has a power that defies the viewer to turn away. Their tri-faceted eyes, the head feeling is unlike any other art (it’s comfortable, it’s like a billboard). It addresses serious issues, much of which is opaque, academic, and with not enough visual intensity in respect to the latter, one thinks of the very good work of Barbara Kruger. But there is an inherent problem with this immediacy — it is the potential for the “intertwined” things to happen.

"Untitled (Money Can Buy You Love)", by Barbara Kruger

In this selection of over 100 photographs covered almost seventy years, Kruger responds to the changing “built” scene in Houston. For the nostalgist built, a large number of street scenes, of anonymous photographers, captured that built scene in Houston from the 1970s through the 1940s, a period when its booming had just begun. The photographer, curator Elizabeth Glazman has not been able to determine the photographers, dates and titles. They are rich in detail. People fill them, their clothing now quaint costumes, their vehicles relics of the past. Buildings in them serve as backdrops for the urban dramas enacted on the streets.

Perhaps the most compelling photograph in the exhibition is from this anonymous group. It takes little imagination to see the political and social meaning of it. The Texas Commerce National Bank, Houston, clad in full military garb, is moving department by department. A line of cars awakens her. Upon her arrival she encounters three black men, waiting, lottering, perhaps curious about the traffic jam. She gets into her car and drives her home.

Public architecture expresses certain culturally held attitudes about power, control, and wealth. The unknown photographer whose photograph this is knew that well. The photograph contains within it the drama that comes from social class, roles, expectations. There is a drama, of sorts, in the eight photographs by Gary Winogrand and George Krause’s four. In them a woman is present, usually with her child, and often with her dog who impresses with its gitty, tawdy charm or, because of its stiltiness or oppression, as Winogrand so often. They are all shot through quickly. Whether Geoff Winningham’s version of a parade of workers in Houston’s First Shell Plaza is a cliché-laden image or not, it is that it forces its aim at the separation between pedestrian and urban space and urban space and the sky.

The street scenes serve as an introduction into the work of the photographers that express the two polarities in architectural photography. The belief is there, present clearly and accurately the built environment. Leon Leventhal and Maxime Du Cane this way sympathize with the viewer; I think that I needed an instrument of precision to record my impressions if I were to reproduce them accurately” is set against the approach that replaced objective clarity with romance and emotion, exemplified by Tidwell and Grosby’s “Gulf Building” — a dreamy, soft recording of a building in which the urban object becomes an icon. Glazman has found photographs by Irwin Stern and Danny Sennott, for example — who record with clarity the built world. Sennott also brings delicacy and restraint to his six color prints of shops and warehouse. The inspiration for Sally Gall’s “Untitled” (Francisco Tower) and Serge Guitton’s “First Tower” can be traced back beyond Steinbeck’s romantic renderings of the city to Bernique painters who chose as their subjects Christ, the Virgin, and the apathy of the heroes from the myths. The soaring clouds and misty distances into which these buildings vanish are the heavens of the legendary Gal and Hamburg see buildings as religious totems, soaring monuments to a faith in the myths.

But the core of Glazman’s selection is neither political nor moral. It is a subtle and seductive subtext that her architecture is somehow suspect. Architecture is, of course, our most public, most venerated and, in a way, our most intimate art. Buildings, unless de- rotund, just lack it. A favorite Grosby’s “Gulf Building” and Bob Guitton’s “One Shell Plaza in Green Glass Reflecting” are Gaudi-like buildings, structures threatening to tear the structure apart. Irving Sennott hoax. Richard Payne and David Corson also seem to be making a statement. The smal, almost too small, in an effort to reduce it to a manageable size. This is a game of the viewer, psychoanalyzing and trying to read a code to a 4-by-5-inch print; and these readings are quite sensible. I know it. Wendy Watriss captures a strangely compelling, almost absurdly beautiful building, a vast expanse of sky, the enormous beauty of rocks. Both manmade and real — two tons-worth in one time span), others were a bit facile (rock pools, moody, growing in the still water, far-stained with fortune-cookie rocks). No matter — although much of the symbolic content was impossible to define, it wrenched a favorable, nostalgic response. The active sensibilities involved (some irresponsible, others serious and accurate) were those of a collector of memories, a packrat with more than her share of lucky finds.

This visual/mental ideas was articulated referentially — no matter what direction one travelled through the room, the sequences of discoveries that Hansen and Gerhardt expanded upon were in evidence. Large stones were mounted on six core panels with the same ease and assuredness as are photographs. Collage was here presented as photographic overlay; maps superimposed on snapshots of the old man that took the artists across Texas to Utah (accompanied by the enormous “Si- liconstones” that served as starting point, central icon, and catalyst, and was built in Gerhardt’s back yard) of words of response to this conceptual
travelling circus, anatomical illustrations and photographs of nudes (homage to Dalí throughout) adorned with scale notations and measurement marks that suggested the Eastern idea of being spiritually centered (repeated in a plumb line hanging from the ceiling), the legs of nude female figures, the heads becoming cloying: few attempts were made to disguise the ubiquitous film strip excessive in its content. Yet the landscape (as part of the Great Wall of China) did not lose its self-conscious stature. On the other hand, rarely did the silicon-ion camera evocatively transform the landscape into something perfunctory — it became a permanent fixture throughout the journey. The seductive tension between the geometric and organic forms in the landscape was disconcerting, sometimes逗留 and presented intuitively, and this underlies the most successful aspect of the collaboration (although a more homogeneous, aligned covanta hard is master to imagine). It is easy to envision the artists consummate delight at having decided to include, say, a bolt of cloth or sheaths of dried bamboo. Silver solder and sealing wax were used interchangeably — new materials, yet inextricably combining in this referential context. Hansen and Gierratano discovered that the silcon-ion camera was an image permutation — it became a permanent fixture throughout the journey.

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THE HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY
FALL 1985 CALENDAR

EXHIBITIONS

September 6-October 20, 1985
Nic Nicosa: Domestic Dramas and Near (modern) Disasters
Georgia Michnio: Private Moments

October 25-December 1, 1985
Olivier Parker and Rosamund Wolf Purcell: The Photographic Print: Early Processes
John Bornhard: Sidewalk Scene

December 6-January 5, 1986
Richard Misrach: Four Cantos
The Photographic Print: Color Processes

WORKSHOPS

Registration is on a first-come-first-serve basis. Space is reserved upon receipt of check or cash deposit. Checks should be made out to HCP. Deadline for registration is 7 days prior to workshop. If a workshop is to be cancelled, late registration is possible. Tuition refunds are available up to 7 days prior to a workshop only.

LEARNING TO SEE
INSTRUCTOR: Sally Gall
TIME: 7:10pm, Wednesdays, Oct 2, 9, 16, 23, Nov 6, 13
PLACE: HCP
FEE: $60 members, $75 nonmembers

INTRODUCTION TO LIGHTING
INSTRUCTOR: Jim Lemoine
TIME: 9:30-4, Saturdays, Nov 2, 9, 16, 23
PLACE: II Workshop (Jim's studio)
FEE: $40 members, $50 nonmembers

WIRING ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHY: A PRACTICAL WORKSHOP
FOR REVIEWERS
INSTRUCTOR: Teresa Byrne-Dodge & Mimi Crossley
TIME: 7:10pm, Wed. & Thurs., Nov 6-7
PLACE: HCP
FEE: $30 members, $45 nonmembers

INTRODUCTION TO VIDEO
INSTRUCTOR: Janet Denimore
TIME: 9-4, Saturdays, Nov 9, 16, 23
PLACE: SWA M.P. 159 W. Main
FEE: $40 HCP & SWA/M.P. members, $55 nonmembers

INTERVIEW TO NON-SILVER PROCESSES
INSTRUCTOR: Anne Dubberry, Paul Judice, Jim Tiebout
TIME: 9-4, Saturday, Nov 23
PLACE: HCP
FEE: $20 members, $25 nonmembers

FOR CHILDREN
POLAROIDS FOR KIDS
INSTRUCTOR: Sally Merrigan
TIME: 1-5, Saturday, Oct 19
PLACE: HCP
FEE: $10 members, $12 nonmembers

LECTURES

Monthly lectures are held at the Center at 1411 W. Alabama unless otherwise noted. Lectures are free to members and $7 to nonmembers.

September 18, Wednesday, 7:30pm
NIC NICOSIA Dallas artist Nicosa will give a slide presentation of his work including the series in the concurrent HCP exhibit, and will discuss his current projects.

October 16, Wednesday, 7:30pm
AL SOUZA Massachusetts artist Souza will give a slide presentation of his conceptual work noted for its humorous style.

November 12, Wednesday, 7:30pm
JODY BLAZER: “Tax Planning for Photographers” – a prominent local accountant specializing in tax consulting for artists and nonprofit organizations. Blazer will discuss how photographers might save taxes, deductions of expenses related to salary and freelance income, and other beneficial tax theories.

December 9, Monday, 7:30pm
RICHARD MISRAICH California artist Misraich will give a slide presentation of his work discussing his various approaches to the landscape as subject reflected in the concurrent HCP exhibit.