SPOT/A PUBLICATION OF THE HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

SPRING 1985

Bernard Faucon

PARIS' ENORMOUS PHOTO MONTH

BERNARD FAUCON: GROWING UP

AARON SISKIND, LINDA CONNOR: SPIRIT

GEORGE KRAUSE STRIKES AGAIN

RAY METZKER: A LIFE'S WORK

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STAFF

Editor: Dave Crossley

Contributing Editors: Paul Hester, David Portz

Writers: Lisa Bertelsen, Dave Crossley, Paul Hester, Lynn McLanahan, David Portz, April Rapier, Ruth Schilling

Production: Karen Sadoff Long, Andrea Meltzer, Debra Rueb, Phil Schmitt, Eugene Shaw, Michael Thomas, Theresa Ward,

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MESSAGES

NAKED IN PARIS: PART TWO

(In the Winter 1984 issue of SPOT, *Dave Crossley wrote in this space about the abundance of flesh on exhibit all over Paris during a recent trip there to see* Le Mois de la Photo, *which is exhaustively described in this issue. Crossley's treatment was light, to say the least, and writer Ruth Schilling felt a little further discussion was required. That follows.)*

The nude is ubiquitous in Paris. Statues of unclad gods and goddesses proliferate in the parks and gardens of the chateaus and palaces of Paris and its environs. The nude is everywhere in the public domain and the commercial domain as well. The sight of a representation of a naked human body is almost banal, as common as are golden arches here in the States.

In French art the nude as subject has a long history, one that has not been without controversy and scandal. Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass* affronted public sensibility not for its nude females, but for the presence of clothed males. When Duchamp exhibited his *Nude Descending a Staircase*, it shocked the masses for its treatment of the figure and angered his fellow cubists for including a nude at all, the favorite subject of the academic art they were repudiating.[1] The abundance of nudes in French photography reflects both the cultural climate that accepts the nude and the place of the figure in French art.

A nude is a nude is a nude is not the case with French photography any more than it is with ours. However, the more accepting atmosphere of Paris results in a wider range of work that gets shown. Some of the work I saw in Paris would just not be exhibited here easily. Ours is a more Puritanical culture. Nudity is often synonomous with sexuality, not sensuality, and that's a very politicized area in our culture. (See "Private Parts and Public Considerations", *Exposure* 22.3 for a recent article on censorship.) We don't see much nudity on TV because it is not allowed or condoned. You see a fair amount on French TV because it is.

Now whether this less restrictive atmosphere in France produces better photographs is another issue entirely. Of course, it's not a causal relationship. Ignoring the cultural context of the work, though, would be a mistake and misleading. Helmut Gernsheim once wrote, "Photography is the only 'language' understood in all parts of the world . . ."[2] Certainly we don't need translation to recognize a nude, but cross cultural photographic exchange may be more complex. To judge or simply to understand the photographs, it may not be enough just to see them. Of course, if it's true printers won't reproduce the photographs of nudes, as has been the case with this magazine, then we're held hostage to a mentality that precludes discussion of the work in any language.

Ruth Schilling

[1] *Calvin Tompkins, The Bride and the Bachelors*, (The Viking Press, 1965) p.23.

[2] *Creative Photography*, 1962; reprinted in *On Photography* by Susan Sontag, p.192.

LETTERS

WRONG

In the relative calm between semesters, I have begun to catch up on my reading. While at the Society for Photographic Educators conference in Amarillo, I picked up the fall 1984 issue of SPOT. Today it was dusted off and read with gusto. It was most interesting to read the article "Clouds with Depth" and find that "the world has never seen before" the likes of Davis's "three-dimensional photographs of clouds". Humbug.

Arthur W. Judge's book *Stereoscopic Photography: Its Application to Science, Industry, and Education*, published in 1926, discusses on pages 158-159 how to take steroscopic photographs of clouds with a single camera. As a member of the oldest photographic group in America, The Stereoscopic Society, I can say that I have personally viewed a dozen or more stereo photos of clouds by fellow members and have produced a couple myself. An excellent reproduction of clouds in stereo can be found on page 225 of *The World of 3-D* (1982), by Jac. G. Ferwerda.

It often seems photographers are "reinventing the wheel" because of their poor knowledge of photographic history and this seems to be an excellent example.

Russ Young
Lecturer in Photography
The University of Texas, Austin

P.S. What is more interesting visually is a scene which is normal stereo and clouds which are pseudo-scopic (negative stereo) in relief. These aren't uncommon, either. Quite a perceptual hoax on your brain . . .

PLEA

The news broke this week that the Reagan budget proposes a 30 percent cut in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts. Nonetheless, the brave Houston Center for Photography plans to continue allocating a significant portion of its budget for three photographer's fellowships. President Reagan evidently feels that spending on such things as the arts, employment and education programs, and school hot meals is superfluous when compared to national defense. Many of my colleagues apparently agreed when they voted for Ronald Reagan in 1984. Regardless of the particular issue that motivated them to vote for Reagan and his policies, the butchering of the arts funding is a part of the package. I'd imagine they would also want to help their leader fulfill his goals by happily digging into their private-sector pocketbooks to make up the NEA's missing 30 percent. Anyway, it is common knowledge that only freeloaders (and Democrats) participate in the aforementioned programs. I hope that all Reagan supporters accept their patriotic, supply-sided duty by refraining from applying for HCP's fellowships (or any other public grants).

Paula Goldman
Houston

BIG BUCKS

Each spring the Houston Center for Photography awards three fellowships to Houston artists working with photographic media, to support work in progress. Fellowship winners are awarded $1500 each and an exhibition at the HCP the following spring. Deadline to submit portfolio & written proposal: June 2. Winners announced June 28.

The Houston Center for Photography
1441 W. Alabama
Houston, TX 77006

SNAP JUDGMENTS

As a service to the field, SPOT's photomystic reveals his unique method for predicting an artist's earthly success, and describes collaterally some of his curious visions.

By VISIONARY JOE

I have discovered that, by listening to an artist speak, I can divine the likely extent of the artist's success. I will describe my gift, to satisfy your natural curiosity. And I must start with this: I do not listen to what artists say.

The psychology that makes artists prone to falsehoods is little understood. I have thought of it in two different ways. I formerly thought that an artist sought to demonstrate a chasm between his own and his listener's soul. The width of the chasm was shown in statements by the artist which revealed a greater depth of feeling, or a mind astounding in its breadth. The artist's works were then purveyed as slender spans in a fragile bridge across this canyon, by which a buyer of the oeuvre in sufficient quantity might be enabled to cross. Only in large retrospectives would the public be allowed to tremble on the catwalks to a great artist's spirit.

I realized, however, that I had extravagantly inflated the cunning of great artists, and misconceived the profligate dissemination of fine art. I now see mature artists more as rumpled hitchhikers, who will say anything just to keep riding in your car. And amateurs are still deciding how to dress before starting their hitch, and hope to get to London.

So you see, there is little point in truly listeing to an artist's speeches. Instead, I judge the destinies of artists by the quality of my daydreams while they are speaking. A great artist's personal vision or dogmatic dicta will float me off on a wave of afflatus as long as the great Pacific. But a novice, so brisk and factual, will seldom allow my mind to wander, and must be judged accordingly.

Ray Metzker, the most recent great artist to visit Houston, inspired grandiose visions. I believe he was speaking of the pesky pieces of cardboard which drifted in the foreground of his landscapes in 1978. He explained these levitating objects as products of his obsessive concentration, and in part due to the camera as stimulator of events. I began to picture Friedrich Nietzche, gazing at the Alps from a Thuringian Pass, when Napoleon bore down upon him. Napoleon rode at the head of troops bound to ravish Prussia, and he said to Nietzsche, "Stand clear," though he then descended to converse. I should have heard their whole exchange, but Mr. Metzker interrupted with discussion of his ill-shapen sunbather series, making particular reference to a photo of a dozing woman's Spandex cranny. I was shaken: I could not resume my dream.

Other artists have also demonstrated and confirmed their greatness. Lauri Anderson evoked the apotheosis of Gertrude Stein, in which thirty pinkish cherubs struggled to loft her toward heaven, before the assistance of the hand of God. And a brief sentence from Andy Warhol was sufficient for a glimpse of Michael Jackson, frozen in the crystalline Arctic during a bungled exploratory lark, upon his discovery centuries hence by post-nuclear mystics.

The daydreams inspired by modester talents allow me no visions of famous persons or great events. For example, take the artist who makes portraits of hypocrites, and speaks of the influence of her parents on her work. She caused me to happen on the stick-and-bone fetish of a caucasian shaman, erected in the woods near my childhood home.

Another artist produces pictures of moles dressed as admirals. During his description of his artistic phases, beginning with his earliest grade-school projects, I gazed at leaping and floating springboks on the Namibian plains. Another mildly talented artist sculpts couples for wedding cakes from soiled diapers. She discussed divorce as her source of inspiration. I had reveries meanwhile, of angrily waltzing Viennese couples. These daydreams confirm the ultimate destiny of such an artist: a regional success.

Of the last, however, the lowest order of artist, there is little to be said. I am never inspired to daydream in their presence. One artist, for example, portrays non-coital human relations on lengths of Velcro, which twine and lacerate while hanging in the wind. She will not discuss her art, but concentrates on global events. She seeks to stir my concern on the shrinking Amazon jungle. She gauges my reaction to the U.S. production of half the world's toxic wastes. She compares U.S. and Soviet expenditures on military aid to Afghanistan. It is clear she will never succeed as an artist: she has not the talent to make me dream.

Visionary Joe evaluates an artist. Photo by Paula Goldman.

NOTES

ANDY GRUNDBERG: THE CRISIS OF POST MODERNISM

Andy Grundberg, a photography critic for *The New York Times* and Senior Picture Editor for *Modern Photography* magazine, spoke at the Houston Center for Photography on January 10, on the relation of Post Modernism to American photographic tradition. His lecture and slide presentation (titled 'Masking/Unmasking: Photography and Post Modernism') was a compact summary of several twentieth- century intellectual currents. He first described the way in which Post Modernism has had different characteristics in different disciplines, such as dance or architecture, because in each discipline Post Modernism has been a response which isolated and defined a different Modernism. In the visual arts, Mr. Grundberg cited characteristics of Post· Modernism which included, beyond the critical attitude maintained toward painters bracketed by Cezanne and Kenneth Noland, an opposition toward the ruling mythologies of Western culture fostered by Modernism — such as the myths that any image can be newly invented, or that an individual can make a creative contribution not already contained in the culture. Mr. Grundberg also noted the Post-Modernist taste for alternative and mixed media (outside of the traditional paint on canvas, and sculpture in metal) which has served to improve photography's standing in the fine arts.

Mr. Grundberg said that Post Modernist image-making has its intellectual sources in the Deconstructionist responses to Structuralist linguistics and semiotics. Appearing in the early part of this century, each of these theories de-emphasized the content of communication's apparent meanings, finding meanings instead by an analysis of the structure and inter-relations of 'signifiers' —the words chosen to designate and identify real objects and ideas. Post-structuralism questioned whether meaning could be derived from analysis of these structures, saying instead that language is always distortive of meanings, and that pure, unblemished understanding or meaning is unobtainable. While Structuralism reflected the belief that communications must be decoded to yield their deeper senses, Post Structuralism sought to demonstrate that deeper senses could not be discerned at all.

Mr. Grundberg relies on Beaumont Newhall's synthesis of the photographic tradition to classify as Modernist those photographs which reflect the heritage of Alfred Stieglitz's 'American purism' and Lazlo Moholy-Nagy's imported 'European experimental formalism.' Post Modernist responses to the traditional definitions of what is photographic, what 'makes a good picture,' were grouped by Mr. Grundberg into techniques for 'masking' and 'unmasking.' These terms are derived from the Post Structuralist critique on the derivation of meaning.

Masking in Post Modernist photography occurs when a surrogate is created which imitates an existing photographic style or styles, to expose its underlying assumptions and influences. For example, Mr. Grundberg suggested that Cindy Sherman's self-portraits utilize the 'debased imagery' of B-grade movies and glamorous ads to ask questions relating to feminine identity and stereotypes, indeed of individual identity itself. The various docu-dramas and domestic scenes staged by Eileen Cowin, Laurie Simmons, and Ellen Brooks explore how we have formed our tastes and behavior in interpersonal relationships from the cultural messages we have received.

As examples of the unmasking process (the disassembling of myths about the creative potential of individuals, or the significance of imagery) Mr. Grundberg cited Richard Prince's rephotography of pictures in periodicals or Sherry Levine's 'After Edward Weston',an exact copy of an Edward Weston print. The work of these artists points out that 'visual input is already overdetermined', that the 'visual universe is exhausted'.

Mr. Grundberg feels that many of the artists producing Post Modernist works rely on photography 'because it is an explicitly reproducible medium, because it is a common point of cultural exchange and because it avoids the aura of authorship,' the latter being denounced as a part of the myth of individual creativity. Many Post Modernists working with photography are 'happily ignorant' of the photographic traditions, instead having been influenced by the theories developed in American art criticism, and the practices of Conceptual Art, taught in art schools. A third influence on these artists is contemporary life, 'as mediated through contemporary pop culture and mass media image making'.

Mr. Grundberg stated that the practice of photography as a whole is increasingly concerned with issues of representation, fabrication, melodrama, and the blank parody that is 'pastiche'. Pastiche is described as the assembling of one's art from a variety of sources, but without a motive such as satire or humor, as if the style of the sources is a neutral one, and judgements are not solicited about from a more normal point of view. Mr. Grundberg feels that the premise of Post-Modernist Art is that we cannot have 'a pure unblemished experience' any longer, that 'all original experience has been used up', and that this is 'the crisis that photography and all other art face in the late twentieth century'.

David Portz

Andy Grundberg at HCP.

ART IN SPACE

The first press release came right to the point: "Through the miracle of science, the Art in Space Center [in San Francisco] has built a State of the Art rocket containing all the vital technology necessary for a successful liftoff into the outer limits of our galaxy." The first "test rocket for Art" would be launched from a San Francisco park on August 18, 1984. It would be filled with microchips of art.

That release was yellow. The "Second Stage Release," which was orange, said "the site for the launch — a closely guarded secret — can now be revealed." It then gave the name and location of the park, which closely guarded secret had also played a major part in the first paragraph of the earlier release. The second stage missive went on to promise that mayor Diane Feinstein "or her look- a-like" would be present at the launch to proclaim August 18 as "Art in Space Day." Tang, the official drink of the Art in Space Center, would be served.

Art in Space scientists and assistants prepare to launch San Francisco rocket.

Safety had been considered, the Center assured. The rocket would be launched from a hill "above the audience, away from children." Special viewing glasses would be provided during blast-off, and security would be upheld by the Avante Guarde. "Art in Space Day" would become a yearly festival celebrating artist-produced rockets.

The Third Stage Release had been stripped of the earlier seriousness and rambled through a burlesque about plots to fire an Anti-Art Ballistic Missile and about some inpenetrable confusion over who had done what. It did note, however, that "neither the government nor any other agency has bequeathed grant money to support the Art in Space Center." Specific information for TV camera crews and photographers was given, as was the warning that there would be no further press releases.

A highly placed source within the Center says that shortly after that release was sent, "a mole within the organization revealed a lot of secrets and the fire department revoked our permit," so the launch site had to be changed. On the day of the launch, maps to the new "top secret" location were passed out at the old location. People apparently became confused and were running around to parks all over the place. The rocket was launched outside the city limits, where Sam Samore, one of the principals in the Art in Space Center, read Mayor Feinstein's proclamation, which he had made up, and then led the crowd in a rehearsal of the "duck for cover procedure."

Then the rocket was fired. Actually, there were two rockets, both of which abruptly turned and began to fall to earth. Mr. Samore reports that, "Nobody knew the rockets had parachutes, so everybody just started running around, trying to get away. Luckily, the parachutes worked."

Curiously, the Art in Space Center insists that the rockets are out in space. Video tapes and tracking reports are being prepared, and Samore says the Center is busy working on more projects. "Of course, they're top secret," he cautions.

VARIOUS DATA & UNSUBSTANTIATED RUMORS

The January 14 issue of *The New Yorker* ran an item on research that indicates exposure of female rats to light increases the size of their ovaries, in certain instances. This result is linked to the mysterious pineal gland, which in humans is hidden at the base of the brain. Though light may not cause humans to grow bigger ovaries, five to six-hour doses of strong light have been used successfully to calm depressives, apparently regulating the body's clock by simulating daylight. Photographers who don't have rats and aren't depressive should be interested to know of the light bulb used in this research, The Vita-Lite, made by the Duro-Test Corporation in New Jersey. This fluorescent bulb simulates the full beneficial spectrum of sunlight, excepting the harmful, ultraviolet wavelengths, the company claims.

Federal tax laws which went into effect January 1, 1985, make significant changes about gifts of art; the changes relate to donee sales reports, appraisal summaries for gifts of over $5,000, and new penalties for over-valuation. Arts organizations which hold auctions take note.

The Photograph Collector has published its latest figures intended to serve as an index of prices paid at auctions for fine art photographs, and therefore measure the fluctuations in the market. The figures show a half-percent decline in what is described as a stable market, after a slump in 1981-1982. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose somewhat during the recent measurement, but since 1975, the base year, the photography index has risen 250 percent, while the Dow has risen only 150 percent.

Richard Andrews has been named Director of the Visual Arts Program of the National Endowments for the Arts. Andrews was formerly the Art in Public Places Coordinator for the Seattle Arts Commission, and as an artist does both sculpture and works on paper. Andrews will oversee the program's fiscal 1985 budget of more than $6.3 million, out of which grants are made to individual visual artists and the organizations that assist them.

The NEA also announced an artist's exchange program between the United States and France. Up to ten fellowships will be awarded each year, starting in 1985, so that American recipients may work and study in France. American fellows will receive up to $25,000 each, and ten fellows chosen by Ministries of the French government will receive similar stipends to pursue their disciplines in the U.S. Guidelines and applications may be obtained by writing to the International Program, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, DC. 20506.

The Photographic Resources Center in Boston has announced the recipients of the 1984 Logan Grants, awarded in support of new writing on photography. The winning entries will be published in the Center's quarterly publication *Views: The Journal of Photography in New England*. Colin Westerbrook, Jr., of Chicago received the top award of $5,000, and grants of $2,500 were awarded to Mary W. Marien of Syracuse and Nancy A. Roth of Minneapolis.

The decision of New York's highest court in *Cohen v. Herbal Concepts, Inc.*, will increase the possibility of lawsuits against photographers under New York's invasion of privacy statute. Plaintiffs suing for damages must prove that there is a sufficient identifiable likeness to permit recognition, but the court will allow recognition to be established even though the complaining party's face does not appear, in whole or in part, in the photograph. As a consequence, a photographic release will be necessary from more of the people appearing in photographs, in order for the photographs to be exhibited without threat of lawsuit.

Visual Verité is a new photography gallery in Houston. Its owner, Mark C. Hickman, comes from Lafayette, Louisiana, and is himself a photographer, whose pictures made up the gallery's first show. The gallery is now reviewing portfolios for exhibition during the coming year. Call 521-2165, or drop by the gallery at 5007 Montrose, two blocks north of the Museum of Fine Arts.

The Artist League of Texas, in Abilene at North Second and Cypress, has two galleries — devoted to photography and painting — and eleven artists' studios. The cooperative includes eleven resident and twenty non-resident artists, several of whom are photographers. The League is interested in tying into an intrastate network of artists and galleries.

Photographs you can lick: Any print, 5 x 7 or smaller, can be turned into hundreds of color or black and white postage-like stamps at fifteen bucks a hundred for color, thirteen for black and white. Contact Double Image, P.O. Box 3319, Berkeley, CA 94703.

Auctioneer Howard Zar asks for bids on a photograph by Ann Wulff on his way to netting $21,000 at the HCP's bi-annual auction. Also pictured (l-r) HCP Executive Director Lynn McLanahan, board member Martha Armstrong, and dealer Clint Willour, the auction's Howard Cosell.

CALENDAR

SPRING 1985

EXHIBITIONS

MARCH

Through March 31 Houston Center for Photography, 1441 W. Alabama, "Aaron Siskind and Linda Connor." Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat & Sun 12-5.
Through Mar 16, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1001 Bissonnet, "Eleanor & Barbara: Photographs by Harry Callahan" Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-6 Thursday 'till 9 pm.
Through Apr 15 Museum of Fine Arts, Houston 1001 Bissonnet. "Houston Photographers from the MFA Collection" Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-6, Thurs 'till 9 pm.
5-31 Blaffer Gallery Univ. of Houston, Entrance 16 off Cullen Blvd., "Major Exhibition on the History of Video Art" Mon-Fri 10-5 Sun 1-5 closed Sat
Through Mar 14 The Drawing Room, 3209 Montrose "Marsha Kracht: Black and White Photography" Mon-Fri 10:30-5:30
15-Apr 30 Square One313 Travis "Photographic Works: George Hixson and Gary Retherford" Mon, Tues & Fri 11-5 Tue & Wed 11-8 closed Sat & Sun.
Through Mar 24, Contemporary Arts Museum, 5216 Montrose, "Owen Morrel: Photo Collage Works 1976-1984" Tues-Sat 10-5 Sun 12-6.
22-May 5, Heights Gallery, 1613 Oxford "Leonard Hart: 50 Years of Photography" Mon-Thur 1-6 Sun 2-6

APRIL

4-26 Goethe-Institute Houston 2600 Southwest Fwy. Suite. 110 "Barbara Entman: Architectural Interpretations" Mon-Fri 9-5.
5-May 15 Houston Center for Photography, 1441 W.Alabama Annual Members Expose: (in conjunction with the Houston Coalition for the Visual Arts exhibitions highlighting the work of Houston Artists.) Wed-Fri 11-5 Sat & Sun 12-5.
5-May 1 Diverse Works 214 Travis "Contemporary Photography and Video from France" Mon-Fri 11-4 Sat 12-4
Through Apr 13 Benteler Gallery 2409 Rice Blvd.
"Points of View: Ference Berko, Franco Fontana, Joel Meyerowitz, Nicholas Nixon, Stephen Shore, George Tice."
Through Apr 15 Museum of Fine Arts, Houston 1001 Bissonnet. 'Houston Photographers from the MFA Collection' Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-6, Thurs 'till 9 pm.
April 17-June 1 Benteler Gallery "Panoramic Exhibition: E.O. Goldbeck, Mary Peck, Jeri Polacek, Michael Ruetz."
Month of April Moody Gallery, 2815 Colquitt, "Group Show of All Exhibiting Artists" Tue-Sat 1-5 For more info. call 526-9911
27-June 23 Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston 5216 Montrose "Barbara Kruger: Striking Poses" Tue- Sat 10-5, Sun 12-6
24-May 11 Sewall Art Gallery-Rice University entrance 7
"22nd Annual Rice Art Students Exhibition" Mon-Sat 12-5

MAY

10-June 30 Heights Gallery 1613 Oxford "Tracy Hart: Photographs" Mon-Thur 1- 6 Sun 2-6
12-26 Blaffer Gallery Univ. of Houston Entrance 16 off Cullen Blvd. "1985 Masters of Fine Arts Exhibit" Mon-Fri 10-5, Sun 1-5 closed Sat.
17-June 23 Houston Center for Photography, 1441 W. Alabama, "Silicone Stones: An installation by Mary Margaret Hansen, Carol Gerhardt & Karen Colina" Wed-Fri 11-5 Sat & Sun 12-5
21 — Aug 4 Museum of Fine Arts, Houston 1001 Bissonnet "Golden Age of British Photography: 1839-1900" Tue- Sat 10-5 Sun 1-6 Thursdays 'till 9pm.
23-June 22 Davis-McClain Gallery, 2627 Colquitt, "Gary Faye: Black and White Photographs" Mon-Fri 10-5:30 Sat 11-4.
28-Aug 11 Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1001 Bissonnet, "Tribute to George Balanchine" Tue-Sat 10-5 Sun 1-6 Thursdays 'til 9pm.

EXHIBITIONS ELSEWHERE IN TEXAS

MARCH

Through March 20, Carpenter & Hochman, 2701 Canton St., Dallas, "Casey Williams," call (214) 939-0501 for details.
Through April 7, Laguna Gloria Art Museum, Austin, "Figure It Out! Exploring the Figure in Contemporary Art," Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5, Thurs 'til 9pm.
Through April 7, Allen Street Gallery, 4101 Commerce, Dallas, "Reed Estabrook," and " Portraits: Group Show," Wed-Fri 12- 5, Sat 10-4, Sun 1-5.
Through Mar 8, Southern Light Gallery, Amarillo College, 2201 S Washington St., "Book of Days: 56 Texas Photographers," Mon-Thur 9-10pm, Fri 9-5, Sat & Sun 12- 5.
5 - May 4, Afterimage, 2800 Routh St., Dallas, "Jacques-Henri Lartigue," Mon-Sat 10-5:30.
11 - April 12, Southern Light Gallery, Amarillo College, 2201 S. Washington St., "Tom Chambers: Dyer Street," 9-10pm Mon-Thur, Fri 9-5, Sat & Sun 12-5.
19 - May 1, University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures, 801 S. Bowie, San Antonio, "Panoramic Photographs by E.O. Goldbeck," Tue-Sun 9-5.

APRIL

12 - May 12, Allen Street Gallery, 4101 Commerce, Dallas, "William Eggleston," and "Associated Group Landscape Show," Wed-Fri 12-5, Sat 10-4, Sun 1-5.
15 - May 10, Southern Light Gallery, Amarillo College, 2201 S. Washington St., "Life in the 20th Century: Robert Hirsch," Mon - Thur 9-10pm, Fri 9-5, Sat & Sun 12-5.

MAY

3-28, Southwest Craft Center, 300 Augusta, San Antonio, "Jerry Uelsmann". 10-4 Mon-Sat. Uelsmann workshop May 3-5.
6-June 28, University Gallery, Southwest Texas State, San Marcos, "Photography: 3 Approaches," Linda Frese, Holly Roberts, Gloria DeFilipps Brush, call (512) 245-2611 for details.
7 - June 29, Afterimage, 2800 Routh, Dallas, "Goodwin Harding: Platinum/Palladium Prints of the Northwest," 10-5:30 Mon - Sat.
29 - June 23, Allen Street Gallery, 4101 Commerce, Dallas, "New Faces: Bill Frazier, Rita Dewitt, Luther Smith, Linda Fresa," Wed-Fri 12-5, Sat 10-4, Sun 1-5.

WORKSHOPS/ CLASSES

MARCH

16-30, Images II Photographic Workshops, "Mexico with Jo Brenzo," 1 or 2 weeks in San Miguel Allende, call 526-6111 for details.
March 18, April 15, May 12, HCP "Discovery Workshop," Charles Schorre, instructor, $40 members, $50 nonmembers, call 529-4755 for details.
20-22, Douglis Visual Workshops, "Communicating with Pictures," directed by Philip Douglis, $545, Guest Quarters, Galleria, call (215) 544-7977 for details.
March 26,28,30, HCP, "Underlying Questions," Ray Metzker, instructor, $95 members, $120 nonmembers, call 529-4755 for details.

APRIL

6, HCP, "Introduction to Portrait Photography," Dave Crossley, instructor, $40 members, $50 nonmembers, call 529-4755 for details.
11,25, HCP, "Highlights of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston Collection," Maggie Olvey, instructor, $20 members, $25 nonmembers, call 529-4755 for details.

MAY

4, HCP, "Hand Coloring Photographs," Casey Williams, instructor, $40 members, $50 nonmembers, call 529-4755 for details.

LECTURES/EVENTS

MARCH

Through April 11, Goethe-Institut Houston, Spring Film Series, call 528-2787 for details.
23,24, SWAMP, "All Pro Video Rasslin," performances at 12, 2, and 4, Downtown Library Plaza, in conjunction with Houston Festival.

APRIL

10, HCP Anne Noggle, 7:30pm, 1441 W. Alabama, $2 admission for nonmembers.
13,14, Photographic Collectors of Houston, Camera Show: Buy, Sell, Trade, Olde English Inn, 7000 Southwest Freeway, 10-5pm, $3 admission, call 868-9606 for details.
17, HCP, "Anne Tucker: Contemporary Photography," 7:30pm, 1441 W. Alabama, $2 admission for nonmembers.
8 or 9 or 10 Rice Media Center, Joan Meyers platinum print demonstration, free admission, exact date to be announced, call 527-4894 for details.

MAY

1,HCP, "Jeff Silverthorne," 7:30pm, 1441 W. Alabama, $2 admission for nonmembers.

LECTURES/EVENTS ELSEWHERE

MARCH

4-8, Southwest Craft Center, "Photojournalism," Robert Gilka, instructor, and lecture Mar 4, 6pm, 300 Augusta, San Antonio, call (512) 224-1848 for details.
14-17, Society for Photographic Education, Minneapolis, MN, national conference, call (507) 332-8741 for details.
24,25, Meisel Professional Portrait Services, Seminar with Don Blair and David Ziser, call (214) 350-6666 for details.
Through 26, Allen Street Gallery, "Commercial Photography Symposium," 4101 Commerce, Dallas, call (214) 821- 8260 for details.

APRIL

17, Allen Street Gallery, "M.K. Simqu & Skeet McAuley: Two NEA Recipients," 7:30pm, 4101 Commerce, Dallas.

MAY

22, Allen Street Gallery, "Luther Smith: Portrait as Fine Art," 7:30pm, 4101 Commerce, Dallas.
date TBA, Allen Street Gallery, "Benefit Auction," call (214) 821-8260 for details.

COMPETITIONS

Submit slides, for Book of Days Calendar, 1986, deadline Mar. 16, call Dan Schweers (512) 477-1978 for details. Caution: Schweers will keep slides for use in lectures.
Submit slides, photographers and printmakers using exciting and innovative photographic processes, for inclusion in exhibition Jan '86; send to: Maggie Olvey, The Photographic Print, HCP, 1441 W. Alabama, Houston, Tx, 77006.
Submit slides, 14th Annual East Texas International Photography Exhibition, deadline April 15, send SASE for prospectus to East TX Photo Contest, Box D, E.T. Station, Commerce, TX, 75428.
Submit work. The Houston Center for Photography awards three fellowships to Houston artists working with photographic media, to support work in progress. Fellowship winners are awarded $1500 each and an exhibition at the HCP the following spring. Deadline to submit portfolio & written proposal: June 2. Winners announced June 28. HCP, 1441 W. Alabama, Houston 77006.

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. Charge for monthly meetings. 521-2090.
Houston Chapter of Association for MultiImage, 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 2nd Tues monthly at Continental Savings & Loan Assn., Lake Jackson, Tx., call (409) 265-4569 Don Benton for details.
The Houston Camera Club, meetings 7:30 pm 1st and 3rd Tues monthly at Baylor College of Medicine, Debakey Bldg. Room M- 112, 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 7-10pm 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 Steve Granger, 498-8088, for details.
1960 Photographic Society, meets 7:30pm 1st and 3rd Tues monthly at Cypress Creek Christian Community Center, 6823 Cypress Wood Drive & Stuebner Airline, call 522-1861 or 353-9604 Dave Mahavier for details.
Society of Photographers in Industry, meets 3rd Thurs monthly, Sonny Looks Restaurant, 9810 S. Main, 6-10pm, cocktails, dinner, speaker, visitors welcome, call 795-8835 Dave Thompson for details.

PARIS IN THE FALL

In which two seekers of new truths and lasting beauty find instead elaborate shuck and jive but are satisfied after all by total immersion in photography.

(The following is a collection of notes on the monster event, Le Mois de la Photo a Paris. *It is followed on page 8 by a discussion of the work of Bernard Faucon, whose exhibit was a high point of that event. A number of short reviews of many of the other exhibitions may be found on page 9.)*

By Dave Crossley and Lynn McLanahan

Two hours after we got off the plane on a cool crisp late afternoon in November, we stood nearly breathless at the edge of the River Seine, watching the fog swirl up through the lights bathing Notre Dame. As we stared, we wondered what causes goosebumps. What has Notre Dame been infused with that brings up emotions? Is there something in the idea of universal mind that carries across centuries, bringing to new generations the love and committment of the past? The main question in our minds was what could go into art, into photographs, to pluck the same strings?

Unwittingly, we were setting criteria for our evaluation of the thousands of photographs we would begin looking at the next day. We were in Paris to see as many as possible of the ninety-nine exhibitions that made up *Le Mois de la Photo* — The Month of the Photo, a biennial event that is, among other things, a model for a similar event to be held in Houston in March, 1986. Called Foto Fest, it will be the first such spectacle in the United States. As staff members of the Houston Center for Photography (which supports but is not connected to Foto Fest), we were curious about what might be in store for that month, and we were equally interested to get some notion of what was going on in European photography. And so to Paris.

The first night, right off the plane, we walked aimlessly for five or six hours. There was lots of evidence of *Le Mois de la Photo* everywhere; posters and lighted signs were abundant. Bookstores and galleries had posters in their windows about photography exhibitions, many of them not related to the official event. It was difficult to imagine such photographic saturation in an American City.

The following day, a Monday, the galleries were closed, so we visited the incredible Centre Pompidou, or Beaubourg. The program for the *Mois* listed nothing at Beaubourg, so we were puzzled to find four photography shows there.

There were no goosebumps that day. Beaubourg was chaotic and the photography uninspiring. Looking in the windows of nearby galleries, we first encountered Pete Dine's photographs of dogs and cats. In the official catalog, we looked at the fashion pictures and the plethora of portraits of old movie stars, and began to wonder about *Le Mois*. We struggled to find an exhibition about 30 years of Japanese advertising photography, only to see a terrible exhibition, containing one interesting image: the one that had been reproduced in the catalog.

By Tuesday night, the grimness of what we were seeing had inspired us to dream of better things. We sat in the salon in the grand ruins of the borrowed apartment, talking energetically about the Great Pictures and constructing in our minds a temple to photography. We designed little rooms, each just large enough for one picture and a chair and a spotlight and otherwise darkness and silence. We made lists of the great photographs, rejoiced in the rightness of the establishment of the temple at the site of the Houston Center for Photography (100 yards from the Rothko Chapel), embarked on a scheme for expansion of the Center, and so forth. We stayed up until 5:30 talking about Foto Fest and wanting it to be a wonderful spiritual effort, positive and inspiring to photographers and viewers. It was unrelentingly revisionist and grand.

As if to reward us for our expansiveness, the next day was clear and crisp and sunny, and began to yield a few treasures. We visited the Galerie Sequier and saw the work of Philippe Chauveau and were pleased that the gallery, which had just opened, was showing photography and would probably continue to do so.

In the afternoon we went in search of the Galerie Daguerre, to pay homage. We found the Rue Daguerre and the Hotel Daguerre and the little side street the gallery should have been on. Poking our heads in what we thought was the right door, we found a nasty little man who appeared to be managing a 1950s-style Communist cell. As he mimeographed, surrounded by piles of propaganda, he brusquely told us the Galerie was out on the street, so we looked around for another twenty minutes, then went back and asked him again. This time he said that this space *was* the Galerie Daguerre. Sure enough, behind the door were a few small free-standing walls covered with photographs — terrible Ciba-chromes of bees and flowers. We bowed, thanked him and left. For some reason it was funny that the Galerie Daguerre was showing bees and flowers.

By Thursday the exhibitions were getting slicker. In the enormous complex of buildings that make up the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, we saw the work of several Mexican photographers as a small part of a wonderful multi-media exhibition about Mexico's celebration of the Day of the Dead, as well as major shows by Lucien Clergue and Bruce Davidson, and smaller exhibits of the photographers Jane Evelyn Atwood, Mary Ann Parkinson, and Quentin Bertoux.

The Bruce Davidson exhibition — a major retrospective centered on his subway photographs — was the biggest surprise of the week. Mounted by the National Photography Center, it was a great installation of work by a powerful photographer. In the center of the installation was a slide show of the work of Leonard Freed, with music that was absolutely perfect for looking at the Davidson subway photos. This raised questions about why photographs hung on walls are always viewed in silence, but photographs in slide shows often have music accompanying them.

The other question raised that day was why the Davidson, Bertoux, Parkinson, and Atwood exhibitions — and everything at Beaubourg — weren't mentioned in any of the hype about *Le Mois*. The answer turned out to be politics. *Le Mois de la Photo* is funded by the City of Paris. The others are funded by France. France and Paris are, politically, two different states these days, the country being run by the Socialists and the city being run by the opposition. We were amazed to discover that some people associated with *Le Mois* were unaware of the Davidson exhibition and that none we met had seen it — yet it was without question the most spectacular photography show in town.

Bringing photography to the people means exhibiting in some pretty unusual places. There were museums and galleries, of course, but there were also photos to be found in subway stations, department stores, business offices, bookstores, embassies, cultural centers, town halls, atop skyscrapers, and underneath camera stores. Some of these more innovative spaces worked brilliantly, others were offensive flops. The Leica exhibition in the Saint Augustin subway station was one of those rare moments in subterranean art, beautifully installed on a train platform.

On the other hand, in a FNAC department store the photographs were in a low ceilinged room with the tops of the photographs up against the ceiling, which was covered with mirrored tiles so you had to look at the bad photographs twice.

The basement gallery of La Chambre Claire on opening night.

Fortunately, FNAC redeemed itself with its Photography Book Forum, a giant room filled with photography books, old exhibition catalogues, and magazines from all over the world. It became painfully apparent that Europe publishes a great deal about photography that never seems to cross the Atlantic: the full range, from heady criticism to lighter picture books. And the selection of magazines dealing seriously with artistic issues in photography is immense when compared to American efforts.

The openings at some of these affairs were quite different from what we are accustomed to in America. The art is examined as little there as here, however reading is encouraged and smoking is required. Everyone who has homework, a good book, or a full pack of cigarettes comes, so the crowds are immense, especially in the smaller spaces such as La Chambre Claire. The ground floor has a wonderfully comprehensive photography bookstore and down the spiral staircase is an ancient cellar turned gallery space. Below were people reading and talking in a den of smoke and flesh, and not much air. An oxygen tank would have extended our stay.

Friday was a frantic day of trying to see as much as possible, because time was running out. It was also the day to visit the headquarters of Paris Audio Visuel, the organization that sponsors *Le Mois de la Photo*. The small offices were a madhouse of people trying to cope with something that was just too big. Mounds of paper, catalogs, books, and posters threatened to engulf them all. Their eyes were glazed over and their mouths hung open as they greeted each newcomer and waited for yet another excessive demand. Ours was a good one. We wanted a copy of every photograph they had, copies of all artist's statements and other information about exhibitions, as well as catalogs and books and posters and anything else that might be interesting. A staff member, Alexandre Zaré, accepted our request without emotion and took us to a room where we began to plow through what was actually a very well organized collection of photographs and statements, kept in boxes on the floor. It was a long job, but he got us what we wanted.

That evening, we attended the the Nicholas Nixon/Frederich Cantor opening at the American Center, where we finally found the director of this whole thing, Jean-Luc Monterosso and arranged to spend some time talking about Foto Fest.

The founders of Foto Fest, photographer and teacher Fred Baldwin and gallery owner Petra Benteler have worked feverishly to establish a relationship between Paris and Houston. Some of the Houston exhibitions will travel to Paris in 1986, and Monterosso's group will send exhibits to Houston. The mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, has given the wedding his blessing, as has Houston mayor Kathy Whitmire. There are business interests to be served by the cultural enlightenment of Houston.

Is that good or bad? The Paris event was a great experience, but the number of truly interesting exhibitions couldn't have numbered more than five, and some of them had nothing to do with the event. Is *Le Mois de la Photo* about photography, or is it about boosterism, chamber of commerce cultural gloss? We suspect that if an event similar in quality to the Paris one were held in Houston, it would only be held once. If we expect people to come from all over America to revel in the wonders of photography, it had better be good stuff. We left Paris fearing we really hadn't seen the work of the main group of innovative French photographers, let alone the creative ones from other European countries. It is not a cream-of-global-photography event, and that is what we all want. There is only one world, and there is no serious reason why a large number of its greatest practicing photographers and their work couldn't be gathered together in one place every other year for a shot in the arm and a reappraisal of what photography and art and life are all about.

Bernard Faucon at his Paris opening, with Lynn McLanahan.

Dave Crossley and Alexandre Zaré in the Paris AudioVisuel offices.

BERNARD FAUCON: GROWING UP

A discussion of the work of French Photographer Bernard Faucon, based on his recent exhibition at the Galerie Agathe Gaillard, 3 rue du Pont-Louis-Philippe in Paris, during Le Mois de la Photo.

The Houston Center for Photography will present a retrospective of his photographs from February 28 to April 6, 1985.

By LYNN McLANAHAN

Photographs by Bernard Faucon

Bernard Faucon's large group of color photographs made an exhibition you could really sink your chops into: meaty, challenging, and rewarding. It was one of the few real diamonds among an otherwise lackluster series of exhibitions at Le Mois de la Photo.

Born in 1950, this French photographer is best known for his images of children acting out a variety of strange and mystical rituals. More often than not, the children aren't real, but rather are mannequins. Faucon acts as the costume designer, make-up artist, and director in his "mises en scène photographiques." He even has to adjust the bodies of his "actors" (arms up, head to the left, right leg forward, etc.). In Faucon's work we can see the directorial mode at its utmost.

The result of his mammoth efforts of hauling his own little world around the countryside with him and staging scenes is a body of rich and complex tales. Casual glancers often remember his photographs as happy visions of childhood: children having fun at parties, playing in fields, and doing things kids will do. Those willing to look closer quickly see their oversight. Each photograph challenges the viewer to interpret a wealth of symbols and the task is never easy. These are not pat one-liners. Just when you may be congratulating yourself on a religious interpretation of what's happening in the foreground, you notice unusual games being played in the background.

Faucon's world is inhabited by young children, mostly boys, both real and artificial. The viewer is forced to become a child as well: Faucon allows us entry to his world from a lower, child's eye level. We are not looking down upon his world, safely casting judgement. Rather, we are a part of his world and it is not always a comfortable feeling. You are constantly battered by sexual, political, religious, social, and economic questions, the kind that are piled high in our subconscious, and which we generally prefer to leave behind.

In "Le banquet" (1978) we have a royal feast in the countryside which has been interrupted by an approaching fire. In "L'enfant qui vole" (1979) we have a boy "flying" off a cliff, his friends playing in the field below. Faucon adds to the tension by sometimes juxtaposing real children with his mannequins. In "Colin-maillard" (1977) a young girl tentatively stands amidst a group of young male mannequins on a hillside, all of whom are in uniform pajamas, stumbling around blindfolded. Possible interpretations seem endless in so many of these photographs.

Faucon has chosen to use the Fresson process to print his photographs. A Fresson print is similar to a gum-bichromate print: various pigments can be mixed with the light-sensitive potassium dichromate and the colors can be modified by using different pigments. The degree of difficulty involved in making Fresson prints scares most artists away, but as Faucon is in Paris where the process was invented at the turn of the century and where the L'Atelier Fresson de Savigny still operates, he can take advantage of professional printmakers.

Unlike color prints on commercially manufactured paper, Fresson prints are made on archival printmaking paper and have a soft, soothing quality that ennables us to bypass harsh reality allowing us to drift into Faucon's fabricated world as believers.

In this exhibit, work from Faucon's "children" series was delegated to the downstairs exhibition space, and on the main floor was a "new Faucon." Gone for the most part are his children, yet one does not feel a stranger amidst the new work. Studying these landscapes and interiors, one quickly becomes aware of the rich iconographic vocabulary Faucon included in the earlier work. The children may be gone, but the symbols remain. Northern Renaissance painting fans will delight in the wealth of symbols to be found tacked to the walls, casually arranged on the floor, even leaping out of cliffs. The abundance makes you want to run to your bookshelf, dust off your Fergusons's *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, and get down to decoding.

While you may find fire, grapes, and assorted flowers in Ferguson's, you won't find many of Faucon's other trademarks, such as aesthetic bits of garbage and flying envelopes. These symbols took on a somewhat secondary role in the earlier mannequin-dominated work, but here they have to survive on their own and Faucon has subtly prepared us for this transition by introducing these elements in his earlier work. Viewers with a bit of the detective in them will enjoy spotting the Faucon iconography in this new work.

The question becomes — can these symbols hold their own without the children? Some do so better than others, but it is a bit unfair to judge because in this exhibit we seem to have experimental work, work that hasn't yet arrived at a point as highly developed as his earlier series.

In some of these landscapes and interiors, Faucon appears to be weaning himself of the children by including only one huddled by a

PARIS:
THE EXHIBITIONS

A discussion of some of the photography shown during November's Le Mois de la Photo *in Paris. This is part one of a two-part feature. Part two will appear in the summer issue of* SPOT.

bush or two appearing only as shadows behind a suspended sheet.

One could look upon this transition as the slow death of his "civilization," the only remaining trace on a barren earth being scattered symbols. Perhaps this is what Faucon was alluding to in the earlier "L'enterrement des jouets" (1978) which depicts several mannequins futilely trying to play in a barren graveyard of toys.

In a newer image we have a somber interior, the floor covered with melons and one young boy curled up asleep in the shadowy background. This is in contrast to his earlier "La Sieste" (1979) in which eight children fill the picture sprawled on a field, having feasted on the melons which fill the remaining space. In the newer image we can see that Faucon is still testing the strength of his symbols, not quite ready to turn the photograph over to the melons and their surroundings.

Following this weaning process to completion, we are confronted with several landscapes and interiors altogether devoid of children and populated only by Faucon's symbols. Some of the landscapes remind one initially of John Pfahl's manipulated landscapes, but Faucon's mark is much more haphazard and whimsical.

A surge of white balloons rises out of a field of blue flowers in one, and in another our view of a field is hampered by a curtain of white streamers. Such party decorations remind one of the Peter Pan "I won't grow up" spirit present in the earlier work, but these more superficial symbols don't hold up very well without the children. In other more successful images, nature plays a more independent and active role. Fire, a familiar symbol from the earlier work, takes on a personality all its own as it hovers menacingly over a field in one, and emerges dramatically from the side of a cliff in another. Though just as carefully planned and staged as the rather forced balloons and streamers, the fires contain that hint of the supernatural so prevalent in Faucon's earlier work.

Moving to the interiors *sans enfants*, the symbols very often hold their own. Viewing this evolution, one is reminded of the history of the still-life genre.

Centuries ago, objects played a secondary role and their prosperous owners or religious counterparts dominated the paintings. Slowly but surely, the objects came to stand on their own and to tell the viewer a tale without any human figures present. In one of the new images we have almost a scene-of-the-crime: envelopes flying about the room, benches turned over, a state of disarray; one senses that Faucon's "children" have been here. In another, we have a white room and a table with a white tablecloth laden with symbols such as a silver goblet, sliced oranges, and scattered leaves, fruits, and nuts. Scenes such as this begin to hold their own, and one doesn't automatically hearken back to the "children" and view the interior feeling that they've just left.

However, one is reminded that Faucon is still exploring by images such as one in which we have a corner full of subtly colored pieces of folded cloth piled high. Such images seem closer to simple studies in color and, perhaps resisting the change, I found myself missing the supernatural overtones.

Faucon's highly developed earlier work is going to be a tough act to follow. I applaud Faucon for having the gumption to move on and grow, never an easy task especially when you can so comfortably rest on the laurels of your already acclaimed work. In this exhibit we see Faucon's attempts to move on: in some he seems to be floundering, in others he seems to be on to something.

Viewers can partake of this transitional journey, feel almost a part of the growing process because of the rich vocabulary of symbols Faucon has taught us in the earlier work. The fires, feasts, flying envelopes, melons, forks, knives, flowers, fields, and water — these old friends and more are all here to help Faucon on his journey and play with him along the way.

The Larousse Photographic Archives at the Dawn of the 20th Century. *Giraudon Photographic Agency. 92 rue de Richelieu.*

When you least expect it, you stumble on a jewel. Dark, raining, up a rickety staircase hoping to find an exhibit, walking into an office space with people pulling transparencies out of drawers, typing, and talking on the telephone — this was it? They ignored us so we began to look at the photographs scattered about on the walls. Larousse is France's *Encyclopaedia Brittanica* and hanging was a selection of images from their archives. One began with wonderful, rarely seen 19th century portraits by French greats such as Carjat, Sarony, and Reutlinger of celebrities including Pierre Loti, Maurice Maeterlinck, and even a fat Sarah Bernhardt.

Drawn by the photographs, one ceased to worry so much when stepping on a computer sticking out from underneath the man's desk you were squeezing behind, trying not to get caught in his telephone cord as he was talking. The variety was impressive: landscapes, street life, portraits by known, unknown, and anonymous photographers.

Chinese fish merchants, climbers in the Swiss Alps, lochs in Scotland, Rumanian countryside: the work ranged in style from the refreshingly naive to the more sophisticated and technically proficient. The interesting selection and the unique ambience which I soon began to appreciate made this an exhibition I yearned to go back to as I moved on to less than inspirational exhibits.

Lynn McLanahan

Stars . . . Stars . . . Stars . . . The Baroque Treasures from Cine-Revue (1945-1960). *Tour Maine-Montparnasse.*

Going to this exhibit on the 56th floor of the only skyscraper in Paris was a bit like going to the top of the Empire State Building.

One buys a ticket, takes a special elevator, goes through several turnstyles, and suddenly has a breathtaking view of the city. The black and white photographs from the archives of Cine-Revue present movie stars as we have come to know them in front of the camera, and also on the set behind the scenes, contrasting the real with the unreal. The "immortals" of the time are there: Ava Gardner, Elvis Presley, Bette Davis, Elizabeth Taylor, and yes, Ronald Reagan are all depicted for the most part as we were meant to see them, glamorous stars full of "le sex-appeal." Hollywood's themes and power over fashion become very evident.

The photographers included Raymond Voinquel, Sam Levin, Clarence Bull and Virgil Apger, yet their roles in the creation of these pictures seemed to receive back seat treatment; their subjects easily dominated the exhibition.

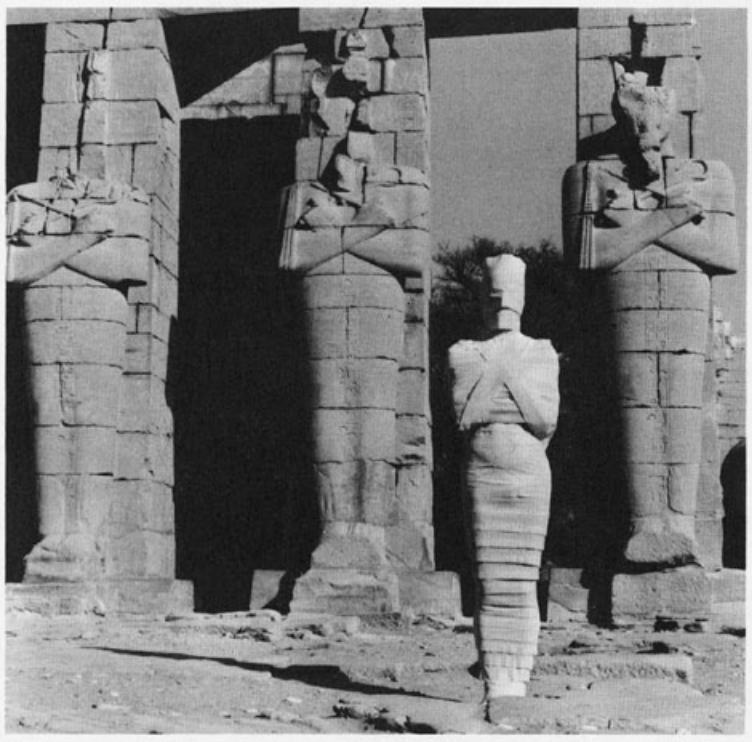
In the spirit of Hollywood, it seemed appropriate that the exhibition was surrounded by souvenir shops where one could buy anything from placemats of Paris to lottery tickets.

L.F.M.

Philippe Chauveau: Foreign Bodies.
Galerie Séquier, 10 rue Sequier.

Philippe Chauveau has made a series of photographs of a person entirely wrapped in toilet paper, posed in exotic settings in North Africa. The pictures are beautifully

Philippe Chauveau



Philippe Chauveau

made and presented, so the first reaction is not that they are stupid, although that is the second reaction, which turns out to be wrong. These pictures are proof that images can have their own lives, and that they continue to do their work long after they've been dismissed.

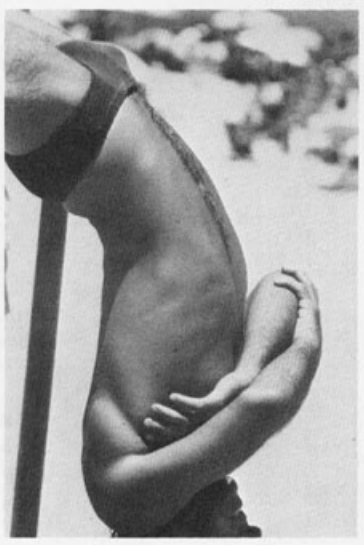
Even though it is patently clear what the images are of, they become mysterious, and they impart a sense of gladness, somehow, that Chauveau has done this job, and that the ancient columns and temples have enjoyed his presence and given to his paper-clad figure a gift of time, a sort of ribbon between the past and the present that didn't exist before Chauveau made his journey.

The photographs, made in 1983-1984, were shot in places with names like Touna El-Djebel, Louxor, Ramasseum, Magawish, Nephtys, and Deir El-Bahri. Chauveau traveled with a huge garbage bag to carry his toilet paper, which he bought wherever he was. It took two or more rolls to do a wrap job, and he has no idea how many rolls he used. He employed different colors of toilet paper to achieve different tones in the black and white photographs. Sometimes, he says, there was too much sweat, and he couldn't shoot, even in the evenings.

Mac Avoy, writing in the catalog for the exhibition, says of the photographs, "his masks scream in silence, on a background of absence, forever." I don't think they scream at all. They are a little like the monolith in 2001 and 2010, just being there, neutral. It is as if they have achieved synchronicity with the movement of these sacred grounds through time and space.

Dave Crossley

Alair Gomes



Contemporary Photography in Brazil; Corpo & Alma. *Espace Latino Américain, 44 rue du Roi de Sicile.*

Going to see an exhibition that purports to represent the cream of all photographic activity in a whole country is a fearsome prospect. You want them to pull it off; you want to know that such and such country produces fine photographs. There is an uncomfortable elitist residue in the back of one's poor fevered brain that presupposes the little countries are going to do something embarrassing.

This Brazilian show cleared away a lot of that nonsense. There was a stong overall concept, an excellent installation, and a bunch of well-made photographs. Slick, almost, complete with separate matching brochures for each of the seven photographers (Vera Chaves Barcellos, Hugo Denizart, José Oiticica Filho, Iole De Freitas, Alair Gomes, Mário Cravo Neto, and Lygia Pape).

The exhibition is called *Corpo & Alma* — Body and Soul. The curator, Roberto Pontual, explains that the title refers to many things, but most obviously to "the delight of the body" after Brazil's "long and dark winter of repression," this body "seeking with all its soul an identity disturbed by so many detours and blemishes." Apparently the idea and the phrase are widely used in newspapers, magazines, film, and television in Brazil.

So what we have is a lot of bodies. Alair Gomes has photographed muscular young men posing and engaging in acrobatics on beaches. Lygia Pape has done a series on children, three shots of each, tough looking youngsters.

Hugo Denizart has photographed wonderful dark hands, forearms, and elbows as they intrude, leaning and touching, on bright color abstractions apparently painted on walls. Mário Cravo Neto has a group of rich portraits that use curious viewpoints and are mostly pictures of neck muscles. Vera Chaves Barcellos has done an almost witty series on feet, printed about lifesize in color and hung close to the floor.

This show seems to be a hint that something interesting is going on with photography in Brazil.

D.C.

Autochromes — 80th Anniversary: Private Collections Presented by the Albert Kahn Foundation *and* **The Autochromes of the French Society of Photography.** *Salon d'Automne, Grand Palais.*

I was so excited anticipating this exhibition that my first reaction on discovering there were no original autochromes, only reproductions, was extreme disappointment. This color process was presented by the Lumière Brothers to the Academy of Sciences in Paris in May of 1904. One doesn't see many of these today because, in addition to being rare, they are extremely fragile and are hardly ever exhibited. An autochrome is a positive color print in which dyed particles of starch are sandwiched between two pieces of glass. As I began to walk through the 80th Anniversary exhibition, my disappointment soon dissolved. The reproductions on paper were of extremely high quality and conveyed the subtly colored grains of starch beautifully. It is hard to convey the magic of an autochrome, but the softness of the colors and the way in which certain colors leap in front of others can perhaps be compared to Seurat's pointilist style in painting. The reproductions held onto this magic.

Though there were a number of images by the Lumière Brothers, the other photographers represented were not big names: André Adret, Paul Carenco, Serge Clin, Jeanne Deves, and Yves Louvet among them.

The selection of images illustrated a refreshingly unpretentious and almost naive snapshot sensibility. The subjects ranged from family picnics, still lifes, portraits, and nudes, to scenes like the one of a man resting after changing a flat tire; I readily confess to being seduced by the nostalgia. The photographers were also obviously having fun with being able to photograph color for the first time; the image of a woman in a pink dress, pink shawl, standing on a ladder next to a pink parasol, picking a pink flower from a tree is an obvious example. Hooray for Albert Kahn (whose collection includes 72,000 autochromes) for making such magical ventures in time possible.

A smaller exhibition of reproductions of autochromes accompanied the 80th Anniversary exhibition. Though these autochromes were also made at the turn of the century, the works were very different in style. Composed of works by members of La Société Francaise de Photographie, the images reflect their struggle to have photography accepted as an art form. They looked to painting for their subject matter and used many a familiar cliche. Autochromes, with their soft colors and grainy quality, can look like pastels or paintings (if you squint your eyes), in much the same way a gum bichromate print can. These photographers were more interested in making photographs that looked like paintings than using the photographic process to create something new. This trend was quite common and this particular group of photographers were by no means alone in their pursuit.

However, comparing their work to that in the 80th Anniversary exhibition, flat cliches cannot compare to the freshness of vision of those willing to experiment, and even play a bit with their cameras.

L.F.M.

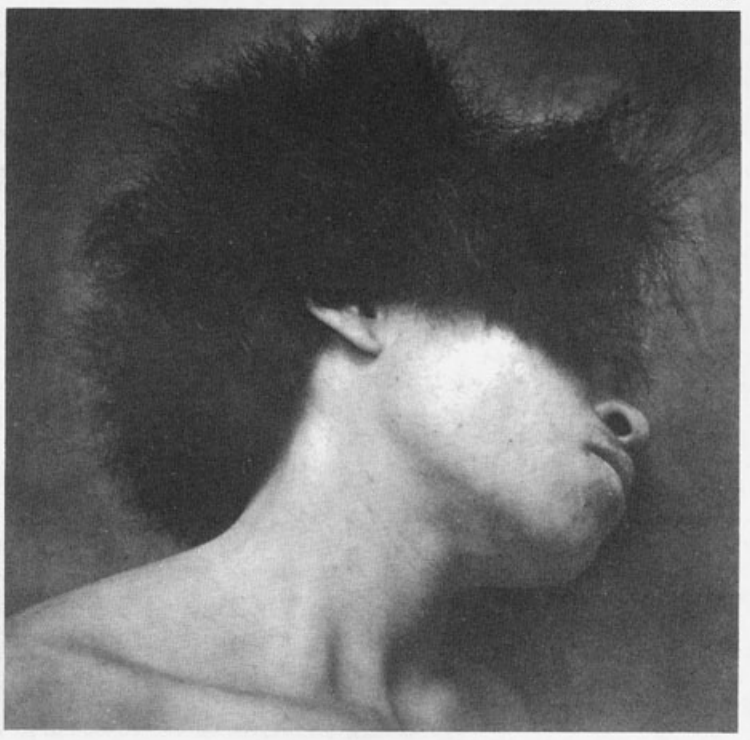
Cine-Monde: Photographs by Xavier Lambours. *Bibliotheque Andre Malraux, 78 Boulevard Raspail.*

Parisians seem to love two things in their photography: fashion and film stars. The fashion is supposed to represent right now while the past is kept alive with photographs of movie stars. Xavier Lambours photographs the latter, but he has not lingered long with the typical soft light, romantic images we're all used to. Some of his photographs are fierce, especially one of Lee Marvin and another of Orson Welles. He has photographed Francois Truffaut (who had just died and whose picture had a small black ribbon across the corner of the frame) Lillian Gish, Anthony Perkins, Martin Scorcese, Jeanne Moreau, Robert de Niro, and many others.

But these are pictures of celebrities that one would actually stop and look at. Sometimes it's just a little trick, a different viewpoint, shot from below perhaps.

But more often it's some sort

Mário Cravo Neto

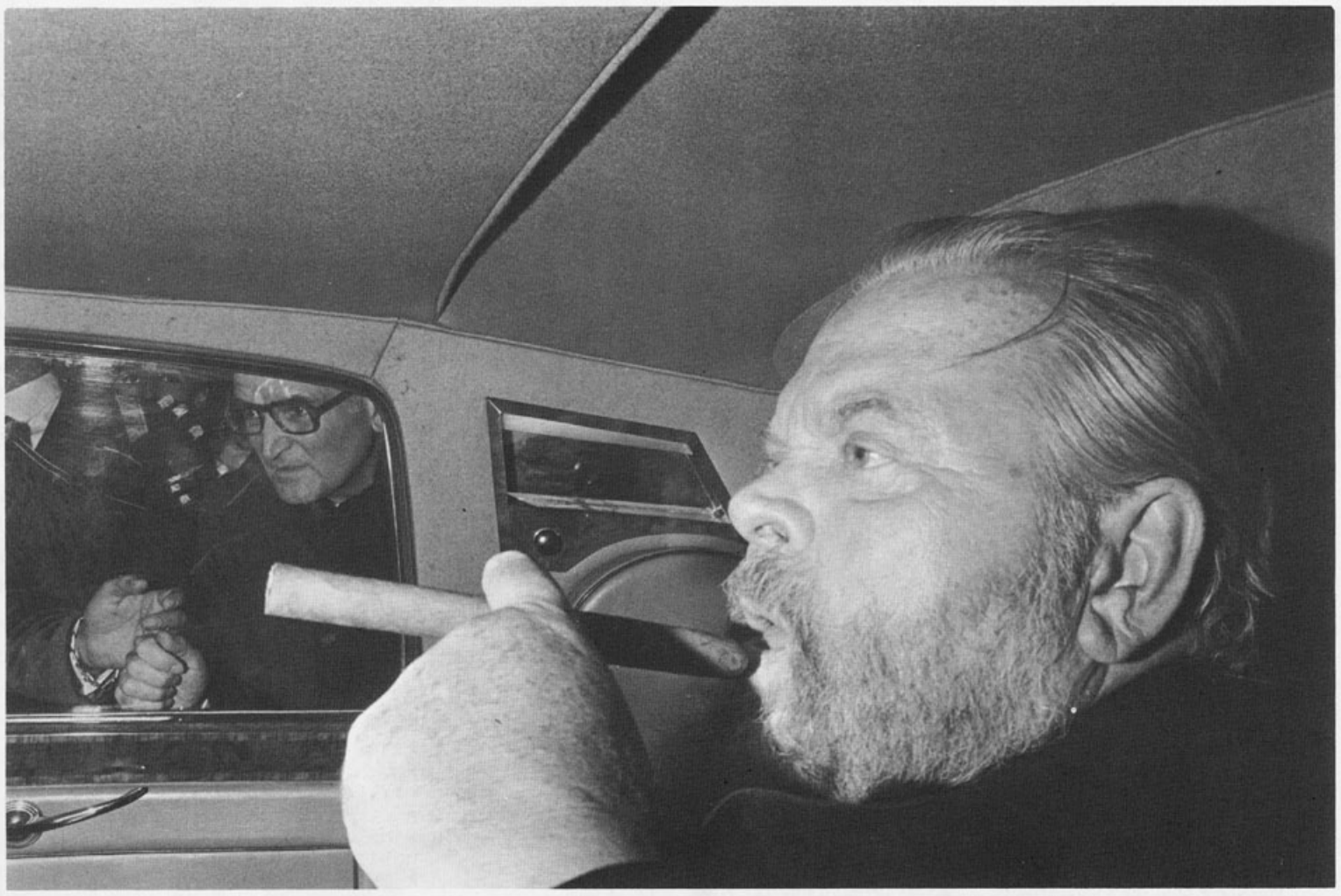


of connection Lambours seems to have made with his subject, a way of working that's similar to the way Annie Leibovitz is able to get inside and tear everything up and rearrange the furniture so we can actually see what the place looks like.

Something curious is going on in Lambours' mind. Right in the middle of this exhibition of photographs of famous people is a print of a cow's udder. And in a little alcove is a series of square pictures of a fellow wearing a sort of mandarin robe, little wire glasses, huge fake ears, and a beanie with a propeller on top. He is seen on rides at fairgrounds, sitting on lampposts on bridges, being laughed at by a policeman, and almost always with a big lawn chair, which he drags around the streets of Paris.

Lambours has obviously been off the deep end for quite a while, and France is surely fortunate to have him around occasionally to lift its people out of their melancholy.

D.C.



Xavier Lambours

The Peking Opera in Holograms. *The Museum of Holography. Forum des Halles.*

We've all heard of holography, some have even seen a hologram, thanks to *National Geographic* and Walt Disney, but I had no idea how they were made, and I looked forward to learning a bit about this relatively new process. The museum had a video running continuously that did its best to explain, but even though it was an American production in English, I came away with only fragments of understanding of the making of a hologram.

There were several different exhibits at the museum. One presented holograms of the Peking Opera by Jean Mortes which were interesting only because they were holograms: you could see figures in Chinese costumes in the three dimensions, period. Another presented rather banal subjects, such as wrenches, which incorporated more interesting colors and capitalized on holographic qualities a bit more toward artistic expression. The objects appeared to be on the surface of the wall and the space around them appeared to recede into space, back into the wall, enhancing the illusion of objects floating in space. This created a tension, as I knew the objects were really in a picture hanging on the wall, not floating in space.

Wandering into the next dark room the viewer was invited to stand behind a row of 3D glasses and view slides projected on the front wall. Indeed, they looked three dimensial. Finally, there was a small room with examples of how some artists in France are incorporating holograms into their work — predominantly in a small way and with collage.

My feeling as I left the Museum was that holography seems untouched thus far by artistic hands. The process seems to carry with it many limitations both technical and financial, but once we get past those barriers and holography falls out of the hands of techies and into those of some adventuresome artists, great things could result.

L.F.M.

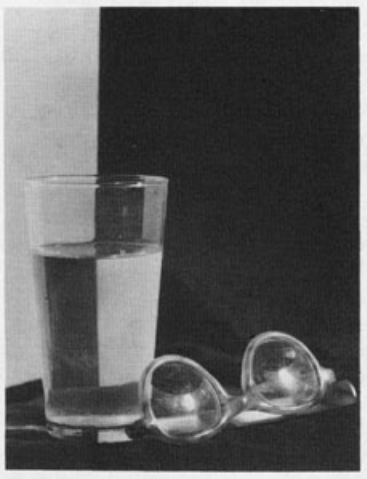
Venice, Verdi, Wagner: Images from the Opera. *Galerie Regine Lussan. 7 rue de l'Odeon.*

Composers Wagner and Verdi both worked in and were inspired by Venice, thus the title of this exhibition of photographs of moments from the world of opera.

Many of the greats, such as Maria Callas, are immortalized on the stage and many of the photographs could be viewed as early seeds of the directorial mode: heroes such as Parsifal emerging in loin cloth from rather rough and clunky stage sets. Thinking "directorial" enhanced my enjoyment of this exhibition which could otherwise be seen simply as photographs of opera stars on stage performing.

L.F.M.

Maurice Tabard



Maurice Tabard. *Galerie Marion Meyer, 15 rue Guenegaud.*

Tabard died in 1984 and this exhibition was a tribute to the adventurous spirit this man brought to photography. Though not as famous as his contemporaries, such as Man Ray, Tabard's work reflects the attitudes in Paris during the 1920s and 1930s. Tabard tried everything: photograms, solarization, double exposures, negative images, hand applied emulsion, and combination printing.

Looking through the selection, one could see how these techniques applied to a number of subjects: fashion, nudes, aerial views, still lifes, and portraits.

A fitting tribute to this photographer, who also for a time worked at the Gittings Portrait Studios in Houston.

L.F.M.

Photography, Fashion: Pierre et Gilles, Bettina Rheims, Noelle Hoeppe, Robert Mapplethorpe, Rosella Bellusci, Jorge Damonte, Bruce Weber. *Galerie Texbraun, 12 rue Mazarine.*

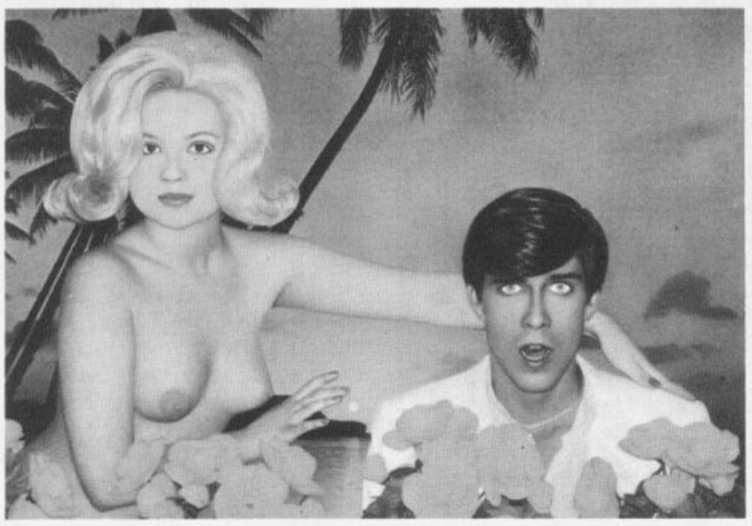
One can just imagine Calvin Klein looking at some of the pictures by Robert Mapplethorpe, Bruce Weber, and Noelle Hoeppe with his heart in his throat, his joy overflowing, his dreams seeming true, his life infused with hope and longing. These smooth pretenders, both behind and in front of the camera, seem to be from other worlds, where life has been reduced to extravagant posturing in crisp, clean light, or to a kind of permanent dim, smoky hallucination, everything diffuse and hard to see. The ennui in both worlds is obviously overwhelming and the characters seem crazy, witless, and lost.

Bruce Weber is a star in the fashion world at the moment. His pictures of people redesigned after novels by Scott Fitzgerald are published everywhere. Much of what he does seems to relate to sports and the outdoors, as if all the men and women were Olympians. Indeed, one of his biggest recent projects was his transformation of many of the real 1984 Olympians into glamorous heroes and heroines from another time, with slicked back hair and great hats.

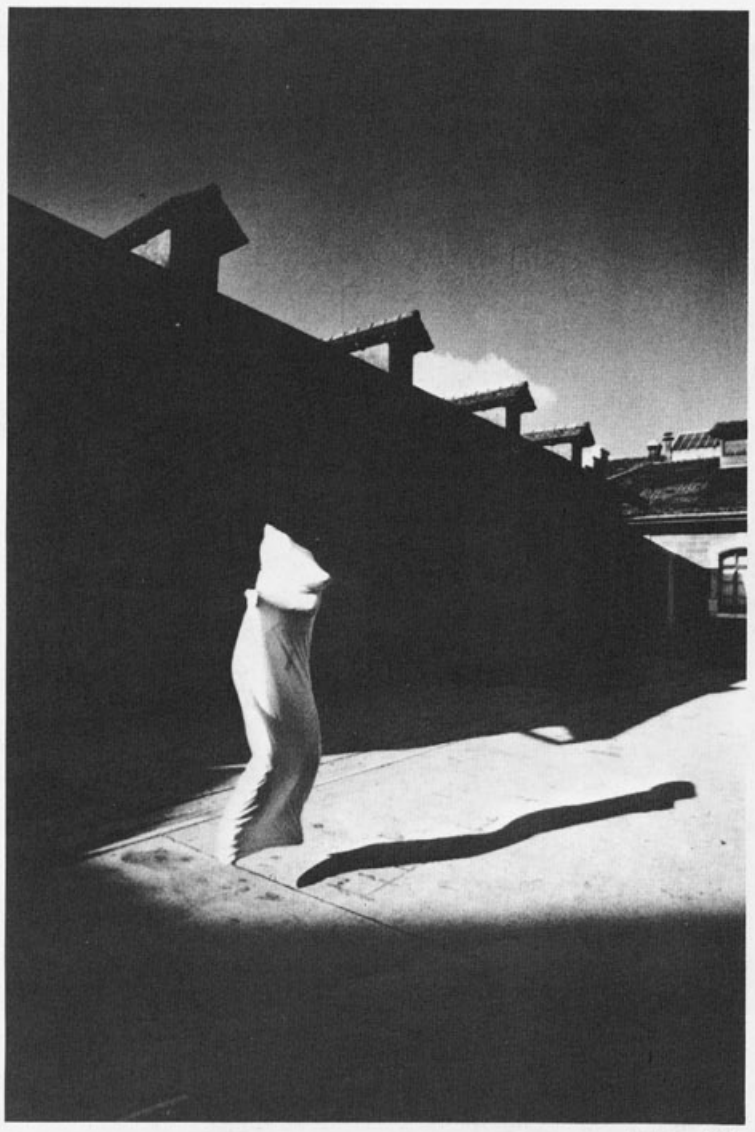
Noelle Hoeppe makes pictures composed almost entirely of middle tones, with lost women groping their way through the smoke. They're beautiful in a way that seems not quite right for fashion photography, and, like Weber's, the scenes are always from an earlier time. It's a little unclear what she's trying to sell with these pictures that appear to have been made shortly after the party had been going on for a little too long.

Then there's, ah, Pierre et Gilles. Zany, I suppose that's the right word. Their weird, heavily retouched color pictures of smooth soft people are being widely published in Europe. These guys have no shame at all. No gimmick is too tacky, no color combination too gauche. There's lots of skin in their pictures, but almost none of it looks quite real. The work has tight connections to beach movies, tele-

Pierre et Gilles



Noelle Hoeppe



Christian Vogt

vision, and comics. Your sense of humor has to be of a certain curious caliber to want more of this, but there you are. I collected their postcards.

D.C.

Swiss Photography from its Origins to Our Day. *Pavillon des Arts, 101 Rue Rambuteau.*

Good Lord, what a spectacle this was! Hundreds of photographs, old and new, of every conceivable type, in a monster exhibition that must have touched on everything that has to do with Swiss photography.

There was a copy of the first lithograph made from a photograph in Switzerland; a photograph of the daguerreotypist Johann Baptist Isenring, who introduced photography to Switzerland in 1840; the cover of the catalog of the first photo exhibition in Switzerland; and so on through the ages to Werner Bischof and Robert Frank and then to the contemporary conceptualists.

There were wonderful pictures of such subjects as a family of Russian peasant immigrants outside their cabin, just miraculous in the ability of those people at that moment to fling their spirit far into the future. There was a goofy picture made in 1890 by Johann Link, in which five crazed men and boys — all in suits — cavort in fevered madness, one leaping over another's back, one tearing down the street with a mysterious board on his shoulder, another casually standing on his hands, and yet another lurching into the frame from the right bearing a stick as though it weighed 500 pounds.

The feeling of delight at this slightly askew vision carried right through to work of the present, with a large representation of the good work of lots of contemporary photographers. This was a terrific exhibition that asks for a tremendous amount of time. It would make a great book.

D.C.

Bruce Davidson

Johann Link

Pete Dine: Animals. *Les Rencontres d'Olympus, 33 Rue du Comandant René Mouchott.*

The English photographer Pete Dine had quite a few pictures of animals. Dogs, cats, everything.

D.C.

Bruce Davidson, *Centre National de la Photographie, Palais de Tokyo.*

(This retrospective exhibition of Bruce Davidson's photographs was not technically part of the Mois de la Photo, but it was a major photography exhibition during that event.)

Davidson is a humanist. He doesn't claim social realism or documentary goals for his photographs, but wishes them to reflect his compassion for his fellow man. He has been consistent in both his concerns and approach. More often than not, he chooses to work in the genre of the photo essay, as opposed to simply shooting at random on the street. His choices are topical and urban (*Teenagers*, *E. 100 St. Subway*). Chronologically, Davidson's technique becomes more refined and dominant with each series while the subject matter remains constant (in a sense). Grainy, casual 35mm portraits give way to more self- conscious and formalized prints, culminating in the large color prints of the New York subway.

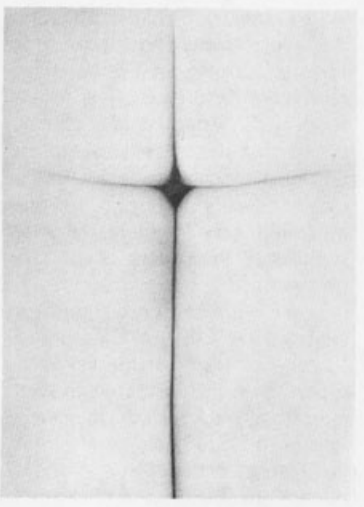
Davidson began photographing the subway in black and white and then switched to color, which seems appropriate considering the graffiti-laden environment the subway has become. I wondered what any French person seeing the N.Y. subway for the first time in these photographs would think of it compared to their own rather business-like Metro. Coupled with the use of flash and the effects of flourescent lighting, the noise of the color is often deafening. The trains look more like rides at Coney Island than public transportation. Unlike Walker Evans' *Many Are Called*, which focused on individual facial expressions caught in a moment on an anonymous train, in Davidson's photographs the color alone sometimes seems to be the reason for the photograph. People's clothes become mere foils to the graffiti surrounding them.

The installation reinforced the often circus-like atmosphere of the photographs. They were hung in a sort of labyrinth that dictated the distance you could stand from them. Notably, this arrangement gave one the feeling of being on a subway car. The prints are large and this scale combined with the shortened viewing distance heightened the trapped, anxious feeling reflected in some of the photographer's subjects.

Not all the photographs focused on the train interiors or even the underground part of the system. In fact there was a distinct lack of orientation to the images. While some images are blaring, others are quite romantic in an urban way. In one photograph two women stand waiting on an elevated platform. Backlit, the soft summer twilight streams across the platform revealing slightly the women's figures beneath their sundresses. This romanticism with a hint of boyish voyeurism is in evidence throughout Davidson's work. It energizes some of his best photographs, while it is the downfall of others. For example, one of my favorite Davidson photographs is from the 1959 series *Teenagers*. A young girl admires herself in the mirror on a cigarette machine while her equally self-interested boy friend primps nearby. There is a directness in the photograph that alludes to the photographer's presence; yet that allusion doesn't interfere with the scene. Too often in other Davidson photographs I am made aware of the photographer at work, using his lens, framing, and print quality to heighten the 'drama' of the photograph.

Davidson doesn't have a cool, dispassionate eye. As a result, his photographs sometimes cross the thin line that separates humanist concerns from mere sentimentality. At his best, though, Davidson doesn't allow his camera to reduce a situation to one dimension. His subway is both horrible and beautiful. There is celebration and condemnation in all the series, reflecting his involvement with his subjects and his respect for the complexity of life.

Ruth Schilling



Erwin Blumenfeld

Erwin Blumenfeld. *FNAC Montparnasse, 136 rue de Rennes.*

While it's obvious that Erwin Blumenfeld liked photographing women, it's not so obvious that he had any sort of vision in his mind while he was doing it. It's as though he could hardly wait to get back to the darkroom to introduce some gimmickry. Why so distort these women? To photograph a woman whose hair reaches down below her hips would seem to offer adequate opportunity for straightforward sensual work, but Blumenfeld solarizes and double exposes and essentially hides all that glorious hair. The exhibition is a chaos of color, disembodiment, and eyelashes floating alone. It just doesn't look as though he ever found a form he liked. It is a perfect example of the worst of photography, all put in one place, a memento of a talent largely wasted.

D.C.

Contemporary Photography in Yugoslavia. *Centre Culturel de la République Socialiste Féderrative de Yougoslavie, 123 rue Saint-Martin.*

This was a little sad. Many of the photographs were of pretty good quality, with interesting imagery, fairly thoughtful documentary work, and one sort of conceptual commercial piece. There was one strong group of pictures of the butchering of a pig in a little village. By and large it wasn't exciting work, but it was adequate.

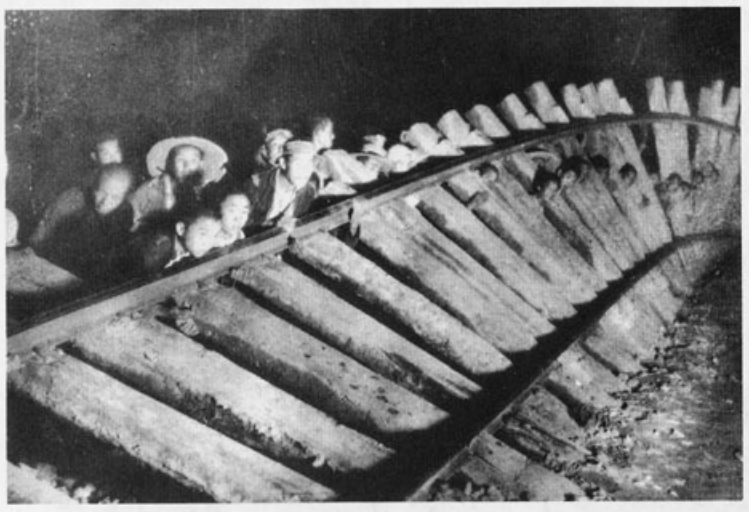
Unfortunately the installation was crummy. Most of the prints had at least one corner hanging outside the mat, the corners of which appeared to have been cut with a screwdriver, and no one at the gallery seemed to care about setting things right.

In the front window was a display of zillions of 5x7 prints glued not very well to thick corrugated cardboard and hung on wires in a mad sort of chaos no doubt meant to convey the vast diversity of the fairly closed. However, that is about all they did. There was little creativity in any of the photographs after 1936, and the print quality often looked dangerously close to Xeroxes.

Perhaps the romantic in me hoped to find the individual still alive, but if this exhibit is any indication, 1930-1960 were not building years for creative photography in China.

L.F.M.

Li Feng



many cultures of Yugoslavia. This was an official exhibition, which might explain its overall grimness.

D.C.

With The Adjustable Wrench in the Little Salon: The New Fashion. Photographs by Dominique Bouchard and Herve Lecerf. *Galerie Shop Photo Montparnasse. 33 rue du Commandant René-Mouchotte.*

In Paris, if you do a lot of old-fashioned fashion photography and reduce the image to Xerox-like tonality, then hand-color it gaudily, and mat it with big nuts and bolts through the mats, you can get a show in this camera store.

D.C.

30 Years of Chinese Photography (1930-1960). *Mairie du Vle. 78 rue Bonaparte.*

I had high hopes for this exhibit of thirty years of photography from China, held in the grand and gilt hall of one of Paris' town halls. What an opportunity. Unfortunately, the work was very disappointing. The subjects were interesting because they allowed me to see aspects of China that don't make it to *Newsweek* or *Time*. Portraits, landscapes, people at work, soldiers at war, students marching, athletes, and children; they offered a chance to glimpse thirty years in China that were

Alice Odilon: The Intimate Beauty of Inexpressible Feelings. *Studio 666, 66 Rue Maitre-Albert.*

Beauty isn't exactly the first word that comes to mind when looking at these photographs. Alice Odilon has photographed herself, at least what remains of herself. An anorexic, she has reduced herself to muscle and bone; she is like a skeleton covered with skin. She thrusts herself at us, naked usually, or wearing what might, on another person, be thought of as sexy apparel — garters and stockings and black gloves, or black lingerie. She photographs herself with her breasts hanging over a plate of fish, her arms held over her head so we can see their thinness and how misproportioned her head has become. In one particularly difficult picture she has smeared mud (or is it, as her essayist seems to suggest, menstrual blood?) on herself so that her emaciated flesh also looks as if it has been badly burned.

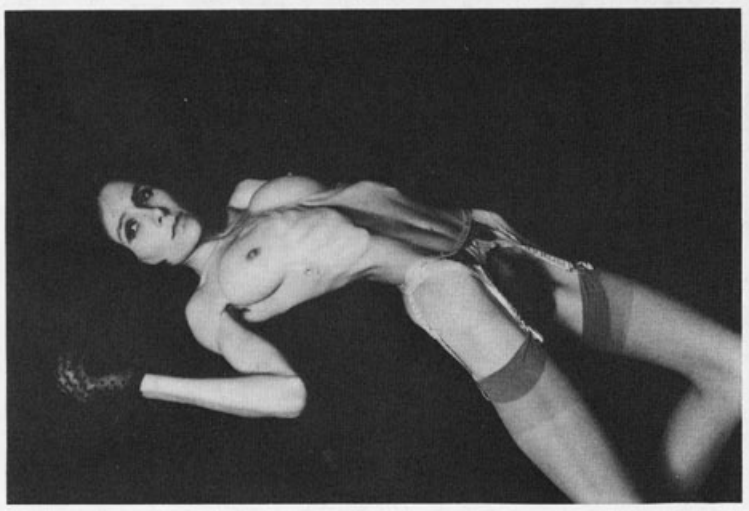
She is playing a voluptuous role, but she does not appear to be having fun. Always she peers out of her great black eyes, seeming to call for help, for somebody to come along with a magic wand and blow her back up. It is difficult to imagine trying, and in any event, it looks as if it would be too late.

One has to be astonished at Alice Odilon's willingness to make the most of what is clearly a pretty bad situation. She is not dead, after all, but clearly has great life in her. Just making these pictures required a lot of drive and energy. One only wishes she'd stopped occasionally and had lunch.

But then, of course, the pictures would never have existed.

D.C.

Alice Odilon



Mise en scene pour une Assomption: Etude documentaire no. 100 Orlan. *Galerie Art Contemporain J. et J. Donguy. 57, rue de la Roquette.*

"Mise en scene" is not meant to be translated in English, but suffice it to say that the artist is telling you that this was created, fabricated, produced to be documented, photographed, taped, whatever. This installation was and is memorable, especially in light of the overwhelming body of predictable work presented in the exhibits of the Month of Photography.

Orlan is one of Paris' premier performance artists, and in this installation she confronts us with ideas about the Assumption. The room had "altars" of varying sizes composed of various media. Orlan herself takes on the role of Mary draped in white or black and appears in photographs, videos, and holograms. A lyrical aria sung by a female soprano pervades the room, and Orlan's voluptuous figure clad in voluminous drapery and other dramatic touches overwhelm the viewer. What we have here is 1980s baroque: use everything available and make it dramatic. And I mean everything, even one of those jukebox contraptions you used to find at your booth at the cafe, with pages of hit tunes that were turned by an automatic arm. Instead of tunes, the pages contain photographs of "the madonna" in various guises.

Orlan herself wandered into the gallery while I was there and it was a treat to hear her tell about how she put this installation together. One wonders what the men in the old folks home think when this presence sweeps in, dresses them in religious garb, and photographs them to use as framing photographs on her altars.

Orlan has a definite flair for performance and though this exhibition/installation is not for everyone, it was a breath of fresh air to this tired gallery goer.

L.F.M.

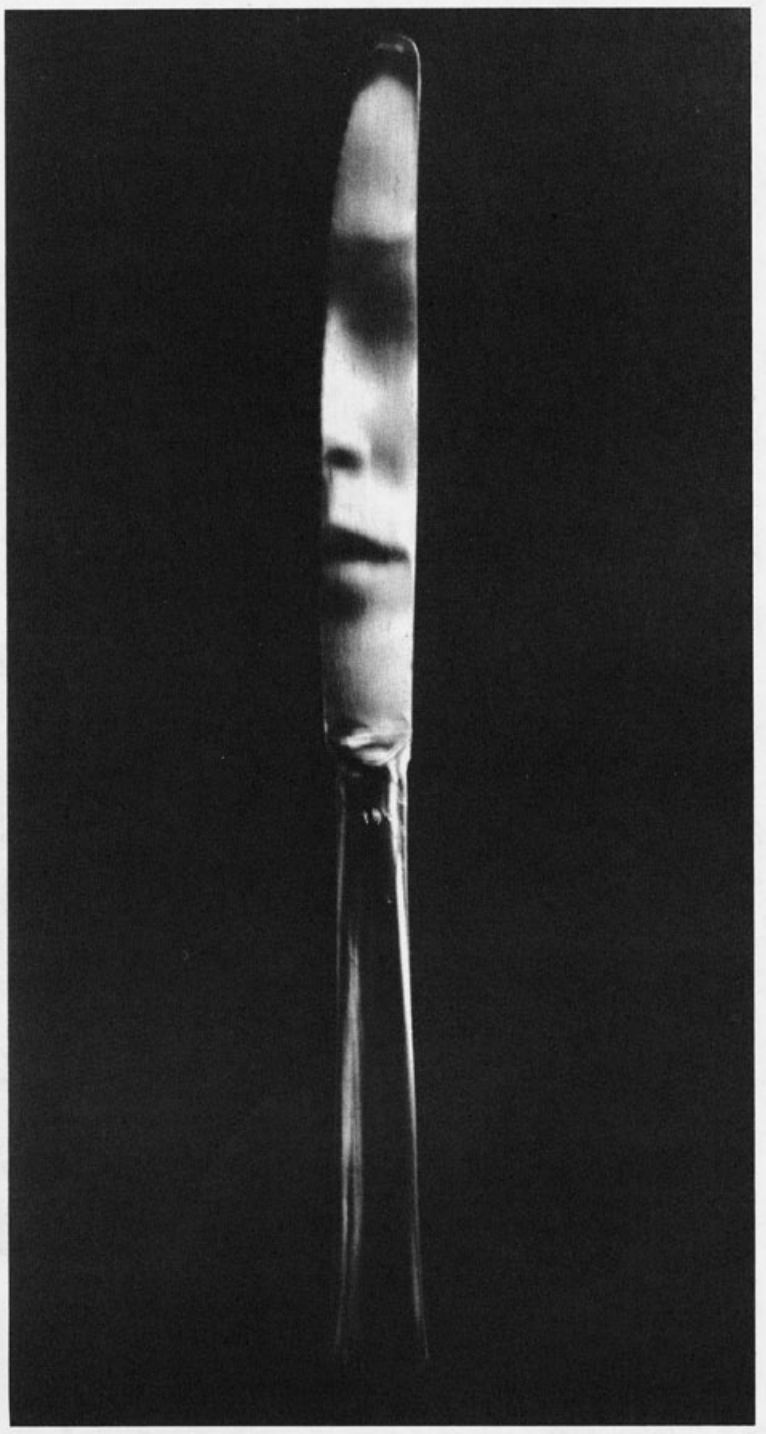
Alain Fleischer: Silverware and Other Objects. Studio 666, 6 rue Maitre-Albert.

Alain Fleischer is a filmmaker in his 50s who lives in Paris, where he also teaches about film and photography. For this exhibition he photographed common reflective objects — knives, forks, spoons, hairbrushes — with the faces of people reflected in them. Six of the prints are quite large, about six-and-a-half feet high by three feet wide. He has an odd feeling for the internal dimensions and qualities of these things, and says "To see one's face as a reflection in a knife or spoon makes these objects both less and more alien; one finds oneself present in them, the objects carry on a dialoque with the one using them . . . ."

The images are grainy and slightly blurred, often because of movement, as though the camera were handheld, a strange way to do still lifes. But then, they aren't really still lifes. In Fleischer's view, they are more than lifeless objects, these shiny commonplaces. For him, "Silverware, copperware, and stainless steel . . . see passing the images of our daily lives, of our intimacy, of those beings who surround us, and of ourselves." He speaks of "The profile of the father at the bottom of the ashtray, the smile of the mother on the back of the hairbrush, the white hair of the grandmother on the sides of the tea kettle, the immense hand and arm of the maid on the iron, and in the faucets of the lavatory, oneself, the laughable self-portrait, . . . the test of the mirror."

D.C.

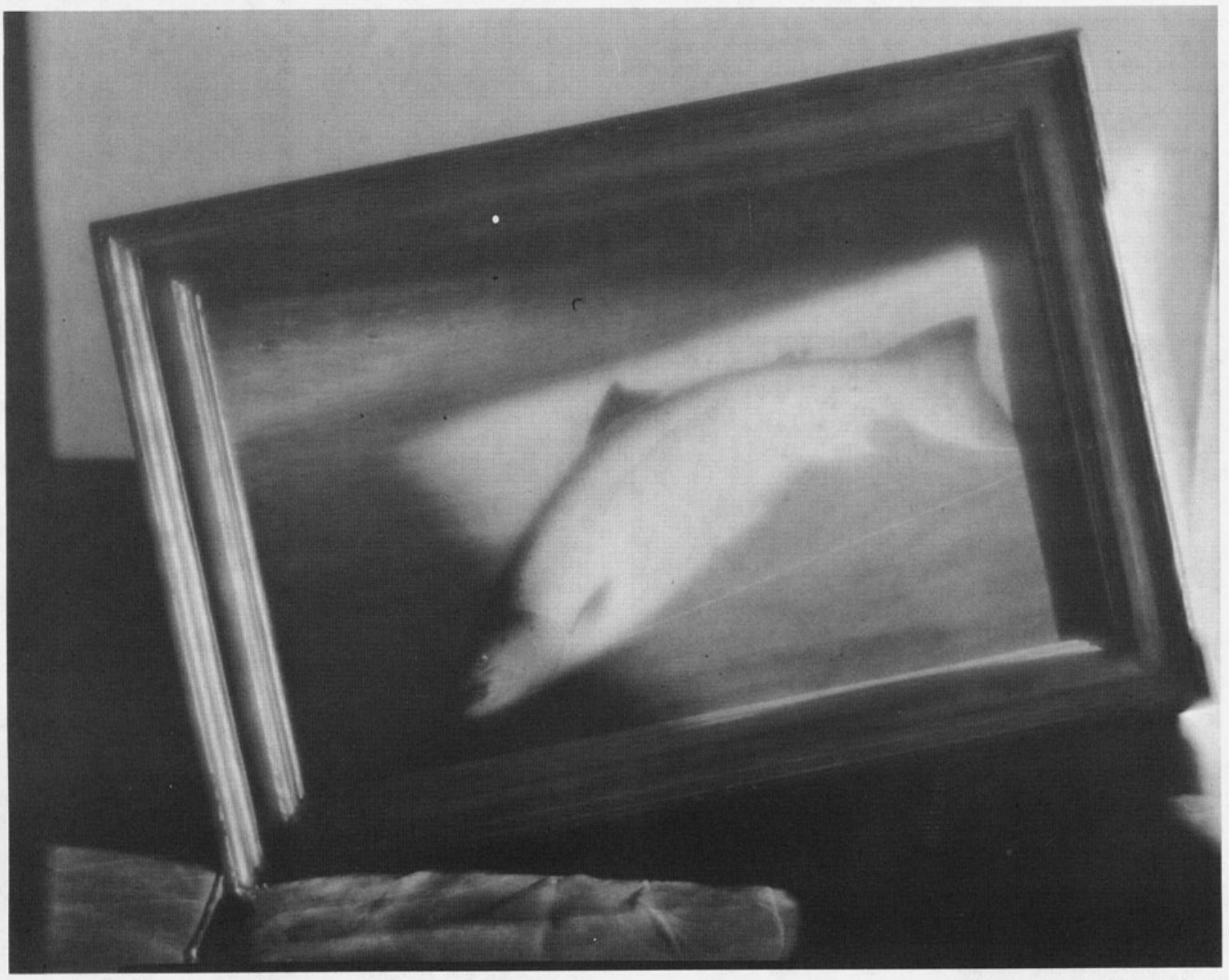
Alain Fleischer



Orlan

SISKIND, CONNOR: CLEAR VISION

Aaron Siskind and Linda Connor. February 15-March 31, at the Houston Center for Photography.



Photographs this page by Linda Connor

By APRIL RAPIER

There exists an undeniable bond between Aaron Siskind's and Linda Connor's pictures, the obvious connection being the student-teacher relation.

There are other dimensions to the bond as well: they have remained supportive friends over the years, holding each other's work in high regard; the influences remain intact and reciprocal; and as Gay Block points out in the curator's statement for this, their first joint exhibition, "they agree that the human element is the most important ingredient in their work." The exhibition includes retrospective bodies of work (Connor from 1967-84, Siskind from 1937-83), and it is extremely enlightening to witness the respective progressions.

Connor's journeys, both emotional and physical, are not unlike notations in a diary, for they are insightful and introspective. There is no sense of passivity or lack of involvment, or of the refuge one can take behind a camera, although at times she demonstrates the anthropologist's probing neutrality. The more recent pictures are clearly descended from a progressive vision and understanding established in her work with a soft-focus portrait lens.

As with the work of Emmet Gowin, the imagery is accessible by virtue of being drawn from surrounding life and visible experience, yet is magically transformed into an introspective odyssey. She now views things in larger scale, looking at the sum rather than the parts. One is inclined to view this as a distancing from the subject matter (petroglyphs, Peruvian landscapes, life in India and Nepal), because in many instances she is literally documenting from farther away.

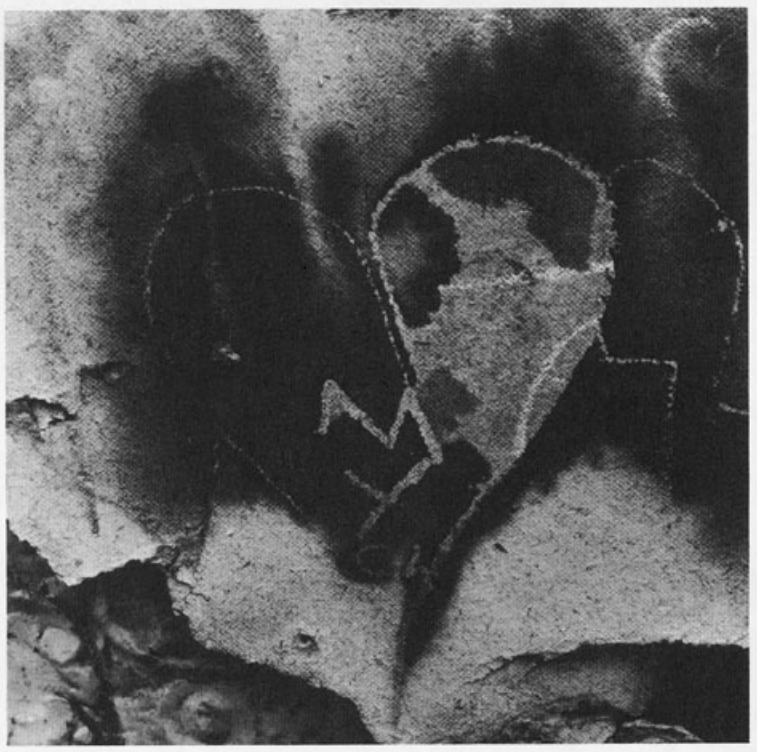
Less representational, the associations are grounded in the present, the factual versus the fictive, wondrous specters in captivity versus descriptions of them. As she once drew us closer to her sense of the past, now Connor draws us closer to the inhabitants and treasures of the world. She seems a part of wherever she is, unafraid to feel and experience the connections, heralding new possibilities all the while. The world as she sees it is rhythmic and arcane, the pictures exultant in discovery.

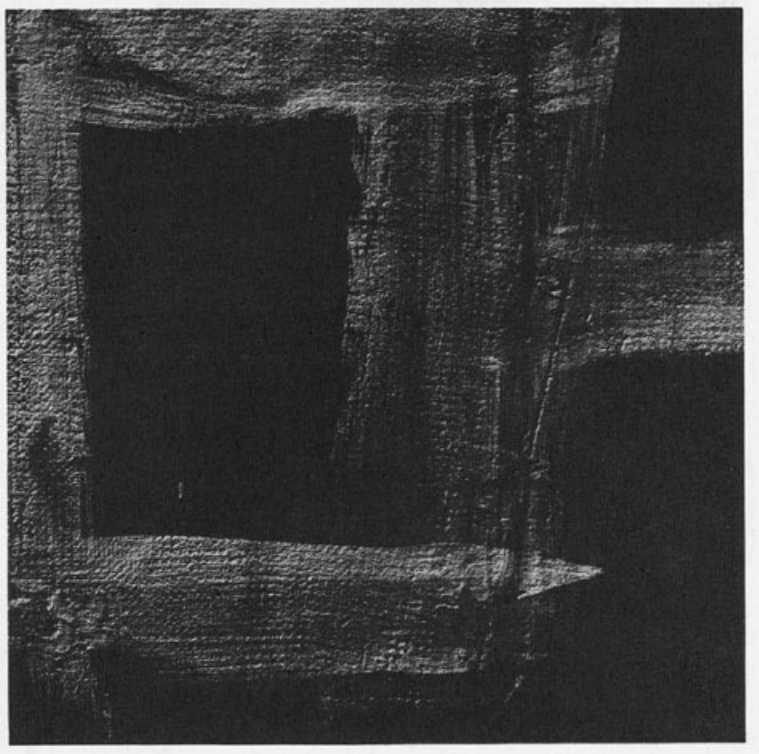
Aaron Siskind's work needs no introduction, nor is it necessary to assay it critically. His is a marvelous legacy of singular devotion, evidenced by faith in and continuation of a clear-headed vision. As teacher, influence, and inspiration, he has been invaluable to so many photographers around the world, and from time to time, we all sound notes of gratitude. But it is likely that he can never fully know the debt photography and its other practitioners owe him.

There is no discordance here, no false note — although he laughs about what "came in between," the experiments and rejects; rather, as the pictures flow chronologically, they demonstrate a profound self-awareness. He understands the subtleties of resource and intention, the ultimate act of clarity culminating in the picture.

I spoke with him on the morning of January 20; he was hard at work in the darkroom, enthusiastic about the new pictures from his most recent trip to Sicily, sounding hale and jovial, at peace with his work and the world. It was thrilling (anticipation of new work) and reassuring: his vision and energy are self-perpetuating.

Photographs this page by Aaron Siskind





RAY METZKER: KNOWING SHADOW

Unknown Territory: Photographs by Ray Metzker. *The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, November 17, 1984, to January 29, 1985.*

By DAVID PORTZ

Ray Metzker's photographs have begun to behave as a life's work. This extensive retrospective organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, together with an excellent catalogue and appearances by the artist, bring Mr. Metzker for the first time to the view of a mass audience. It is a dramatic introduction. We are met by an artist confident of his inventive techniques, and emerged from the shadows of his predecessors.

The exhibition's title and catalogue emphasize Ray Metzker as an artistic innovator. The exhibition's 190 photographs span twenty-five years of work, and represent the results of twelve projects, or series. Metzker has formalized an approach whereby he structures a "term" for each project — a sort of contract with himself to confine the work by some constraint. Some terms were chosen to confine him to a place, as in, for example, the series photographed within Chicago's Loop, or the series within walking distance from his Philadelphia apartment. In his *Sand Creatures* series, he prowled Atlantic City Beach to photograph the bulbous and unglamorous bathers.

Other terms for his series have been more theoretical, designed to explore a viewer's expectations, or a photographic technique. For example, in questioning the convention of a photographic print being only one frame, he has combined two, in *Double Frame*, or the frames of a whole roll, in his *Composites*. The *Double Frame* series utilized the black dividing line between the frames as a compositional element, which merged with two disjunctive images to form a single teasing abstraction. The *Composites* series resulted in large posterish prints which from a distance are highly patterned, the simpler *Composites* resembling the early motion studies of Muybridge. On closer viewing, each *Composite* reveals a single sequence of events — a sailor walking, for example, or persons passing through a glass revolving door. Rhythms are often established by overlapping images and multiple exposures, which give some *Composites* a bewildering complexity.

The *Pictus Interruptus* series resulted from a term which required that the clearly focussed distance be largely obscured by a blurry object set in the foreground. This method confounds the eyes' tendency to see closer objects more clearly. Many photographs in the series are landscapes in New York, Philadelphia, Wisconsin, or Greece, though skies and street details were also interrupted.

Metzker returned to city streets to photograph *City Whispers*, the most recent series presented. Ordinary pedestrians are isolated in huge sluices of brilliant light, which cut the predominating darkness. All of Metzker's work has utilized sparkling white highlights and intense blacks. But following his experiments in printing the underexposed, overdeveloped *Dark Probes*, Metzker has placed much of his daylight city in detailed shadow. The emotional tone of the photos is lonely and reflective, not the emotions of the unidentifiable persons in the photos, but those created by their isolation in the textured darkness. The swaths of light falling on each photograph's inhabitants arrive as unacknowledged salvation, skeptical transcendence. The results of his earlier visual studies are folded and compressed into the *City Whispers* series, where it is most evident that Metzker achieves expressiveness, despite his restraint.

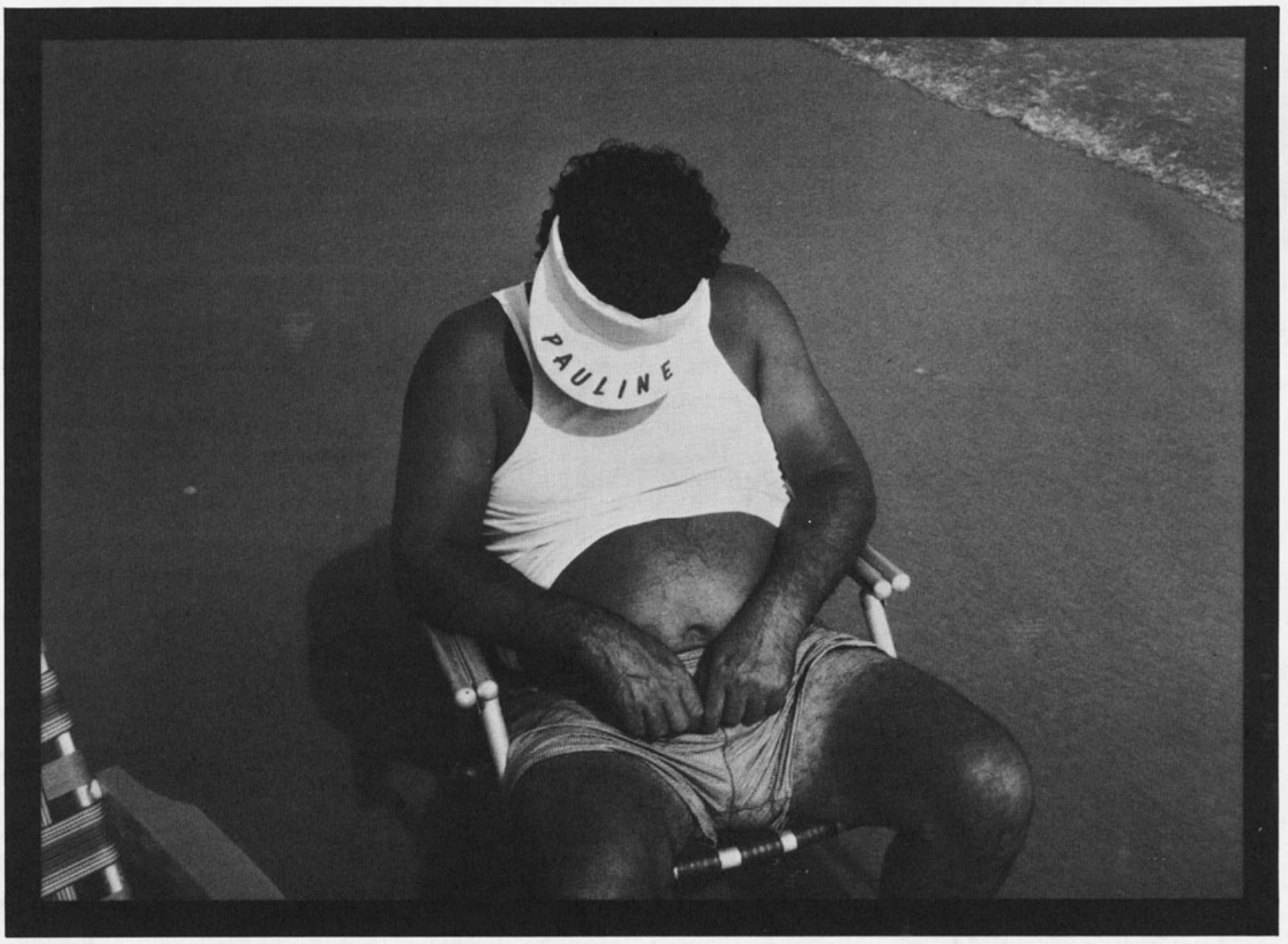
Concurrent with the Metzker exhibition, the Museum of Fine Arts displayed works of Lazlo Moholy-Nagy selected from its recent acquisitions, and a travelling exhibition of Harry Callahan's pictures of his wife and daughter. Anne Tucker, the museum's curator of photography, is to be thanked for orchestrating the museum's resources to present the Metzker exhibition together with works of these two photographers, who had significant influence upon him. Ms. Tucker is also to be praised for the Metzker exhibition catalogue, which is extremely well written and commendatory, though overzealous toward Metzker's preachy philosophizing.

The catalog traces Metzker's photographic pedigree to Moholy-Nagy, who founded the New Bauhaus in Chicago, and to Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind, who succeeded Moholy-Nagy after the New Bauhaus became the Institute of Design. Metzker studied under Siskind and Callahan, and several attributes of his work are said to be derived from the Institute of Design: its experimental spirit, the printing with high contrast of black and white, deep focus, and the emphasis on design. Some of Metzker's prints have particular affinities with Siskind's — the fascination with surface and texture, the tendency toward abstraction. Harry Callahan's work also finds thematic parallels in Metzker's photographs, as in the candid nature of his street photographs and the superimposition of imagery. Callahan also worked within parameters for each project, similar to Metzker's use of terms.

Most striking of all, however, are Metzker's congruencies with the work of Lazlo Moholy-Nagy, particularly in the subject matter of his prints. Some of Metzker's favorite motifs can be seen in the Museum's collection of Moholy-Nagy — blandly looming, foreground shapes which force attention to their perimeters; faces unfocussed in the foreground, others focussed in the distance; pedestrians hurrying in bustling urban settings, or sometimes only their legs; and the abstract shapes and patterns plucked from vehicles and machines. In the distance of time from Metzker's schooling, however, the similarities with the work of his forbears have receded into his own distinctive photographic language. He is more strident, for example, in forcing darkness to do his bidding, imposing it where once there was light.

Moreover, the tone of Metzker's work is different from that of his photographic ancestors. Moholy-Nagy's work often communicated his exhilaration at the technical and societal changes he was witnessing, and the diversity of those events. Siskind and Callahan, even within their esthetic and abstract preoccupations, show a whole-heartedness and playfulness of spirit. Metzker seems instead the solitary man, willfully aspiring to an intellectual vision. Though a distancing from human subjects can be observed in the works of all four artists, Metzker's aloofness is most severe. Aaron Siskind, the nearest contender in dehumanizing his prints, nevertheless frequently references the human form, and uses graffiti in a way which communicates vitality. Metzker's photographs contain human figures but deny their consequence over the other elements in the composition. There is seldom anymore a person's distinctive gesture in Metzker's pictures. There is seldom an unusual face.

A viewer cannot make requests of an artist. A viewer cannot ask Ray Metzker for an unusual human situation, a circumstance which brings a fact to light, sympathy, empathy, or an emotional depth which is not Metzker's own. There is much that Metzker excludes from his photography. His efforts to forcibly order his photographs' visual content, expressive of an austere ethos, honors his artistic mentors. They are honored too by that other quality that comes from Metzker's efforts, the secret source of many viewers' admiration of his work. We are brightened by his purely visual wit of light in darkness, as subtle as the edges of the silhouettes of *City Whispers*.



Ray Metzker

PATSY CRAVENS: DIGNITY AND GRACE

Patsy Cravens. *November 2-December 1, at the McMurtrey Gallery, 1 Chelsea Place, Houston.*

This exhibition was a perfect collaboration of physical space and imagery. The gallery itself is warm and inviting; the experience of traveling from room to room exploring Craven's smallish black and white and color photographs (made from 1984-1984) was quite pleasant. It seemed to build upon the immediate and delayed power of the pictures, at once subtle and strong. Her vision is an expression of faith, the impact emotion has on memory.

In fact, this pure, direct transposition of feelings makes the pictures complex and fascinating — the world is filtered as though from a child's vantage point. This is a completely developed world in miniature, reduced to manageable proportions and allotments of expression.

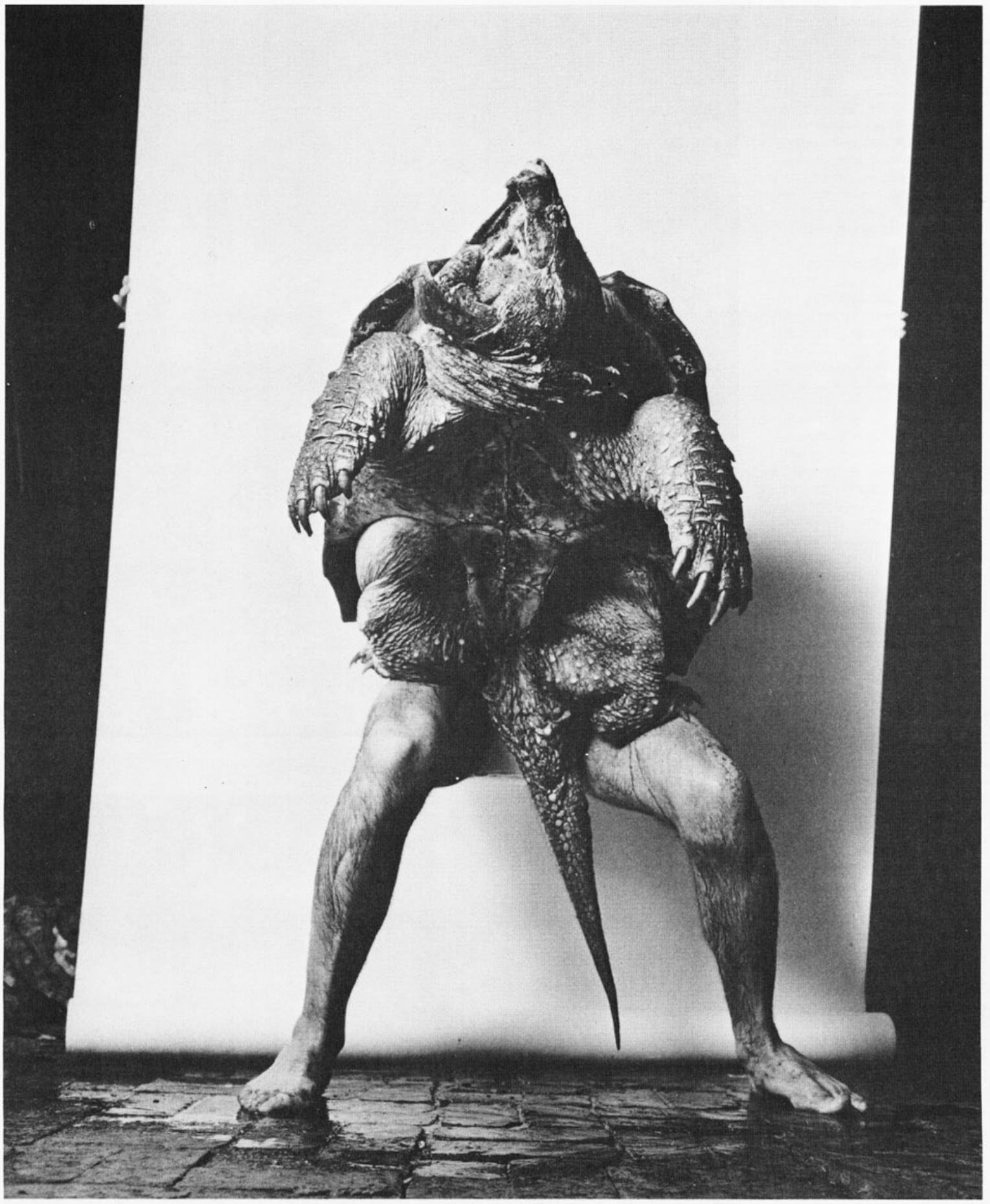
Abstraction of form, light, and color substantiate the background in a majority of pictures. If there is a recurring motif, it would seem to be a "veil" in the forward-most plane that serves as a crisp introduction, a discreet keeper of secrets; half-open curtains, dusty windows stand firm yet ephemeral again and again, beckoning all the while. She also creates a frame within a frame in many instances — the overmat encloses a photograph of a window, introducing a reference point beyond which the image is layered, the colors are stacked, not unlike painting. She hands out dignity and grace to scraggly, dying growth around her. In her world, flowers are dried, never dead. Her plants are very un-plantlike, and they do not behave predictably in gesture or transition; light catches the dense foliage and animates it in impressionistic color and shadow.

This is where memories live — in comfort and beauty, neither waking nor sleeping. Often, her use of color is startling, and this is where it most succeeds. In the same way, the less-mannered images, devoid of nicety (journey to the Texas hill country versus journey to the chateau), although rougher-edged, are more accessible because they are well intentioned. They are more from the heart. When the viewer gets what is expected from an identifiable locale, he or she is neither disappointed nor exhilarated. The images that expand to root out a permanent spot within the viewer, both thrill and linger, in spite of being secretive and personal, entries from a journal of recovery and restoration. One is treated vicariously to long and solitary walks (except for the dog that is so clearly a comfort and joy) of patient exploration, yet Cravens doesn't seem to be searching for images. They appear before her and the surprise is contagious. The catch is that it is no easy feat to be casually spontaneous with a larger format camera (2¼ x 2¼) as it is with a 35mm. Therein lies the evidence of both commitment and deliberation. She makes no attempt to disguise technical aberrations, nor disclose their sources, but the mysteries aren't a stumbling block — they quietly advise and encourage to proceed as experiences unfold.

The least successful work is the most specific — the playful, defiant nudes that ultimately make little sense. They seem to refer to earlier work — exploration without discovery. They are discrete and self-conscious, drama without substance. It is the work of feelings, not ideas, that is irrestible and enduring.

A.R.

Photographs by Patsy Cravens



Photographs by George Krause

GEORGE KRAUSE: QUIET DISCOVERY

George Krause: An Overview of the Photographer's Work of the Past 25 Years. *February 2-27, at Harris Gallery, 1100 Bissonnet.*

Each picture in this exhibit is a tribute to the insistence of thought and movement; they are magnificent, alone and as a group. The photographs are divided into four series with titles that serve as notations, not barriers — there is great lateral movement among them. It is remarkable to note that, as singular images, each is so deeply felt, not dependent on a concept or the strength and momentum of companion pieces. An aspect of their power lies in the synthesis of intimate and inanimate — not in a baroque, passionate sense, nor in an overly romantic sense inherent to much of the subject matter (graveyards, religious iconography, nudes). One step further lies the realm of empathy, and a complex and thorough understanding of intention and conclusion, where the photographer's presence is a constant; he assures us with the deadly quiet of his discoveries. The assurances are graced with humility and occasional humor. His photographs are double-edged, irony finding its way to both sides: he is a seeker of truth, equally an intellectual and a mystic.

In confronting the over-burdened subjects of religion and death, Krause explores old terrain, using new premises; he fuses disparate systems, and the sacred and profane meet as one. In a sense, looking closely can cause one to be less sure. The series *Saints and Martyrs* is drawn from religious statuary, icons and altars, and fixates on re-examined and re-positioned bits and pieces. The identities and connotations shift dramatically when taken out of context: aging plaster, easily identifiable by its overwrought decoration is infused with life of its own. Krause shows us the anima of collective belief: one has faith in the heavenly light, the knowing glances, the ecstacy that is pain and promise. Postures are studied closely: in one image, we are shown Jesus on the cross from the waist down; in another, the gesture of his hand touching the cross is emphasized. Both are extremely moving, not necessarily from the standpoint of sympathetic belief: they speak universally. By covering statues of Jesus and Mary with plastic, or placing them prone (the specifics are understated, which encourages highly interpretive response), the saints and deities, in watchful vigil, are humanized. A prone posture also heightens the notion of ecstacy. This approach helps us to understand the iconography unique to certain other cultures: for example, statues of saints are adorned with photographs of those in need of prayer; milagros (lovely representational medallions fashioned from silver, tin, etc.) hang from the same saints heralding success with gratitude. The pictures celebrate the richness of these rituals.

The series entitled *Qui Riposa* explores the eccentricity with which the dead are honored and remembered. These are very real people, beloved and mourned, still all-too-present. Sadly, the old tradition of affixing a photographic image to the headstone isn't practiced much anymore. Krause has recorded hundreds of them, in various parts of the world; the results are hauntingly sad and beautiful. They are celebratory as well, inviting tacit approval of the memory of someone unknown to us. Many of the juxtapositions are decorative, others unintentionally ironic; the ideology and symbols chosen to comfort the living and keep the dead company are endlessly fascinating. Often, babies were photographed after they had died, because no pictures existed prior. Great liberties were taken: eyes were retouched open, creating an unhappy and obvious parody of life. Couples were montaged together for an eternity of uneasy companionship: where were pictures of them together in life? Relationships were recreated, bonds reformed long after the last of uneasy truces had dissolved. In one image the woman is eternally a bride; the groom has faded entirely. Nature intervenes elsewhere: stone cracks, emulsion crazes and fades, snails climb over the faces portrayed, weeds disrupt carefully constructed sites. Messages are powerful, considering that they are contained within such confined spaces. They speak of guilt, sorrow, disbelief as well as the joy of memory. Krause includes the angels and saints who watch over the dead, who live on; in this context, their ornate splendor is less oppressive than in, say, the shop window that recurs in *Saints and Martyrs*. Another image tells of the organization adjoining death: the husband has passed on, yet the wife, still alive, is already beside him in the photograph, keeping him company, waiting to join him. That which is missing — the date of her death — oddly matters least. There are lighthearted moments represented: one (without a photograph) is a plaster bust; below it is the jubilant word MAMMA! In another, a man points at all who look, in the manner of a comedian, laughing forever. One is sure that this is decidedly how he wants to be remembered. Elsewhere, one of two photographs has been rather brutally scratched away, the memory too painful for someone to bear. Again and again we are reminded that it is memory that survive[s].

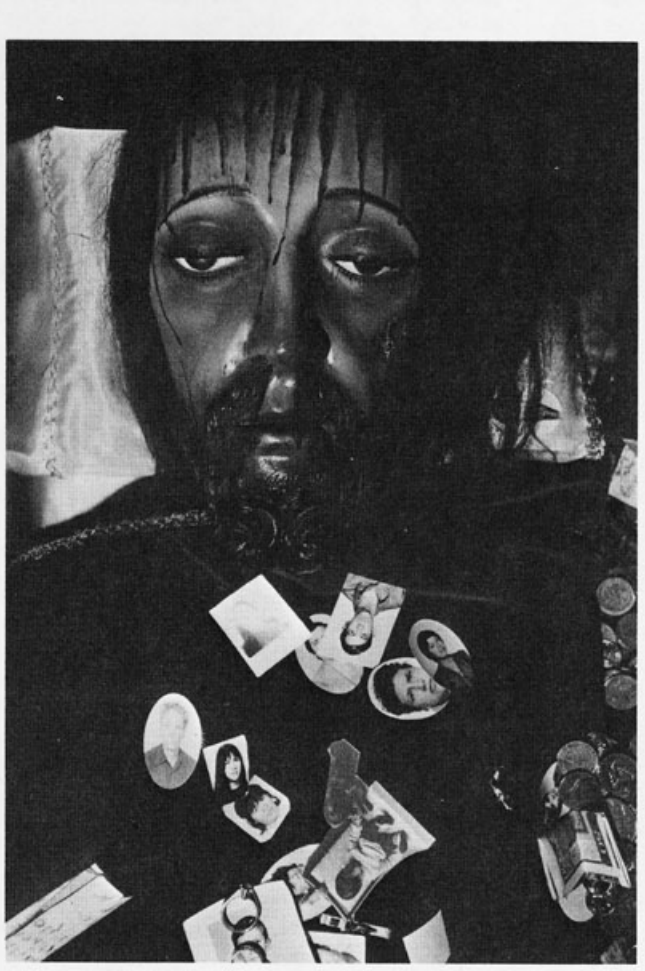
Krause's use of the nude is a similar reminder of mortality and eternal life. The series *I Nudi* (intentionally genderless) is neither profligate nor pure; in a subset of pictures inspired by the Leo Steinberg article entitled "The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and Modern Oblivion," the saints and martyrs are humanized in yet another way — they are freed to

explore their potential as sexual beings. To understand fully his work one must look to his sources of reference and inspiration, which are quite often literary and historical. Krause's postulations are the extraordinary musings of a fertile mind, and it is my fervent hope that he will someday write about them; it is not my intention to go into the extensive connections here. He often recreates religious art history in the photographic allegories, sometimes using himself as a model, participating in the same measured tones as those he directs. Women are draped, chaste though not covered, suggesting a Madonna of this earth. Mother and son float in a pool; that she "carries" him is a poignant twist. The freedom in this case is both gravitational and emotional. The Madonnas here are unafraid to acknowledge their sexuality. One very powerful image, both contemporary and historical in tone, sees a long mirror against a wall in an otherwise empty room. Reflected in the mirror are Krause (nude) photographing the whole thing, and to his left, a nude woman, posing. She is upstretched; he assumes a more protected, behind-the-camera crouch. The viewer is given a more assertive point of view (that of photographer) because the photographer is at once participant and witness. A similarly magnetic image is layered from the floor skyward, where the photographer happens to be. A nude woman lies on a mirror, which rests on a sheet spread on the floor. One sees bits of reflection, Krause and camera included, which creates a circular reference, holding us captive within its confines. Little attention is paid, in general, to camouflaging the reality of the studio — its existence is readily acknowledged and included. Nor does it detract from the integrity of the story being told. He goes from the classic (woman swinging a white drape over her head, back to the camera, background colors black) to the absurd (George fully clothed, at a desk, a naked woman on his lap) with the same result being to recreate and thereby destroy stereotypical response. In a most courageous image, Krause is the only model; he has an erection, and he wears only a mask with an enormous nose. His hands are drawn back, no pretense of protection, and he is looking down.

Presented within the *Street Pictures* are random portraits (the mercury intensification of a negative does black skin great justice, resulting in a richer, truer, more beautiful tonality); graphic presentations of architecture and design elements, evidence of secret intentions — the way things really work when man invades nature; more myths in the form of hooded, robed figures, some carrying crosses, others placed in the landscape, calling to mind religion and its antithesis (KKK), heaven and hell as a single image. There is the occasional use of photographic sleight-of-hand; perhaps the objective is to make a sweet, appreciative comment on the wonder of it all. The events aren't momentous but the feelings evoked have great power. A few of the photos are from his book, *George Krause I*; the magic of his images only gets stronger when viewed repeatedly.

Krause is at his most demonstrative with the nude, yet never becomes exploitative. The tenets that support one series sustain others equally well. Certainly his subject matter is universal, thoroughly explored, yet without fail he brings to it his own incalculable worth and beauty, giving us the need as well as the desire to think it all through again. Something new will turn up every time.

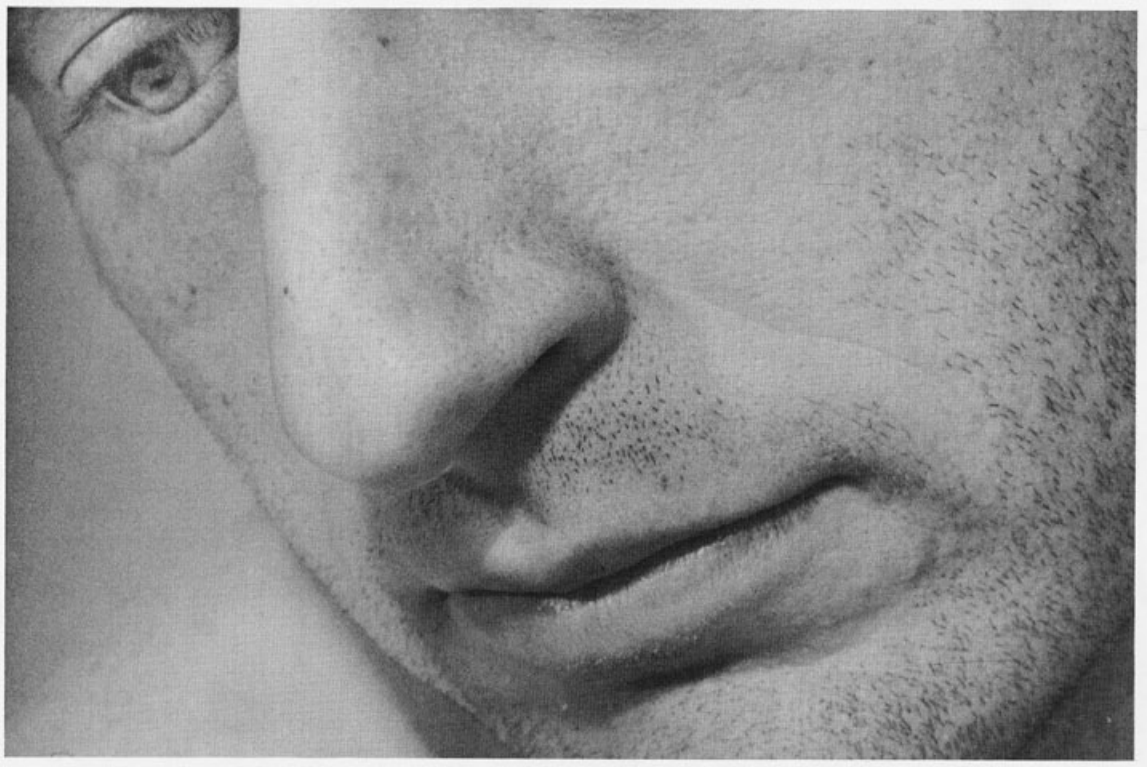
A.R.



BLACK, WHITE AND COLOR I: THE INFLUENCE OF PRECEDENT

Black, White and Color I: Six New York Photographers. *January 11-February 9, 1985, at Diverse Works, 214 Travis Street, Houston.*

By APRIL RAPIER



Susan Shaw

In the curator's statement, Charles Gallagher, executive director of Diverse Works, Inc., says: "*Black, White and Color I*, the series, is a survey encompassing five major American cities. Each exhibition seeks to spotlight artists whose work visually produces and records personal expression. This is . . . a chronicle of the present ways in which the medium is being manipulated, both technically and conceptually." The problem with this idea is that, while the medium is being manipulated conceptually and technically, the offerings suffer from being derivative of established manipulations and therefore rarely break free.

Diverse Works is to be applauded for surpassing the traditional gallery approach; it is all the more difficult to understand why the notion that visual production and recording of personal expression, a fairly general concept in art, is being touted. The work as a whole is rather mainstream.

Allen Ludwig, by his own admission, works in a very traditional (and technically superior) fashion. Going from piece to piece, it is almost impossible not to be guided more by the precedent for the particular technique being used than by the work itself. It is not necessary to cite sources, for surely the artists are aware of their influences; more often than not, the influences overshadow the movement of the pieces. In sum, the images as a body form a dispassionate homage applied to no end.

Mr. Ludwig has included two groups of pictures, his *Base Metals* series and a platinum/palladium collaboration with Gwen Akin. In the *Base Metals* pictures, he calls upon Marcel Duchamp as a conceptual influence. The relationship between the reality of the crushed metals and the renovated (hand-painted), photographed metamorphosis is responsible for the weight of the piece. Layers of metals in various states of deterioration, some tinged with a graffiti quality, oddly compel, although quietly. "Heart Like a Wheel Out-take" is pop in genre (without the attendant colors).

Some titles are strictly descriptive, others whimsical and poetic. As with the platinum/palladium collaboration pictures, technique is paramount, although the large size, rather than enhancing the images, renders them less special. Other pieces include multiple Polaroids forming singsong patterns of color and shape. Pop art asserts itself again in the repetition, with alternating colors, of the number 50 and a soft drink can, motifs the pieces are constructed around.

Mr. Ludwig's collaboration with Gwen Akin involves the use of a large format camera, a documentary shooting style, beautiful lighting, painstakingly lovely printing technique, and gruesome (for the most part) subject matter. He refers to a bowl of dismembered pig snouts and endless other dead animals and animal parts as "various common objects which are banal, well worn photographic cliches, or even ugly." This description is downright blithe given the macabre nature of the subjects. Granted, there is the random Visegrip, spoon-and-fork still life, or tray of nails, but mutilated specimens dominate; the inherent shock value is hard to overcome. Yet they are gorgeous beyond the subject matter. Reconciliation of the attraction/repulsion is a battle perhaps not worth the effort.

Susan Shaw's extremely close, wildly hallucinogenic portraits create topographic landscapes from the face, without necessarily referring to the face itself. She splashes colored light onto sections of the face to create shadow and paradox. The intimacy should seem invasive, but doesn't. Nor is it revelatory. The minimal expression given and noted serves as a barrier to the viewer's emotional involvement; the faces do not belong to people of this world. Their reality is implied and the slightest of gestures important. The strange angles and tightness strip away any reference to real life. Shaw likens these arrested moments to Kabuki Theatre: "Photography is theatrical — a natural stage with frame as proscenium."

Alan Kikuchhi-Yngojo's *Metaphoto* series begins with Polaroids of hands or torsos, and are then covered obsessively and sometimes violently with tiny things — computer tape, pieces of wood, confetti, pin pricks. They are transformed into fetishistic altarpieces, resembling tattoos, armor, jewelled decorations, bones broken through skin. Mr. Kikuchi-Yngojo wants each of his pieces "to function both as an image and an object;" he likes "the idea of making a photograph, then making something else out if it." He seems to fully understand his imagery, which adds to its value and hypnotic fascination.

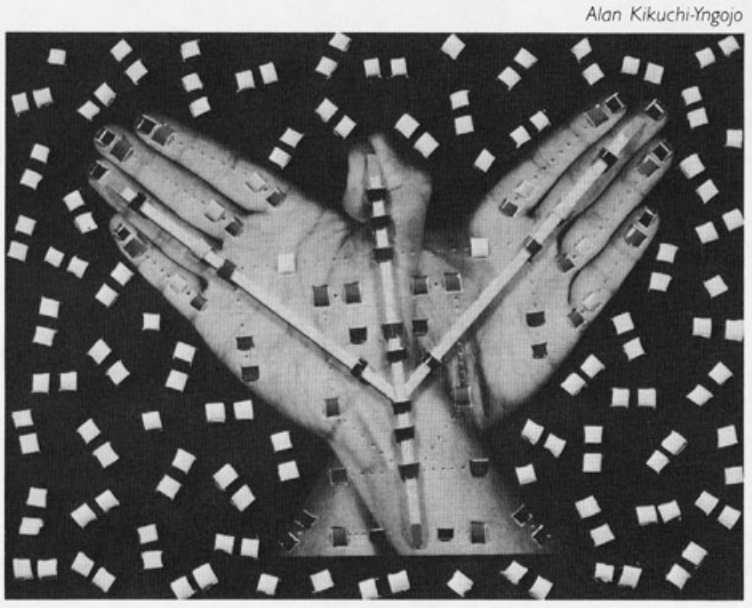
Geno Rodriguez's 30x30 "silver dye bleach process" (Cibachrome) photographs offer a concept that is overstated and uncommunicable; even the evidence of allegory never reaches beyond reference. Models stare at the viewer menacingly, extolling evil myths; one walks away from their artifice in self-defense. Mr. Ludwig, in a discussion of the exhibit, states that Rodriguez's "color is handled in a painterly manner while still adhering to the graphic truth of the photographic medium."

Rodriguez believes that "pure color should be dissociated from naturalistic form." He applies unearthly colors to the skin of his "Gods and Goddesses" and uses fragments of larger figural forms to further abstract his imagery from the literal" (Ludwig). Although Ludwig believes that these characters are freed as icons "from conventional associations and appeal directly to the imagination," it is more likely that they make a brief appearance in the psyche, only to be dismissed as too embarrassingly improbable to incite a flight of fancy. "St. Peter the Fisher" is an exception.

A gold hand holds a fish, covering most of it; the paint has begun to flake. Its seductive understatement allows the viewer the pleasure of his own conclusions.

Hiromitsu Morimoto creates a stunning fusion of photography, drawing, light, and air in his very formal, discreetly suggestive studies. A silver photographic emulsion is applied to fine drawing paper; after the image is printed, graphite is rubbed into areas to heighten contrast. The result is flat and shimmery; the roughest of materials take on the smoothness of age. Because, tonally, they use mostly whites and light greys, tiny areas of black, used sparingly, take on great importance, as does part of a leg or a section of torso bending into draped, flowing cloth.

Alan Kikuchi-Yngojo



Jim Leach has explored many tricks of the trade, most often involving motion and light; the results are printed using the gum bichromate process. The particular combinations, including the male nude, are confused and confusing, and the muddy colors he chooses (pigments are mixed with light-sensitive emulsion) oppressive.

GORDON PARKS: ACTS OF LOVE

Gordon Parks. *December 13 to February 12, at Pembroke Gallery, 1639 Bissonnet, Houston.*

Gordon Parks has been heralded under many banners — writer, poet, composer, filmmaker, choreographer, and photographer. Now in his 70s, he is still an activist, still creating, moving about the country, as he has done since 1937 (when he began photographing). For fifteen years, he worked full-time at *Life* magazine as a photojournalist. This undoubtedly helped form his style, yet no one discernible manner holds the work in check.

His fashion photography is represented here (as well as portraiture and a stunning landscape, ("Place de la Concorde, Paris, 1951"); some of it is stylized, true to the vision of the 1950s and 1960s. Yet there are many of his so-called fashion images that have far more to do with the soul of the model than what she is wearing.

This is clearest in the portraits of famous people; devoid of sensationalism, they are thoughtful and revealing interiors. Soft and certainly flattering, they represent a classical way of seeing that is eternal. For instance, a portrait of Gloria Vanderbilt, dated 1960, shows her posed in the tradition of a formal painting, balanced against a non-competitive background. It is not a portrait of wealth, nor does it deny the reality of circumstance. His touch is non-judgmental. Within this image one senses the integration of other disciplines — notably the written word — by the way in which it goes beyond the limitations imposed by the rigidity of a portrait sitting.

Another, "Spanish Fashion 1950," doesn't have the dated feel that signals the eventual demise of most fashion photography — it is timeless. The filmmaker in Parks also influences his photographic style; he is able to witness the "performance" as though he is invisible. A portrait of Ingrid Bergman, "Stromboli 1949," brings to mind the work of Italian photographer Mario Giacomelli. Bergman looms large in the foreground, yet is oblivious to his presence. In the background, old ladies dressed in black are equally unaware of her. It is a haunting moment, more so because he participates at a distance.

Parks says that being black profoundly influences his style, yet he feels that one has no notion of his race when viewing the pictures. His most recent film, *Solomon Northrup's Odyssey*, is about enslavement — what he calls "America's Holocaust" — but he does not limit his concern to black issues. A moving photograph titled "Flavio 1960" chronicles his intervention in the life of a dying twelve-year-old Brazilian boy. That Flavio is now 30 is an obvious source of pride to Parks. Nor is he sure that he is more sensitive to any given situation than a white photographer might be. The notion of a black sensibility means little to him; he isn't alienated by defensiveness. The photographs are acts of love.

A.R.

Gordon Parks

HCP JURIED SHOW: CONFUSING

Annual Juried Exhibition. *The Houston Center for Photography, January 4 to February 10, 1985.*

My feeling is that many stalwart viewers left this exhibition, juried by Anne Tucker, curator of photographer at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, with the feeling of having missed out on some vital piece of information, some common element that would explain the gimmickry and confusion. Yet we are expected to believe that this show is representative of photography today. Three things characterized the exhibition: conceptual ideas without visual clarity or follow-through, imitative continuation of grand old traditions (from-the-hip street shots, travel records, large format landscape-illusions, meditations on the ordinary), and the assemblage of text and found imagery (collage, inclusion of old photographs, and mixed media). To the extent that any exhibit has its (subjective) winners and losers, this one is not exceptional. The weakest work is mindless and in one or two cases egregious. Surely there is rhyme and reason to the exhibit, but the connections are obscure.

Several artists bear mention,

however, as being remarkable or admirably on the right track. Some of their work redefines the above mentioned categories, breaking free creatively.

Hil Scott's small color photographs are like a three-ring circus, filled with illusion and nice tomfoolery, the unexpected a constant. More importantly, they are not clever or glib. The element of scale is played with wisely — the viewer's patience isn't put-upon. Only one, "Receding Dots," leaves his control, descending into the device of design. They strike a satisfactory balance between complexity of the elements within the picture and structural simplicity.

In a similar manner, William Pankey transforms the magical into the ordinary and back, a charming completion of the circle. He does so, for example, in "Munger Street, Dallas," by hiding most of the scene behind a fence, thereby rendering it far more desirable. A hammock, climbing ivy, and stairs all run rampant in the imagination, combining to outshine their predictable realities.

Gary Faye also accomplishes a sense of wonder, with a much different result in the portrait "Lee and Jud". Two people are seen in peculiar dress, the intensity in their faces substantiated by the rifle the man holds. One slowly becomes aware of his hand gripping her waist, flesh exposed. Questions start to form, and they are increasingly discomfiting. What is the nature of the relationship between the people (gun aside), of the performance, the seeming hostility? At some point, the background asserts itself, for it is a rich and marvelous one, replete with concurring symbols and confusion. Even as questions continue to arise, the portrait is complete.

Paul Hester's documentaries of conscience and will have become increasingly blatant and spare, his a voice of protest with no pretense of politeness left. The opinions are more obvious now — perhaps he grew tired of being misunderstood or met with the glazed-over confusion of guilt. "Where is your illusion of control?" the text/voice asks, quiet and strong. The light is natural now, the male model is nude, his body strong and supple; his dance movements readily convert to battle stances as our imaginations grow with Hester's politics of caring.

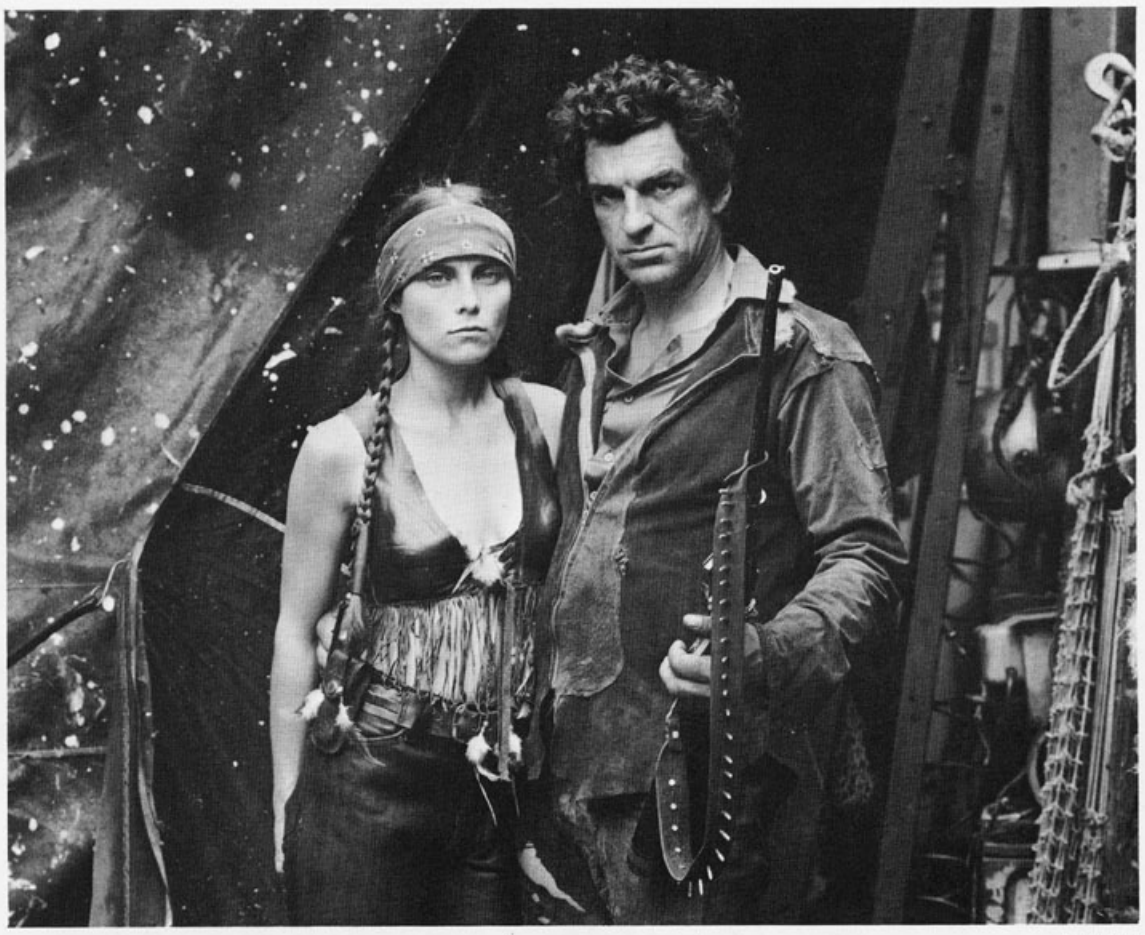
Doe Doherty is represented by a single image, entitled "Underwater I." Beautiful and evocative, it is in perfect equilibrium and manages to exist quite nicely alone, although one feels sure that its companion pieces could only enhance it. On the other hand, Laura Derrick's portfolio is dominated by a single image — an interior that says a good deal more about the real absurdity and desperation of poverty that any number of street children images could — because it is a portrait of oblivion. The household iconography is odd, the TV is on, its image faint, and a small boy grins in delight at the attention he receives. He, unlike the other rundown children in her pictures, is unaware, untouched by well- meaning media intrusion. It is a very potent image.

In her large, multi-media pieces, Rita DeWitt has the visual sensibility of an emotional pack rat. One feels sure that nothing escapes her attention, that sooner or later it will integrate and fuse as an element in these ongoing puzzles. Her use of words (text from old books, journal entries) and photographic and other electrostatically reproduced imagery serve as the basis for an elaborate visual acting-out of emotional data. Her technique is perfect; one can devote countless hours to pondering the beauty and pain contained within the pieces.

Ward Sanders treads gingerly through text and old photographs, in spite of the volatile overtones of the subject matter. In one instance, a man is being strapped into an electric chair; the caption reads "Sentimental Journey." The odd marvels of eccentricity are enhanced by toning, hand-applied color, and religious overtones. They are unsettling and, one hopes, a series to be further explored.

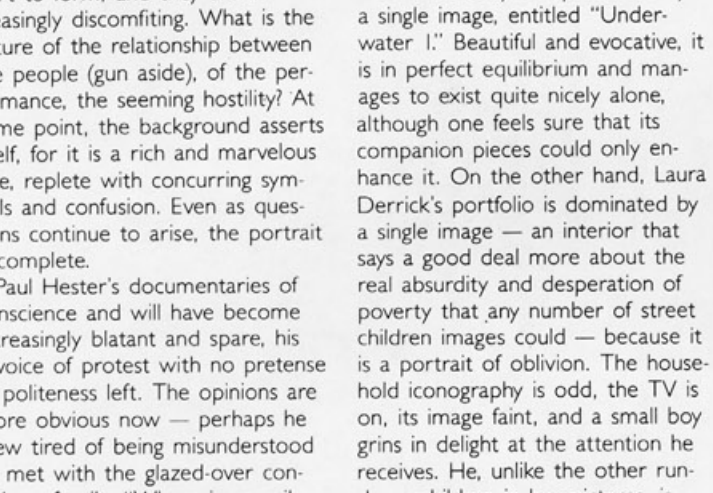
Sandra Schwimmer has captioned old photographs (from movie magazines?) with funny issues that are like Laurie Anderson rewriting Dear Abby and Emily Post. They are camp commentary, and are welcome.

Artists included in the exhibition were: Patsy Cravens (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), Megan Daly, Robert Dean, Laura Derrick, Michel Dimanche, Doe Doherty, Gary Faye, Miranda Gatewood, Monte Gerlach, Paul Hester, James Iska, William Pankey, James Paster, Pam Pitt, Ward Sanders, Hil Scott, and Rita DeWitt.



Gary Faye

Sandra Schwimmer



At age 24, I am still embarrassed at purchasing sanitary napkins. What is your opinion of my feelings?

RICHARD ROSS: DUST AND DEATH

Richard Ross: Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle. *At the Houston Center for Photography, January 4 to February 10.*

Richard Ross's large (15x15 and 30x30) color images of taxidermied animals both startle and delight. He found his subjects in the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, which has been in existence for over 350 years. The lighting — or lack of it — is completely suitable to the spirit of things: during some rather long exposures, Ross had the "distinct suspicion that some of the animals had moved." They seem robust and very alive within the darkness and warmth of the prints, in spite of evidence to the contrary (bowls of mothballs in the display cases). Their gestures are amazingly spirited, moth-eaten fur and tattered feathers notwithstanding. The faces are especially expressive and dramatic, fangs and claws bared, attack postures recreated, blood drawn.

Hundreds of beautiful birds, the color shifts in their markings distinctive and minimal, are lined up in cases, perched on ornate pedestals, meticulous labels their legacy.

Ross presents to the viewer a theatrical aspect missing in modern museums and dioramas. The dust of decline is ever-present, thickening the air, most potent and impressive in the large overviews.

Some animals are draped or completely wrapped in brown paper, the shroud a further mystery. Their animation is illustrated best by the countless variations in the tilted heads of row upon row of birds — all striking sad poses, gathered to reminisce.

A.R.

Richard Ross

SECOND VIEW: ROMANTIC ACTS

Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project. *Mark Klett, Chief Photographer; Ellen Manchester, Project Director; JoAnn Verburg, Project Coordinator; Gordon Bushaw and Rick Dingus, Project Photographers. With an essay by Paul Berger. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.*

By PAUL HESTER

What's wrong with this picture? was a syndicated newspaper attraction in the Sunday comics, appearing just below Dick Tracy and Beatle Bailey. The reader was challenged to find the details of one drawing, omitted from a second one — a door knob or the stripe on a cat. These Sunday afternoon amusements came to mind when I first looked at this new book from the University of New Mexico Press. No matter how grand the vista or unique the geological formation, I could not help but jump back and forth between the images, trying to pinpoint the discrepancies.

Second View: The Rephotographic Project documents the efforts of a group of photographers to return to the sites of 19th-century landscape photographs and remake 20th-century equivalents from the original vantage points. The text attempts a thorough explanation of the methodology and philosophy as justification for this monumental project. The book provides extensive essays, footnotes, appendices, maps, and a list of rephotographic sites, complete with date of exposure, time of day, and who was along for the ride.

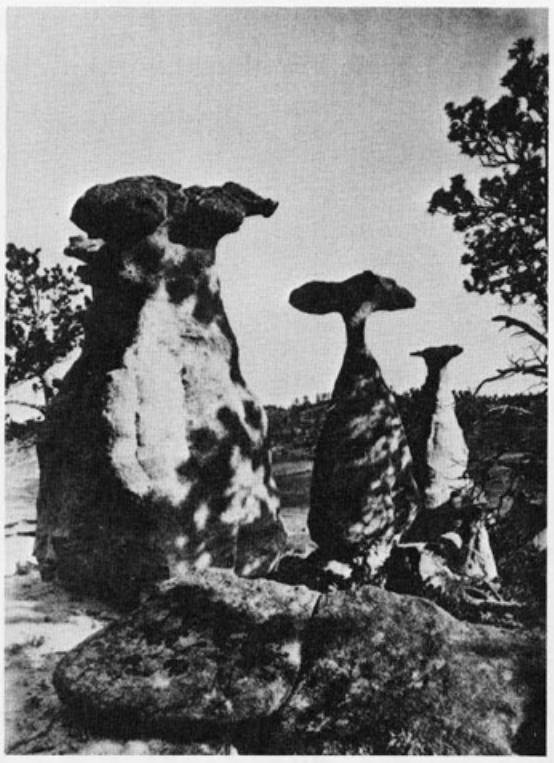
"The objective was to repeat variables (vantage point and light) which physically limit the picture-making process . . . . We were interested in which things in photography could be selected and repeated at another time, and which could not. We were photographers interested in seeing the results of a visual experiment . . . . We have found that rephotographs monitor very specific and long-term physical changes in the landscape. We found the process can offer unusual insights into how nineteenth-century photographs were made and can reveal sources for historical information about the viewpoints of nineteenth-century photographers. In the end, rephotographs cause us to explore, by visual means, our perceptions of the land, and consequently the very ways the landscape has been represented by photography."

Out of thousands of photographs made during the government's surveys in the 19th century, the RSP repeated 122. Many pairs are surprising in the absence of change; others for the repetition of wagon trails, railroads, and interstate highways. In two pictures from Canyon de Chelly, Arizona, time appears to move backward as the ancient ruins in the older picture have been restored and made whole in the more recent picture. Several photographs describe old landscapes that are now submerged below large reservoirs, and others reveal landforms originally concealed by water. Entire mining towns vanish in the rephotographs. All of these are particularly suggestive of photography's link to time and memory, but I don't think their presentation here tells us how the 19th-century photographer worked.

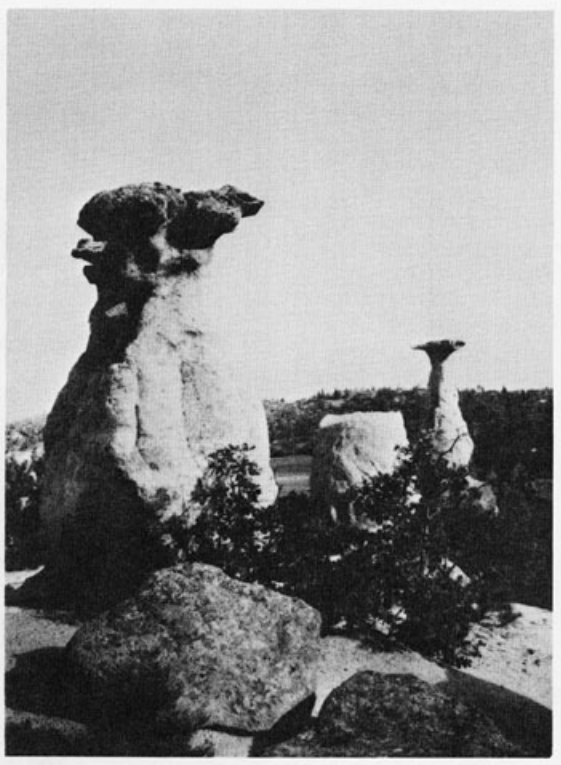
It is an extraordinary sensation to stand exactly where another photographer stood 50 or 100 years ago and experience a time warp that undermines your belief in the uniqueness of your own moment. There are pairs of images in the book through which I can imagine the 19th-century photographer, convinced that what he saw would last forever. Only a half dozen pairs allow us to exceed our curiosity about their obvious discrepancies to sense a resonance of changing time.

In the preface, Mark Klett, the chief photographer, declares that "our fieldwork taught us there were many perspectives from which to evaluate rephotographs, but here we are concerned with the mechanical and conceptual aspects of the process rather than with the interpretation of individual rephotographic pairs."

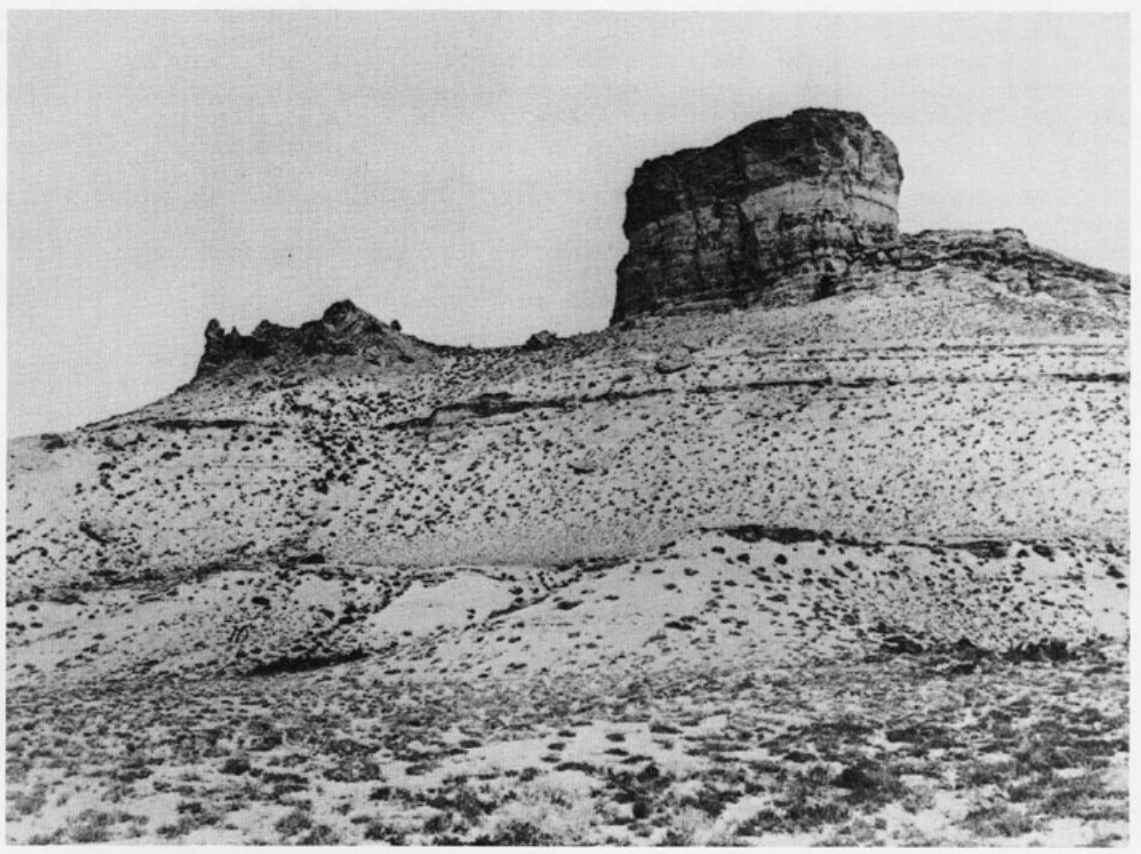
Indeed, the essays and appendices are loaded with measurements and coordinates. Precise distances on topographical maps, exact times of exposure in Mountain Daylight Time, with additional information available for each site, including "equipment type, exposure



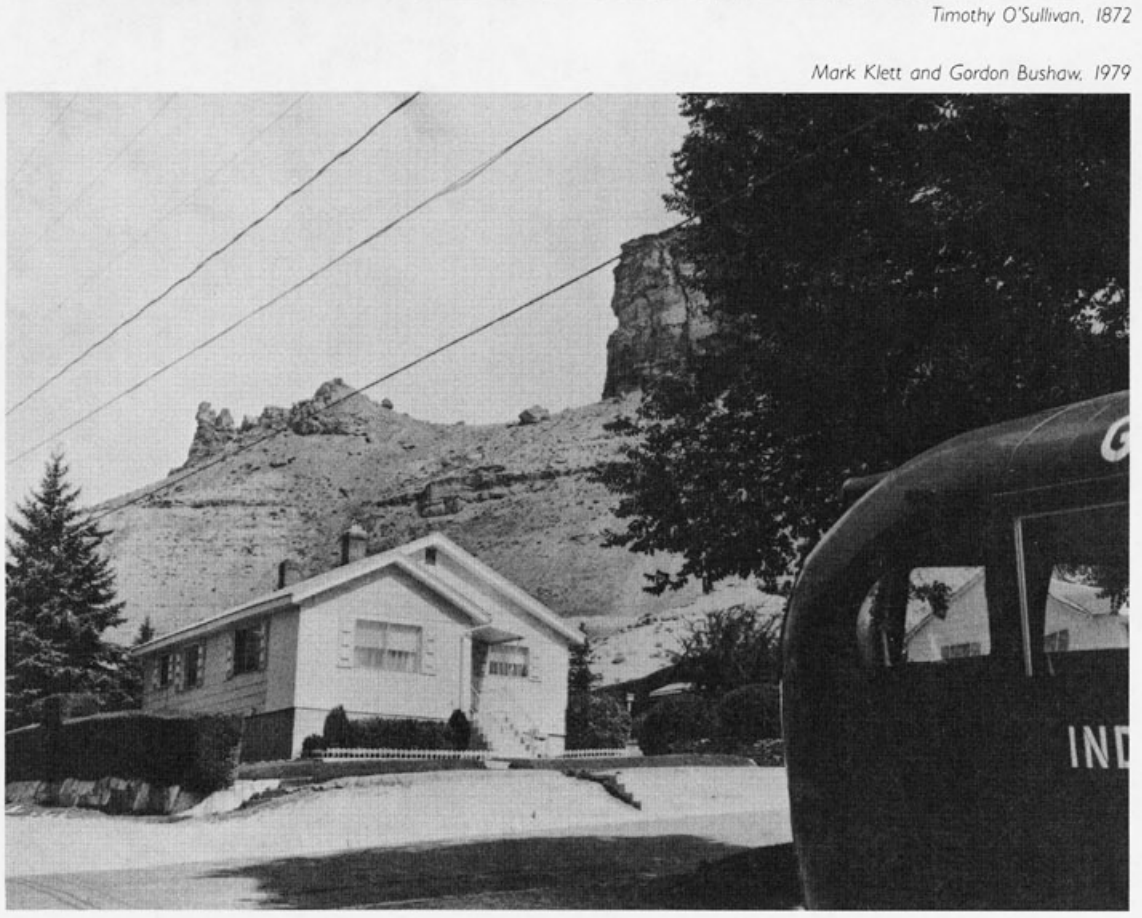
William Henry Jackson, 1873



JoAnn Verburg, 1977



Timothy O'Sullivan, 1872



Mark Klett and Gordon Bushaw, 1979

Casey Williams

THE HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY
SPRING/SUMMER 1985
LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS

LECTURES

Monthly lectures are held at the Center at 1441 W. Alabama unless otherwise noted. Lectures are free to members and $2 to non-members.

April 10, Wednesday, 7:30pm
ANNE NOGGLE This pioneer in portraiture will present and discuss her highly acclaimed series of self-portraits and portraits of the elderly.

April 17, Wednesday, 7:30pm
ANNE TUCKER Photography Curator at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Tucker will present a slide lecture: "Contemporary Photography."

May 1, Wednesday, 7:30pm
JEFF SILVERTHORNE Silverthorne is currently a visiting professor at the University of Houston. He will present his various series including his most recent one, *Broken Myths*.

July 10, Wednesday, 7:30pm
LAURIE MACDONALD This Houston video artist and curator of the concurrent HCP exhibit will present several videos from around the country and discuss current trends in this medium.

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. Unless a workshop has to be cancelled, late registration is often possible. Tuition refunds are available up to 7 days prior to a workshop.

DISCOVERY WORKSHOP
INSTRUCTOR: Charles Schorre
TIME: Mondays, 7:30-9pm
March 18, April 15, May 13
PLACE: HCP
FEE: $40 members, $50 nonmembers
LIMIT: 20
It's time to think about what you're doing. Schorre is a prominent local artist and philosopher who has taught at Rice University and the Museum of Fine Arts' Glassell School. Small assignments for each class will serve as a starting point to generate discussion about awareness and help participants to think about themselves and their art. Each participant should bring a small photograph or snapshot of him/herself to the first meeting. Guaranteed to enrich you as an artist and a person.

UNDERLYING QUESTIONS
INSTRUCTOR: Ray Metzker
TIME: 7-10 Tuesday, 6-10 Thursday,
10-4 Saturday, March 26,28,30
PLACE: HCP (Saturday will be spent in the country 45 min. from the HCP)
FEE: $95 members, $120 nonmembers
LIMIT: 20
Metzker, who lives in Philadelphia, is an internationally recognized photographer and thinker about photography whose 25-year retrospective was at the Museum of Fine Arts last fall. In this intensive thought-provoking workshop, participants will discuss various issues confronting photographers using their own work and other work as a starting point. Participants are asked to bring 5 examples of their work to the HCP 10 days before the first meeting so that slides can be made to use in class. As the class progresses, participants are invited to bring their more recent and problematic work. Fee includes dinner on Thursday and lunch on Saturday.

INTRODUCTION TO PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY
INSTRUCTOR: David Crossley
TIME: 12-5, Saturday, April 6
PLACE: 3210 White Oak
FEE: $40 members, $50 nonmembers
LIMIT: 15
This workshop will cover basic studio lighting for portraits as well as the use of flash and fill light outdoors. To demonstrate the results of light manipulation, Polaroid exposures will be made. Participants should be ready to photograph and be photographed.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON'S COLLECTION
INSTRUCTOR: Maggie Olvey
TIME: Thursdays, 7-8:30 pm, April 11, 25
PLACE: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
FEE: $20 members, $25 nonmembers
LIMIT: 20
Olvey is the curatorial assistant for works on paper at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. She will present highlights from the Museum's collection of over 5,000 19th & 20th century photographs. Olvey will acquaint participants with the breadth and strengths of the collection and welcome special requests for the second meeting. There's nothing like seeing the real thing, especially when it's a private tour of one of the nation's premier collections of photographs.

HAND COLORING PHOTOGRAPHS
INSTRUCTOR: Casey Williams
TIME: 9:30-3:30, Saturday, May 4
PLACE: HCP
FEE: $40 members, $50 nonmembers
LIMIT: 15
Williams has extensively investigated hand-coloring techniques and is currently working on hand-colored photo murals and smaller studies. There will be a demonstration of different coloring techniques including the use of oils, watercolors, and dyes followed by hands-on experimenting with these techniques. Participants are asked to bring b&w work prints (matte surface ideal) and different exposures of the same print.

LEARNING TO SEE
INSTRUCTOR: Sally Gall
TIME: 7-10 pm, Wednesdays,
June 5,12,19,26, July 3,10
PLACE: HCP
FEE: $60 members, $75 nonmembers
LIMIT: 15
Learn to use your camera to explore your vision and expression. Gall is an instructor at the Museum of Fine Arts' Glassell School and in this workshop participants will become acquainted with their cameras and explore their own vision. Class will consist of regular critiques of participants' slides (b&w and color) and presentations of slides of past and present photographers.

INTRODUCTION TO VIDEO
INSTRUCTOR: Laurie MacDonald
TIME: 9-4, Saturday, July 13
PLACE: HCP
FEE: $40 members, $50 nonmembers
LIMIT: 10
Interested in learning how to take better family videos or experimenting with the art? MacDonald, a prominent local video artist, will introduce participants to portable video production and basic editing. The workshop includes an introduction to video equipment and a hands-on shooting session to be followed by cataloguing and editing.

FOR CHILDREN

MAGIC WITH POLAROIDS
INSTRUCTOR: Sally Gall
TIME: 10-11:30am, Mon. Wed.
Fri., June 24,26,28
PLACE: HCP
FEE: $40 members, $50 nonmembers
LIMIT: 10
AGE: 7-12 years
Gall, an instructor at the Museum of Fine Arts' Glassell School, will introduce participants to photography and teach them how they can use a camera creatively. Students will learn how to use a Polaroid camera and how to see, photographically, with projects such as finding shapes, color, and lines in nature. Fun with photography.