

"Kurt Kren," by April Rapier

APRIL RAPIER ON KURT KREN/PHILLIP LOPATE ON FILM/MARK JOHNSTONE & THE MATERIAL WORLD OF IMAGES  
HUGUNIN'S NUCLEAR PFAHL-OUT/DICK TALK VIDEO CRITIQUE/CUTFORTH ON PORTRAITURE/PETER BROWN'S RIDDLE  
REVIEWS BY JILL A. KYLE, THERESA THOMAS, LIZ MENGEL, ROBERT ESTEP, ED OSOWSKI

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## VOLUME IV NUMBER 3

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...writers and critics will prophesize with your pen, and keep your eyes wide the chance won't come again. -B. Dylan

There are many Houstons. There's the fall and spring Houston and there's Houston summer. Some people say it's year round. But in the fall and spring, those Houstons had energy, people in the streets, festivals galore, the culture glowed even as the economic reports grew dim. Life, then, offsets the weight of Houston summer and the toll it takes on boards of directors who govern the business and culture of Texas. On the other hand, the "Houston Proud" Astros lead the National League West. They have a manager with player-intensity, a dozen class ballplayers, and they win in the Astrodome. The manager has a yogi at his side, and neither of them fears the teams of California and New York.

Editors are like managers, only they depend on writers and critics to use their pens. Sometimes, they're a wild bunch to deal with. They don't make any money, for one thing, and that makes them justifiably bitter. Another thing to remember is that the spring and summer issues of a Gulf-Coast quarterly are put together during the winter and spring before publication. The fall issue is done in the summer when the heat index is the cruelest; when the problems of art and politics are managed by the few who haven't left town. It is a time of empty streets, nature induced power surges, and breakdowns in commuter solidarity. It's the time of rolled up windows, closed galleries, and overrated movies like the seductively styled romance *Room with a View*; a love story with dumb servants, a dumber intellectual, and the background violence of the working class used needlessly as an establishing scene for a yuppie *affaire du coeur*. Given the mental climate, one needs a friend in Houston summer. It's not a happy time for lonelyhearts.

The fall issue of SPOT, despite summer production, belies this climate of improbability. Just as the spring issue of SPOT dealt with the dilemma of regional experience, and the summer issue operated as an archive for the remembrance of Foto Fest, this issue, produced in the air-conditioned days and nights of Houston, connects the industry of image making with the diversity of its sources: still photography and allied books, video and filmmaking, *Dick Talk* and "the untamable land of Texas."

April Rapier has written a profile which doubles as a report on a missing artist, the Austrian filmmaker, Kurt Kren, who currently lives in Houston, and can be seen regularly at the Museum of Fine Arts. One of the few "authentic" artists, regardless of residency, who has for more than thirty years pioneered the making of structural films which go back to his early associations with the *Materialaktions* movement in Vienna.

Sometimes it pays to be non-commercial for what is set in type is not always printed, not even in stone. Such was the fortune of SPOT when it received in the mail Phillip Lopate's resourceful critique of the Houston International Film Festival thanks to a profit publisher who decided to call it quits.

In "Melting the Material World," Mark Johnstone warns us that the image may be dangerous to our "lived" experience because it constitutes the "most common form of the object in today's world." He claims that our use of this object is misunderstood, and he calls for radical adjustments in education to help us contend with the mass produced imagery now joining our minds to the surface of the world.

Perhaps, HCP, with its current obsession for the "new," fuels this kind of inflation with a policy of "more is more" noted by Jill Kyle in her review of the "torrent of images" that were shown in recent exhibits: *Grand Illusion: Large Format Polaroids*, 1985 HCP Fellowship Winners, and the *Painted Photographs of Daniel Babior*.

But the "new" keeps on coming with HCP's fall exhibition, *Texas 150: New Texas Photography*, the only "requisite thematic element (according to April Rapier, co-curator of the show) is that the imagery debut at the Center." This is reasonable enough when one considers the pool of photographers to choose from in a state where economic jitters threaten to close all art parks except those in the "majors." This show draws on a wide range of technique and philosophy, from documentary to sculptural mixed media incorporating photography. In this curious grouping no one issue or position will dominate. It promises to be a free-for-all between the classical and the avant-garde photographers of Texas.

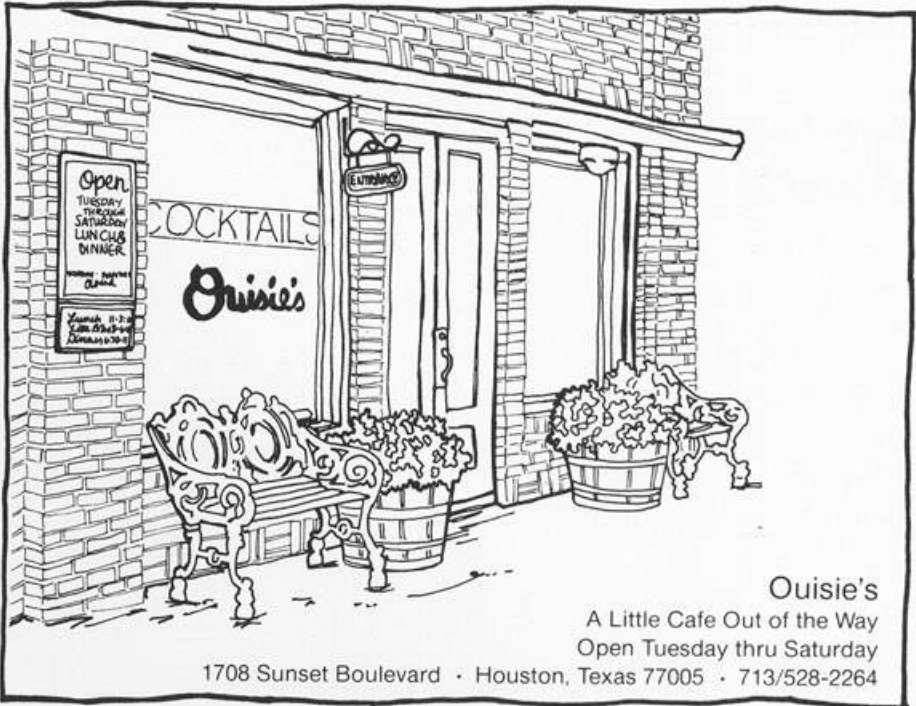
The photographers come from places in Texas that sound like a rodeo circuit: Fort Worth, Dallas, Lubbock, Austin, Houston, Beaumont, Abilene, Odessa, and Terlingua. Luther Smith, Skeet McAuley, Dennis Darling, Jim Estes, Steve Goff and Bill Wright, working in black and white and color, adopt a witnesses' position in viewing the environment and its inhabitants from a transparent point of view. Also working the straight side of the photographic street, T.R. Mackin and Keith Carter explore the personal in a more introspective manner. Susan Grant and Bill Frazier take up the postmodern slack with staged and simulated images from the present and the past. Barbara Riley, and Rick Dingus venture outside the strictly photographic realm, incorporating hand-applied color and line to a painterly end. June Van Cleef, Margo Reece, and Roger Cutforth work the aesthetics of printmaking and painting into the domain of the photographic. Sally Grant's 3-D alterpieces and Elizabeth Ward's installation panels venture into the conceptual, and Ron English's mural *trompe l'oeil* photo-productions destroy the line between illusion and reality.

In this issue, Roger Cutforth's "Portraiture from Both Sides of the Camera" treats photography as "rumor—unverifiable information of uncertain origins." Only in SPOT can this be coupled with James Huginin's "Nuclear Phaff-Out," Peter Brown's riddle, "Thoughts on the State of Photography," and the controversial video tape, *Dick Talk*, by X, which publicly opens up to women the slyly privileged discourse of sexuality.

October is not only world series time, it's the fifth anniversary of HCP. For this one, a master photographer and a legendary curator will share exhibition space at the Center. John Gutmann's photographs of the south and southwest (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, and Arizona) taken on a return trip from New York to San Francisco, 1937, "depict the American vernacular from the New Orleans Mardi Gras dancers, who didn't miss a beat even in the hard time of the depression, to the distinctive features of the U.S. highways with giant billboards and gaudy gas stations." These photographs operate on several levels of meaning, conveying considerable information but going far beyond documentation to become images of emotion. The fabulous Walter Hopps will complete the celebration with a "staged exhibition," *Four Walls*, encapsulating time, invitation, installation, and the construction of a documentary.

I'm ready when you are, señor. ...let's overturn these tables, disconnect these cables, this place don't make sense to me no more, can you tell me what they're waiting for, señor? —B. Dylan

Lew Thomas



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photo George O. Jackson, Jr.

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## FILM

### SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

Houston International Film Festival offers a wide range of films but shows lack of boldness by excluding the work of avant-garde directors.



Lightship

By Phillip Lopate

In the five years I have been going to the Houston International Film Festival, I have watched it evolve from a pretty careless, ragtag emporium of celluloid product into a much more consistent and professional operation. This year had probably the best lineup of films ever. One could see a bunch of independent little films that had already opened in New York and gotten good reviews (sometimes, as it turned out, unjustified), such as *Smooth Talk*, *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *Parting Glances*, *Always*, and *Sugarbaby*. There were also some big studio movies that were about to go into general release, but premiered during the ten-day event, such as *Salvador* and *Violets are Blue*. But where the festival really performed a service was in bringing to light a few gems that had not yet opened anywhere, and maybe never will, having fallen through the cracks of commercial distribution in the United States. This year I saw a better crop of pictures in Houston than at the New York Film Festival (admittedly New York's weakest in twenty-two years).

Over the years the Houston International Film Festival has developed a distinct personality. It likes to take chances on low-budget features, preferably comically oddball, amia-

ble, and not too demanding. It also has a soft spot for first features made in the Houston Gulf Coast region. Unfortunately, many of these little films are independent only by virtue of budget size. Utterly conventional in sentiment and style, they seem made for the sole purpose of impressing the big studios. Likewise, the foreign titles shown at the Houston festival often turn out to be the commercial schlock of other countries, no more sophisticated because subtitled.

In short, the Houston International Film Festival does not operate from a very strong or clear aesthetic viewpoint. Intentionally, I think. "We're after a wide range of films, to pull in different audiences," says Steve Buck, the festival's program director.

A typical Houston Film Festival will have something for the new-wave-music crowd, something for the gays, something for different ethnic groups, something for the yuppies, something for those who get off to really crass, campy movies, and even something for film buffs like myself. It's the kind of festival that offers a generous if uneven potpourri in a laissez-faire, egalitarian spirit, like a rummage sale where one is encouraged to go through the bins. This can be fun; it can also be frustrating.

Let me explain. We film buffs tend

to follow the careers of certain directors, because we subscribe to the idea that movies *are* an art form, and the director is usually regarded as the *auteur* of the artwork. Film buffs' appetites are whetted by the chance to see a new work from a filmmaker who has given us pleasure in the past, or about whom we've read in magazines such as *Sight & Sound* or *Film Comment*. Half the fun of seeing a new picture can be the anticipation of wondering how an old favorite will handle the assignment, whether it be Fellini doing *Ginger and Fred* or Sergio Leone shooting a gangster film in America. The real film buff is not ruled by snobbish notions of genre superiority. He may find more art in a supposedly exploitative horror picture such as David Cronenberg's *The Dead Zone* or Billy Friedkin's *To Live and Die in L.A.* than in a more culturally pedigreed project such as *Ragtime* or *Out of Africa*. What makes a movie artistic is its internal integrity, its complex freshness of vision (cinematic and moral), and its stylistic choices, not high-mindedness.

As a film buff, I admit I would appreciate a more curated festival, where one could expect each selection to come up to a certain artistic level, which included some retrospective of hitherto lost older films and restored classics, and which had both a stronger sense of historical continuity and a better representation of the cutting edge of current world cinema. Each year at the Houston Film Festival I find myself wondering why there aren't any works by those young and old lions of the avant-garde such as Chantal Akerman, the prolific Raul Ruiz, Godard, Bresson, Jacques Rivette of France; Angelopoulos of Greece; Antonioni (whose last two films have still never shown in Houston, though both were at the New York Film Festival) of Italy; Stan Brakhage, Jonas Mekas, Yvonne Rainer, Lizzy Borden, and Mark Rappaport of the United States; João Botelho and Manuel de Oliveira of Portugal; Leonel Broca of the Philippines; Imamura and Oshima of Japan; the Straubs, Rainer Haupt, Werner Schroeter, Daniel Schmid, and Rosa von Prouheim of Germany; Peter Greenaway and Chris Petit from England; Nelson Pereira dos Santos and Ruy Guerra of Brazil; New Indian Cinema; Tarkovsky from Russia; Zanussi of Poland, etc., etc.? These may not be all household names, but they are among the film artists most intently discussed in cinematic circles today. Their exclusion year after year from the Houston Film Festival suggests a rather serious

lack of daring, not to mention scholarship, on the part of festival organizers.

Now, I can anticipate the festival's counter-argument: There's no audience in Houston for those esoteric filmmakers: we would lose our shirts if we showed them. Perhaps so. But the only way to build a knowledgeable, adventurous audience for film art in this town is to begin to slip in some more difficult and challenging fare, along with flicks that go down as easily as a gulped oyster. A film festival has a pedagogic as well as an expositional function—or should have.

The Houston Film Festival's amnesiac personality, which treats each title as an isolated expression unconnected to the director's past work or other patterns of cinematic culture, may be partly explained by the fact that all three of the event's organizers are in the business end of movies. J. Hunter Todd, the festival's chairman, runs Casablanca, a film import and production company; Steve Buck, the program director, works for AMC Theaters, overseeing the Greenway 3; and Woody Woodward, the festival director, is employed by Warner Amex. Regardless of how much pure love these men have for movies, their festival is conditioned by an exhibitor/distributor mentality, i.e., a market-research pragmatism which views each film as a discrete commercial package: How can we sell this one? They could stand more input from knowledgeable film critics and scholars, the way the Telluride Film Festival uses William K. Everson or Tom Luddy as consultants, or the New York Film Festival turns to people like Susan Sontag and Andrew Sarris.

Having said this, I want quickly to add that Todd, Buck, and Woodward have rendered incredibly altruistic, heroic service to the community in keeping this festival going. They take no salary, putting the festival together in their spare time as a hobby, and they run a smooth operation on a shoe-string budget, without the sort of corporate sponsorship or local arts-council support that virtually every other film festival in the world enjoys. Perhaps their scatter-shot programming approach is more appropriate to these times, when there has been such a falling-off in the availability of great new art films, or even great entertainment movies.

The Houston Film Festival deserves particular credit for digging out *The Lightship* by Polish director Jerzy Skolimowski. It was made a few years ago by a movie company that went bankrupt, and now sits on the shelf in distribution limbo. Skolimowski is himself in that limbo of emigré Eastern European directors, along with Dusan Makavejev, Ivan Passer, and Andre Konchalevsky, who are unable to make films again in their native countries because of politics and censorship, and who must hustle motely financing deals and low budget crews all over the globe. A genuine if extremely erratic *auteur*, Skolimowski, director of *Deep End* and *Moonlighting*, may have achieved his most perfectly sustained piece of filmmaking in *The Lightship*.

This brooding, Conradian sea yarn has a masterful anchoring performance by the Austrian actor Klaus Maria Brandauer as a Coast Guard captain, and a more debatable star turn by Robert Duvall as an elegant gang leader who holds the ship hostage with his psychopathic stooges. Duvall chose to mumble his lines with the mannerisms of late Brando—an "interesting" performance, and not so flawed as to sink the film's other virtues. Chief among these is the cinematography, with its complex *mise-en-scène* that fully exploits the tightness of the set, while poking around here and there to relieve the potential claustrophobia. I especially enjoyed one tracking shot which bobbed from the upper to lower to upper deck along the entire hull, giving the audience a visceral sense

My Beautiful Laundrette: Omar (Goron Warnecke), Rachel (Shirley Anne Field), Uncle Nasser (Saeed Jaffrey)





of oceanic swell.

The film revolves around tensions of motion and stasis; a lightship, we learn, is never meant to move, but to caution other vessels with its revolving light. Duvall and his goons try to force the captain to liberate the ship from its immobility and sail away, while the crew and the captain's teenage son are contemptuous of him for not rushing the gang and fighting them off. The captain's refusal to budge—seen at first as cowardice, the product of past disgrace—ultimately comes to seem curiously active and courageous.

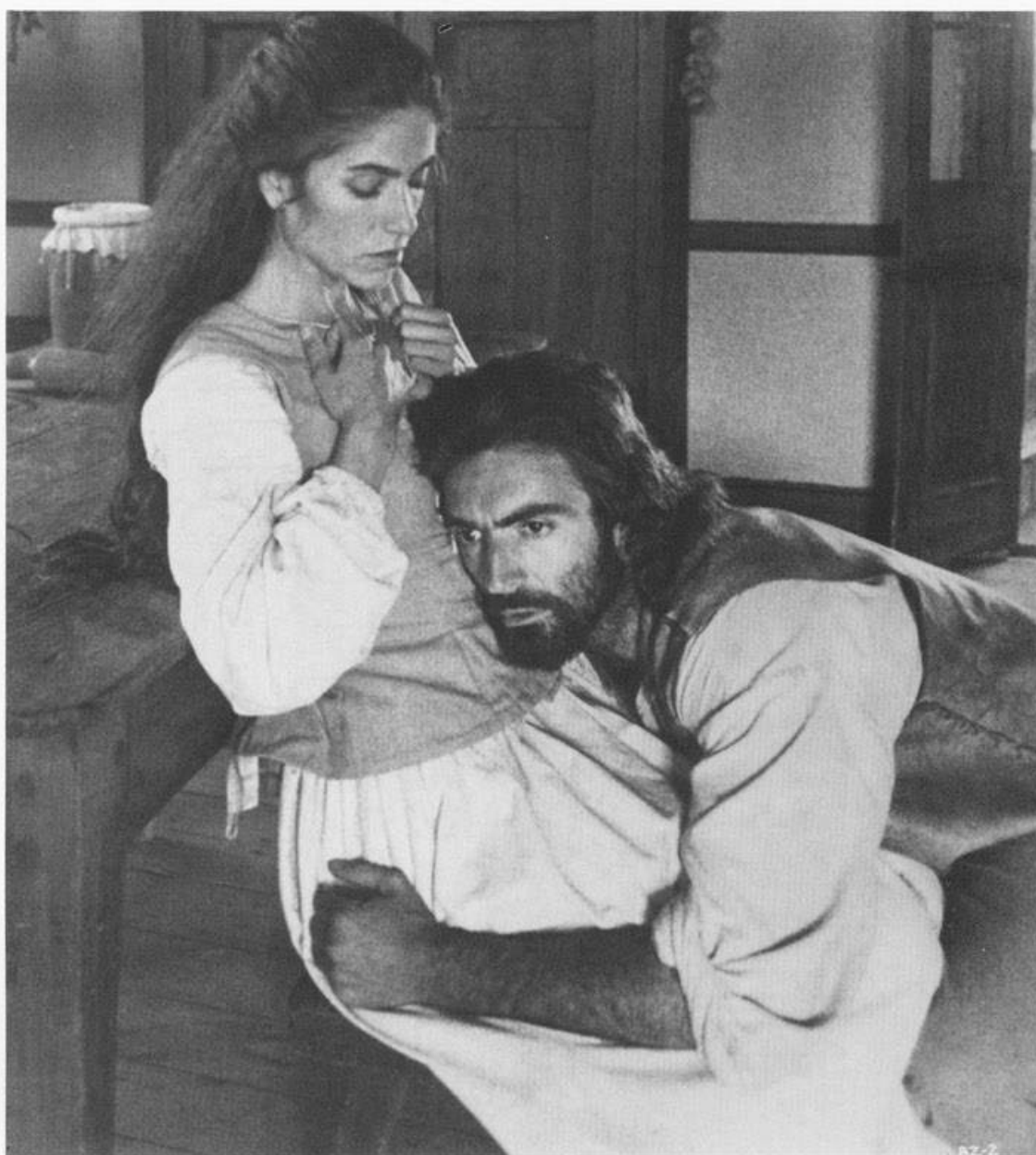
Another happy discovery was *Sherman's March*, subtitled *A Meditation on the Possibility of Romantic Love in the South During the Era of Nuclear Proliferation*. This witty, quirky feature poses as the film diary of Ross McElwee, who has been commissioned to make a documentary about the Union general's march of devastation, and keeps getting sidetracked into recording, *cinema-verité* style, his own bittersweet pursuit of women. I say "poses" because, though the film wears a guilelessly autobiographical air, anyone who has ever tried to make narrative art out of his or her life will know how much shaping, pruning, and self-distancing are needed to carry it off as successfully as it is done here. Ross's horny, lugubrious, romantic debauch threatens to depopulate the South of available young women, as one after another of his intended sweethearts leaves shortly after he meets her. Along the way we are treated to poignant glimpses of the New South: fanny tucks, Burt Reynolds groupies, survivalist freaks, the Rapture, cellulite exercises, Scottish clan gatherings. The film may be too long by half an hour (and several courtships), but the accumulation does enforce the point that bachelors such as Ross seem ruled by patterns of attraction they feel powerless to change. In his case, these patterns include a fear of well-scrubbed, church-going women, an ambivalence toward women as intellectual as himself, and a decided soft spot for marginally talented, sexy-looking bimbos, trying to break into show business.

McElwee has been called a "Tar-heel Woody Allen." Actually, we come to know the people in his movie, including McElwee, with much more truthful shading than anyone in the fairy-tale world of Woody Allen's *Hannah and Her Sisters*.

*Letter to Brezhnev*, a British new-wave film about a pair of Liverpoolian working-class girls who pick up two Russian sailors, was another fresh, delightful surprise. The Liverpool milieu of Victorian buildings, seedy waterfront hotels, and neon-splashed youth clubs has wonderful local color and gritty detail, and the script and direction never break stride. Though the color photography has that slightly acid brashness of punk, the characters are treated with good old-fashioned sympathetic humanism.

I was glad I saw *Belizaire the Cajun*, the best of the features made in our region. It had a lively music score, good period research, mundane visual pictorialism, but likable characters—all in all, a perfectly satisfying example of the conventionally made, amiable little independent film that is a Houston International Film Festival specialty.

*Violets are Blue* left me with a good feeling, in spite of the fact that Sissy Spacek was never believable for a second as a tough photojournalist and Kevin Kline's role as the husband caught in a triangle was woefully underwritten. The film's overall lingering charm may be attributed in part to its poetic feel for place—Ocean City, Maryland, with its carnival-beach atmosphere—and in part to its dazzling night sequences, when the director, Jack Fisk, rouses himself and shows what a first-rate filmmaker he could be if he kept his mind on it.



*Belizaire the Cajun*: Belizaire (Armand Assante) and Alida (Gail Youngs)

Forced to name my favorite movie of the ten days, I would probably select *Kuei Mei: The Story of a Woman*. I am told this Taiwanese drama is considered the best film ever made by the Republic of China. What a pity that the People's Republic of China withdrew its highly-touted entry *Yellow Earth*, on political principle. According to Steve Buck, it finally came down to a dispute over national flags decorating the Greenway 3 lobby: the Communist Chinese consulate said the festival could have its film if Taiwan's flag were taken down, and the festival organizers understandably refused. Myself, I have fewer principles: I would have taken all the flags down just to be able to show both Chinese films. (Next year hang balloons, guys.)

In any event, *Kuei-Mei* traces the adult life of a beleaguered but strong woman, as she marries a man who turns out to be a compulsive gambler, raises his rebellious children from a previous marriage, works as a domestic in a wealthy Chinese home abroad, slaves to start her own restaurant, parts from her husband when he is unfaithful to her, comes back to him reluctantly, grows old and eventually is seen dying of uterine cancer. The director's delicate but unsparing handling of this "woman's picture" material owes much to the Japanese film masters Naruse, Ozu, and Mizoguchi, but he has clearly arrived at a mature, philosophically measured style all his own. Most remarkable is the title performance by a great Chinese actress who ages believably, from a pretty, pony-tailed teenager to a pregnant wife, to a chubby matron no longer appealing to her husband, to an old woman wasting away in the hospital—all the while keeping a consistent spine of character.

It's interesting how this severely truthful film was dismissed by a local critic as a "soap opera" simply because it dwelt on a woman's suffering, while the same critic gushed over the macho melodramatics of *Salvador*, which was infinitely more

sentimental and clichéd. One hesitates to criticize an American studio movie that takes on so serious a subject as U.S. imperialism in Central America, and whose heart is so obviously in the right (or should I say left?) place. Nevertheless, *Salvador* proved to be such a vulgar cartoon of history, so hamfisted in its treatment of heroes and villains, that for the first—and I hope, last—time in my life, I almost found myself sympathizing perversely with the right-wing death squads, just for dramaturgical balance. Not that their opponents, the dewy-eyed *campesinos* with rifles, were given any more dimensionality. Indeed, in this new movie genre of the jaded war correspondent who learns commitment to the People's cause from getting too close (actually, it's the old action-war movie genre disguised as Hollywood social con-

science), only the white reporters get to have inner lives. You could shuffle the images from *Under Fire*, *Year of Living Dangerously*, and *Salvador*—the voyeuristic treats of charred bodies, gasoline explosions, brown-skinned masses armed with sticks rioting against government tanks boring down on them—and nobody would be the wiser. What makes *Salvador* unique in its class is its pig-out, frat-house buddies, played by James Wood and Jim Belushi, as if director Oliver Stone were eyeing the *Animal House* audience as well.

I regret to say that *Salvador* was chosen best picture by the festival jury.

Closing night brought the festival a touch of glamour, with the appearance of an honest-to-gosh movie star, Alan Alda. Here to plug his film *Sweet Liberty*, which he wrote, directed, and starred in, Mr. Alda fielded

questions for half an hour with graciousness, intelligence, and insight, turning what could have been a dull self-promotion into an exhilarating teaching situation. I wish I could have liked Mr. Alda onscreen half as much as I did in real life; but he still has a directorial tendency to smooth things over and to let the obnoxious goody-goody character he plays off the hook. (He should take lessons from Albert Brooks.) As in *The Four Seasons*, *Sweet Liberty* has its funny moments and sharp little behavioral observations, but every time it veers toward the irreconcilable stuff of great comedy it shuffles back for cover to the diffuse, defanged "feel-goodism" of TV sitcom endings.

The Houston Film Festival has an enthusiastic devoted following, but for some odd reason it is still not treated as a major event in the city's artistic life, which it certainly deserves to be. I wonder, for instance, why it hasn't yet caught on with the Art Crowd, those opinion-makers who give an event in town a certain modish luster. Perhaps it's because the artists, museum and gallery workers, writers, bookstore owners, photographers, architects, etc., who take so many chances in their own fields, all become tired businessmen when it comes to seeing a movie; they want something that has a big advertising budget behind it and promises to be diverting and undemanding. Perhaps, too, the Houston Film Festival has an image problem. Half commerce, half art, it never has developed a cultural patina, at times seeming more like a testing ground for the Greenway 3's regular programming than an independent event.

The Houston Film Festival has proved itself again and again. Whatever faults I may find in it, it's a lover's quarrel: I'm deeply grateful for the cinematic feast they lay out year after year, as are others adventurous and fortunate enough to attend.

Though the festival had opened at the Windsor Theatre, it moved quickly to the Greenway 3; and by the end of ten days, the belovedly icky Greenway lobby had become home away from home. A camaraderie had developed among the red-eyed stalwarts, those festival regulars who kept bumping into each other in line. "What have you liked so far?" we would ask each other, and preserve some diplomacy when someone's tastes violently differed with ours. When the last film was over, one of the regulars turned to me and said, "Now what will I do with my life?"

Phillip Lopate's new novel, *The Rug Merchant* (Viking), will appear in March 1987. He co-programs the films at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

*Salvador*: John Savage (left) and James Wood (right)





Kurt Kren: Etudes (film score)

# TAKING THE CAMERA OUT FOR A WALK

By April Rapier

Kurt Kren is clearly a man enamored with his computer. He telecommunicates with it. he makes art, he learns things. Sometimes it puzzles him, for the computer is not logical, nor is it mathematical, in the way his films are. In fact, the computer makes no sense. Kren likes that.

With regard to Kren and his films, no straightforward, clear-cut portrait is forthcoming: he is kind, unintentionally evasive, real smart, insulated, careful. He seems always ready with a contradiction, for the world is an unruly place. (Filmographies painfully illustrate the disparities.) His sense of humor is very subtle, heightened by the necessity of being an intent listener (his English is heavily accented), the stories are great, especially later on— one saves them, goes over them, gleaming truths from his riddles. During our conversations, I made the mistake of calling him an artist; to my horror, he was insulted. His language is precise, often unfathomable, coded. Entry is restricted.

His passage into the world of film (art) seems to have occurred around a pivotal event, and has the feel of an incidental decision. After being told by a professor, in Holland, where he spent a portion of his childhood, that modern art was shit, he returned to Vienna (at age 17), deciding to see for himself, first by investigating the galleries and museums, then by gaining entry to an artists' club (the vehicle was a poem; the year was around 1950). Soon after, he bought an eight millimeter camera and promptly broke it, something he has continued to do with alarming regularity—some people are mechanophobic—Kren is enthusiastically techno-reckless. About this expensive problem, he says, "If I wreck it, I stay with it."

This was not his first experience with film, however. In Holland, he would boil film stock free of its emulsion, then draw on it, a technique that he has expanded upon through his career. The artists' club concept holds great fascination, considering it a starting point for many European artists of the time; its core was a group of amateurs, students, and practicing artists

learning technique from each other, the evolution of an aesthetic intentional, as though it were something one could arrange for, organize. His first film, *Das Walk* (a German-English fusion that sounded peculiar to him), was about a woman who walked in graveyards. When I asked him what, if anything, he'd change about it, he said that he'd rather the title be gender-specific or plural. He still likes graveyards. His films operate on a purely visual level, then as now, otherwise he "would write a book instead." Sometimes it seems that to be designated artist constitutes a naive calling.

The idea of an implied communication in each film points to an es-

sential human necessity, the most fundamental communication of all—human to human. Kren is a shy man, who, one feels, would rather steer clear of the absurd, topical transactions that characterize (percentage-wise) most daily interactions. He is as no-nonsense as seems possible for a human to be, and very detached. One reason that a return to Austria seems unlikely is that there are "too many friends." To resume filmmaking, the necessary and missing element being a "click" of inspiration, might also hinge on emotional involvement; his computer seems a far more unconditional friend. This implicitly suggests, however, an openness to possibility, especially in the realm of future films.

In the early 1960's, the most progressive gallery in Vienna was run by the Catholic Church—Galerie St. Stephan—and some pretty wild films (in good company with other art) were getting around. Kren had a job in a bank (non-committally), where he was to work for several years; his films debuted at St. Stephan, with the help of Kubelka, and then later with the Austrian Film Museum. The steady but oddly clustered output of films that transpired over the next twenty-odd years established him as one of the world's great avant-garde. Movement is an aspect of Kren and his work—he doesn't seem to settle anywhere, regardless of the amount of time spent in one place. In fact, he sees his time in Houston as monastic, a retreat. When pressed for details regarding life in any particular place, he mumbles something about "missing the train." So much for intentionality or burning desire: "My life is not made of plans—it just happens;" just as he feels, sometimes, like "taking the camera out for a walk." It so happened, around 1967, that his film *16-67/20 September*, a political/revolutionary piece about "eating, drinking, pissing and shitting"—a demonstrable, unvarying progression—cost him his bank job; although he forfeited his pension, he was granted a freedom that he still holds dear. He said of this film, in an at once gleeful and resigned apology of sorts, "It is very dirty.

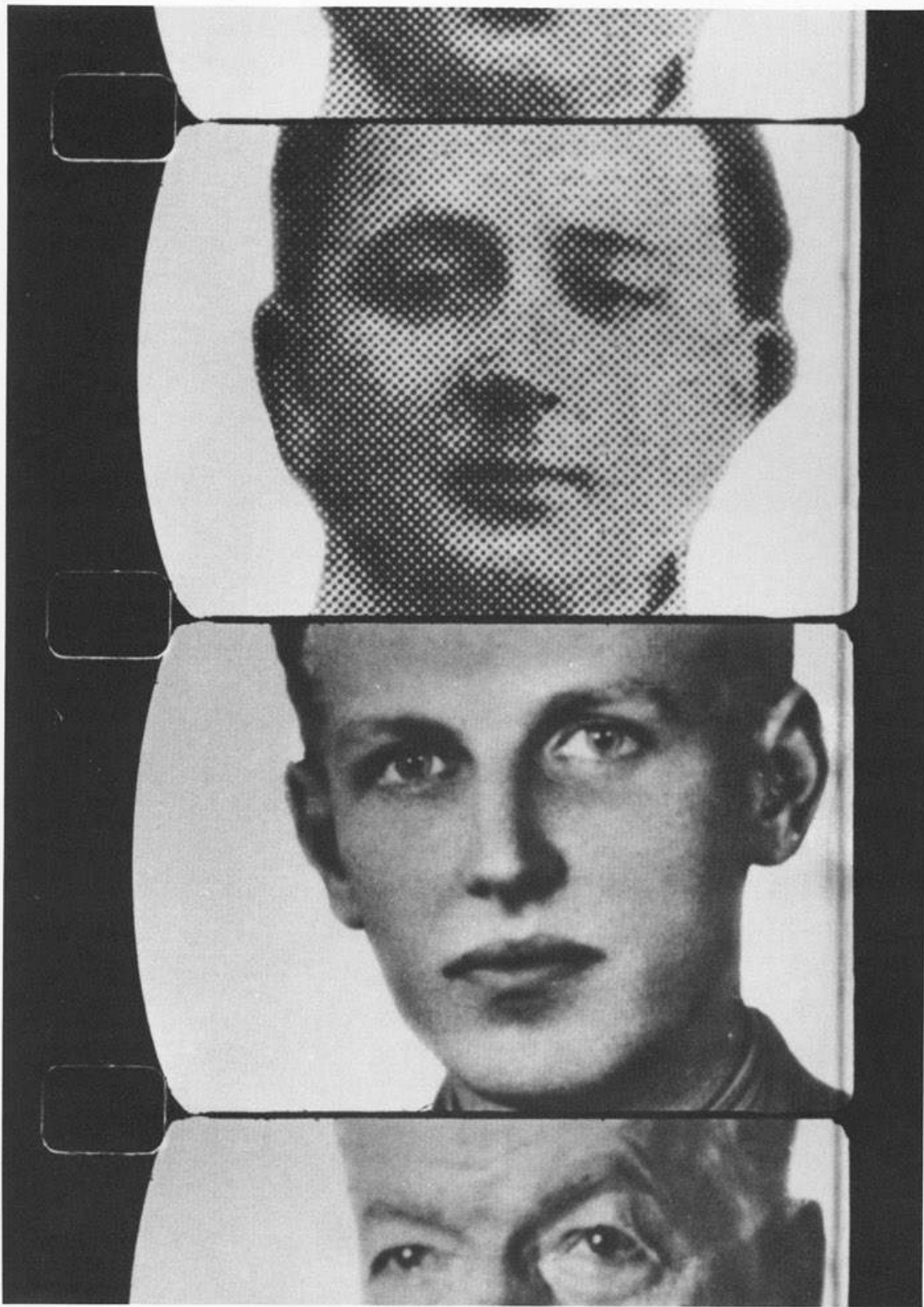
Many friends will hate me after having seen that film. Sorry. It had to be done." This ongoing chain of events—always situational—that has led him over the planet, never hinges on volition. Although Kren projects a resolutely obstinate image. Nowhere is this more evident than in the political animal that is resurrected when Reagan (among others) is mentioned. (An interestingly skewed perceptual notion about the US emerges in a story he recalls, of a Viennese dog who dies of shock when hearing American police and ambulance sirens.) Perhaps when seen in tandem with the possibilities of computers, the following best defines his attitude regarding the conceptual genre: by the time something (words, images) gets printed, its gone. Mail art, a genre he's been involved in since its inception, embodies the present in a most useful form. I am certain that he will find my speculative notions amusing and useless.

It became easier to understand his method of approaching film when he illustrated his matter-of-factness with a story: he was asked to shoot and deliver a film, for a festival, given four day's notice, which he did (*Foot-Age Shoot-Out*). He normally takes a long time with a film; this one he terms a "rape." He removed his name and copyright from the piece. "Probably (his) last film," I asked whether he'd ever seen a print. "Yes, its great," he replied. Yet the film screened before he ever saw it. He simply isn't dictated by awe, nor is he starstruck over past acclaim. The computer is a language, not unlike any of the others he speaks. Its most clear-cut reference to his films is in the methodical, precise designing capacity. His preparatory materials were the same—mathematical, orderly (it has been said that almost all his work raises philosophical questions about the relationship between experience and structure). Drawings, silkscreens, collages, prints from scores, and photographs accompany the films; in a brilliant marketing idea, he sold super-eight millimeter films in a portfolio box with the attendant artwork. Chronological prefixes (order and date) accompany the titles; the films are from three seconds to twelve minutes in length.



Kurt Kren: from Multiple, Box 5





Kurt Kren: from Multiple, Box 3, Szonditest

The work can be divided into three periods: formal-individual, other-artist collaborative (often performance-based) and formal-expressive. Formalist tendencies, down to his very systemic structures (he edits as he shoots), are shared, on a founding level, with Brakhage, Warhol and Kubelka; therein do all comparisons end, except with Brakhage, a kindred spirit. Any reference to Austrian film doesn't apply to him, excepting, of course, the influences, collaborations, associations and the like—he is the Kren film scene. Some of the films based on other artists' work (Muehl, Brus) occur around violent, sexual "happenings", nihilistic statements recycled further into absurdity. But to lift elements, for display, from a life's continuum of film is ridiculous and misrepresentational. The films

must be seen.

When Kren was a child, he would play with a new toy intently for an hour or so, then give it away. Now, "other than the films and computer, all other things are soon forgotten." The statements, "Kren usually" and "Kren always" are interchangeable; he laughs wholeheartedly at the bugs in a particular computer program. Later in the day, the solution will come to him, easily. In answer to my questions, he tries not to make a "statement," because "it will change" —almost as a result of uttering the words. Stylistically, his rubber stamp *meaninglessness*, with which he marks bills and personal correspondence alike, is loosely akin to his lifestyle, and constitutes the only philosophical statement he'll claim. Death, to Kren, is "quite

a bad joke," not because of what comes afterward, but because he can't go on forever. He claims that screening his films for personal viewing is logistically difficult; perhaps it is a connection to the past that need not be reviewed. Kren seems of indeterminate age, shaved head, casual dress and rootlessness reinforcing this; his life, even his job as a guard at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, illustrate the fleetingness of his present. He is never without a camera (Disc) in his pocket; at first glance, the Safeway-printed snaps he keeps in an album seem random, disjointed. They are, in fact, obsessive, persistent examinations (via the alarming banality of his haunts), in surgical search of "what catches the eye." When asked what the pictures mean, he responded, "its just what it is" —a physical recording transcendent when he introduces himself (literally) into the frame (first gesturing at security monitors, closeup with a friend, self-portrait featuring jawline and trademark jacket). He demonstrates a concerned ethnocentric chauvinism, saying that Americans are more "fucked up;" one suspects that he pulls the same stuff on European counterparts. HCP is planning a retrospective of Kren's films in the near future. Do not miss it.

Kurt Kren: Dog, "35/77 — Dogumenta" (slide and film loop lost, Dokumenta, Kessel)



## MELTING THE MATERIAL WORLD

I "We are less convinced by what we hear than by what we see."—Herodotus: Histories I

By Mark Johnstone

It is a good thing that the fears of photography held by various primitive tribes and cultures are unfounded. If the camera eye could deplete or capture the spirit of its subject, the world would have long ago been sucked dry. Objects would cease to exist, and the world would be drained of all meaning. Photographs fill the space of our lives and the defined meaning of any image is tenuous, at best. What have photographs told us about the world, or what do they tell us about life today?

Meaning is not reflexively moored to specific objects, for there is a difference between an object and a picture of it. Decoding photographs remains a misunderstood—and *pivotal*—operation for the average person. The confusion has long been a part of popular culture: "I have something better than the facts," said Jimmy Stewart, as a reporter trying to prove a man's innocence (*Call Northside 777*, 1948), "I have a photograph!"

Photography created a new set of social, political, philosophical and psychological ramifications for consideration of the world. Mechanization and industrialization, at the beginning of the 19th century, turned out a diversity of new production techniques and objects, shifting the economic order of the world. These shifts brought about equally profound changes in existing political and social structures. In the past 200 years, to oversimplify grossly, through the phenomenon of manufacturing (the creation, design, construction and marketing of products), the production of objects has formed a world-wide basis for social and economic development. Products are embellished with seemingly infinite physical characteristics of function and appearance. The codification of knowledge has been directed into the production of things. An object can be improved in design or function, mass produced and constructed less expensively, or slyly marketed. Products can be made to assume various forms which will satisfy vastly dissimilar tastes.

The most common form of object in today's world is the image. Photography has quietly created an environment affecting us on many levels, yet the rise of an image culture has been so encompassing that the average person rarely thinks about it.

II "What's wrong with illusions?" "You'll find out some day." —Carole Lombard asking Cary Grant (*In Name Only*, 1939)

Daguerre's announcement of a new method to mirror reality did not magically restructure the world in 1839. The change may have begun with Galileo's first rudimentary investigations of the heavens (1609-1619), which were an effort to understand, and thereby master, the limits of the natural world. The advent of the telescope and microscope in Holland, in the 16th and 17th centuries, also expanded the way nature was considered and viewed. The subsequent shifts in thinking which developed from this period can be traced through the accomplishments of the educated class during the Ages of Enlightenment and Reason. But neither Daguerre's announcement and the fact of photography, or manufacturing, can fully explain the changes in social structure or the intellectual climate of a given period.

Photography, as a medium of expression and communication, foreshadowed the Information Age of the mid-twentieth century. It disrupted the traditional hierarchy of information as it was controlled and dispersed by the "learned" classes. In 1860 the *carte-de-visite* of a famous personage could be placed next to





Viking Lander 1: Mars, B/W, 8/3/76

the images of one's own family. The functional change wrought by mass media communications (magazines, radio, and later television) was fundamental. By 1960 any television personality could occupy a position of attention equal to any world leader. Soupy Sales and John F. Kennedy were made partners in the vast embracing world of modern image transmission. The populations watching television in the 1950's were subject to a fractured sense of hierarchical values. The growth of a technological society not only changed the homeplace, but also the workplace, as it increased the shift of employment from factory to office. By 1965, everyone had access to a copy of the office document. Information, even the most unimportant bit, became part of the common currency of day-to-day functions. It was no longer particularly significant what purpose this information served: quantity of data became a symbol of power. The positions of respect which had previously been the goals of a technocratic bourgeoisie were replaced with lifestyles acquired through power. "Status" became the defining standard of social structure.

How existence is perpetuated within identified social structures can be understood in terms of sensorial habituation. Our ancestors developed senses crucial to survival and, like their modern day counterparts, had a physical dependency on visual stimuli. Visual patterns are interpreted through a complex cognitive system including: anthropological, sociological, and psycho-physical functions. Information was originally augmented with an increased auditory and tactile sensitivity, whereas modern man grapples with imagery on increased intellectual terms. Modern culture can be divided into two leading components: image "constructors" and image "consumers." The image constructors include all media, and the consumers are all of us.

Technique is a major component of creative effort and is regulated by the procedures inscribed in the equipment. The technical characteristics of each medium have determined the ratio of creators to consumers. A recognition of the dynamic between the two areas is crucial to an understanding of how visual information functions in a community. Painting has relatively few creators and many consumers. Photography has a more balanced ratio, except in areas of image transmission, such as mass media magazines, film or television. One seeks to separate and define, at least for the purposes of art, two factors of image creation: the creative effort and the symbolic content of the work. One might also seek to assess, for the purposes of writing about art, the effect of the work on public thinking and behavior.

The still image remains the most basic piece of information to be examined. In a gallery, for example,

a viewer has the ability to identify the role of the artist (image creator) and may be able to separate functionally the processes of creation and consumption. Productions of a complicated technical nature make the basic process of definition and deconstruction more difficult. As Diane Arbus pointed out:

*It's always seemed to me that photography tends to deal with facts whereas film tends to deal with fiction. The best example I know is when you go to the movies and you see two people in bed, you're willing to put aside the fact that you perfectly well know that there was a director and a cameraman and assorted lighting people all in that same room and the two people in bed*

telecommunications and information. Still photography comprises such a small part of electronic or cinematic imagery that it is only proper to examine all photographically generated imagery. The largest, and by implication the most dominant, portion of this imagery is not produced by the art world. We live in America, in an age when there is a historicization of the present. The United States, a mere 25 years ago, experienced via television and news reports the drive to place a man on the moon. Now, through written narrative and filmic reconstruction, a new generation knows that period in dramatic and

devices such as the diorama, constructed a perceptual experience for viewers. Cinema introduced sophisticated visual and optical techniques of foreshortening, cross-cut, montage, editing, fade-in, drop-out, enlargement and close-ups which dramatically alter the content, not just the presentation, of subject matter. Television places an emphasis on the detail, because a panorama or overview is not sufficiently dramatic or detailed on a small screen. These alterations create a different sense of how life and interpersonal relationships occur in the world. Many of these visual devices are now applicable to still photographs in ways that the viewing public can understand, but still does not think about.

The incorporation of photographic imagery into our lives may be considered from a slightly different perspective. Family snapshots, over the past 80 years, have become a reference for preserving personal experience and heritage by recording holidays, birthdays, and special occasions. Photographs often form one part of a person's memory. One grows up with snapshots as mnemonic devices which can be embellished with oral accounts. Today, virtually anyone with these surrogate records of personal heritage will probably have difficulty separating what is *lived experience* (subjective memory) from the fact of a snapshot, or be able to identify exactly the embellishments woven into the image by the picture making ritual. Picture "inflation" produces images more specialized, intimate and precious than life itself. What can be more confusing for today's children growing up with videotape documentation of their lives from birth? How is acquired (lived) information to be separated from reconstructed information? Transformed information which in many instances, is more vivid and dramatic than memory! A mind must be educationally sensitized to make the proper distinctions between what is experienced and remembered, and what is learned and acquired.

A fundamental difference in imagery today, compared to 45 years ago, may be considered in relation to aural cues. One hears a particular piece of music and is likely to associate it with a time and place which have personal meaning. Music videos have a greater sensory impact than most live events, and a viewer's link to "lived" experience becomes secondary. Will today's impressionable youth recognize music from their early years as stimuli to formative or meaningful experiences, or as a video with dancing performers?

*As abstract and queer object properties become more important, we may expect language to develop with deep structures to reflect the worlds which we discover and create: worlds which so far as we know are uniquely human. We are being cut off from the biological past which moulded the eyes*

*and the brains and the speech of our ancestors. The Intelligent Eye is for the first time confronted with an essentially unpredictable future, whose present objective hypotheses are bound to fail. As we create so must we adapt to what we have created; the danger is that we may create a world beyond the restraints of our intelligence: a world we cannot see.*<sup>2</sup>

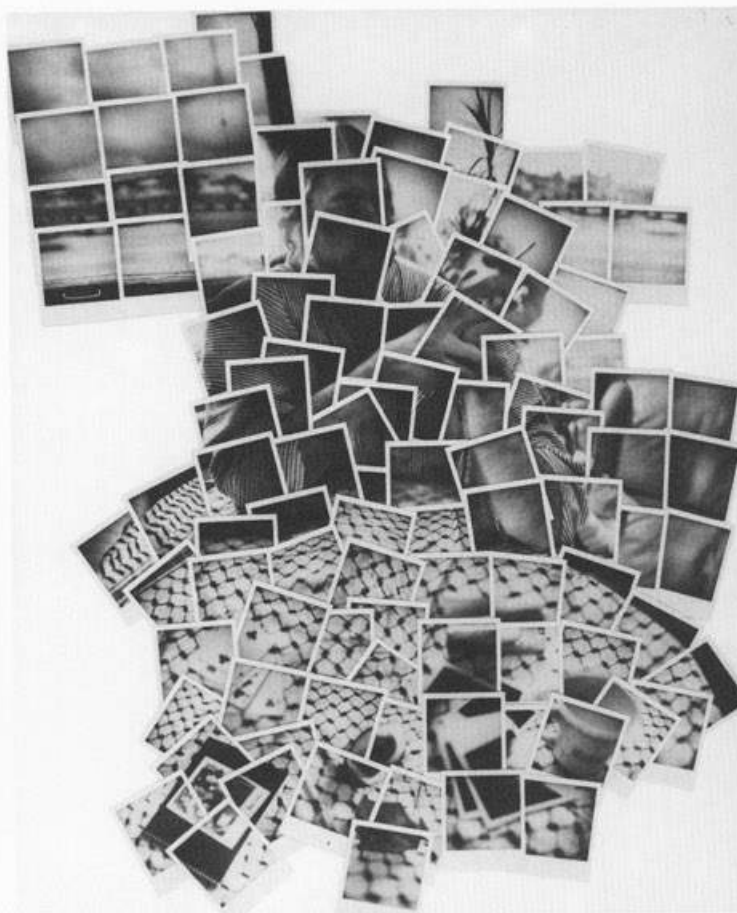
**IV** "News is TV, entertainment is TV. Hell, life is TV." —Jann Wenner (founder and editor of Rolling Stone)<sup>3</sup>

The photographers born between 1945 and 1960 experienced a fundamental shift in the information supplied to them during their developmental years, from radio and printed magazines to television. The predominant evolutionary trend of world culture, over the past twenty-five years, points to an elevation of the eye over all other human senses. "Seeing is believing;" and visual verification has become the measuring stick for most day-to-day information.

The functional analysis of photographic imagery exists as a crucial component of space exploration today. These transpersonal images (created through the efforts of many people and advanced technology) fit into the network of communications media, and service the desires of an eager spectator public. Scientific inquiry, through the marvels of modern technology, creates views which appear "realistic," "truthful" or "factual":<sup>4</sup>

The technology of digital image processing was recently used by art historians to mix colors which purportedly matched the originals, during the restoration of Leonardo da Vinci's painting, *The Last Supper* (1495-97). Computers were also used to judge the relative accuracy of perspective in Carpaccio's painting, *Legend of the True Cross: The Healing of the Demoniac* (1495). Verification was established, through an analysis of his rendering of the Rialto Bridge, that Carpaccio painted "things as he saw them." The concluding inference was that his descriptions of Venetian life in the painting should be accepted as being "accurate" and "true." The use of computers for investigations of science or art is interesting, but is presently limited to the formal properties of an image. A far greater issue exists in those ethical questions surrounding the alteration of news photographs routinely released by the wire services, such as the Associated Press. Alterations are not identified, and the public is largely unaware that such manipulations even take place.<sup>5</sup> It may be recognized that the media controlled by other governments engage in this practice, but we remain unaware when similar occurrences exist in our own news services.

There exists a potential for direct basic computer operations to the research and analysis of photographs. Indices are needed for framing information in a meaningful



Joyce Neimanas: Untitled, 1981 (original in color), mixed media

*were't really alone. But when you look at a photograph, you can never put that aside.*<sup>1</sup>

Images, as in advertising, can become more important than the product they represent. Newscasters today are selected for their appeal as models, rather than journalists, and news becomes escapist entertainment. The schism of modern visual consciousness lies in a conflict between the symbolic significance of images, and their increasing emptiness in public venues.

**III** "I don't have a photograph, but you can have my footprints. They're upstairs in my socks." —Groucho Marx, (*A Night At The Opera*, 1935)

It is problematic to isolate still photography as the dominant cultural message carrier in the age of

fictionalized terms. Television "docu-dramas" blend fact and fabrication and the dividing line between the two becomes indistinguishable. In *The Right Stuff* (1983) actual documentary footage was combined with dramatic recreation and it is difficult—if not impossible—to delineate between the two modes. The sensorial environment created by television and film has so overwhelmed the viewing population that it is natural to expect the mode of communication to be superficial and entertaining. There is little, if any, attempt by the average viewer to cope with what may lie beyond immediate appearances.

Theatre productions, until the twentieth century, rarely deconstructed the space of a stage. The traditional use of theatrical stage space was translated into early cinema which, through the history of



fashion. For example, if the works of Diane Arbus were to be cataloged, classified and compared to all the photographs appearing on the first page of the *New York Times* between 1940 and 1970, it might be argued that her work not only marked the development of a unique artistic temperament, but also reflected a state of mind reinforced through the mass media predilection for certain types of people, during that period. Computers are an invaluable boon to such cross-checking and cataloging tasks.

The incorporation of movement into an evolutionary development of vision, through cinema and television, is part of the natural progression of visual sensorial habituation. Yet single still images continue to abound. Why?

...when photographers begin to conceive their art as the making of visual networks, constellations, sequences, etc., they move from a conception of "art" narrowly defined by aesthetic concerns to a conception of "art" as a form of investigation and a form of cultural communication. In this broader conception, familiar distinctions—as between "art" and "science"—cease to be sharp; and art itself becomes a science-like activity, an orderly inquiry that requires imagination and discipline in equal portions. The work produced under such a conception lies primarily in the deployment of ideas in networks, where meaning is produced by interactions among images, in the context of expectation entertained by viewers.<sup>6</sup>

The photograph comes into existence through a specific set of actions, but the traditional methods of examination and evaluation are cumbersome and occasionally faulty. The advent of new imaging technologies is altering the way the world exists. The technological solution to all developments, in the past 200 years, has been innovation. The answers lie not only in machines or generated data, but the incisive and expansive concepts applied to them.

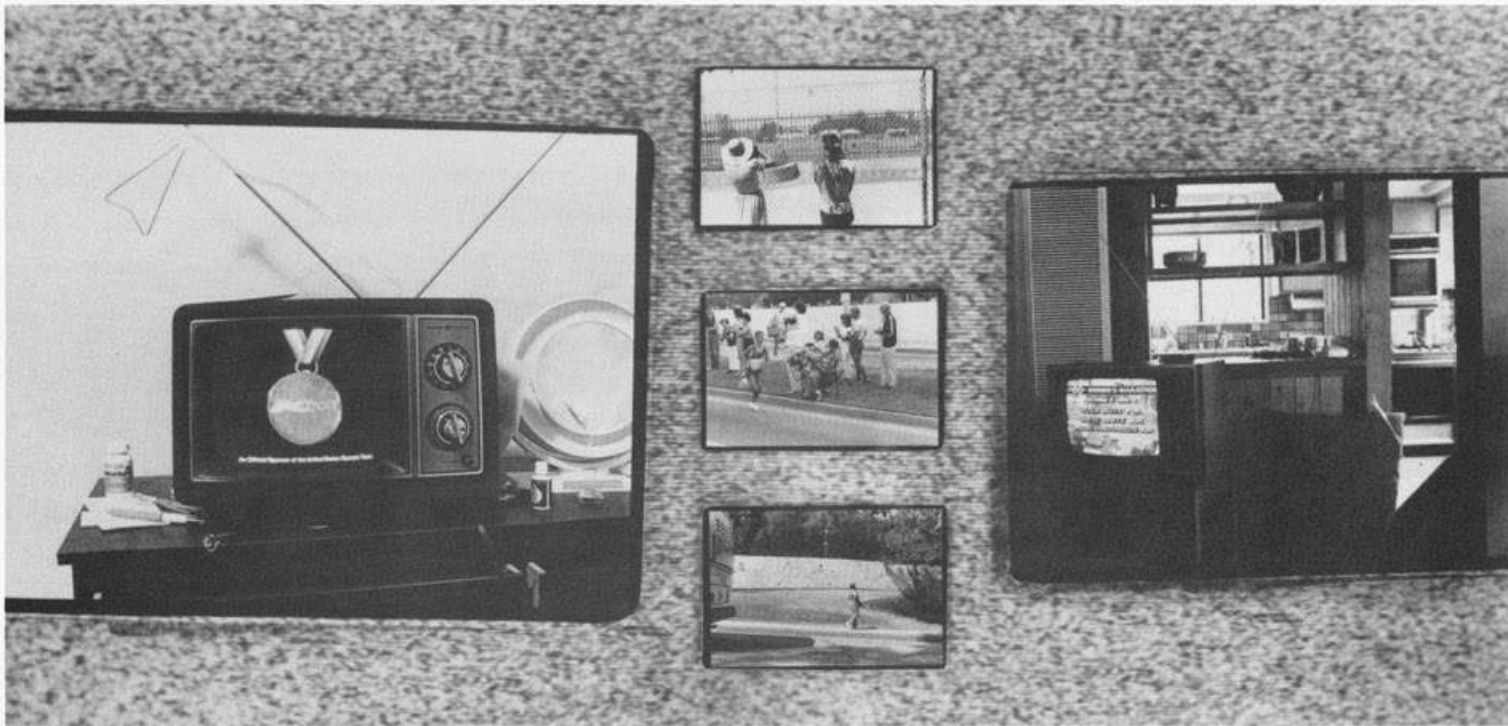
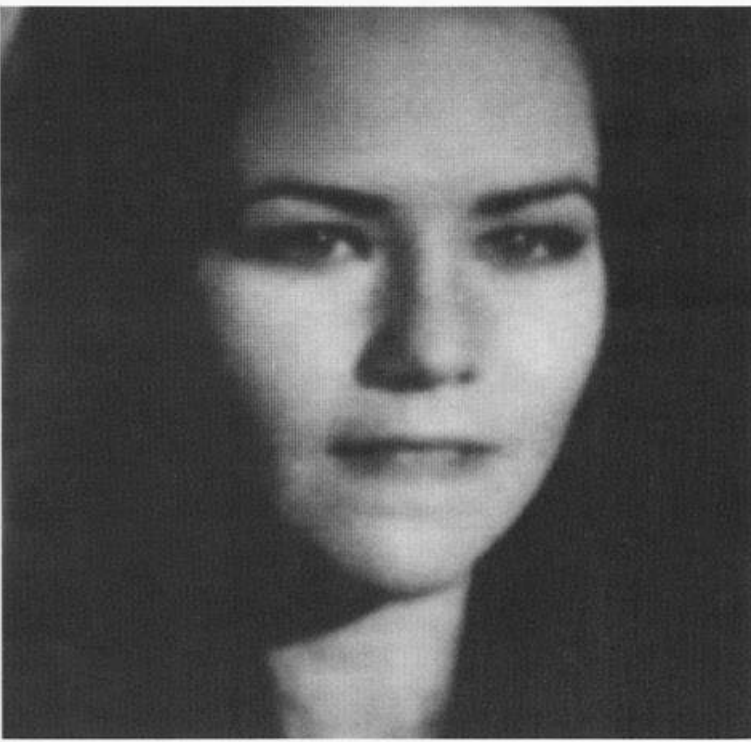
**V.** We must change our romantic attitude toward the rules, too, and recognize them not as an imposition but as a biologically and culturally agreed upon code of communication, and constitution, the foundation of our freedom. —Frederick Turner

A historicization of the present is a deadly serious issue in educational and intellectual terms. When actors and actresses are accepted for the knowledge and authority they represent in Hollywood productions, a fundamental shift has occurred in the hierarchical order of information. The US Congressional hearings of early 1985 provide an excellent example of this change. Sissy Spacek, Jane Fonda and Sally Fields testified during the hearings on the plight of the American farmer, after having starred the previous year in movies depicting the current economic struggles of farm life.

A disturbing trend in contemporary journalism can be found in the success of the Gannett newspaper publication, *USA Today*. It characterizes itself as a form of the "new journalism of hope," as contrasted with a prevailing "journalism of despair," and is a "quick read" modeled after television. Gannett, in fact, even modeled the machines selling the papers after television sets. The editors have made astute strategical moves in shaping the paper's format. Stories are abbreviated into short digestible nuggets, less than 1500 words, and pages are filled with dashes of color, graphs and charts. The editors have observed, for example, that sports fans don't want to read stories recounting the games, they only want the statistics—and that is what fills the sports pages.<sup>8</sup> In a larger sense this is precisely what any sport has become—a game of statistics. Statistics and lists are a guiding criteria for American culture because they represent compressed information—and time means money. But lists and tables of statis-



John Maggioro: Mona Lisa—Koo Stark, 1984 (original in color), SX-70 prints



Ardon Alger: Women's Marathon, 1985

tics lack the necessary supplemental information that allows for the establishment of meaning. Generalities are created to assess individual accomplishments, perhaps due to the laborious task of creating fresh insights.

Encyclopedias were the 19th century form of gathering ideas and facts, and today the computer provides similar services, but with greater capabilities of indexing and cross-checking information. Society, as an organism, has developed a central nervous system of information. But as matter and energy have degraded, so too has information. The word "imagination" stems from the visual image, but is now applied to all forms of conjectural thought, visual or otherwise. Despite inexact usage and skewed definitions, words will remain as our most basic and immediate (perhaps even effective) way of grappling with ideas.

Symbolism is becoming a more dominant characteristic of social existence, as everyone can "create," or be "creative." When creative multiplicity can partially compensate for a relative deficiency in image quality (look to the history of the snapshot, or the evolution of television), the factor of technological innovation has been acknowledged for its broad social impact.

Our rational knowledge of the world, as promulgated by photography, has not led to a greater freedom. The struggle for status has supplanted the needs of survival. Self-identity has become intertwined with the identity of mass society, as values are arbitrarily apprehended from mass media. We have witnessed a melting of the material world. This is an age of

needs, when the means must be found to identify the meaning of the images affecting our lives. It is not an insurmountable task, but one necessitating new forms of education. Only by such innovations will images cease to sway us in involuntary ways, and allow us to control some portion of our destiny.

*The author wishes to thank Paul Lamprianos, a mathematician and imaginative thinker, whose discussions and writing have helped fuel and define many of these concepts, over the past six years.*

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Diane Arbus, *Diane Arbus* (Miller-

ton, N.Y.: Aperture, 1972), p. 6

2. R. L. Gregory, *The Intelligent Eye*, New York, McGraw Hill, 1970), p. 166.

3. *New York Magazine*, May 13, 1985, p. 22.

4. Mark Johnstone, "Photography, Computers and the Man in the Stands," *Photo-Communic* (Fall 1984), pp. 30–36, and the reference to Harry C. Andrews, "Digital Image Processing," *Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering Spectrum*, April 1979, pp. 38–49.

5. Howard Bossen, "Zone IV," *Studies in Visual Communication* (Summer 1985), pp. 22–32.

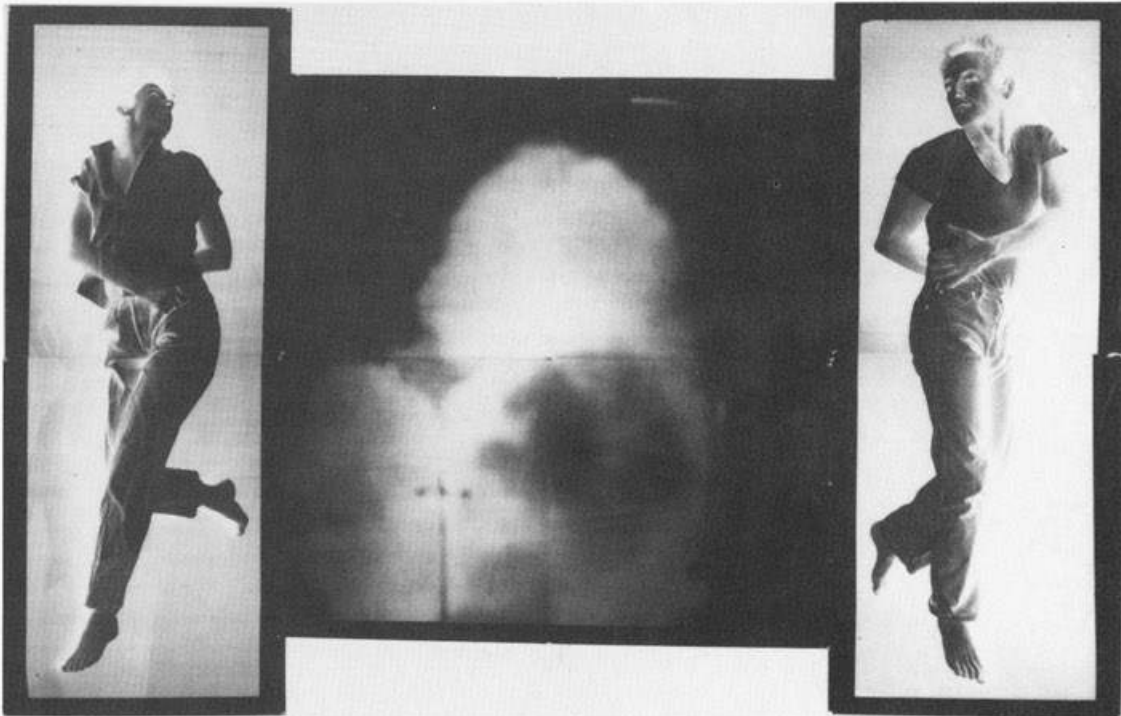
6. Leroy Searle, "Idea Networks," *Radical Rational Space Time* (Seattle: University of Wash., Henry Art Gallery, 1983), p. 9.

7. Frederick Turner, "Escaping Modernism," *Harpers*, November, 1984, p. 52.

8. Tom McNichol and Margaret Carlson, "Al Neuharth's Technicolor Baby, Part II," *Columbia Journalism Review* Volume I V (May/June 1985), pp. 44–48.

Mark Johnstone is a Los Angeles based photographer and writer whose articles have been published in American and European journals devoted to photography and art.

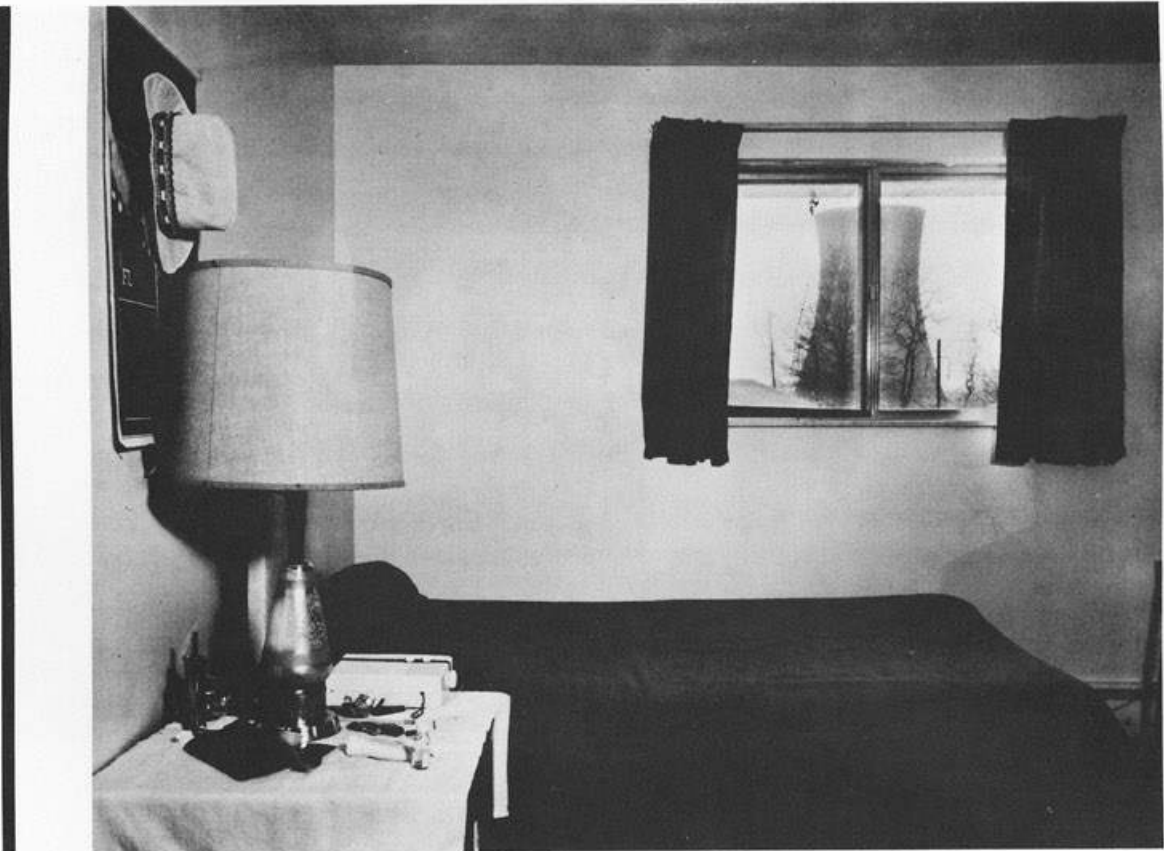
Jeff Weiss: Untitled, 1985 (original in color), Cibachrome, 120" x 80"





A PROBLEM OF NUCLEAR PFAHL-OUT

This essay was written prior to the Chernobyl nuclear accident. In the light of that disaster the issues discussed in this article take on more urgency. —James Huginin, Chicago, Illinois



JANUARY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 New Year's Day	2	3	4	5	6	7

Lisa Lewenz: January (from the calendar A View From Three Mile Island, 1984)

By James R. Huginin

I immediately wanted to take the essay apart 'seam-by-seam.' The book had been published in 1984, but I procrastinated in obtaining a copy until a few days ago when I bought the weighty, cumbersome book at the Los Angeles County Art Museum for twenty-five dollars. I placed it on my desk where it displaced ninety square inches of scarce table-top until I accidentally knocked it off several days later. The tome tumbled open to page one hundred and seventy-nine, revealing a color reproduction of one of John Pfahl's photographs from his *Power Places* series—an idyllic view of the "Three Mile Island Nuclear Plant" taken in May of 1982. On the facing page was the beginning of an essay, "John Pfahl: Power Places," by Sally Eauclore. I needed no further invitation to pick up Eauclore's book. *New Color/New Work: Eighteen Photographic Essays* and read what she had to say about Pfahl's luscious color images, luminist inspired arcadian vistas in which nestle not a woodsman's cabin or a little farm, but the utilitarian architecture of the sources of our nation's electrical energy: hydroelectric and nuclear power plants.

"In John Pfahl's *Power Places*," begins Eauclore, "the conflict between the machine and the garden that has raged since the beginning of the Republic looks happily resolved." This initial reading of Pfahl's imagery is the most obvious, the most open to the layperson, and is so admitted by Eauclore herself when she mentions that the proponents of the utility industries have responded favorably to these photographs. Indeed, these pictures could easily grace any utility company's calendar or annual report. She, however, goes on to complicate this reading by sketching out what she considers as the less obvious, more esthetically sophisticated, connotations inherent in Pfahl's photographs:

But since the tensions—and stakes—of that conflict are higher than ever before, Pfahl's idealization must in fact be ironic, for his photographs contain scenes suggesting the transcendental powers of nature deliberately juxtaposed with signs of a technology

so powerful that it not only threatens the picturesque but the very world itself.

Consequently, says Eauclore, the images may also be read as a veiled attack upon the very power plants whose proponents find Pfahl's pictures a sympathetic vision of a nuclear future where a benevolent nature will live in harmony with nature's most destructive potentiality, the atom. (The fact that Pfahl trains his camera on hydroelectric power plants, in addition to nuclear power, to a great extent obviates Eauclore's reading of Pfahl's imagery as critical of his subject matter.) Eauclore, in a reading that ignores the pleasant association usually attached to sunsets, dramatic cloud effects and reflecting water, argues that anti-nuclear protestors can "point to frozen gray waters, apocalyptic sunsets and other corroborations of doom." But she glosses over the fact that these images are, if not reactionary, politically naive. At best, they can only reinforce the pre-existing values of those who view them—proponents for the plants will read the photographs as celebratory, as confirming their visions, while those concerned citizens against such plants could, with a stretch of the imagination, find them indirectly accusatory. Either way, Pfahl has failed to take a firm position vis à vis the plants. He does not seek to educate people to the dangers inherent in nuclear power, to change the opinions of those who fail to see the impact of such plants on our ecology and the future of the human prospect. This "waffling" is, according to Eauclore, a more complex handling of subject matter than seen in the work of committed political photographers whose normative stances she believes smack of a didacticism, hence appeal only weakly to an affective state. According to this brand of criticism excessive denotation overwhelms the complexities of connotation. But Pfahl, according to Eauclore, follows the proper path toward an esthetic ambiguity:

While his prints reveal the pastoral ideal under technological encroachment, Pfahl encourages complex musings.

Just how complex these musings are is hinted by the essayist herself: Pfahl himself is no crusader except

perhaps in the art-for-art's-sake realm . . . Steering clear of direct confrontation with ecological questions, Pfahl places pictorial priorities foremost.

The artist's moral and political indecisiveness on the issue of energy versus ecology, an indecisiveness pointed out by Eauclore herself, has been twisted by this essayist's semantics (e.g., "complex musings") into a positive esthetic virtue reminiscent of the critical program of the New Critics.

Writing on poetry during the 1940s and 1950s, the New Critics—I.A. Richards, John Crowe Ransom and William Empson—opposed irony, tension, ambiguity and emotive language to the straightforward discourse of scientific explanation. Ideas, in the realm of poetics, were not to be presented patly and neatly; the task of poetics was not to exemplify or produce ideas, but to become involved in the "recalcitrant stuff of life," as one writer put it. Such "complex musings" were gauges for the esthetic complexity of the organic whole, the autonomous entity, that was the poem. Distance, detachment, impersonality and fictionality were qualities admired by the New Critics, qualities Eauclore finds in Pfahl's *oeuvre*. In his book *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, William Empson mentions "ambiguity of the fourth type" which "occurs when two or more meanings of a statement do not agree among themselves, but combine to make clear a more complicated state of mind in the author." It is this "complicated state of mind" that Eauclore attempts to elucidate in her essay. However, after reading her essay, that complicated state of mind can only refer to Pfahl's political simplemindedness as it is refracted through the murky waters of Eauclore's arguments.

Eauclore borrows haphazardly from the New Critics' theoretical architecture in arguing the four main points in her essay:

1) that Pfahl's imagery is not unquestioningly celebrating our energy technologies, but incorporates a tension (tension, as understood by the New Critics was derived from lopping the prefixes off extension and intension, signifying that the meaning of poetry, its

"tension," was the full organized body of all the extension, or denotation, and intension, or connotation, that we can find in it) between the implied threat of the power plants and the postcard beauty of the natural settings in which they appear—as evidence she can only point to captions under the photographs which identify the source of potential danger, its geographic location and the "no nukes" viewer's predisposed negative response to such plants;

2) that in producing this tension, Pfahl is appropriating the conventions of picturesque photography and jamming them up against those of social documentary—she says Pfahl has succeeded in reappraising the picturesque while at the same time utilizing that genre's time-worn clichés;

3) that such ambiguity and post-modernist tampering with genres is esthetically better than a more didactic and direct political attack on the plants—as would be carried by Allan Sekula, Fred Lonidier, or Steve Cagan—calling such an unsubtle tactic "obvious sarcasm" and a person who would stoop to it "a lesser talent"; and, finally, arguing for the organic unity of Pfahl's esthetic production over the years.

4) that this esthetization of something essentially political resolves and cluminates: a) Pfahl's long-time interest in his 19th-century predecessors—such as Carleton Watkins—and b) his self-reflexive attitude toward photography exhibited in the perceptual games he's played on viewers in his past work and in the carefully thought out formal arrangements he always establishes within the frame.

Eauclore, then, sets out to claim esthetic import for Pfahl's production, and its consistency with his past work. But she also lays claim to the critical thrust of *Power Places*, a thrust that is precariously balanced through irony between overt criticism and open celebration, a "complex musing" that, she claims, enriches the esthetic pleasure of these images. (Lately, it's been fashionable for formalist-oriented critics to turn back Marxist theory on itself—that all cultural production is inherently political—and



claim as politically critical art works that, at best, only marginally question the status quo.) Such a dilemma of meaning may be wholly acceptable for certain kinds of subject matter, but when an artist filters an objective social condition of global import—as is nuclear power and its impact on our environment—through an esthete's subjectivism, the result may easily slip into ethical confusion; a critical commentary encouraging such a murky position can only propagate the muddle. For instance, in plate 116—which depicts the San Onofre Nuclear Station near San Clemente, California—the breast-like dome structures which characterize the plant are so far up the coast, in the right side of the frame, as to be barely noticeable. The setting sun bathes the scene in a delicate, warm light we've seen in numerous postcards and travelogues. Nature has assimilated the plant into itself, the domes' hue being identical to the expanse of beach cutting diagonally through the frame. Only the caption identifying the structure as a nuclear power plant hints at the possibility of dire consequences. In plate 115, Pfahl has aimed his camera at Hoover Dam, and in plate 112 at Diablo Dam in Washington. Their identifying captions, however, fail to conjure up apocalyptic nightmares, and so Eauclaire shifts critical gears to accommodate them:

*The dams rival nature with their sheer massive presence. Pfahl finds bold abstraction at Diablo Dam, Skagit River, Washington, where the concrete seems at loggerheads with the stone boulders and where foliage vies for supremacy over both . . . Diablo is awesome, invested with the venerability of a natural monument. The poignant little stump in the left hand corner harkes back to America's first homesteaders and their primitive attempts to tame nature.*

The contradictory readings for John Pfahl's *Power Plants*, and valorized in Sally Eauclaire's essay, is echoed in the very structure of our society. Herbert Marcuse, a noted Marxist, has shown that the bourgeois cultural experience was at once the authentic expression of the desires, fantasies, and hopes that capitalism could not fulfill or accommodate and the hegemonic imposition of the very distortions by which cultural experience allowed anything to be expressed so long as nothing could be changed. Eauclaire herself hints at this ideological effect in the 19th-century attempts at reconciling the demands of capitalism and the delights of nature:

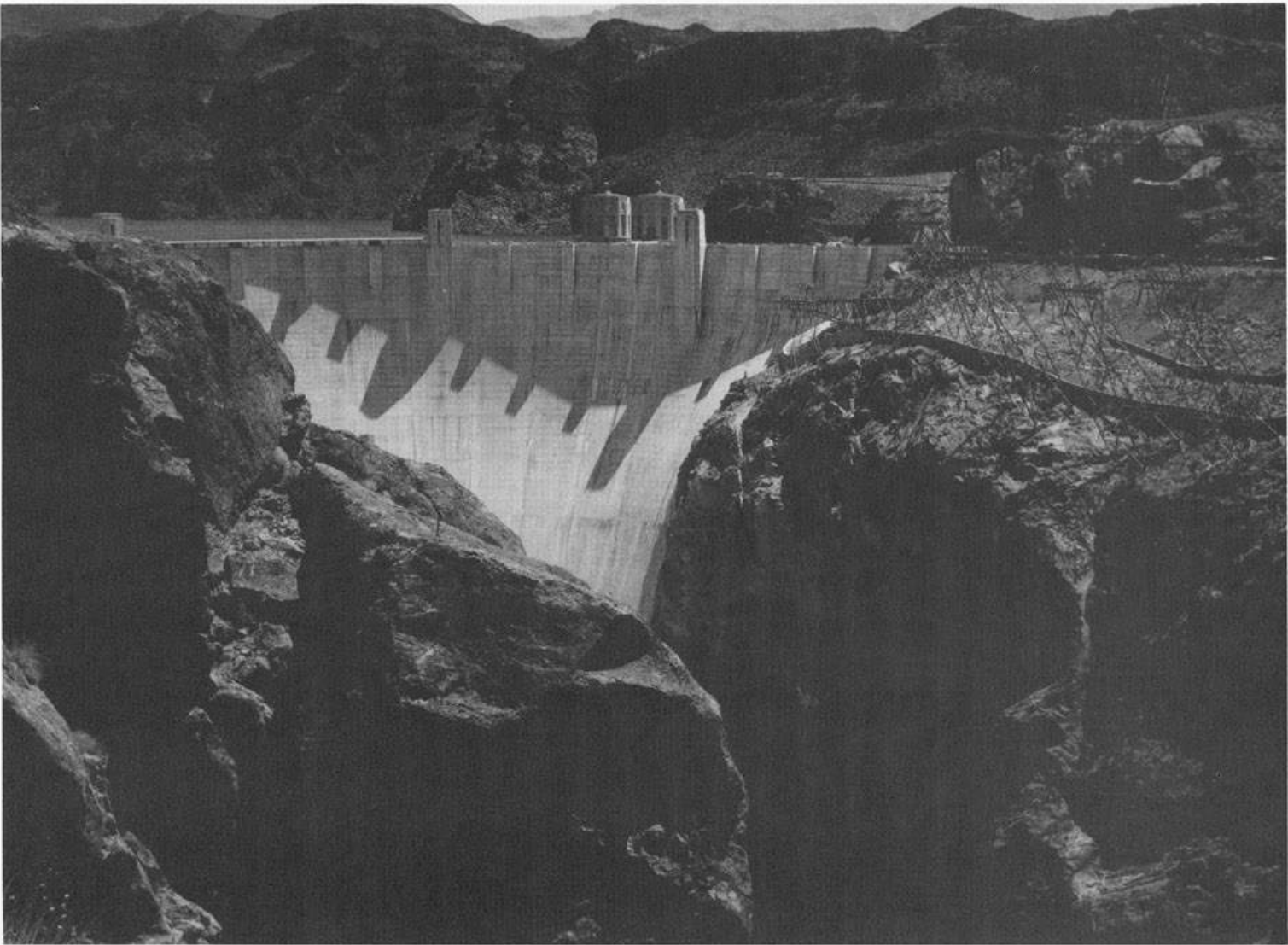
*The energy/ecology dilemma is hardly new. 19th-century writers exalted technology as often as they pointed to the immance of God in nature. America was a garden that epitomized utopia on earth and also a frightening wilderness to be tamed.*

What Eauclaire enjoys in Pfahl's photographs is the expression, the continuance, of such contradictions, mistaking an ideological effect for an esthetic effect:

*The beauties can be striking—in several cases nature has never seemed more lovely. Sometimes the stunning geometries and pearly surfaces of some of the power plants suggest the perfection of the Emerald City and the power of the pyramids. Yet the presence of signs of technology—whether those of oil, coal, steam, or nuclear fission—have prompted numerous viewers to read the photographs as elegiac summaries of our civilization. . . . All that is missing is the motto, Et in Arcadia Ego—I [death] am also in Arcadia.*

Yet it is the very absence of that motto as expressed in formal and contential terms that prevents Pfahl's imagery from being actively political, from being a threat to the utilities he photographs. If Pfahl's pictures were to constitute the only challenge to such utilities, these companies would have little to worry about.

The fact that some critics would consider his images as resolving the art/politics dilemma is an indication



John Pfahl, Hoover Dam (original in color), Colorado River, Nevada, June 1983

of the inadequacy of idealist esthetics in coming to grips with material reality, with the pressing need for something other than mere imaginative resolutions of actual conflicts. We need to go beyond the private concerns as lauded by Eauclaire,

*In the Power Places Pfahl has met an adequate antagonist, one to challenge his ruthless formal intelligence and stimulate his intellect. What's more, after years of pursuing the picturesque in its many differing popular and art-historical meanings, he has finally found a subject commensurate with his capacity to wonder.*

Turning that "capacity to wonder" into the capacity to alter the concrete conditions of our existence counters what Terence Hawkes (in *Structuralism and Semiotics*) has pointed out as the main ideological issues re-enforced by Eauclaire's critical stance:

*Thus, New Criticism's admiration of complexity, balance, poise and tension could be said to sustain the characteristic bourgeois concern for a 'fixed' and established, unchanging reality, because it disparages forceful, consistent and direct action.*

Rising above Pfahl's estheticism, achieving a witty, nevertheless barbed, social criticism is Lisa Lewenz. Who? you say. L-e-w-e-n-z. An artist adept in a variety of media, she has been playing academic gypsy from out of the Chicago area for a number of years. Currently, she is a visiting artist at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. Her *A View from Three Mile Island* (1984) takes the quotidian form of a calendar for that year, a smart choice of format as her idea is to communicate to a broad range of people, not merely court accolades from the Photographic Establishment. Unfortunately, Pfahl's portfolio remains quite invisible to the average jane and joe who rarely wander through the portals of gallery or museum. Where Pfahl's full color renditions are visually seductive and glamorize the power plants, Lewenz's monochromatics narrow the esthetic spectrum the viewer is to respond to, making her social critique more precise.

Lewenz's calendar takes up about one hundred eighty-seven square inches of wall space. That's more area than Eauclaire's publication displaces, but it begs to hide con-

veniently that smudge or that nail hole in your wall and so doesn't sit cluttering your desktop for very long. Besides, you can scribble your appointments in it. Flipping through the comb bound calendar month by month, studying the photograph on each page as with conventional calendars, you catch glimpses of Three Mile Island—those conspicuous towers—framed through the windows from inside homes of Harrisburg area residents. Lewenz photographed in the area for two years before compiling her calendar. What startles is how close those neat little interiors are to the atomic piles. No, it isn't because she tricked us with a telephoto lens, for if anything, those master bedrooms, child playrooms, living rooms, and dining areas demanded a wider than normal lens for their portraits. Tense interiors are quaint, akin to Chauncey Hare's *Interior America* minus occupants; they recall John Pfahl's *Picture Windows*, but Lewenz pulls her camera back to include objects of daily use so that personal objects will be rendered in a photographic detail that must spark our innate voyeurism. This tactic not only contextualizes the nuclear plant peeking in from every window in the calendar, it also sets up an ethical tension between the uplifting values we associate with home and hearth and those more questionable values of a corporate management which oversees the horrible destructive potential looming just outside. In contradistinction, Pfahl goes about making—according to Eauclaire—an esthetic tension between the picturesque and the apocalyptic—a false tension since the final holocaust will be picturesque. I've talked to atomic physicists who've personally observed atmospheric nuclear explosions and all were ecstatic over the visual esthetics attendant upon achieving nuclear fission.

The calendar's cover displays its title, *A View from Three Mile Island*, and date, 1984, in a modest serifed typeface; above is a single photograph flanked, for emphasis, by wide black rulings. In this image Lewenz moves closer to Pfahl's brand of meta-photography. The setting is no longer homeside, but institutional. She has cropped up to

the edge of the large glass doors, its metal frame forming a large cross-hairs over the scene. Beyond the doors, on a large walkway, stands a woman in the act of taking a snapshot of her family. These typical Americans stand proudly before the nuclear plant which is to provide the backdrop for the snap. This woman, recording a great moment in her family's sojourn, acts as a symbol (she faces away from us) of the typical. Less successfully, Robert Adams' photographic study of the middleclass residents imperiled by the atomic weapons plant situated near them was an attempt to juxtapose the everyday suburban reality to the implied horrors resulting from an accident at the weapon plant. The image also operates as a self-reflexive gesture, referring to the artist herself who is performing the same photographic activity behind the woman's back—with a more sophisticated camera and different intent, of course.

Carefully positioned, an open square outlined in black on the glass door repeats, intensifies the camera's framing of the plant behind. This *punctum* (as Barthes might label it) further targets the "real subject" of these images, the power plant, which was inaccessible to Lewenz and so had to be shot through the openings of places she could get permission to enter. This multiple framing suggests the constructed nature of the photographic image and, by implication, the constructed nature of our belief systems. That the people on the cover, except for the scowling grandmother, pose so cheerfully before the deadly machine behind them says something about the way such an atomic device has been socio-politically "framed" by the utility companies for general "consumption."

This introductory image sets the stage for all that is to follow inside the calendar. It makes its appeal both to those average janes and joes perusing their local Crown Books or B. Dalton Book Sellers, and those sophisticates more in their element while either navigating the clutter of Chatterton's Books or other similar book-dives, or making a purchase in a well-scrubbed museum bookstore.

Besides appropriating the overall

design format of the traditional calendar, Lewenz has taken the convention of inscribing inside the date quads the birthdays of illustrious folk, momentous events like ground hog day, and popular holidays and turned up its social stridency several decibels. Flip the calendar open to January third and read:

*Idaho Falls test reactor kills three workers. 1961*

or for the fourth of January read:

*Reagan bill gives a-plants temporary license before safety hearings. 1983*

The seventeenth of February commemorates a frightening statistic:

*Report: high levels of strontium-90 in US milk & childrens [sic] bones. 1959*

On the back of the calendar, Lewenz appends a lengthy discussion of this project, its origins in a near-miss between a ferry she was passenger on and a nuclear submarine lurking just beneath. Here she comments on her purpose in incorporating these pithy blurbs:

*Some of these events become headline news while others pass unmentioned by the media. As with most events in our lives, only a few are clearly remembered. This calendar is an attempt to chronicle a variety of nuclear-related events and to focus thought on the options for our future.*

The result of Lewenz's research is that throughout the year the calendar's owner is led through an abridged history of the nuclear age with its terrible dangers and bureaucratic mumbo-jumbo. It's a gift that "keeps on giving," day by day, as you check each day's date and find yourself being slyly educated in easily assimilated chunks of news. In so doing, she has successfully navigated between the Charybdis of pedanticism and the Scylla of over-simplification. For the Yuppy set, perhaps we could persuade Lewenz to do a clever take-off on *Trivial Pursuit*? Trivia would be supplanted by politically relevant information!

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BRINGING UP  
DICK AND JANE

The video tape *Dick Talk* by X was shown "on request" at the Houston Center for Photography (May 23—June 29) in conjunction with the exhibition *Recoding Sexuality*.

According to X ("a 44 year old video producer") *Dick Talk* was made: Because I could no longer stand the tension between what I said to myself about sex and what I said to others. The languages were so far apart that I had to deny myself the expression of ideas, feelings, questions, observations, and most of all, laughs, about an inwardly luscious and agreeable life. I could share other experience; why not sexuality? I was sure other women felt the same way. I am sure men do too.

So I rounded up some good talkers, women who knew what they knew about themselves and what they didn't. I promised them and myself anonymity because I didn't want to hurt family members and friends who would not approve of such talk. And, none of us is independently wealthy.

I asked three women to shoot, light and do the audio on *Dick Talk* believing we could talk more freely away from a male audience. The crew wanted to be credited.

The best part of *Dick Talk* is that I finally got to talk "Dick."

The following critique of *Dick Talk* was done by four women, a freelance critic and three Houston based artists, who also wish to remain anonymous.

The Houston Center for Photography will forward requests for information on *Dick Talk* to the producer, X.

Look, Dick.  
Look, Jane.  
Look and see.  
Oh, oh, oh.  
Oh, Dick.  
Look and see.

**A:** They are much more rigid than what they are saying.  
**B:** Yes, they are being real careful with what they are saying, they are holding their hands all together, their legs are crossed.  
**C:** Do you think that they are uncomfortable?  
**B:** Sure, wouldn't you be?  
**D:** Let's see how they are at the end.  
**E:** It reminds me of the *Saturday Night Live* slumber party, where they had their hair up in curlers and talking—it was absolutely hilarious.  
**C:** Why?  
**D:** Because it was so familiar—they were like six in bed together and one would say "do you know what they do? . . ." They would open their mouths and pssst, psssst, psssst



X: *Dick Talk*, 1986, video still

whisper—then say "oh, my gosh, my mother would never do that! Neither did my father. . ." and then everyone would laugh.  
**A:** I would go through my dad's drawer with his handkerchiefs and the smell of hair tonic thinking I would find out something about the other sex—but I never got the details from reading a book—there was an aura of mystery. It's like art is today—where are the men hiding? They are always the viewer—all the information we have about the nude and everything comes from the man—but we never see him—that really disturbs me.  
**E:** I wonder why they didn't invite a man to this?  
**A:** Maybe we should have a man here with us.  
**B:** I think we should do this two times—once with us—then another time with some guys here.  
**D:** But I think that's what they want to do with *Dick Talk* and have the sequel with men talking.

Come Dick. Come and see. Come. Come. Come and see Spot

**A:** I saw this tape the opening night at HCP in that side room and all the men were just squirming—so uncomfortable—and the women were cackling.  
**C:** I don't think the video director knew how it would turn out.  
**A:** Oh, I think she did.  
**E:** What do you think she really wanted?  
**D:** I think it's an answer or take-off on men's locker room conversations—as a jibe.  
**A:** Yes, now all of a sudden we are women, the viewer of all this—and this is our turn to participate.  
**C:** But do you think they know each other—as men would—and feel comfortable about all this?  
**B:** I think they know each other—but not as best of friends type thing—they'd be behaving

differently.  
**A:** I see two of them being very competitive—about one-upping the other and the other two much more layed back—really getting into what is being said rather than the one upsmanship.  
**D:** I think it is their personalities.  
**A:** That's what surprises me about this tape—that I don't think of women getting together for one upsmanship.  
**B:** Oh, yeah, it's more "oh, wow, tell me more" as an intrigue rather than—well, I did I better than you.  
**C:** I don't think of women getting envious—like men do.  
**B:** Sure, you wished it happened to you, or wish that some day it may happen to you but you don't try be better than someone else.

Go up, Tim. Go up. Go up, up, up.

**A:** Here they are showing pictures from *Playboy* and it always shows lots of hair—and it's so funny 'cause all the pictures and diagrams that I

ever saw were pink and hairless—I was so shocked to see hair.  
**B:** "He." "It"—it's like a third person they are referring to.  
**A:** We are always in control and don't have to make excuses that "it has a mind of its own."

Go down, Tim. Go down. Go down, down, down.

**B:** Do you notice how girls talk about the sensation of the water or the grass or being behind a big bush. . .  
**D:** The whole context of the way women perceive is different—the sensuality is the feel, the smell of a guy's hair, his eyes—and yet I hear that men get turned on most by a woman who is half covered.  
**C:** They say that's why "totally nude" girlie shows aren't half as successful as the strip tease idea or G-strings or pasties.  
**A:** That's funny 'cause here they are zeroing in on one part of a man's body—just like men do—instead of talking about the body, the hair, the smell, the shape, the shadows—all that sensuality.  
**B:** And they are talking like the men do—they are right into the same thing and it's not very sensual.  
**A:** And the one in the striped blouse is so concerned about how good she is in bed—that she's not into the discussion—she's so worried about "am I good?"  
**B:** I think she has a male point of view—and here she is painting her nails.  
**C:** I've never been around a group of women where one woman pulls out some nail polish and starts retouching up their nails—kind of strange, no?  
**A:** She is truly representing the stereotype of what we see in girlie magazines.  
**D:** With no style or glamour really.  
**A:** Whereas the two women who aren't quite as young or whatever,

don't seem to be into the image of what men think as sexuality—like the woman in the beige suit is much more intellectual about it.  
**A:** And that other one is preening like a bird—stroking her nails—have you ever seen anyone put polish on like that?  
**C:** The slang they use—it's a man's vocabulary—like right out of some porno magazine.  
**D:** It's like she has gotten all her information from that kind of magazine and she's just spilling back what she's picked up along the way.  
**A:** But the first time I saw the tape—I giggled and delighted that women could get together and talk like that—and now to see it again I guess I'm getting more critical of it—I don't care for the things "nail-polish" is saying.  
**B:** Perhaps a part of the funnyness of seeing it the first time was the nervousness attached to it—what they were going to say—what they were going to do—the anticipation factor—but I remember the woman



X: *Dick Talk*, 1986, video still

I really related to was the woman in the blue dress—when she would say certain things I wanted to know who she was.  
**C:** And she's the one with the least *Playboy* body.  
**B:** You know I'm disturbed at the title "*Dick Talk*"—if I were talking about sex with women, I wouldn't say "dick"—'cause I don't think women talking about men talk about "dicks" first.  
**D:** But maybe that's not fair, because I think this is a jarring take-off on locker room talk—and that the women were directed towards talking about "dicks."  
**A:** But it's not—this is almost condoning it—that women should talk this way too.  
**D:** And instead of doing it in an ironically, funny, bitter way—it's a mimic of them—very unconscious.  
**A:** I think so too—I think that we are so well programmed, that we have learned these things so well, that it is just flowing forth.  
**C:** But have you ever been around a bunch of girls that are talking like this? I haven't.  
**D:** Me either, except I do have couple of friends who talk about it all the time, but they are the only ones I know—and they are always talking sizes—and I'm kind of shocked to hear them.  
**A:** I don't think it's unnatural for girls to talk to each other about sex—but I do find it's unnatural for them to talk about it in terms of the stereotype—they haven't gotten down to anything original—in fact, I've been wondering myself through all this if I have anything original to say about penises and I thought you need to watch this again and listen, then say what you really feel—this all seems like *Playboy*—they haven't had anything original—they are programmed in.  
**D:** It's all clichés.  
**A:** This is a freudian things, going back to our fathers and how we so

strongly associate with them—and everything—our first experiences like the *Playboy* magazines and me with my father's handkerchiefs all started with our fathers like I loved the smell of my father's pillow.  
  
Look up, Baby. Look up and see Dick. See Dick go up, up, up.  
  
**D:** And my father with his pipe, the smell of tobacco.  
**B:** Even today I had to make a phone call from a public phone booth and the cigarette smell of the open phone booth was very sexual—like a man had been there before me—that pervasive thing—and I felt very sexual with that beautiful smell—and I stood there in the phone booth and thought "ooooh. . ."  
**D:** I think another point is that sexuality is not just men. . .  
**B:** Yeah, and here they are equating sex with a "dick"—you don't have to have one—we don't have one. . .  
**A:** And what you are saying that

sexuality has to do with being very safe—in a home or enclosed in a phone booth—not alienated—that you can be who you are.  
**B:** Here, the penis seems to be alienating him somewhere.  
**D:** Like he is somewhere else and hasn't even shown up yet—like a third person—it's "it", then it's him.  
**B:** Like the one woman who wondered who he was—never first thinking about how big or how little his penis was—or shocked if it's really little or if it's really big—I'd like to think about the whole person.  
**D:** There are compensations.  
**A:** We are watching a beauty pageant about penises.  
**B:** Well said, we really are—and we know about them.  
**C:** Yep, they are sponsored too—maybe by the *Dick Clark Bandstand* and the top 40 hits.  
**A:** But look at that woman—she's been kind of put down as being the mother. . .  
**B:** She's past the age of *Playboy*.  
**A:** Instead it would be very interesting for me to hear them talk about what they feel like.  
**B:** Instead of the physical size—about the human being.  
**A:** The image at what we are looking at doesn't at all mean what we are about being artists—it's not the object that is there—it's the aura that surrounds.  
**B:** It's about your partner, about letting your mind be gone and to have your own images that can be taken up in.  
**C:** And yet, they have translated these images into something specific—there isn't any day dreaming about this.  
**B:** But that is what good sex is—a reverie, a meander.  
**C:** Like waking up in the morning and you are half here and half there.  
**B:** It's a wandering—not pre-programmed.  
**C:** The one woman is contradicting



everything the others have said—she's into nature and the natural discovery—and the others are into the vocabulary of what they have read—I wonder how these people were chosen—they certainly aren't the closest of friends.

**D:** But I think that they are acquaintances that have consented to talk about this—that don't have a fear of being found out—I wonder if they are all married. . .

**C:** They are backtracking, rehashing—don't you think a greater discussion would have taken place with a nun and a Chinese lady and a Black lady and city girl and a country girl or from some African tribe—different cultures instead of so similar.

**B:** But in a way, this is an affirmation of what we all are thinking similarly.

**A:** But this was boring to me because they just touched on it—there was no depth—and they had a whole hour or tape to do it in—but they didn't—they mentioned things and kept on mentioning.



Anonymous: "Critical Janes," 1986

**B:** The whole thing was that the woman in the blue dress and the woman in the white shirt when they would start in on something and what they diffused—the others won't take up on it and go on—there wasn't any crossfire.

**A:** Somehow the others kept changing the subject—getting back to the size or the specifics—while the other two were trying to enlarge or expand upon something and be more thoughtful about it away from statistics

**D:** Or maybe a certain amount of disillusionment that comes with time and broken relationships and mistaken judgements and so on that becomes frightening—it would have been wonderful to have wandered into a different sociologic group and ask them to give you 30 minutes to talk about sex and men and how you feel about yourself—and go on to another and another and another group.

**C:** But this served as an ice breaker—I mean I've never seen anything like this—I may really be out of it—but for me it serves as an introduction—a spurring on—I mean we have come together because of it.

**A:** Right, the first time I saw this, I came out and said "wow" this is alright and it got me talking with my friends about it.

**B:** I may not feel quite the same about it, but I couldn't wait to talk to some really close friends—it was nice to know that some women were doing it.

Oh, Mother. Oh, Father. See Dick. See Dick play.

**C:** What do you think guys would say about this (tape)—we've said that the American guys who saw it felt squirmish—I wonder what European guys would think—maybe they wouldn't have to prove anything.

**D:** I don't think that they (European guys) are that much more secure.

**B:** Maybe stylistically different.

**A:** But across the line, I don't think they are different—black, white, European.

**C:** I think so—it's cultural heritage—like how we speak of Italian men.

**A:** But when it comes down to the actual interaction between that man and that woman, I don't think it's much different in any culture.

**D:** I don't think any man likes to hear women talking about them or that are comfortable with any kind of explosive sexual coverage—nude photos or whatever—if the roles were reversed in movies, whew.

**A:** In the history of art, it's always been the man as voyeur, whether it be painter or photographer of nudes—take any situation where there is a nude woman and image that as a nude man—and we—or I as a woman—would die laughing—I can't image men being coy or presenting themselves to us that way—some photographers have tried to dispell that myth—like when

they are photographing, they are totally nude themselves—although I do think there was some sexuality involved—some sexual interaction in itself—but that I am not any more than a voyeur than she is—and there is an attempt at some kind of mutual exchange.

Oh, Mother. Oh, Father. See Dick. See Dick play.

**D:** These women are talking about being voyeurs themselves—like the woman talking about when she was five and the thing that turned her on was watching some little boy playing with himself—isn't that some kind of voyeurism for a kid that age?

**C:** No, I think it is more a fascination.

**B:** Then it goes underground and is snuffed out of us as bad.

**C:** Do you think this set out to accomplish what it was supposed to accomplish? Or was it a fluke to see what would happen if you got five women together with one topic and a video camera? Or were they prepped about what to talk about beforehand?

**B:** They laughed alot in the beginning but they didn't seem to laugh as much as it progressed or at the end.

**A:** No, I think it got competitive—or did the director make them talk about "dicks" which they wouldn't have talked about otherwise—are these the voices of individuality?

**C:** I don't think they knew what they were getting into.

**B:** In the end they were very revealing of themselves as human beings—just by their attitudes and demeanor.

**D:** The one in the blue dress was so sensitive about the things she said—that she had experienced it herself without being taught.

**B:** The one in the blue stripes was trying so hard—but still a kid about what she hadn't gotten.

**A:** And that guys should be thankful for what she had taught them.

**B:** For me what they have done is like chapter one—finding out about one another and what was comfort or discomfort—like an experiment that needed to be carried out over time.

**C:** But I have a feeling that they couldn't go on—that two had out-done each other and the two sensitive ones had been left with dead ends—that nothing was engendered—like!!! Instead of . . .

**D:** Too bad they didn't pick up on the two sensitive women and go on.

**A:** But I do think something was accomplished just by doing it—and that we can sit here and talk about penises whereas in our parents generation it was unheard of—and here I sit wondering if I should tell my daughter what we've been talking about—I mean I almost thought about bringing her here to discuss it with us.

**B:** It's like how do we present this to our children?

**A:** In a way, the tape diminishes an uncontrolled bias about presenting this—because before I didn't know five women I could sit down with and talk like this—but this has broken the ice for me—and that is a good feeling.

**C:** Actually I feel very comfortable now just talking about things and it was kind of exciting to find that there were all of us who were going to get together and discuss things rather openly.

**B:** But why did we feel that way at first and now the excitement has dissipated?

**C:** Maybe, it's like seeing *Psycho* over again—watching Bates turn the skeleton around again didn't have the jittery impact of the first time.

**D:** Maybe, the impact of this film is to show that it can be done.

**B:** Like it's ok—and I think that was HCP's excitement—like it's OK to show this there—it's OK to talk about it here.

**A:** It became legitimate.

**C:** And not raunchy or perverse to talk about in a public space—and yet the vocabulary was what you would find in a porno book.

Dick is big. Baby is not big. Baby is little. Big, big Dick. Funny little Baby.

**B:** Yet what I find out of all this is that women don't have a vocabulary that is feminine—cunt, pussy, dick, prick, etc. —sounds so awful.

**C:** But what words are there?

**D:** What words aren't degrading to us? Vagina is horrible too—and dull.

**B:** Cunt used to be a magical word for a witch—from *cuntis* meaning healer or wise woman—but it has come down so twisted and bad.

**A:** It's even the root of *uniform*—wise writing.

**B:** I have an idea—we should band together as women—and send a letter to Dr. Suess and have him invent a vocabulary for us. Even though he is a man and he is in his 80s—he has created such wonderful images and words for children on their terms—that if anyone, who exists today, he should be able to create an exciting vocabulary for good women, and potent women, and wise women instead of this worst sort of stuff that we have to deal with today.

Come away, Spot. Come away. Dick and Jane can not play. Dick can not go up. Jane can not come down. Come away, Spot. Come away.

PERSPECTIVES

REGIONALISM:  
A SENSE OF PLACE  
PART TWO

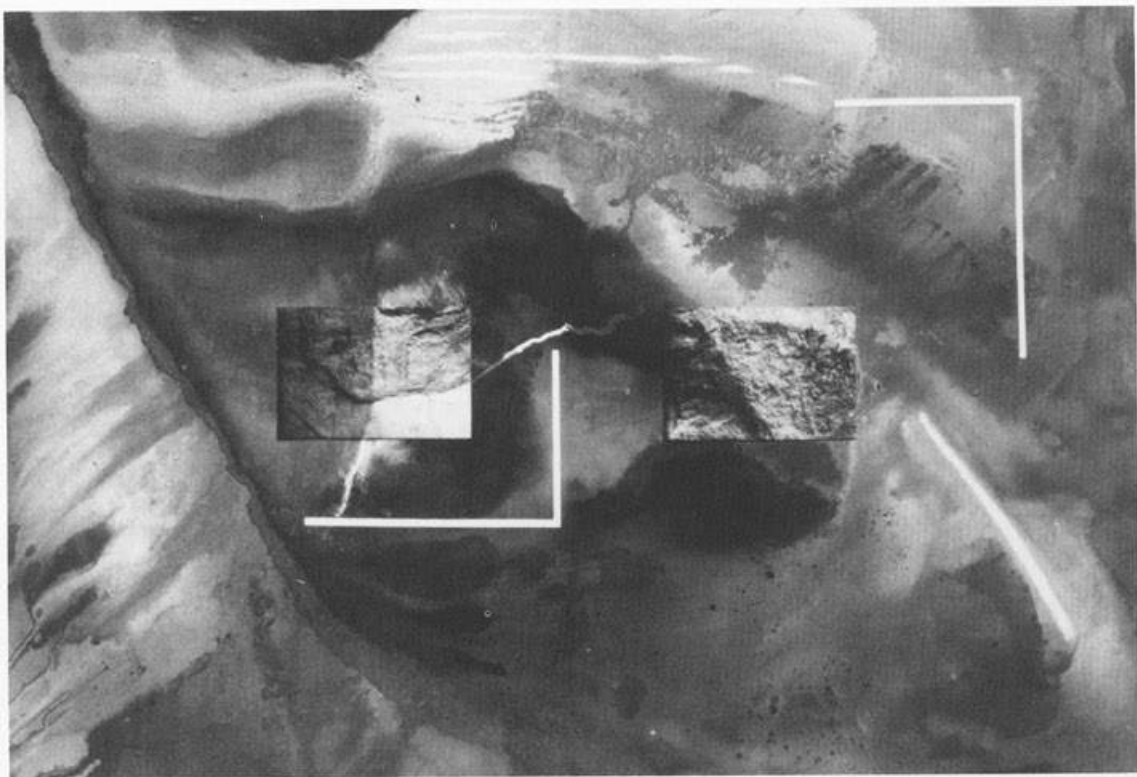
In the spring issue of SPOT April Rapier wrote the first of two articles on regional art: "Why Regional Photographers Don't Take Their Work Seriously (Enough)." The Texas Landscape, organized by guest curator Susie Kalil, for the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (May 17—September 7), offers Rapier a fitting subject for the critique of the generic in a regionalist theme—the "untamable land of Texas."

By April Rapier

Quotations from the slide/tape presentation of the exhibition entitled *The Texas Landscape*, 1900-1986, float through memory in somewhat contradictory accompaniment to the work. With most every conceivable genre of painting and combination of mixed media represented (by 82 artists, 22 of whom are photographers), every vintage photographic vision in attendance, the quote (although made applicable only to the environmental sculpture of Don Shaw) "no burden of precedent, only the challenge of originality" rings inaccurate. The work is in all aspects a continuum based on a dominant and unique theme—the untamable land of Texas—not its people, nor their achievements. The photographs are representational, the paintings and works on paper are expansive thematically, the sculpture is whimsical and clichéd. But they are in a sense our history and the essence of the art as a story of beginnings and metamorphoses is as curious and sustaining as it is unforgettable. Incorporating all the correct formulas—feathers and bones, oil to grand vistas, cows (and manure), moving region to region, the clichés grandstand, and the sweet details are lost in the fray. Georgia O'Keeffe departs from the pack as does Casey Williams and Earl Staley, exemplary non-conformists, but most others try to imitate such concepts as "sky" or at best capture them without going the necessary step(s) farther.

There are more than enough implied connections and comparisons drawn between painting and photography (demonstrated in the placement of the art), excluding the obvious—light-sensitive emulsion on stretched canvas (Bob Wade's faded, vintage-looking "Whitney, Texas Picturesque" of dead wolves hanging on a fence), photographs used in collage, hand-colored photographs—to spark a tie between the two historically at-odds media. Although this is a point in its favor, the overall selection stacks up with photography being safe and documentary, painting and paper-works interpretive, sculpture in its obsession with the most generic clichés and icons rarely superceding cute, a direct descendant of dull. (I am, admittedly, not much of a fan of contemporary sculpture.) Sometimes, the sculpture incorporates a feeling of collage (Guy Johnson in "Tropic Sport Shoe"), which better represents the kind of experience one might have when examining the concept "landscape" in the context "Texas." (This manner of categorization comes to the forefront of one's experience of the work again and again, more often than not.) Environmental sculpture, in its design, wildly vacillates between that which edifies (structurally and pedagogically) by contradiction and that which attempts an integration ranging from anonymity to passive acceptability. Both share the absolute goal of fusion. Neither transition is initially seamless. Whether a construction whose design is to stimulate the earth around it evokes a sense of growth from its surroundings ultimately succeeds has little to do with "precedent or originality," however, for conceptual origins are rarely born of site-specific locales. Surely the concept of forming tons of concrete into boxes, in order to reform a landscape (Donald Judd, near Marfa, Texas) has less in common with the land, or a "sense of place" (the show motto) than it does with some conceptual notion or translation of "the land." These indulgences in wretched excess are more shrines to power over the land (using the ultimate symbols of permanence and performance—steel and concrete, extending civilization into relative wilderness), at best a feeble attempt, for nature wins every time. (So much for Andrew





Charles Schorre: Big Bend #3, 1985, oil, acrylic, and photograph collage on paper, 22 3/4" x 30"

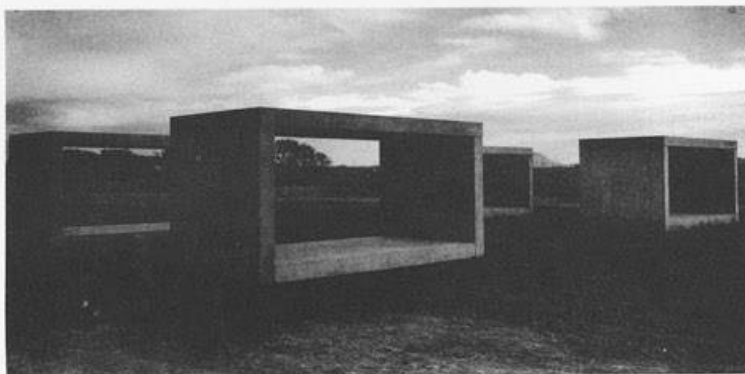
Lester's "Floating Mesa" ("whimsically defying nature.") Even in a figurative sense, the example of steel banding a mesa top (both Shaw and Lester, using similar ideologies) cannot live up to being "not an object as much as a guide to seeing" (Strada, from the slide/tape). These large-scale sculptural projects, by attempting to compete with an even larger scale (by infinite and incalculable factors) environment, are odd homage to source and resource. The seminal "Cadillac Ranch" on Stanley Marsh's Amarillo property, a 1974 Ant Farm project, commissioned by Marsh, is the exception to the opinions stated herein, however. It is my assumption that everyone who reads this will have at least heard of it; no false attempt at integration or modesty is evidenced when viewing ten Cadillacs planted on end, by now violated in all ways by aficionados and vandals alike. It is a statement, not an anti-statement; it is honest and will endure as such, without ripping off the land, or alarming those who encounter it. (Speaking of ripping off the land, the question most frequently asked this reviewer regarding James Surls' carving of a thousand year old cypress tree has nothing to do with the finished piece. It is this: did he chop down a tree to make it?)

One interesting photo/other medium comparison lies in Mel Chin's "North Jetty" drawing. It is as sentimental, arbitrary and therefore personal an expression of the desire to speak a small universal truth as Frank Gohlke or Ansel Adams or Suzanne Bloom might offer. One either enters into its simple, captivating beauty or is left untouched. The strength of this kind of work lies in its unwavering, almost involuntary dedication to a universal ideal. Al Souza juxtaposes little (4x5 inch) photographs with comparably-sized paintings, as counterpoints in form and color and volume. They are formal studies, the way one might remember a place to be on a strictly visceral level. Their relations are both complex and obvious, and draw on far greater resources than any landscape could offer.

Barbara Riley's hallucinogenic style of hand-painting photographs resurrects the by now flatness of the combination. The utterly enthralling and beautiful "Energy Group I," 1983, demonstrates an even balance between media, as well as an expertise in said medium and the psychology and phenomenological implications of color. Charles Schorre's use of color, in tandem with photography and a mesmerizing and inimitable quality of line, has a comparable impact, although on a subliminal, irrevocable level.

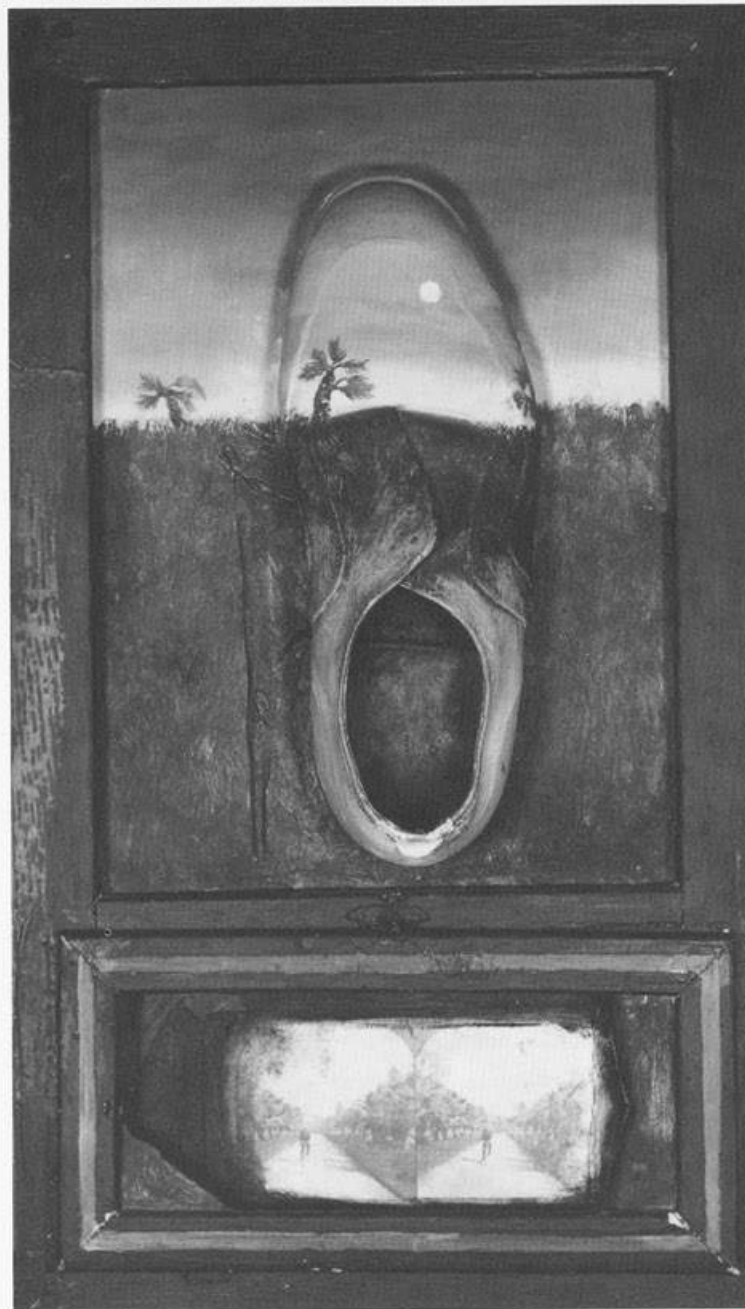
The "Big Bend Series III," 1985, an oil/pastel/photo (to name a few) collage does the landscape a great honor: it allows for the possibility of a gentle human integration, presence or lack thereof notwith-

standing. Schorre's work is the land, not a reaction to it, no prior agenda carried over. Earl Staley's invocations, painting with acrylic, dirt, and glitter in a grand scale, causes a similar resounding in the viewer.



Chinati Foundation: Donald Judd, Marfa, Texas

Guy Johnson, Tropical Sport Shoe, 1962, mixed media



The notion of packing up and wandering around the disproportionately large undeveloped areas of Texas (then as now) pervades the older photography, from Strand's "Telephone Poles, Texas," 1915 to Robert Frank's "US 90 En Route to Del Rio," 1956, as well as the more recent: what part of the country could be more vast and satisfying a place to disappear into and re-emerge from, loaded and uninfluenced except by the purity of the experience? The FSA photographers came to document history: what began as a sociological study (whose influential traditions extend into such work as Garry Winogrand's "Hippie Hollow, Lake Travis, Austin, Texas," 1973, the inclusion of the female nude here the only departure) has endured as a body of art transcending genre and the expectations attached. Russell Lee's "Round Up: Waggoner Ranch," 1955, is another such transmigration from thematic to interpretive, documenting the demise of an old tradition and the instatement of a new: cattle round-ups using helicopters, science and efficiency replacing the cowboy. Arthur Rothstein's vision of the panhandle, and Dorothea Lange's record of the drought "Near Dalhart, Texas" are other examples of the standard set by a timeless intention applied to historical events. Both Geoff Winingham and Suzanne Bloom look to an altered land, comparing and contrasting ideas about grandiosity and reduction in nature, the former in an 1981 aerial image of the Houston Ship Channel (black and white), the latter in a 1979 image, "White Oak Bayou Series #9" (color). They are, upon initial encounter, dispassionate and unrestricted, the scale of the subject matter's force upon humanity and the evidence of man being the obvious distinctions. Yet both are controlled by man; both control man. In the same removed scheme of things does the incomparable E. O. Goldbeck record the events within his realm, here a baptism in a San Antonio Park Pool, a huge crowd in attendance. There is no substitute for this repository of sociological/humanistic information, and future generations are enormously indebted to Mr. Goldbeck for his attending to the details of ordinary life. Vernon Fisher's "Running on Empty," 1978, acrylic on paper, whose title perhaps refers to Jackson Browne's anthem on loneliness, has an emotional similarity as a remotely powerful rendition. It incorporates a run-on text, a stream of consciousness discourse about empty gas tanks and radios (there is always the battery), and has the feel of a hand-painted photograph, the realism of the event carrying over as though it were an actual record, the real thing. It is what one would expect of an illustrated journal entry.

Some areas of the planet seem to exert a more metaphysical influence on witnesses than others. Big Bend is one such area, its magnetism drawing the obligatory land-cruisers and the brave hikers, alike, in relatively measured numbers. Each artist here discovers Big Bend anew, transforming a vision, a function of its spatial outrageousness, its impossible, austere beauty, its unidentifiable otherworldliness. Ansel Adams' image of Big Bend is stylized in his tradition, a severe reduction far more dedicated to his definition of beauty, by then a world-standard that art followers counted on. Casey Williams, rejecting any such notions or standards, removes Adams' anonymity of place, exploring instead the unique colors and organic icons in "Untitled, Big Bend," 1984 (purple mountains looming in the background, man's futile efforts at integration disappearing in the dry heat, that which remains just barely holding on, the sun-bleached plastic flowers that mean one thing only—death).

The result, a hand-painted mural, is a far more personal interpretation: whereas Adams transposed Big Bend in accordance with his vision, Big Bend forever altered Williams, and he is far the richer for it.

Frank Gohlke sets his own standard as well, that of immutable timelessness, in his static imagery of the monolithic: he may as well be photographing dinosaurs in pre-historic times. This consistent unification is comforting, and it offers to the viewer a position regarding the world that is threat-free, unequivocally filtered. Laura Gilpin, whose work in portraiture is extreme and potent, is poorly represented here, her "Palm Avenue," 1947, little more than a notation made at arm's length.

Perhaps the most provocative line of questioning is inspired by the comparison of certain images, such as Danny Lyons' "Cotton Pickers, Ferguson Unit, Texas," 1967-69 (of black prisoners) and Lewis Hines' "Cotton Picking near McKinney, Texas, October, 1913" (of whites in the field, presumably free). Another pair, Carl Mydan's "Loungers Hang Around the Duval Club Lunchroom in Freer, Texas," 1937, and Lee Friedlander's "Texas, 1965" characterize the ideal of the West, and its logical evolution, from muddy streets and muddier boots to cafes with electric stars, cactus domesticated in futile gesture of control, his shadow as a marker of time and intention. Oddly, the other Friedlander image included ("Untitled, 1977") is very painterly in spirit, a discovery in the style of Adams. The physical comparison between Mary Peck's circuit camera photograph, "Near Amarillo, Texas," 1984, and Julie Bozzi's similarly long and narrow oil on paper, is startling and joyous. Peck's huge, empty spaces, a train running parallel to the horizon line, finds its abstracted mirror opposite in Bozzi's work.

The homage to found-in-nature iconography and altarpiece, in the work of Madeleine O'Connor, David McManaway, Michael Tracy, and Guy Johnson, is peculiar and stunted, the removal and installation or reproduction of the organic serving to invalidate it. All the above-mentioned artists call upon every trick in the pack-rat and junk-art collector's book, from stereo cards (subsequently hand-colored) to snake skeletons and the like. Herein lie the most demonstrable theatrics, with sculpture running a close second. Regarding clichés, who might be the worse offender? Would the art with the most bluebonnets win? The chief here, by far, is sculpture, although much of the work is guilty. Demonstrations of cliché in painting and photography are found in uniform peacefulness, as implausible as if all the chaos of, say, Earl Staley, were to dominate instead.

One wonders about an implied landscape, when thinking about Robert Lever's four men in suits, with their various peculiar posturings, or Staley's demons of the desert, in "Temptation of St. Anthony," 1977/85. One imagines Staley to have eyes on the inside, far more functional than the ones that operate outside, just as one is certain that he is able to paint his thoughts and dreams and terrors directly, without the filter or intervention of consciousness. But the landscape is an internal one, just as Lee N. Smith III's "Against all Undertoads" (John Irving, another pop phenomenon recalled) is a psychoscape in the form of acting-out, a wonderfully-colored painting of a kid at the lake, all the worst fears about what one imagines to lurk in the muddy waters below coming true without his knowing. This innocence characterizes much of the work across an uneven grouping, laboring to unite under two unrelated and disparate banners—the landscape and the sesquicentennial.





Roger Cutforth, Portrait of Amanda Linn, 1984 (original in color)

## PORTRAITURE FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE CAMERA

Roger Cutforth's portraits will be shown in HCP's exhibition, Texas 150—New Texas Photography, September 5—October 12. The exhibition will travel to the Southwest Crafts Center, San Antonio, in January 1987.

By Roger Cutforth

My portrait work began as a group of experimental photographic works in 1984. They grew out of a feeling of frustration with conventional photography, i.e., the single image lying behind a glasslike surface in which any presence of the artist is excluded. For me, photography was always a sequence of images connected either in time, or in the consciousness of the person who had taken them. What follows is an outline of some of the problems I saw in photography. The notes begin by referring to painting. I was, and still am, a painter, though I've worked mainly in photography for the last fifteen years.

In painting it is not so much an issue about how things look as about how things feel. Photography is almost exclusively about how things look. I'm cutting up photographs and sticking them together so that I can get details from different frames all into one picture. The photographs are portraits of people I know. One thing can be said in favor of photography in this respect: it is revealing. Most of us have lots of trouble with photographs of ourselves. I search all the frames of the films for details that really interest me. These details of various images become a key for me as to what is interesting about this medium. Thoughts on the portrait of Kim Gordon work fast so that ideas stay ahead of the medium. By this I mean, what interests me in the images should stay ahead of any consideration of them as photographs. Think about the irrational. Is it possible to subvert the rational construction of the world that the camera constantly hands to us? One of the things wrong with conventional photography is that the medium speaks for itself and tells us next to nothing. Yet, another picture of the world, (the direct photography of the nineteenth century, where the world was seen freshly through photographs) only exists for us today in the family snap-shot album. I think it was Carl Andre who once said, "Photographs are like rumors" (i.e. unverified information of uncertain origin). What I want from photography is the possibility of working creatively with the medium after the pictures have been taken. I want the process by which a picture is constructed to show in the end result. Photography, as a mechanical means of reproduction, naturally avoids this issue. This, plus the fact that there's no visible presence of

the artist, is the reason photography has such a shaky footing as an art-form.

I want the work to reveal something that was not previously known. The psychology of the photographer or artist must come forward and play a role in the finished work. "Sometimes you can hide behind a photograph but you can't hide behind a line." (Paulette Nenner)

Man Ray set us a good example but we have regressed.

What the world doesn't need is another pretty picture.

Some friends are rephotographing photographs. I see this not only as a comment on our media-based culture, but also as a reflection of the fact that everything has been photographed a hundred times over. Photographs no longer bear any relationship to anything other than an endless, ongoing series of visual statements. The issue of photography is a false track. The medium is invisible, forget it. Lift from the film whatever interests you and follow your intuition; it's the only route to whatever power there is left in the process in its relation to life. I tell Dan Graham I know what I'm trying to do with photography. I want to show a certain kind of truth about it that's contained in what I consider the dross of my existence, test strips. The strips, made of the most interesting part of the image, accumulate in piles on my floor. I catch myself thinking that they probably contain a more interesting picture than the finished print on the wall. Bethany Jacobson asks me why I don't use the test strips? Because I think I may hate what the work made up of them looks like. I think I may hate what really interests me. I constantly have to tell myself to go ahead and make a mess, to subvert the idealized perfection of the photographic image. "Photographs are always presented as if the photographer doesn't exist. You are reinstating the photographer in the picture." (Jean Fisher) The portrait work is becoming even more unpredictable, the result of a performance between the person photographed, myself, and the camera. I want the finished work to reflect these aspects. It's odd that we think portraits can reveal something hidden about the person portrayed, yet do not see that they speak just as much of the person who made the portrait. It's impossible for me not to see the portraits as mirroring my own desire, of being equally that which I want to see, as well as that which is shown to me. Photographing women the camera obviously becomes a phallic extension, through which I am intimate with them and take what I wish. But what about the men? The portrait with Jean Fisher makes me realize that the missing element in the construction of these works is myself. Jean plays me off against myself. Before the camera she displays an embarrassed prostituted image of femininity, then turning the camera on me, forces me into being a parody of my own expectations of her. This work is hard for me to take. I feel I am naked in it both physically and symbolically.

From this work I realize I can no longer handle the images I collect without being aware that they are also references to an unconscious meaning that is demanding to be brought out.

Roger Cutforth is both photographer and painter living in Terlingua, Texas. He has studied at Nottingham and Ravensbourne Colleges of Art in England. In 1984 he received an NEA Photography Fellowship. His work is exhibited regularly in galleries in New York and Europe.

## THOUGHTS ON THE STATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

By Peter Brown

What is the State of Photography? This is a question that is often posed to me—usually by non-photographers or people at parties who really want to know whether or not to buy an auto-winder. Just the same, it's an interesting question and one that deserves an answer.

We can safely say that the State of Photography is not California. Neither is it New Mexico, Texas, or even an informed state of being. In fact, it's becoming more amorphous every day, for, at present, unless the descriptions we give 1) photography and 2) its state, are so restrictive as to render the whole discussion simplistic and boring, we will quickly find ourselves out on another limb with thoughts and definitions so broad that they will threaten to vaporize. The middle ground these days is almost non-existent. So in order to speed things along I'll simply say three things 1) The State of Photography has always embraced both extremes, 2) The State of Photography takes on many guises, 3) The State of Photography is good.

It was born in the mid-west—in Dekalb, Illinois to be exact. It votes there and spends its holidays there at the family home. Its parents are insurance agents; it has a brother who went to Princeton and a sister who went South and went bad. Grandparents, uncles, cousins, and aunts proliferate and the Dekalb area is littered with friends and relations. But, as I say, it moves around and it changes.

In fact I saw it just yesterday in Palo Alto, California, on University Avenue. I knew him on sight: shabby, shuffling yet still self-contained, possessed and in deep thought. I passed him by and pretended to recognize him as a painter I know. "David?" I said. He looked at me. "Oh," I said. "Sorry, I thought you were a friend." "My name's not David," he said. "I know, I mistook you for someone else." "I'm the State of Photography," he said. "What do you want?" He suddenly had regal bearing and tone. I didn't know what to say so I said, "In Palo Alto, huh?" He stared at me with great critical disappointment, cleared his throat and resumed his shuffle down the street. My advice is: keep your eyes open and be prepared. I was surprised. Finding the State of Photography in downtown Palo Alto is like finding Jesus in the manger. It's unexpected. You might want to put together a list of questions to ask him.

I once met a dog who was the State of Photography. All photographic ideas resided in his tiny canine brain: the past and future of photography were all up there. He, being at that moment the present, was looking intently at a wooly worm caterpillar. A very intense and self-involved dog. But he knew all about Atget to Evans to Frank (a double play combo of major league photo-critical wisdom if ever there was one) as well as all the various referent meanings of wooly worm body language. He had one of those miniature cameras that used to be advertised on the backs of comic books hooked to his dog collar, but seemed to have forgotten it, so engrossed was he in the black and red wooly worm. As I watched, the State of Photography pawed at the caterpillar and then rushed to a corner of the yard where a squirrel was climbing down a trumpet vine.

Of all its guises, the State of Photography is perhaps most interesting in its vaporized form. It then comes into its own most forcefully. It's a maelstrom of anger, peace, pure energy and great spectral beauty. It is earthy and sublime all at once—an aesthetic steam bath that sweats out all our mistakes, misgivings and tangents, leaving the bare bones of form. If a photographer is around after a vaporized State of Photography has been in a



vicinity, he or she will find it surprisingly easy to flesh out these skeletons with content. Not hard at all because everything is so pure and simple. The least addition will do. To be a bit clearer, however, and to add a note of caution: *a vaporized State of Photography really just eats anything in its path*. If you see one coming, get out of the way. If you have the opportunity to follow one around, however, it can be a rewarding experience. Post vapor photos are highly sought after and more than one minor regional artist has hit the big time by trailing a cloud through a house or a neighborhood. Be on the lookout, but be careful. There is a clicking, whirring sound that you may come to identify and use to your advantage.

I had lunch a few weeks ago with a woman who was the State of Photography although she initially claimed not to be. A very Californian lunch, we had pasta and salmon and talked about the State of Photography. "I'm not it," she said, but as we talked it became apparent that she was. She spoke at great length about water skiing at Lake Tahoe (a cold Sierra lake) and about the dangers of falling down. She had a fine sense for her looks, her posture and her situation and I thought 'A pleasant lunch,' until she said, "I don't know about this photography business. It's all so ingrown. What I want is the clarity I had when I was eleven. Then I knew what to ignore." She added with a shrug: "I'm not only the State of Photography, I'm its history and aesthetics as well." I said, "You're kidding." And she said, "No." And I said, "Do you want some coffee?" and she disappeared. That was that. One of the stranger States of Photography.

I knew a State of Photography when I was a kid in New York. He was a tennis pro who approached my friend Johnnie Bachman and me one afternoon and taught us how to serve. We thought he was teaching us simply because he recognized great potential and wanted to be in on the future action, but when he had us serving like little Pancho Gonzalez's he handed us his card. It said "The State of Photography. For lessons in recognition, editing and visual history." There was a New York phone number. We were a little shocked at the way the State of Photography seemed to be drumming up business. At that time—around 1960—the State of Photography must have been at low ebb. I think it was having a hard time recognizing Polaroid. (I told Johnnie this but he couldn't understand—and I couldn't really either.) The State of Photography had never seemed particularly reticent or conservative before. But I've always kept a weather eye out since then. While seeming to be generous, the State of Photography is often self-serving. He shuffled off the court when we told him we couldn't afford lessons. If any trait quickly identifies the State of Photography, it is shuffling—an aimless gait. It never seems to be looking at anything in particular, and then, unexpectedly, it pounces.

Teenage years were filled with the State of Photography. David Hemmings in *Blow Up* was what we wanted the State of Photography to be, but he wasn't. He was the state of London and the state of the times. My high school year book photographer and the man who did passport photos were closer to the State of Photography, but they weren't it, either. The most complete State of Photography I knew then was Melissa Loveless who was beautiful but had been sold a bill of anti-sexual goods by her mother from Indiana. She was all dressed up with nowhere to go. She was a repository of good and bad and vibrated with the tensions of American History. I once caught her on a conference call with Lewis Carroll and Timothy O'Sullivan. They were exchanging

recipes for sourdough biscuits. And Melissa was asking O'Sullivan about Indian bread made from acorns when Lewis Carroll said he had a call coming in from the east and would phone back next Thursday. Melissa said good-bye and O'Sullivan told her to hang in there, that answers would be forthcoming. Melissa said she was sure that he was right and said good-bye again. She noticed me watching and said "I'm the State of Photography today." "I know," I said, "I'm the State of the National League." Melissa looked embarrassed. She was the only person we knew who regularly went to the school social worker for help with her thoughts. But the State of Photography resided in her for six years. She got married, divorced, married again, went to Law School, Medical School and now lives in Reno with her husband who drives a Porsche and is also a doctor. There seems to be a vestal virgin quality to the States of Photography I've known; an innocence of one sort or another is necessary and she lost hers sometime during her second graduate degree.

The final State of Photography I'll tell you about is my grandfather. And he was the State of Photography for his entire life. He was chased by a water buffalo in China in 1930 and lost an eye, but still saw things with clear, open compassion. So did my grandmother for that matter. But Paw Paw kept at it for years. He's the only State of Photography I've known who was also a photographer. We are proud of him. The State of Photography existing in a family precludes it existing in blood relations for the next three generations, so I can recognize it but never be it, which is just as well. I've felt it near a few times but have always shied away from giving myself over for more than a few moments at a time. They don't count. It takes a week and a half of possession for a State of Photography to become permanent. States of Photography can be declined of course and shed like old personalities or working situations.

And there are, of course, the places and things: Elko, Nevada is one State of Photography. So is the Smoke Creek Desert with the Fox Range and King Lear Peak. So for example are the cities of New Orleans and Hannibal, Missouri, the Blarney Stone and the Appalachian Trail. The State of Photography may also appear in the details of one's life: for a while I had a magenta filter in my enlarger that was the State of Photography and my nephew Aki has a State of Photography in a push toy that pops. This is not to say that the State of Photography is everywhere, for it's not. It usually is open, however, and if not that, is at least interesting. As the Sheriff of Inyo County told me a few days ago, the State of Photography is not glib of tongue, and the answers you get from it will depend on what you want to know. So, as I say, you might want to make a list. It is often in a heavy state of grace with full hands and a busy schedule. There is enough for us all, but access at times can be a problem.

If you encounter one, don't try to photograph it. I took a picture of the State of Photography hang gliding last week and it fell out of the sky like a rock, crashing into the side of a mountain in the Eastern Sierra. It's recovering but it was in bad shape for a while, and so was I. Be careful and considerate. While the State of Photography is not exactly an endangered species, like all of us, it is headstrong, complex and fragile.

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## REVIEWS

### A REVIEW OF THREE EXHIBITS

*Grand Illusion: Large Format Polaroids Painted Photographs: Daniel Babior 1985 HCP Fellowship Winners: Dornith Doherty, Paula Goldman, Stephen Peterson*

*The reviewed exhibitions: Grand Illusion, Painted Photographs, and 1985 HCP Fellowship Winners were exhibited at the Houston Center for Photography, July 4 — August 3, 1986.*

**By Jill A. Kyle**

*And I must borrow every changing shape To find expression. — T.S. Eliot*

Houston Center for Photography, under the direction of Lew Thomas, is the place to go for those interested in finding out about the state of photography today. A forum of sorts for those seeking ideas of where the medium is headed, and why, the Center's exhibitions and educational activities attract those able to accept the prevalent expansive attitude toward photography, including those interested in the medium's capacity to mislead and misdirect. For those seeking a conservative reaffirmation of photography as a discrete medium, the Center is often the place not to go. July may count as an exception. It is a month when the visual fare, and there is a lot of it, offers pluralism in photographic intuitions, but it does not address a controversial topic, as a recent exhibit, *Re-Coding Sexuality*, did. At the same time, while many of the images currently on view appear to be mere reflections of reality, or fantasy, still there are issues fundamental to photography in the '80s that are raised when looking through material in each show.

Granted, the Miesian adage "less is more" has all but been snuffed out by the tenor of these post-modern times, and at HCP, a very young institution where maybe it was never heard, "more is more" comes to mind when one confronts the torrent of images on display. Despite the segmentation of diffusive photographic enterprise into three separate exhibits within close proximity, the show is well-installed, and there is not the crowded feeling one would expect. A bigger problem is the difficulty of visually assimilating all there is to see without some sort of broad focus or overview: the burden of providing this falls on the viewer. For me, the critical polemic of function in contemporary photography kept cropping up, whether photography should be judged primarily as an art form or as an instrument to define our society.

Considered within the context of intention, there is the contemporary premise that works of art, and this includes photography, are not just objects for visual savoring and valuation, but are repositories for ideas. In fact Abigail Solomon-Godeau claims that "As photography has historically come to mediate, if not wholly represent the empirical world for most of the inhabitants of industrialized societies (indeed, the production and consumption of images serves as one of the distinguishing characteristics of advanced societies), it has become a principal agent and conduit of culture."<sup>1</sup> But it is also true that while few contemporary photographers linger over the aesthetic notions of photography as distilled by John Szarkowski, neither do they discount them as retrograde so long as the marketplace does not.

What is problematic about the images in *Grand Illusion* (an exhibit drawn from the larger "Selections 2" group of 75 artists, which is part of the International Polaroid Collection) is the obvious absence of any clear critical perspective or curatorial aim in the Polaroid selections. Immediately, the spectator is drawn into a guessing game: what, if any, were the criteria by which Polaroid chose the various pictures for exhibition? Aside from that, the best approach to *Grand Illusion* is simply to see it in terms of random experimentation by a spate of artists revelling in a pop-oriented medium. The main thing that unifies the collection, as far as I can tell, is the sense that Polaroid is fun to work with. But that is not enough to keep the results from being at times banal and even ludicrous. This is the case with Starr Ockenga's sensual

schemes of infant nudity. Because a photograph is always of something real, Ockenga's pictures are that first, and secondly, they are images of appropriation. They refer to ornate baroque *putti* and are related to the ones seen in a painting by, say, Rubens. But, whereas a painting represents some real or imagined scene in a less direct relation to reality than a photograph does, Rubens' *putti* are able to connote sensuality without being offensive in doing so, yet Ockenga's can not. The same relation of the image to what it depicts is a problem for Robert Heinecken's "fabricated-to-be-photographed" pictures. His technical strategy, aimed at constructing color patterns out of food, does nothing more than transcribe ordinary subject matter into analogical, soulless imagery.

One of the most imaginative artists working in the instant imaging Polaroid technology is Lucas Samaras. His scissored, reassembled nude in an interior compresses a leitmotif of change into a staccato progression, coherent but fractured in a way that prevents the eye from settling for long on the subject or on the fascinating objects in the background. Samaras' cacophony of impressions plays on ambiguities of perspective through the artificiality of garish lights and lurid colored gels. Since he is a painter, possibly the instant feedback approximates the active experience of painting. In any case, the photograph, for Samaras, becomes in no way the norm for the appearance of things, but a volatile source of imagery that substitutes for an experience.

Although images in *Grand Illusion* tend to be strong on formal qualities—not to mention that the colors and detail often seem richer than those of direct vision—some can be appreciated in terms of the degree to which the artist's personality is revealed by the selection of objects to be photographed. Rosamond Purcell employs an additive process, whereby she fills the frame as though it were a blank canvas, to build imaginary worlds with poetic combinations of found objects—old photos of animals, antique portraits, art reproductions, bits of lace, burlap and feathers. Arranged in boxes, some with captions like "Who Lives in This House?" or "He Lives in This House," the contents are symbolically held together in the same nostalgic atmosphere of a large *vanitas* still life. Purcell's imagery simulates the dreamy diaspora of human memory, that impressionistic recording device that is antithetical to the exactitudes of photography, and that skirts romanticism in its physical beauty, and metaphorical expressiveness. Conversely, Barbara Kasten's act of choice is affected by a very different sensibility, one that is rooted in the detached, idealistic teachings of the Bauhaus, particularly the artistic example of László Moholy-Nagy. In her surface—perfect triptych, the eerie permeation of cool blues and greens lends a glossy, complex, theatrical presence to the abstract composition. Possessing transparent, opaque, reflective surfaces that are unrelatable to any existing spatial structure, the geometric fabrications are like constructivism turned inside out. An interpenetration of seemingly continuous lines one minute appear as masterfully orchestrated chaos, and the next as perfectly matched pieces of a puzzle.

Some pictures reveal themselves readily, like the abstract patterns in Vicki Ragan's graphic exploration of natural and manufactured objects—eggshells, test tubes, small plastic skeletons—while others do so slowly. And one especially, "Atomic Cafe" by Patrick Nagatani/Audree Tracey, is worth the long look. What makes this piece most interesting is the irony implicit in the sophisticated complexities of technique and



the message it presents. Photographer Nagatani and painter Tracey create a mixed-media scene of a cafe during Los Angeles' predicted earthquake. What first appear to be scratches in the red painted surface are actually strings suspending bottles, plates, trays and chandelier in an "earthquake-proof" fashion. An interplay between tragic and comic suspense fashioned by collaborative elements within a genre scene, it is at the same time an assemblage of paint and photo, a reminder that it is all a spoof of artifice.

As a whole *Grand Illusion* does not work. It is too much like a gigantic advertisement, an advertisement for Polaroid itself, a marketing strategy for selling the product, but not ideas—except for one, the "art" of Polaroid. What gets overlooked by the show of sophisticated Polaroid technology is the most distinctive feature of all these images: the fact that each picture constitutes a singular artifact, since there is no reusable negative behind it. The relationship between each print's visual content and its uniqueness gives to each an important historic overtone. In the spirit of Benjamin, these images remain in the clutches of history while being released critically into the present, and in that sense they are "auratic." But even if it occurred to them, people of Polaroid would give scant attention to Benjamin's theory that photography's ascent to fine art status was virtually predicated on its claims to aura (a quality which he described as being comprised of singularity and uniqueness, the very qualities which produced authoritative presence in an original work of art).<sup>2</sup> After all, how many potential Polaroid customers even heard of Walter Benjamin?

In Daniel Babor's *Urban Transplant* pictures, a keen sense of formal relationships, especially abstract patterns of verticals and horizontals, and the graphic recording of moods and movements of city dwellers prevent their unlikely dislocation into rural settings from being merely scenes of disjunctive tomfoolery aimed at trivializing the human figure. His work, fresh, provocative, variously sad and funny, mirrors the extent to which interpersonal relationships in daily existence are governed by social structures and economic circumstances.

Babor works in hand-colored photomontage, a variation of the technique that the Berlin dadaists found to be such an adaptable vehicle for carrying socio-political commentary during and after WWI. Babor is subtle, yet he comes within screaming distance of the spirit of dada by dissociating figures from their normal environment in order to suggest irony and criticism by their juxtaposition. In "Speculators" (1985), two farmers stand on an isolated country road and scowl silently at a couple of business-suited moguls a stone's throw away. Political implications are obvious—real estate developers (anti-environmentalists) prey on naive residents of rural areas—but the wittily-presented subject is more amusing than disquieting. In fact, without Babor's sense of humor, and there is never a loss of concern for human feelings because of it, the repeated themes of psychic dislocation might begin to seem a bit academic.

Never too reliant on technique, nor too curious about how things will look, Babor focuses on what things will mean. He emphasizes veracity of the image, the better to proffer the dissonance of figures in out-of-synch situations as though they were the truth. In "Wilderness" (1984-85), four career types clad in greatcoats walk briskly through a desolate field: behind them, barren trees stalk like bosses doggedly tracking employees. A weird scene, it is not surreal, nor are any of Babor's images; and therein lies their



Paula Goldman: Commercials for the Way We Live series, 1986

greatest fascination—they are improbable, but not impossible. Even the delicate hand-coloring in the photograph is not at odds with a sometimes weighty content, but contributes to the tone. The effect is oddly natural, as though the mind sees in terms of information content (in other words, in black and white), while emotions affix themselves to certain images, assigning them color. But what is most real and most disconcerting about Babor's tableaux are the nameless, but easi-

ly recognizable, tensions on all the faces, the silence, the lack of communication in the encounters. We are served the ultimate parody of our own high-tech, mass media culture, where conventional relationships between language and communication no longer exist.

Although the genre and technique vary, works by the three 1985 HCP Fellowship winners—Dornith Doherty, Paula Goldman and Stephen Peterson—can be considered within a single critical frame-

work. That is, following Szarkowski's premise that photographs can be apprehended either as windows (records of exterior reality) or mirrors (subjective revelation of the inner being),<sup>3</sup> works by Doherty, Goldman and Peterson fit into the former category. Of the three, only Goldman, in her mixed-media *Soul Food Still Lives*, exhibits a willingness to depart from the "safeness" of photography's tradition and practice, and to experiment with the medium as an artistic tool of diverse

application.

Doherty, who draws her stylistic inspiration from painting, specifically taking cues from impressionism, shoots wind-blown *tigridia*, *bauhinia* and other exotic flowers at very close range. Through effects of color, light and blurred form, she projects a sense of movement and plurality that imply the fluidity of time passing. Barely identifiable in some prints, flowers are blurs of saturated color. When Doherty uses a flash to get some definition in the blossom form, the added contrast of petal outline against cottony middle ground foliage makes an interesting relationship to the geometry of an architectural foil in the background. The frame of time itself is expanded in Doherty's images by catching the foreground flower object with an instantaneous pop of light, a split second within the larger time segment of an extended exposure.

On the other hand, Stephen Peterson's "in frame" topographical photographs evince the stillness of ceasing time. His subjects, open vistas along Texas highways and agricultural belts or the lazy small

Daniel Babor: "Slough," 1984 (Urban Transplant series), hand-painted photomontage, 16" x 20"





towns nearby, all without even a minimal trace of human passage, seem impervious to change, like quiet pockets in a world of flux. Peterson, who shoots with the same objective detachment as the seventies "new topographic" photographers, has an obvious concern for formal, geometric elements in both town and landscapes. Clusters of cylindrical grain silos in "Muleshoe, Texas," two gasoline storage tanks in "Cola Petroleum" (sic) are perfectly, classically centered—the same is true for an irrigator in a barren grain field in "West of Lamesa, Texas" or a post office in "Amis." A meticulous technician, his work scrupulously clean and reflecting a delight in order. Peterson at times lessens the vitality of his concepts by working his images too tightly. He is more consistently successful in the use of a color idiom that, through subtlety of observed detail and natural effects of light, registers his subject matter in a Texas context as much as its topographical exactness does.

The role of consumerism in American life—a theme celebrated, usually with disguised irony, by pop artists in the '60s—is still the source for painted as well as mechanically produced imagery. Paula Goldman's *Commercials for the Way We Live* series of black and white prints deal with the clichéd theme, but she is very clever with composition, and she adds her licks with humor and verve. It is a tough assignment, considering the complex implications related to the meaning behind her images. (What I am referring to is the sense of nihilism that accompanies the enlarged horizons of our contemporary consumer culture. The more all-encompassing the media, the more we are faced with an excess of regurgitated images, which command our gaze but because they are void cannot return it.) It is this nihilism that Goldman picks up on and presents in her work as the double agency we all practice when given the full media treatment. Still victims of the pop milieu of consumerism, we constantly confront glamorous doubles of our own doubleness. In one print, a boxing match is on TV, while beneath it on the living room rug, two kids reroute the fighting action by playing war games with their parent's smiling approval. In another, a young mother holds her baby in front of a bowl of cereal from a box labeled "New GI Joe Action Stars," undoubtedly the double of who or what her son will become by eating the cereal. To a degree, Goldman is objective in her observations, but not so much as to hide a certain delight in projecting the absurd.

Sorting through the exhibits, gauging one image against another, judging relations between technical values and image content, eventually converts to a lesson. No matter how diverse photography appears—and the gap is considerable between the medium's ultimate value as art and its social significance as a tool of mass culture—it is much easier to theorize about these distinctions than to apply them to actual works in an attempt at categorization. And that may be the most distinguishable conceit about photography today.

FOOTNOTES

- 1. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Photography After Art Photography," in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis and Marcia Tucker, David Godine, 1984, p. 76.
- 2. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illumination*, ed. Hannah Arendt, Schocken Books, 1969, p. 221.
- 3. John Szarkowski, *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography since 1960*, Museum of Modern Art, 1978, p. 11-25.

WORKS OF ENIGMATIC BEAUTY

Mixed media photographs and sculpture by Paula Fridkin were shown at The Meredith Long Gallery during Houston's summer Introductions '86 program of exhibitions.

By Theresa Ward Thomas

The Meredith Long Gallery of Houston, a participant in *Introductions '86*, hosted a one-woman show of mixed media works by Houston artist/photographer Paula Fridkin. The show was comprised of photographs and sculpture whose common denominators were the intense and elaborate use of color, pattern and texture. How the individual, especially woman, perceives herself in society and how she responds to that image through the use of cosmetics and costume—themes which Fridkin has worked with in the past—surfaced intermittently in the work. The dilemma of aesthetics and/or message was subliminally addressed by Fridkin who desired to create work which is "ultimately pleasing to the eye."

Of the twenty plus photographic portraits, a good number have achieved an enigmatic beauty. Eschewing the traditional white or monotone mat typically associated with portrait photography, Fridkin selected or created mats and backdrops using a variety of media. Upon first inspection, the elements of pattern and color which embraced the central image of each photograph, seemed to play a subsidiary role to the persona captured on film. Under closer scrutiny, leather, lace, glitter, sand, stock wall papers and fabrics were carefully and/or frenetically combined to inform the viewer about the person whose photograph had been taken. Although similar in format and size, the portraits did not form a cohesive series but rather a distinct collection of subsets. The viewer was presented with individuals simply and comfortably at ease with themselves, individuals dressed up to obscure or compound how they perceive themselves and are perceived by others (and actors from local comedy troupes) as parodies of certain character types.

In "Lureen #1," a young girl who obviously enjoyed playing dress-up, wears a metallic wig, her favorite Minnie Mouse T-shirt, Paula's high-heeled shoes and a ton of costume jewelry. The entire photograph was patterned and textured by the costuming. What started out as a black and white print (as did all of the photographs in the show) had been layered and augmented with a bold addition of color and glitter. The mat, a petite floral design on flannel, acted as a counterpoint to this precocious image.

In the sculptural works, executed concurrently with the photographs, Fridkin's total control over her subject matter was demonstrated. Pattern and image are one and the same. "Love Paula, Heart #3," a heart shaped assemblage of plastic devils and carnations, cosmetic containers and nails, along with "Love Paula, Heart #2," a similar construction with a web-like epoxy restraining plastic toy phones and prescription bottles, address the ambiguities of love and beauty. Unlike the portraits, the all over pattern of these intricate works is simultaneously neutral background and coded object.

Paula Fridkin moves unabashedly from one medium to the next without hesitation or lack of dexterity. It will be interesting to see how she expands and perfects her work in the future.



Paula Fridkin: Laureen #1, 1986, hand-painted photograph and mixed media

LETHARGIC PHOTOS AND EVAPORATIVE CAPTIONS

Wisconsin Summer and VCR Film Stills: Photographs by Dick Blau and Lew Thomas were shown at the Graham Gallery, July 12—August 9.

By Liz Mengel and Robert Estep

As part of the Houston Art Dealers Association's *Introductions '86*, the Graham Gallery is presenting the works of Dick Blau and Lew Thomas.

Blau is presently Chairman of the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee's Department of Film. He was born in NYC and was raised in San Francisco. His intellectual background shows great diversity as a theatre director, filmmaker, and literary critic. His work in photography

began in 1970.

Blau's work is a series of approximately 20 black and white photographs, documenting a family outing and entitled *Scenes From A Wisconsin Summer*. On initially walking past these photographs one is struck, if not overwhelmed, by an evocation of summer heat and the atmosphere of one of Wisconsin's numerous lakes. A second viewing, followed by a third, produces an odd sort of reversal, and Blau's photographs begin to resemble nothing so much as the adequate, if ultimately boring snapshots of a stranger and his family. This is due less to any inherent banality in the subject matter itself as to a sense of uninspired vision, of lethargy at work behind the lens.

As for the photographs themselves: the technical merit of black and white photography is apparent, black areas being black, white areas being white, and the gradations of grays showing Blau's competence in developing and printing. However, the lack of both atmosphere and compositional interest somewhat

negates the purely technical merit. Thomas is presently Director of the Houston Center for Photography. He was born and raised in San Francisco. He has taught photography at both the University of Arizona—Tucson and San Francisco State University. He has lectured and published extensively.

Thomas' VCR *Film Series* consists of photographs of black and white Hollywood film production stills that have been copied onto videotape with color and phrases added to them. The color was added by manipulation of the color balance in the monitor, and a character generator was used to add the phrases. The photographs were then re-copied into still color photos.

In contrast to Blau's approachable if undemanding work, Thomas' present series makes a direct attempt to engage the viewer on various levels of intellectual inquiry. According to Thomas, the imposed captions are intended to distance the viewer from the original context of the stills and lead him/her to an involvement with the presiding issues of space and time, and memory and language.

Although even a cursory viewing of this series would naturally lead to questions beyond those provoked by the inviolate still, Thomas seems to have curiously loaded the dice to his own disadvantage. He has done so by selecting his stills and his captions from opposite ends of the spectrum of accessibility. Thus, while the faces of Marlene Dietrich, Grace Kelly, Claudette Colbert, Humphrey Bogart, Clark Gable, and James Cagney possess an undeniably iconic value in terms of sheer familiarity, Thomas' own phrases are cryptic to the point of resisting comprehension in any but perhaps the most costly way. The sole possible exception is his use of a still from *Frankenstein's Bride*, with the caption of "Trouble in the Family," which is neither obscure nor particularly relevant in terms of time, space, memory or language. It is, if anything, a bit reminiscent of *Mad Magazine*.

A number of the phrases do have a certain limpidly poetical or rhetorical charm, such as "Twilight of the Raw," "White Fear," and "Hollywood Castration," but their relevance to the designated stills appears to be mutually interchangeable and random. In short, the film stills possess an immediacy and an interest which remains long after Thomas' phrases, however clever they occasionally are, have evaporated.

Liz Mengel and Robert Estep are freelance critics living in Houston whose recent review of the photographs of Robert Rauschenberg appeared in the summer issue of SPOT.

Dick Blau: Wisconsin Summer, B/W, 16" x 20"







Dorothea Lynch; Eugene Richards

## THE HOLLOW VICTORY OF DEATH

*Exploding Into Life, text by Dorothea Lynch, photographs by Eugene Richards, published by Aperture, New York, 1986*

By April Rapier

Dorothea Lynch was, by many accounts, a woman blessed with the spirit of living. She graced others with an empathetic understanding; when her own life-threatening crisis arose, she called upon that same empathetic reserve, removing herself from the pain of an impending mortality in order that the record be clear and helpful. In *Exploding Into Life*, with text by Lynch and photographs by Eugene Richards, the simplicity of feeling and portrayal draws out paradoxical relations between opposites—hope and despair, sorrow and joy, loving and selfishness—and how they work around and influence each other until the lines are finally and fully blurred. This is a powerful and unforgettable account of the cause and effect between basic emotions called to the trenches when the shit hits the fan.

At first glance, the task of photo-documenting the illness and decline of one's longtime companion seems out-of-hand, impossible short of a descent into an emotionally muddled realm. Richards' photographs recognize and celebrate the same joy and triumph that emerged through the despair of cancer, the triumph of knowing one's own life well enough to get on with the living of it while time exists. Occasionally, it becomes difficult to recall where a piece of information was derived from, so beautifully do the pictures and text merge as a complete history. Few, if any attempts were made by either Lynch or Richards to romanticize or idealize the hopelessness of death at a too-early age. It is an honest account, painfully so; one tries to disengage from Lynch's steady gaze through tears of outrage and premature acceptance, only to be drawn immediately back, oddly comforted. There is great peace in Lynch's truth. Neither journalistic embellishments nor euphemisms take the place of reality in Lynch's journal, nor does Richards shy from the misery of, for example, chemotherapy sickness. But for Lynch this abnormality is converted to a fact of (altered) life, reckoned with objectively and positively.

This account ostensibly serves many groups, from cancer patients to surviving family members, counsellors to oncologists. The photographs aren't a mere time-compressed record of their lives—they

serve as a guide, from surgical scars to X-rays to loss of sexual identity and appetite. Lynch, in the text, addresses the issue of photo-documentation: "Maybe you should make photographs of the whole thing. If there aren't any pictures of mastectomies, maybe you should take pictures of mine." "No," Gene says looking upset. "No, I couldn't. We have no permission to photograph inside the hospital. And a camera would be in the way when I'm with you." "Come on," I bully him. "You're always criticizing me and our friends for not recording the important events in our lives." So began the draconian labyrinth of procuring permission, symbolic of the loss of control experienced when being treated (and usually experimented upon in the process). The documentation thus extended to other patients, a full-hearted, generous, and necessary gesture that was treated with suspicion and guilt by the medical community and the families of patients, and greeted with acceptance and understanding by the patients themselves.

Fear rises and swells throughout the text, as each new encounter with cancer is faced. Yet Lynch's beauty is a constant, her humanism and caring overshadowing all else. One image of Lynch at an elderly patient's in-hospital birthday party shows the "guests" wearing party hats. As surreal and sad as the atmosphere might have been, Lynch is radiant, a complete participant. Part two of the book, the treatment, removed Lynch from everything familiar. She was impounded in the cold steel and harsh light of hospital sterility, routinely tortured with toxic drugs and radiation, in the hope that her cure would be the one that took, in spite of the odds and a grim family history. In no way did she attempt to be instructive, which accounts for the success of her attacks on the seeming absurdity of the procedures, the indefensible medical jargon that doctors fall back on when the simple truth is too difficult to deal with. She also encountered some unfathomable and cruel, if well-meaning characters along the way, whose ignorant theorizing indoctrinated listeners with terror. She debunked the various agonies and annoyances elegantly, empowering those who encountered her.

Richards' photographs of other cancer patients range from straightforward and illustrative to abstract

and dreamlike, the latter especially when Lynch is included in the image (as in one picture of a woman sitting beside her bed, tubes connecting her to a machine outside the frame, and, one presumes, Lynch's hands extending toward the woman from across the bed, a serene reassurance). Many of the photographs were made in low light, the shadows and darkness and TV glow ominous and appropriate foreshadowing. In the photographs of Lynch, the passage of time is marked by a bald head (the result of chemotherapy) slowly growing hair, as well as events drawing the two back into the world (the Seabrook protest—"Nukes=Cancer"; the birth of a friend's baby). Patients die, patients who, in the course of research became friends. In this arena, her frustrations find voice, for she is helpless to do more than record the losses. Lynch continued, her wait, one is certain, prescient. And then, several years later, a recurrence, the decline rapid, relentless. Richards' first photograph in this phase of the book is perhaps the most beautiful, resignation and peace acting like a veil over Lynch, filtering and protecting her. Subsequent images reflect a wide-eyed euphoria, born of disbelief; Lynch's writing became disjointed and infrequent, a result of the drugs she was given as treatment. She began to confine her observations to that which she understood: garden growing, medication, love, goodbyes.

Richards' postscript, dated October 7, 1985, is equally eloquent and moving. The first paragraph reads:

*For almost two years I have been sleeping half on the floor or against the wall, not wanting to move Dorothea's notebooks and diaries off my bed. On hot humid nights, pages, loose from their binding, stick to my back and my shoulders; in winter, when I try to turn over, they crackle like dried leaves. Still, I can't move them. Almost everything else that belonged to her—clothes, car, jewelry—has been donated to charity, sold, or carried off by friends.*

At this point in the book and this review, my tears begin; I only wish my father and I could have read Lynch's and Richards' account together before his death. Cancer's victory over Lynch is hollow, so strong is her reverberation through her words and Richards' pictures. The book is a loving and lasting tribute, a legacy for everyone to witness.

## THE LOOK OF NEW MEXICO

*The Essential Landscape: The New Mexico Photographic Survey, Steven A. Yates, editor, Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1985, 147 pages, \$45.00.*

*New Mexico, U.S.A., Barbara Erdman, editor, Santa Fe: Santa Fe Center for Photography, 1985, 111 pages, \$35.00 (hard), \$19.95 (paper).*

By Ed Osowski

The photographer who chooses to work in New Mexico does not face an easy task. He or she must first contend with the examples of others who have already been there. An almost endless list—Ansel Adams, Laura Gilpin, Paul Strand, Eliot Porter, Edward Weston, Paul Caponigro—of photographers who have photographed and, in several cases, lived in New Mexico imposes a burden of vision, of subject, and of purpose on the photographer working there today. Two recent publications demonstrate a variety of ways of dealing with the weight of these masters of the past.

*The Essential Landscape: The New Mexico Photographic Survey*, the more impressive of the two publications, is a response, in the words of its editor Steve Yates, to the "transformation and decisive change" that have altered the physical and social look of New Mexico over the past two decades. It records how twelve photographers, commissioned by the Museum of New Mexico, saw the state in the first years of the 1980's. Informing them were the examples of other important surveys of the past—in the nineteenth century the projects of Timothy H. O'Sullivan and William Henry Jackson and, in this century, the work of the F.S.A. photographers. If they had a charge, then, it was to preserve, through their photographs, what New Mexico looked like at a specific time in its history.

The effort to "preserve the look" raises the question of what "landscape" means in the title *The Essential Landscape*. Its tradition, for photographers as well as for painters, is especially rich and landscape is now again very much in vogue. The land, all that surrounds



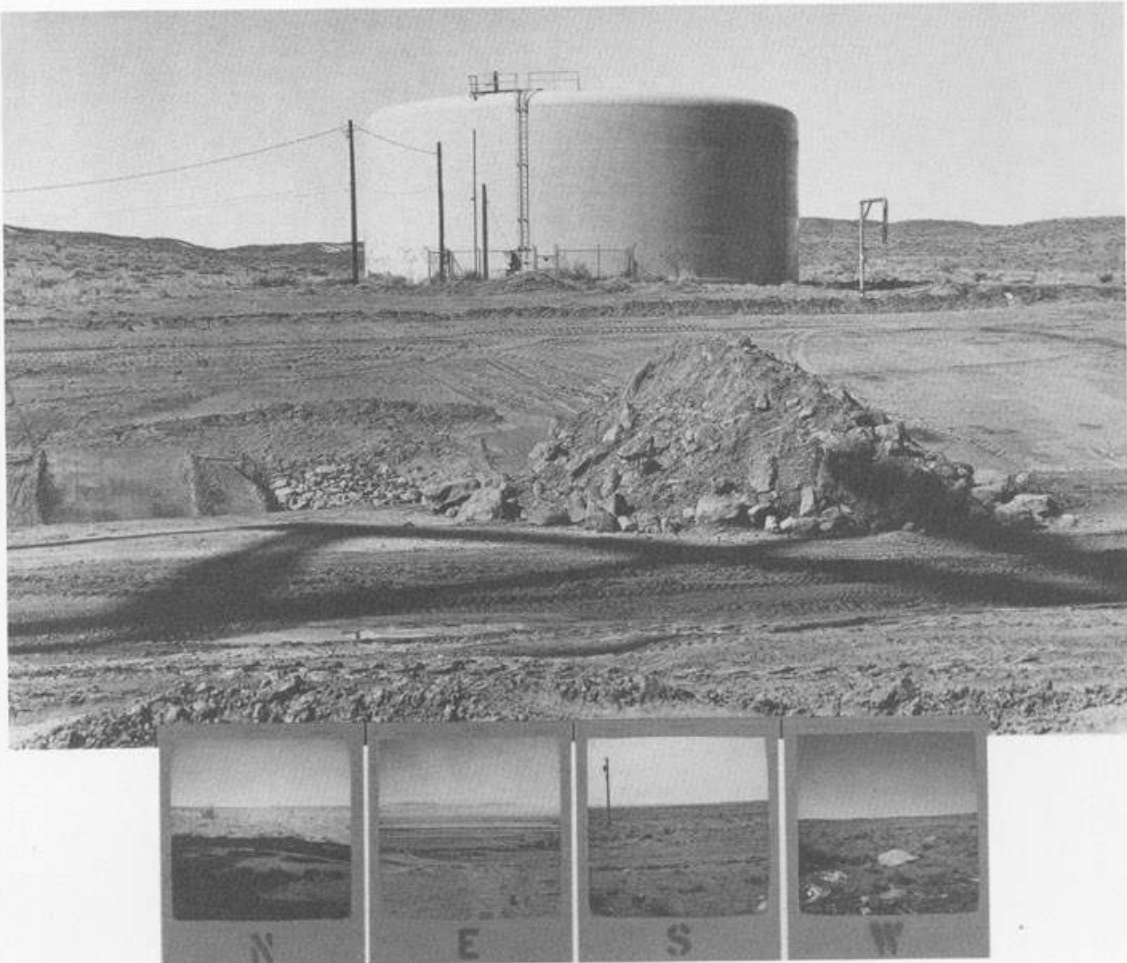
us, is, in a sense, all that is *not* us, is apart from us, is the other. Yet, it is there, in the traditional view of landscape art, that we find those values that give us greatest comfort and hope—beauty, harmony, peace, majesty. Whether the photographer can still elicit in the viewer a response to these expansive ideas is problematical. Writing in *The New Criterion* Eric Gibson criticized much recent landscape painting (and, by extension, photography) for its smallness of vision, its "absence of any significant message of transcendence or spirituality." One has little difficulty locating in the photographs by Joan Myers in *The Essential Landscape* those abstract, stable values, weighty with spiritual significance. In her "San Miguel" a gate, arching across the sky, leads one off, down a path, past houses, to the world beyond man-made objects, to that idyllic space where one experiences, in Myers' words, "a hope for the future, a dream of opportunity." If, as in her photograph "Tecolote," barbed wire and fence posts block one's view of the land, Myers still maintains that beauty and elegance exist, beyond those things that inhibit one's sight.

Myer's photographs demonstrate what might be called the myth of optimism, the fiction that maintains that the natural world continues to survive the efforts of man to destroy it. In their book *Landscape as Photograph* Estelle Jussim and Elizabeth Lindquist-Cock comment on the way that the natural world is filled, not so much with discovery, as with data that corroborates beliefs already held. "What individuals think about nature they bring both to the making of and to the appreciation of landscape photographs." To use Ansel Adams as an example, he approached the natural world knowing before hand that majesty inhered in it and his photographs uncover, rather than discover, that majesty.

Bernard Plossu's "Around Deming" and Mary Peck's "Lake Bed, Palo Blanco" depict views that stretch to infinity, views that move beyond the real world of scrub brush, dust, cracked lake bottoms, and endless skies to a transcendental sphere. The roads that divide these two photographs are motifs that make obvious the spiritual journeys implied in both works.

Myers, Plossu, and Peck are concerned with defining the natural world as one in which man's hand has not "contaminated" what is out there. What emerges from the other photographers is that the world without man is, at best, a nostalgic wish, a deliberately naive attempt to deny what is there and, by imposing the pastoral myth on what one photographs, to see what is not there. "Las Trampas" by Alex Harris graces the cover of the book and Harris may be the pivotal figure in *The Essential Landscape*. Four of his fifteen photographs offer the grand solemnity and intimations of the sublime that Myers and Plossu (and, upon occasion, Paul Logsdon, Edward Ranney, and Meridel Rubenstein) express. But Harris pulls back from this approach in the majority of his remaining works where he enters the closed, ordered world of rooms where he records, with sharp, precise detail, the objects of daily life. In these curiously de-peopled spaces Harris finds the solemnity, the peace, the transcendental vision others locate in the out-of-doors.

It is the social landscape—the world with and made by people—that dominates the remainder of the survey. Meridel Rubenstein's works are topographic collages that romantically convey the struggle to establish a place called "home" on the unyielding land. Richard Wilder's "archeological" photographs cleverly poke fun at the efforts of developers and decorators to create a Santa Fe that will appeal to the desire of the tourist to



Thomas Barrow: Franciscan Reservoir, Albuquerque

find something old, but clean, and adobe, and cute, if you will. When Wilder returned eighteen months later to photograph the Beva Cafe he found a new adobe wall now disguising the entrance to what looks like an upscale restaurant.

In the street scenes of Miguel Gondert and the portraits of Anne Noggle the world has receded to a backdrop against which are enacted small, personal dramas. Gondert's subjects primp for the camera, flaunt their teenage angst and their adolescent sexuality, look ever so slightly troubled, not by the camera, which they embrace, but by their own lives. What imposes on them is not the world but their own psyches. Noggle writes that what attracts her to her subjects is how they represent the "uniqueness" that is "alive and well and living in New Mexico." She feels an obvious fondness for her subjects, but her reach is limited. So unique are her subjects that one cannot move beyond them and the rooms or spaces they inhabit to any reading of how they relate to the world beyond. Noggle's people remain fiercely unique.

Calendar art always disappoints because its reach is so limited. It fails to stretch our perceptions, rarely shocks us with new awareness, but rather lulls us into complacency and a dull acceptance of the status quo. Five of the twelve photographers in *The Essential Landscape* are among the fifty-eight represented in *New Mexico, U.S.A.* Their pieces, along with works by Roy Belcher, Paul Caponigro, Eliot Porter, Stephen Cooper, Douglas Kahn, Robert Saltzman, William Davis, and Willard Van Dyke, are the best in the collection for what they locate in the land is a stasis, a permanence of vision, and a commitment to precise detail, to the very "thisness" of the material world. But the majority of the photographs is *New Mexico, U.S.A.*, a catalogue of two exhibitions organized by the Santa Fe Center for Photography, shares many of the shortcomings of calendar art.

The images in *New Mexico, U.S.A.* rely on the safety of stereotype and glorify the obvious to make their point. In Richard Erdoes' "Navajo Carnival" the cultural juxtapositions are too obvious, too cute. Michael Heller's "Shidoni Sculpture Garden" is, again, clever and tired, an image we have seen too often before. What dominate are photojournalistic versions of what the editor, Bar-

bara Erdman, would like us to believe life in New Mexico looks like.

While *New Mexico, U.S.A.* disappoints with its numerous over-worked images, *The Essential Landscape* suffers from a more serious problem. Really two books in one, *The Essential Landscape* collects eight essays by J.B. Jackson, a cultural geographer and subject of one of Anne Noggle's portraits. Jackson's essays, interesting in themselves, do little to illuminate the photographs they accompany. But, more distressingly, an editorial decision was made to print a mere handful of the 180 photographs in the survey at full-page size. The actual catalogue of the exhibition does a disservice to these twelve photographers. Reducing their works to a 2 by 4 inch image renders them partially unreadable. And, in the case of Rubenstein, Harris, and Logsdon not printing them in color makes them very different works from those submitted to the survey. Last summer, on a trip to Santa Fe, I saw the pieces commissioned for *The Essential Landscape*. The publication of that exhibition only hints at the beauty and strength in many of those works.

## WRY SCHOLARSHIP

The Formative Decades: Photography in Great Britain, 1839—1920, by Roy Flukinger, University of Texas Press, Austin.

By April Rapier

Roy Flukinger's brilliant and erudite volume, *The Formative Decades: Photography in Great Britain, 1839-1920*, University of Texas Press, 1985, was originally conceived as an exhibition, the first in nearly two decades drawn from the Photography Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Resource Center, University of Texas, Austin. The Gernsheim Collection, purchased in 1963, was seen officially as a supplement to the HRC's British literary materials; the merging of the two created one of the world's largest collections of photographic historical materials, inaugurating the Photography Collection, HRC (now HRHRC), of which Flukinger is cura-

tor. The exhibition was a collaboration between HRHRC and the Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, an important and resourceful cooperation. The book is both scholarly and engaging, the result of Flukinger's renowned researching abilities, relentless and absolute.

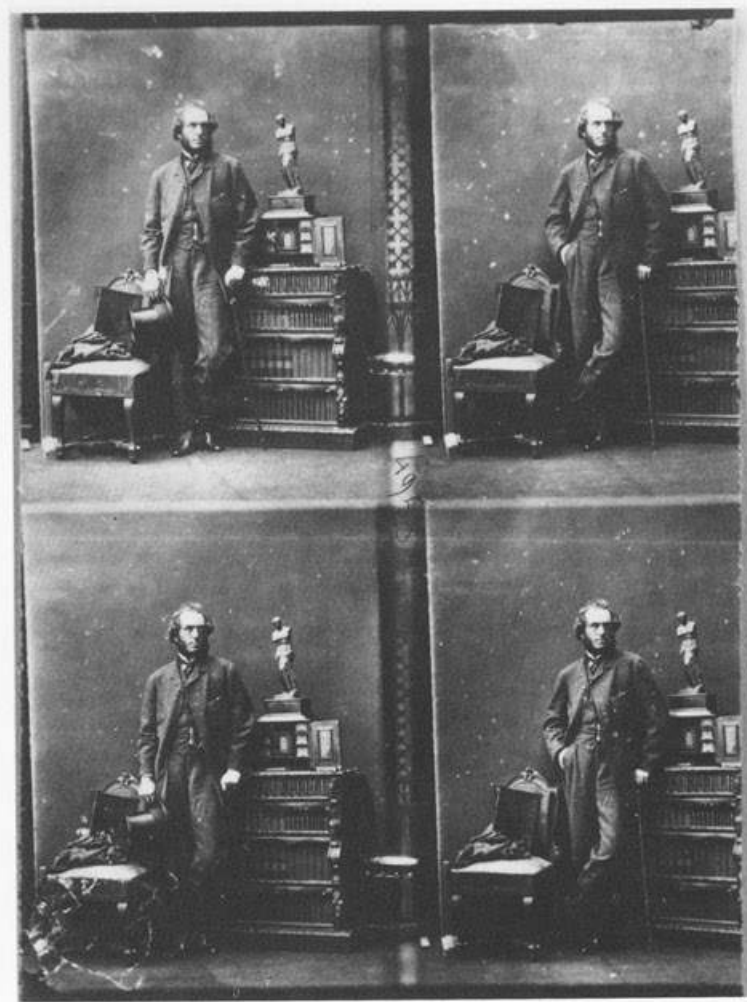
Its format is one of the clearest and most accessible of any historical writing or catalogue: one reads a text first, after which individual photographs are positioned over a descriptive few paragraphs, discussing artist, process, general applications, and other issues. Its clarity and simplicity make available a concentration of interesting and hard-to-find information, making it invaluable as an art or photo-history text. In fact, one wishes for its companion volumes—France and America, to suggest a starting point—as an alternative to Newhall's book, which in comparison, seems truncated and anecdotal. The range of images used is an innovative departure

from the norm, using obscure and better known imagery in enlightening juxtaposition.

Ideas and factual data are drawn full-circle, an entirely different level of material is brought to light, and parallels and connections are startlingly innovative and detailed. Flukinger presents information in a logical progression, enabling the reader to piece together an extremely active and seminal eight decades, a time period that revolutionized the world. His editorial interjections are born of thoughtful and informed dialogue with contemporary imagemakers and educators, reflecting an open-mindedness that clears the reader's way, encouraging further inquiry. Flukinger calls upon other disciplines as well, adding scientific, sociological, psychological, political, and literary disciplines and commentary as response to tangent issues that arise quite naturally in the course of processing new information. *The Formative Decades* is wry and challenging, representative of the kind of work one has come to expect and enjoy from Flukinger, evidenced in his lectures, papers, curatorial skills, and insightful intellectualism alike.

The exhibition provided a rare opportunity to see first-hand a vast and exciting collection of the foundations of photography. The book far surpasses the concept of scholarly catalogue: it contains a wealth of marvelous information and opinion, an indispensable addition to the artists' or historians' library.

Camille Silvy: Multiple Portraits of John Leech, ca. 1860 (Gernsheim Collection).







Photographer Unknown: Main Street, Houston, 1939

## NOTES

## WOMEN IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Anne Tucker, photohistorian, critic, and curator of photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, will participate in the conference, *Women in Photography: Making Connections*, at Syracuse University, October 10, 11 & 12th, 1986.

"This conference will give women a chance to make 'connections' — to explore mutual concerns with people in both similar and different photographic disciplines; to connect women's contributions to the profession in the past with the work women are doing today; and to establish connections with future generations by exploring ways of affecting further progress in the field."

Anne Tucker will take part in a panel discussion, "Great Strides: Great Visions" along with Deborah Ryan, photographic specialist/exhibition coordinator, Schomburg Center for Research on Black Culture, New York Public Library, and Ruth Unzicker, general manager, marketing, and vice president, Photography Division, Eastman Kodak Company.

The program will also feature: Mary Ellen Mark, photojournalist, author and lecturer; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, photography critic and contributor to *October*, *Exposure*, and *Art in America*; Nancy Brown, fashion photographer based in New York City; Ann Noggle, photographer and lecturer at the Fine Arts Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Jan Zeta Grover, instructor of photography at Columbia College, Chicago, author and lecturer; Margaret Randall, lecturer at the University of New Mexico, photographer and author.

Keynote speaker for the conference is Marion Post Wolcott, photographer, whose work has appeared in *Life*, *Fortune*, *Philadelphia Eagle Bulletin* and the Farm Security Administration. Her photographs will also be exhibited as well as *Give Her of the Fruit of Her Hands*, the work of photojournalist Cecilia "Jackie" Martin, sponsored by Eastman Kodak Company.

For more information, contact *Women in Photography Conference*, Sheraton University Inn and Conference Center, 801 University Avenue, Syracuse, New York, 13210-0801. Phone: (315) 475-3000

## PHOTOGRAPHY AND POSTMODERNISM

As a part of the College Art Association's regional conference, October 28 — November 1, Mem-

phis, Tennessee, Michael Starenko, editor of *Afterimage*, will introduce panelists and topics covering key issues of *Photography and Postmodernism*:

"Structuralism, Poststructuralism, and Ethical Postmodernism," by Richard Bolton. Bolton is a photographer, writer and editor of the forthcoming *Sight and Strategy: Issues in Photographic Representation*.

"Postmodernism and Sexuality," by Ed Hill and Suzanne Bloom. Hill and Bloom are both on the faculty of the University of Houston; they are also artists/photographers who collaborate under the name MANUAL.

"Photography, Art History, and the Contextualist Debate," by Mary Warner Marien. Marien is a frequent contributor to *Afterimage*, *Views*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*. She teaches the history of photography at Syracuse University.

"Assimilation of Photography into Art: Reductionism and the Postmodern," by Lew Thomas. Thomas is the author of *Structural(ism) and Photography*, among other publications.

## BACK TO SCHOOL: DIALOGUE AMONG MID-LIFE COLLEGE WOMEN

This fall, over 6700 women over the age of 30 are enrolled in Austin's colleges and universities. The experiences of these women will be the focus of the collaborative art and social documentary project, *Back to School: Evidence of Some Dialogue Between Returning Women Students* to be held October 17 — November 8 in the Mary Moody Northern Theater of St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress Avenue, Austin.

*Back to School* features an exhibition of 61 photo/texts, a play and two public forums aimed at provoking discussion about the process of defining self and the unique needs of mature learners. The project has been conceived and produced by documentary photographer Meri Houtchens-Kitchens and is sponsored by Women and Their Work. The new play, directed by Austin playwright Sidney Brammer, will be performed October 24-26th.

The exhibition consists of black-and-white photographs captioned by the mid-life women whom Houtchens-Kitchens photographed in a studio and in their everyday environments. Viewers will be encouraged to add to the exhibit their written responses to the

photo/texts to further extend the spirit of collaboration in which the work was executed.

Two panel discussions, October 18 and 19, will provide forums for further discussions of issues related to the *Back to School* portfolio. Participants will include the collaborating artists, social science and humanities scholars, community leaders and counselors of mid-life returning students.

For more information, call (512) 477-1064

## HELLO FROM HOUSTON

Postal cards published by the Houston Public Library honor the Sesquicentennials of Texas and of Houston.

From its archive of nearly 60,000 photographic images, Houston Public Library has selected fifteen views of Houston and reproduced them as a portfolio of postal cards to honor the Sesquicentennials of Texas and of Houston. Called "Hello from Houston" the portfolio's sepia-toned reproductions cover the period from 1860 to 1939. These particular images were selected for a number of reasons, states Doris Glasser, who heads the Library's Texas and Local History Dept. and is also in charge of the Library's Sesquicentennial programming and publications. They offer a good representational sampling of the types of images found in the Library's photography collection. And they contain the signs — sometimes subtle, but not always so — of Houston's growth and change.

Each card is dated and identified. The earliest image, from 1860, shows a paddle wheeler docked at Allen's Landing while its cargo was being unloaded. In the most recent image, taken in 1939, Main St. in downtown Houston is shown locked in a traffic jam. Between these two what emerges is a record of Houston's "urban" presence. This is a city, they announce, where the scale is large, busy, full. While charming in a nostalgic way, the 1895 photograph of Old Market Square clearly shows a city where people, horses, carriages, and buildings jostle for space. And when its citizens retreated, as they do in the only photograph whose photographer is known — Frank I. Schleuter's "San Jacinto Day Outing" — it was to a spot outside Houston where they sought relief from its crowds.

Nearly 7,000 photographs in the Houston Public Library collection have been cataloged using the guidelines developed by the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House. Glasser says, and more will be processed as staffing permits. What dominate now, she adds, are photographs which provide a good record of Houston's architectural development. Donations to the photography collection are always encouraged. The photographs of Schleuter, donated by the Bank of the Southwest, form the core of the collection. Recent additions have been made by the *Houston Chronicle* and *Houston Post* which now routinely send their older negatives to the Library. Glasser reminds donors that their gifts are tax-deductible and contributions can be made by contacting her or Louis Marchiafava, who heads the Houston Metropolitan Research Center at Houston Public Library.

"Hello from Houston" was funded by a donation from the Friends of the Houston Public Library. The portfolios cost \$5.00 and can be purchased at all branch libraries and at the Central Library's Texas and Local History and Social Sciences Departments. Glasser hopes to see other photographs

reproduced in the future. Funds from the sale of "Hello from Houston" will allow the Library to purchase a special piece of Texana for its collection.

Ed Osowski

## MEXICAN REVOLUTIONARY PHOTOGRAPHS AT BLAFFER GALLERY

As the focus of Blaffer Gallery's celebration of "Raíces Mexicanas", the exhibition *The World Of Agustín Víctor Casasola: Mexico 1900-1938* will be on view from September 16 through October 19, 1986.

This is the first retrospective exhibition of Casasola's work, one of Latin America's most important documentary photographers of the early twentieth century.

Casasola was a Mexican journalist who turned to photography as the most effective way to communicate with the populace of Mexico. His life's work covers a period of turbulent social change within Mexico (1900-1938), spanning the era between the feudal state governed by Porfirio Díaz through the Revolution to the creation of the modern Mexican nation under Obregón to Cárdenas. As founder of the first Photographic Information Agency, he compiled a comprehensive collection of the work of his colleagues.

Along with the Casasola photographs, Blaffer gallery will present complementary exhibitions of painting, sculpture, video (tapes by Manuel Pellicer and Manuel Urbina of Aurelio Reynoso); and a performance art piece by San Antonio artist George Cisneros.

A panel discussion, or "Mesa Redonda," titled *Art and Revolution: The Mexican Case* will be held on Saturday, October 4, 1-5pm in Dudley Hall (across from the Blaffer Gallery). Panelists are: Guadalupe Quintanilla, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of Houston; Patricia Johnson, fine arts critic, *Houston Chronicle*; Pedro Meyer, photographer, Mexico; Carlos Monsivais, poet, social historian, writer, Mexico; Hugo Gutierrez-Vega, cultural attaché, Mexican embassy.

For more information, contact Sarah Gish: (713) 749-1320.

## COLLECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY TO MEET AT HCP

Interested in collecting photographs and in the history of photography? We're forming a group which will meet at HCP from time to time. Call HCP (529-4755) and leave your name and number. We'll get in touch and let you know when the meeting will take place!

Mike Marvins, Frank Cooper

## 1986 HCP FELLOWSHIP AWARDS

Due to the number of strong portfolios submitted this year, the award money was split four ways, instead of the usual three. Awards of \$1,125 each were presented to Roel Castillo, Bill Frazier, Frank Issac, and David Portz. The "work-in-progress" will be shown June 1987. This year's competition was juried by photographers, Peter Brown and Paul Hester, and gallery director, Betty Moody.



SEPTEMBER

**Blaffer Gallery.** "The World of Victor Casasola: Mexico 1900-1938;" "Images of the Revolution;" video tape by Salvador Toscano, video installation by Manuel Pellicer, and video tape by Manuel Urbina of Aurelio Reynoso, soldier and lieutenant in Pancho Villa's army at age 15, and owner of Leo's Restaurant in Houston. **Sept 16-Oct 26**, opening reception Sept 16, 7-10 pm; Univ. Houston, University Park, Mon-Fri 10-5, Sat 1-5, 749-1329.

**Butera's on Montrose.** "Patsy Cravens: Photographs;" **Sept 8-Nov 7**, 4621 Montrose, M-F 7am-10pm, Sat-Sun 8am-10pm, 523-0722.

**Glassell School of Art.** "Glassell School Faculty Exhibition;" **through Sept 12**; also, "Collaborators: Artists Working Together in Houston, 1969-1986;" **Sept 18-Oct 19**, a survey of the activities of Houston artists who combine their talents to produce art, ranging from painting and sculpture, to performance, video, and installations; 5105 Montrose, M-F 9-5, 529-7659.

**Houston Center for Photography.** "Texas 150: New Texas Photography;" **Sept 5-Oct 12**, opening reception Sept 12, 7 pm; 1441 W. Alabama, Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat-Sun 12-5, 529-4755.

**Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.** "The Texas Landscape, 1900-1986;" **through Sept 7**, 1001 Bissonnet, Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 12:15-6, Thur 'till 9, 526-1811.

**Sewall Art Gallery.** "A Place of Dreams: Houston, an American City;" color photo-essay by Geoff Winningham, excerpted from a book to be published by Rice University in September. **Sept 5-Oct 18**, Sewall Hall, Rice University, 6100 S. Main, Entrance 2, Mon-Sat 12-5, 521-8101, ext 3502/3470.

**Transco Tower, West Gallery.** "Survey of Thirteen San Antonio Artists;" (includes the work of photographer Neal Maurer). **Sept 12-Oct 14**, 2800 Post Oak Blvd., Mon-Fri 8-6, 439-4401.

OCTOBER

**Blaffer Gallery.** "The World of Victor Casasola: Mexico 1900-1938;" "Images of the Revolution;" video tape by Salvador Toscano, video installation by Manuel Pellicer, and video tape by Manuel Urbina of Aurelio Reynoso, soldier and lieutenant in Pancho Villa's army at age 15, and owner of Leo's Restaurant in Houston. **through Oct 26**, opening reception Sept 16, 7-10 pm; Univ. Houston, University Park, Mon-Fri 10-5, Sat 1-5, 749-1329.

**Butera's on Montrose.** "Patsy Cravens: Photographs;" **through Nov 7**, 4621 Montrose, Mon-Fri

7am-10pm, Sat-Sun 8am-10pm, 523-0722.

**Diverse Works.** "Amnesty International Invitational;" exhibition of single projects by 50 selected artists, in response to individually assigned cases from the files of Amnesty International. **Oct 25-Nov 22**, 214 Travis, Tue-Fri 10-5, Sat 12-4, 223-8346.

**Glassell School of Art.** "Collaborators: Artists Working Together in Houston, 1969-1986;" **through Oct 19**, a survey of the activities of Houston artists who combine their talents to produce art, ranging from painting and sculpture, to performance, video, and installations; 5105 Montrose, Mon-Fri, 9-5, 529-7659.

**Houston Center for Photography.** "Texas 150: New Texas Photography;" **through Oct 12**, 6 pm; 1441 W. Alabama, Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat-Sun 12-5, 529-4755.

**Houston Center for Photography.** "Hopps and Gutmann: Four Walls, Five States;" **Oct 17-Nov 16**, 1441 W. Alabama, Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat-Sun 12-5, 529-4755.

**Sewall Art Gallery.** "A Place of Dreams: Houston, an American City;" color photo-essay by Geoff Winningham, excerpted from a book to be published by Rice University in September. **through Oct 18, Oct 31- Dec 6**, "Group Show: Recent Works by Rice Art Faculty;" including photographs by Peter Brown and Geoff Winningham, Sewall Hall, Rice University, 6100 S. Main, Entrance 2, Mon-Sat 12-5, 527-4815, ext 3502/3470

**Transco Tower, West Gallery.** "Survey of Thirteen San Antonio Artists;" (includes the work of photographer Neal Maurer). **through Oct 14**, 2800 Post Oak Blvd., M-F 8-6, 439-4401.

NOVEMBER

**Butera's on Montrose.** "Patsy Cravens: Photographs;" **through Nov 7**, 4621 Montrose, Mon-Fri 7am-10pm, Sat-Sun 8am-10pm, 523-0722.

**Diverse Works.** "Amnesty International Invitational;" exhibition of single projects by 50 selected artists, in response to individually assigned cases from the files of Amnesty International. **through Nov 22**, 214 Travis, Tue-Fri 10-5, Sat 12-4, 223-8346.

**Houston Center for Photography.** "Hopps and Gutmann: Four Walls, Five States;" **through Nov 16**; also, "Photographs at Auction: HCP Biennial Auction Exhibition;" **Nov 21-Dec 5**, 1441 W. Alabama, Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat-Sun 12-5, 529-4755.

**Sewall Art Gallery.** **through Dec 6**, "Group Show: Recent Works by Rice Art Faculty;" including photographs by Peter Brown and Geoff Winningham, Sewall Hall, Rice University, 6100 S. Main, Entrance 2, Mon-Sat 12-5, 527-4815, ext 3502/3470

ELSEWHERE  
IN TEXAS

**Afterimage.** "The Moon Show;" (Fifteenth Anniversary Show). **Sept 13-Oct 25**; also, "Robert Doisneaux;" **Oct 28-Dec 6**, 2800 Routh St., Dallas, TX, Mon-Sat 10-5:30, (214) 871-9140.

**Amon Carter Museum.** "Twenty-five Years of Collecting Photography, Watercolors, and Drawings;" including a rare daguerreotype of the Mexican War, albumen silver prints by explorer photographers, pictorial images, and documentary photographs which illustrate the rise of photojournalism. **Sept 27-Oct 26**; also, "New Landscapes;" including photographs by Paul Caponigro, Mark Klett, William Clift, Lawrence McFarland, and Michael Smith. **Oct. 31-Dec 14**, 3501 Camp Bowie Blvd., Fort Worth, TX, Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5:30, (817) 738-1933.

**College of the Mainland Art Gallery.** "Wendy Watriss: Documentary Photographs of Central America." **Sept 11-Oct 22**, reception following a lecture at 7 p.m. on Sept 11, 8001 Palmer Hwy, Texas City, TX, Mon-Fri 12-4, (Sat-Sun, call for info) (409) 938-1211, ext 348.

**Galveston Art League.** "Galveston;" photographs by Charlotte Land. **Sept 6-28**, at the Rosenberg Library, 2310 Sealy, Galveston, Mon-Thur 9-9, Fri-Sat 9-6, Sun 1-5.

**Laguna Gloria Museum.** Texas Fine Arts Association's "Texas Annual 86;" **Nov 21-Jan 4**, 3809 W 35, Austin, TX, Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5, Thurs 10-9, (512) 458-8191.

FILM

**Rice Media Center.** *Bellizaire the Cajun*, a new feature film by Louisiana filmmaker Glen Pitre. **Sept 25**, this showing is part of a benefit for the Southwest Alternate Media Center. For ticket prices and information, call SWAMP at 522-0165.

**KUHT/Channel 8.** *The Territory*, showcase for Southwest independent film and videomakers. **Oct. 5, 12, 19, 26, Nov. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, 10pm.**

**Rice Media Center.** "1986 Asian American Film Festival;" **Oct. 23-26**, University at Stockton, Entrance 7. Call for times: 527-4894.

LECTURES/EVENTS

**College of the Mainland.** photojournalist Wendy Watriss will give a lecture prior to the opening of her show. "Wendy Watriss: Documentary Photographs of Central America;" **Thurs., Sept 11, 7pm.** Fine Arts Center, 8001 Palmer Hwy, Texas City, TX. (409) 938-1211, ext 348.

**Galveston Art League.** photographic critique by Dave Crossley, free to GAL members. **Sat., Sept 13, 10-12.** Rosenberg Library, 2310 Sealy, Galveston. For more information, call Chula Ross Sanchez (409) 762-5710.

**The Firehouse Gallery.** (Houston Women's Caucus for Art), Walter Hopps, director of the Menil Collection, will speak on "Reflections on Post Modernism: A Dick and Jane View;" After a question and answer session, one or two HWCA members will show slides and discuss their work. **Tues., Sept. 16, 7:30pm.** 1413 Westheimer, 520-7840.

**Blaffer Gallery.** a panel discussion, "How Revolutions Affect Social and Cultural Changes;" **Sun., Oct. 4**, panelists include Patricia Johnson, Fine Arts Critic, *Houston Chronicle*, Pedro Meyer, photographer, Mexico, Carlos Monsivais, poet, social

historian, writer, Mexico, and Hugo Gutierrez-Vega, Cultural Attache, Mexican Embassy, 1-5pm, the University of Houston, University Park, 749-1320.

**The Firehouse Gallery.** "The Other Art Writers in Houston: Freelancing;" a panel of writers who write about art on a freelance basis for local, regional, and national publications will discuss their work. **Tuesday, Nov. 18, 8pm.** 1413 Westheimer, 520-7840.

CLUBS

**American Society of Magazine Photographers (ASMP).** meets 2nd Mon, monthly in the Graphic Arts Conference Center, 1324 W. Clay. International association "whose members work in every category of published photography;" 6:30pm social; 7:30pm meeting. Visitors welcome. Charge for monthly meetings, 771-2220.

**Houston Chapter of Association for Multimage.** meets 3rd Thurs, monthly. Steve Sandifer, 667-9417.

**Association of Students in Photography.** Houston Community College, 1300 Holman. For HCC students. Meets 8pm 1st Mon, monthly. Randy Spalinger 521-9271.

**Baytown Camera Club.** meets 7pm 1st and 3rd Mon, monthly at Baytown Community Center, 2407 Market, Baytown. Vernon Hagan 424-5684.

**Brazoria County Camera Club.** meets 7:30pm 2nd Tues, monthly at Continental Savings & Loan, Lake Jackson. Don Benton (409) 265-4569.

**The Houston Camera Club.** meets 7:30pm 1st and 3rd Tues, monthly at Baylor College of Medicine, DeBakey Bldg, room M-112. Competitions, programs, evaluations. Glenn Stevens, Pres, 520-5013.

**The Houston Photochrome Club.** meets 7:30pm 2nd and 4th Tues, monthly at St. Michael's church, 1801 Sage Rd., room 21, John Patton 453-4167.

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

**Photographic Collectors of Houston.** meets upstairs at the Color Place (4102 San Felipe) 4th Wed, monthly at 7pm. Steve Granger 498-5589.

**1960 Photographic Society.** meets 7:30 pm 1st and 3rd Tues, monthly at Cypress Creek Christian Community Center, 6823 Cypress Wood Drive and Stuebner Airline. Dave Mahayier 522-1861 or 353-9604.

**Society of Photographers in Industry.** meets 3rd Thurs monthly, Sonny Look's Restaurant, 9810 S. Main, 6-10pm. Cocktails, dinner, speaker; visitors welcome. Dave Thompson 795-8835.

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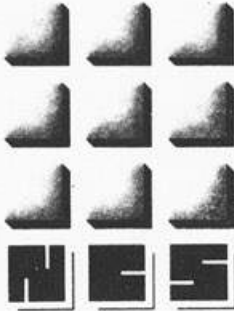
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SNAP JUDGMENTS

In which Joe mourns the death of Meaninglessness, perhaps, though it wasn't killed by critics.

theatrical, the poetic, each one on the arm of a European consortium. Symphonic music again pretends to genius. No-one cares to speak to felonious Jazz.

A few inscrutable Gods stay away, and Christ doesn't come until late. Prophets, for once, are scarce. Formulas gather in knots, speak in cabalistic conversions, the Big Bang Theory tries to snake the Uniform Field. Communism holds sway in a corner, and opposite, there is a ruckus when someone calls Democracy a nasty name. "Our friends don't call us Capitalist," Democracy says, "because *that* implies that we're exploitive." Democracy has the urge to slug someone, but uncharacteristically, walks out instead, trailed by attendants.

Photography offers Bloody Maries to all of the Meanings, save the Gods. Child-Bearing won't drink, Child-Raising takes a nip, and the celibate Betrayed-by-Children asks for something strong. Shoe-heel lenses account for the clicking at the approach of our servant-paparazzo. Ephemeral spirits will fade from the negatives before furtive Photography finds time to print. Photography also tries to charm the frailer, more susceptible Meanings (Design-in-Shadows, Beauty-in-Flowers, Architectural Form) with mezzotints from its pockets, but the Meanings seem unattractive once seduced.

Meaninglessness died a slow death, from an ironic syphilis that could have been cured by the proper antidote, maybe Scepticism, but I doubt it. It is dead, and all the Meanings are laughing in the hallway, each assured it has the pending power struggle in control. It was really Art that caused the first infection, and much later aggravated the symptoms. Jackson Pollock, until Meaninglessness expired in a cough of paint. Thousands of signed Picasso sketches couldn't encourage its recovery. Julian Schnabel announced he would stab its dead body, stabbed it, and is stabbing still.

When the will is read, the murderers will get nothing. (They have substantial trusts, and would hardly notice additional Meaningless wealth.) Not that the various Meanings won't be jealous, when a substantial education fund is formed for Photography. The assembled Meanings will try to shout it down. But Meaninglessness was wise in this gift, charitable. Meaninglessness will be remembered for its grace. It stuck by the underprivileged, always. During its long and sociable life, it never forced its views on anyone. Well, maybe upon a suicide now and then, when doing the town

with Vanity, combining their persuasive skills. Photography will be granted a stipend for a long stay at an eastern college, and a Meaningless chair will be endowed. Meaningless History will be explained by the revisionist Gabriel of Vietnam, Sly Stallone, or by Donald Regan and Edwin Meese, whelping fresh truth from contrary sources.

But you suggest that Meaninglessness is maybe not dead. "We still have clothing fashions. *The Houston Post* runs identical news items day after day. And what about Los Angeles?" But the Totality of Meaning still hasn't hit its stride! CONSIDER WHAT GAINS WE'VE MADE.

Nations solidify behind single religions. The U.S. and its European allies (Angleterra), the Soviets and their evil totalitarian bloc, are all united in Christian-style moral authority, a taste for imperial architecture, and Nineteenth Century rationalist thought. The Islamic nations, and the tiny plastic explosive nation of the Jews, divine that the Meanings shall be crowded off the shelves some day, by irrefutable logic with familiar logos, delivered not by Coca-cola but by MIRVs.

"Enough," you say. "Please make your meaning clear. Photography doesn't need remedial education. What will Photography get from this, now that Meaninglessness has croaked?" Photography has no orphans to see to, as Literature does, after so much promiscuity with Meaninglessness in Paris. Likewise Photography hasn't the torn smocks of scrappy Painting and Garbage Sculpture, misanthropic brother of Brancusi's muse. Photography will not be reduced like those other Arts, to rendering portraits of their final, faithful inspiration, pleasant Profit, pimpled and plump.

Photographers will ride the upswing because THEY NEVER ABANDONED MEANING. They never knew meaninglessness at all. They are instead the people of substance, the people involved with material facts. This comes from having darkrooms, lugging lights, and watching chemical changes. Photographers believe in matter, and then in something more, in essence. It would give their photos value if it showed upon the prints.

We do know certain photographers, however, who unwittingly became Meaninglessness's acquaintances, just before its death. I don't mean the snap-shottist's, just because no-one is interested in photos of Sis's Camaro. The nearest photographers to Meaninglessness are those who seek the Meanings most. Aaron Siskind is an obvious candidate, Harry Callahan, too. Minor White, with his life's mission of making the soul look silly, was ever a contender. Capa gravitated to danger's meaning and then was dispersed. Man Ray and Warhol merely suggested the meaninglessness of Art. They get credit for its demotion to a diversion no more crucial than by-pass surgery. All these master forgers, and Shirley Levine, Martha Rossler, Richard Prince, all these coined additional sense. Their contributions are the two-dimensional meanings of their names.

Decent-minded photographers, you who are serious and exhibit in galleries and affirm the visual world. I am always at your openings! AND MEANINGS COME TO YOUR OPENINGS TOO! Shiny Aspirations, Desires for Influence, Hopes that One Will See One's Ripple Effect, the things that exhibiting photographers live for. THESE COME TO YOUR OPENINGS. I personally am always watching to see if a photographic exhibition has the slightest effect, aside from stirring the vehement rejection of the work, by one's closest friends. Those Meanings never abandon you however, they remain true. Meaninglessness bid them to stay with you. Photographers, and recommend you to Fame.

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By Visionary Joe

Meaninglessness is dead. Photography missed the obituary, but luckily it's the servant at the wake.

All the principal Meanings will be there, dressed so fine. The Fine Arts attend, one painted up, another with a finely chiseled face, the

Photo by Paula Goldman







## PHOTOGRAPHS AT AUCTION 1986

**The Third Biennial Photograph Auction  
to benefit the  
HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY.  
Saturday December 6, 1986  
at the  
Paradise Bar and Grill  
401 McGowen at Brazos.  
Preview at 11 am.  
Auction at 1 pm.**

*In addition to photographs by nationally known photographers this year's auction will feature a limited number of pairs of round trip tickets for destinations in the U.S. and Mexico, courtesy of CONTINENTAL AIRLINES.*

**A Preview Exhibition of the  
Photographs for Auction  
November 22 - December 5, 1986  
at HCP, 1441 W. Alabama.**

**Preview Opening Reception  
November 21, 1986, 7 pm.**

*\$25 Donation to support this year's auction includes auction catalog, buffet, and a chance at winning one pair of round trip tickets to London courtesy of CONTINENTAL AIRLINES.*

*To donate photographs for this year's auction  
contact the Center at (713) 529-4755  
or send to 1441 W. Alabama, Houston TX, 77006.*

*To be included in the catalog, items should be received  
no later than October 31, 1986.*

WEEGEE  
(Arthur Felig)  
"The Flower Peddler", c. 1940

### HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY FALL SCHEDULE

#### EXHIBITIONS

**Texas 150: New Texas Photography**  
September 5-October 12, 1986  
Opening Reception: Friday, Sept. 12, 7-10pm

**Hopps and Gutmann: Four Walls, Five States**  
October 17-November 16, 1986  
Opening Reception: Friday, Oct. 17, 6-8 pm

**Photographs at Auction: HCP Annual Biennial Auction**  
Exhibition  
November 21-December 5, 1986  
Opening Reception: Friday, Nov. 21, 6-8pm

**Patrick Clancy: 365/360**, Multi media exhibition of installation photography, video, and performance art  
December 12, 1986-January 25, 1987  
Opening Reception: Friday, December 12, 6-8pm

#### LECTURES

Lectures are held at the Center at 1441 West Alabama unless otherwise noted. Lectures are \$2 to members and \$3 to nonmembers.

**CHARLES SCHORRE** This renowned Houston artist will critique your work. Take advantage of this opportunity to discuss your work with the insightful Charles Schorre  
Sept. 23, Tuesday, 7:30pm

**JOHN GUTMANN** Internationally known artist Gutmann will discuss his work in relation to the HCP exhibition of his photography. This is an excellent opportunity to hear the views of this important figure in the history of photography. Funded by the Lynn McLanahan Herbert Lecture Endowment.  
October 20, Monday, 7:30pm

**GEORGE KRAUSE** Internationally known Houston artist Krause will discuss his unshowable work — photographs depicting erotica or aspects of death and religion that have been too controversial to be shown in galleries. Mr. Krause will show images that have never been exhibited.  
November 5, Wednesday, 7:30pm

**PATRICK CLANCY** Media artist Clancy will discuss his fascinating photovideo/performance work. This lecture is presented in conjunction with Southwest Alternate Media Project, and coincides with his exhibit "365.360" cosponsored with Diverse Works.  
December 15, Monday, 7:30pm

#### FILM SERIES

Films will be shown at the Center at 1441 W. Alabama. Admission is \$1 to members and \$3 for nonmembers.  
Wednesday, Sept. 10, 7:30pm

**Daybooks of Edward Weston Part One: How Young I Was** (30min.); **Part Two: The Strongest Way of Seeing** (30min.) Quotes from Weston's daybooks express his thoughts about photography as we see his work. Two of his sons, his second wife, and one of his former students discuss the artist.  
Wednesday, Oct. 8, 7:30pm

**Imogen Cunningham, Photographer** (20 min.) This imaginative film shows Ms. Cunningham at age 90, print-

ing negatives for an exhibit, photographing a nude model, and at her birthday party. This award-winning film by John Korty also includes candid interviews in which she discusses her early influences and describes her artistic philosophy. Also, **Never Give Up: Imogen Cunningham** (28 min.) Filmmaker Ann Hersey shows the photographer at age 92, walking around San Francisco as she recounts her life and discusses family, friends, and photography. Intercut are many of her famous photographs, as well as some of her early and rarely seen work.  
Wednesday, Nov. 12, 7:30pm

**Dorothea Lange Part One: Under the Trees** (30 min.); **Part Two: Closer for Me** (30min.) This important film shows Dorothea Lange in her Berkeley, California home as she prepares for a retrospective exhibition of her 50 years of work. While she looks over the accumulation of a lifetime of photography, she comments on the reasons and emotions that have moved her to photograph particular scenes.  
Wednesday, Dec. 10

**Ansel Adams, Photographer** (20 mins.); also, **Photography as an Art** (29 mins.) In both films, Ansel Adams discusses his teaching methods and his indebtedness to other photographers, and explains how a sense of discovery and rediscovery is conveyed through his photography.

#### 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.

#### HOW TO PHOTOGRAPH ARTWORK

Instructor: Carol Gerhardt  
Time: 1-5pm, Sunday, Sept. 14  
Place: HCP  
Fee: \$20 members, \$30 nonmembers  
Instructor Carol Gerhardt will demonstrate how to make slides of your prints, photograph sculpture, copy a painting, record your exhibit, etc. Learn what film to use, the types of lighting, problems to avoid.

#### THE CRAFT OF FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

Instructor: Gary Faye  
Time: 10am, Saturdays, Sept. 20, and 27, Oct. 4.  
Place: Studio of Gary Faye, 2421 Bartlett  
Fee: \$60 members, \$75 nonmembers  
Gary Faye's three session workshop will provide serious beginners and advanced photographers with information and practical application in the use of large format cameras. Camera movements (tilts and swings), exposure control, filters, critiques, and a field trip, will offer invaluable insights into the problems of light and film. Previous experience with large format cameras is not required, only the ambition to create the perfect photograph is necessary. Classes will be held in Gary Faye's studio.

#### STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY

Instructor: Dave Crossley  
Time: 7-10pm, Tuesdays, Sept. 23-Dec. 16  
(no class meeting on Tues. Nov 25)  
Place: Studio of Dave Crossley, 1412 West Alabama  
Fee: \$280 members, \$320 nonmembers  
A twelve-week intensive introduction to commercial studio photography. The course will be held in a commercial stu-

dio and students will produce work. Technically, the course will cover cameras, lighting, film, and all other aspects of studio photography. The class will investigate problems of tabletop constructions, still life, product, and portrait photography. Students will take assignments and will develop their own projects. Color and black and white. All equipment provided. Students should expect to spend \$65 to \$80 on film. The class will meet at Mr. Crossley's studio, 1412 West Alabama.

#### ARCHIVAL MOUNTING AND MATTING

Instructor: Frank Isaac  
Time: 1-5pm, Sunday, Oct. 12  
Place: HCP  
Fee: \$20 members, \$30 nonmembers  
Learn the whys and hows of mounting and matting to archival standards. Frank will discuss various materials and why they're important or unimportant. Members will have free use of the HCP matt cutter after taking this class.

#### STORYTELLING: MANIPULATION VS. PREMEDITATION

Instructor: Blaine Dunlap  
Time: Session 1: 10am-1pm Saturday, Nov. 8  
Session 2: 2pm-5pm Saturday, Nov. 8  
Place: Session 1, HCP; Session 2, SWAMP, (1519 W. Main)  
Fee: \$20 members and students; \$25 nonmembers (for both sessions). Session 1 is a lecture/discussion. Issues involved with controlling documentary reality will be analyzed from various perspectives. Discussion will include selection of subject material, exposition, confronting technical and budgetary restrictions, role of the camera, commerciality vs. aesthetics, and questions of formalism. Excerpts from Dunlap's own documentaries will be screened. Session 2 is a hands-on demonstration. Dunlap will demonstrate single camera shooting techniques while videotaping an original dramatic sequence featuring local actors. By talking his way through the shoot and reviewing segments in playback, numerous strategies and devices will be illustrated. BLAINE DUNLAP is an acclaimed producer of films and videotapes on the culture and traditions of the American South. A Guggenheim Fellow, his work has been screened on national PBS and at film festivals around the world. He will be premiering his first narrative film, *Night Work*, at Rice Media Center on Nov. 8 at 7:30pm.

#### FUNDAMENTALS OF BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY

Instructor: Jay Forrest  
Time 9am - 1pm, Saturdays, Dec. 6, 13, 20.  
Place: HCP first two sessions, Jay Forrest's darkroom last session.  
Fee: \$50 members, \$60 nonmembers  
Limit: 12  
This class is designed for beginning photographers interested in how to operate a camera, how a light meter works, what film to use, and how the photographic process works. Learn how to develop film and make a proof sheet. While basic printing will be demonstrated, participants will not make individual prints. Instructor Jay Forrest will discuss how to set up a simple darkroom in your home.

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