

Vance Gellert. Untitled. from Sons & Fathers excerpts from Carlvision

VERUSCHKA, NARCISSISM, AND BANALITY/HESTER ON MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS/SPACES IN THE HEART OF TEXAS/MCCOMBIE ON HCP'S FELLOWS/PORTZ ON PORTZ/NEIDICH RESHOOTS THE ARCHIVES/LA GRANGE DIALECTICS/ SCHILLING ON DC PHOTOGRAPHY/REVIEWS: MISRACH, FULTON, LIPSCOMB & LIPSCOMB, TPS ANNUAL JURIED EXHIBITION, FAMILY/EXTENSIONS



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SPOT is a publication of the Houston Center for Photography, a non-profit organization that serves the photographic community as a resource for educational exchange through exhibition, publications, lectures, workshops, and fellowships. SPOT is supported in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Texas Commission on the Arts, the Cultural Arts Council of Houston, The Brown Foundation, and the Anchorage Foundation.
For details about membership: contact the HCP at 1441 West Alabama, Houston, TX, 77006. Telephone (713)529-4755.
Subscriptions to SPOT are \$12 per year in the United States. The magazine is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December.
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WHEN YOU PATRONIZE OUR ADVERTISERS, TELL THEM YOU SAW IT IN SPOT

Late summer in Houston brings a dreaded heat, which settles in like lethargy, relentless in its ability to deplete. As a teacher, I look back to last spring semester for inspiration, and ahead to the fall for hope of renewed vigor. Photographic vigor would seem to rely, to an extent, upon the resolve of physical well-being, which vaporizes in any extreme. Boredom is yet another counterpart to resolve. In August, Houston empties. My own work, and that of my colleagues, is often roughly dependent upon travel for impetus; it is merely the framework of working for a living, and the obligatory routine that plants us within the vacuum of ritual, which makes it so. My students seek inspiration out of necessity—the necessity of learning, competing, succeeding academically. There is a measure of desperation to this structure, the structure of externally imposed challenge, yet the results are heartening (see David Reyna's picture on page ten). Moreover, although student work, almost without exception, is of student caliber, it is far more enervated and alive than the programmed, careful, laurels-oriented methodology which informs established imagemaking. That the work coming out of the photography programs is risky, naive, at times incomprehensible, and usually exciting, is old news. What surprises me is the level of complacency and hesitation surrounding, suffocating the old guard's once-fine work.

As artist, I must include myself in the second category. As critic, I eschew such generalizations when they could be applied to me. Ironically, the two must eventually do battle, whether under the guise of self-editing, "honest opinions" solicited or offered, or when turning a critical eye public (see David Portz, *The Critical Self*, page fourteen). It is a concept that most of us deal with defensively; Portz has neither the time nor the patience for such ploys. His strategy in his writing, as in his art, is one of honesty, absurdity, and reckless (if carefully planned) endangerment in the form of experimentation. As a 1986 Houston Center for Photography (HCP) Fellowship winner, he created and is currently exhibiting the result of his grant: rebuses. That they are formative and imperfect has laid them open to much criticism and dismay; that they are new terrain, rough, difficult to comprehend, and funny makes them wonderful. Frankly, his facility with any language, visual or otherwise, engenders considerable ire. When I experience something supposedly new under the aegis of postmodernism, I don't flinch if my interest flags. But I must admit, with great delight, that both Portz's work and the work of my more precocious students plants a tiny yet extremely audible pang of jealousy.

Houston Foto Fest is only two seasons away now, this year concurrent with the Society for Photographic Education's National Conference and several other important events. Modeled after the *Mois de la Photo* in Paris, Foto Fest is a month long gathering of photographers, city-wide exhibitions, curators, collectors, students, educators, dealers, and a diverse photographic audience. From the homefront, one is aware of the excitement ahead, but even more so, one is impressed by the work that goes into staging a milestone of this magnitude (again). Sponsorship and participation are strong, across the board. Last year's glitches, although minor, have been targeted and deleted. It promises to be memorable four weeks, and to paraphrase several philosophical hybridizations, if it doesn't kill you, it'll make a believer of you.

When I look back on my year as president of the Houston Center for Photography (in six months or so), memory will translate the effort, cajoling, bringing together disparate elements, and general full-time nature of things as "business as usual." In the absence of an executive director, the membership at large has pitched in, and the result—a collaborative, energetic, and creative effort—although great news, is hardly surprising. These are the principals and the players who founded HCP six years ago, and while the ranks and points of view have expanded, we remain a membership organization. Many of us are artists and teachers; others are strictly of the business world. Having never relinquished control aesthetically or functionally, no massive effort was required to coordinate the continuation of an exciting and solid course. Heartfelt thanks are offered, however, to all those who have volunteered an enormous amount of time to the various tasks at hand, including the fire cleanup.

Mention the word "fire" in conjunction with art and hearts beat out of control. To put it mildly, we were lucky. Late one Saturday night about a month ago, I received a call from a nonchalant voice on my phone machine saying something about a fire at HCP. A gas leak in the mechanical room had begun a fire hot enough to melt the air conditioning vents in the ceiling; because of an alarm system and a fabulous fire department (these men knew their way around important walls), no one was injured and there was absolutely no damage to any art. The aforementioned heat-wave did not make the necessary inventory evacuation (prior to repainting and airing) much fun. Yet this day, as most our others, was characterized by the essentials being handled in an orderly and well-attended manner. We remain in competent balance between the day-to-day and the wildfire (no pun intended) of inspired collaboration, energies that founded and sustained the Center as a remarkable phenomenon which, once established, continues to grow even more remarkable.

April Rapier



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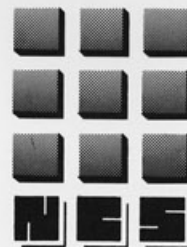
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NARCISSISM AT THE STAGE OF MARTYRDOM, OR: "WAS IT FOR THIS THAT I SPENT TWO YEARS STUDYING COLOUR AND COMPOSITION?"

By Cynthia Freeland

"VERUSCHKA": *Trans-Figurations* by Vera Lehnndorff and Holger Trülsch; introduction by Susan Sontag (\$35.00; 160 pages, 210 illustrations) Boston: Little, Brown (a New York Graphic Society Book), 1986.

In their recent book, *Veruschka: Trans-Figurations*, the collaborative team of Vera Lehnndorff and Holger Trülsch depict ex-super-model Lehnndorff, a.k.a. *Veruschka*, nude, transformed by body paint to resemble, variously, female vamps, male stereotypes, windows and doorways, moss-covered statues, tree branches, and rocky walls. The results, executed by a painstaking (and no doubt painful) process sometimes lasting up to 16 hours, are eerie and fascinating. Elaborately detailed body paint evokes shadows, peeling walls, chipped window frames, rusting hinges, rocky crevices, tree bark, threatening to make our model—lithe and striking though she may be—disappear.

It must be emphasized at the start how much childish pleasure is to be had here. The challenge of even finding *Veruschka* in some images is very great, recalling childhood moments spent over a favorite feature of the magazine, *Highlights for Children*: "Can YOU find the hidden raccoon (balloon, baboon, or whatever) in this picture?" The sheer feats of technical expertise on display in the painting, matched by Lehnndorff's feats of endurance, are sensational and awe-inspiring. (In certain images, in fact, they seem unable to resist an extra showiness, juxtaposing one shot of the model slightly off of kilter to another one showing her in exact alignment, each hole, stripe, and chip of paint on her skin neatly fitting with some nearby parallel on wall or window.)

It must also be said at the start that although at first these pictures puzzle, baffle, and intrigue, on closer study, one suspects that here one good idea has been stretched far beyond its initial power to fascinate. (After you find the hidden raccoon in the children's magazine teaser, remember, you speedily moved on to other entertainments.) Photographically speaking, the images present no new thoughts. They function as "straight" documents drawing upon the medium's traditional strength, two-dimensional illusory realism. No doubt this has much to do with Susan Sontag's enthusiastic endorsement in the volume's rather elaborate introduction. Sontag maintained in *On Photography* that our interest in a photograph is always in its subject—that subjects dominate the medium to the extent of largely precluding development of artistic style here.² No wonder that she approves of this work, done with no innovative camera techniques, no darkroom manipulation, no novel angles, no "funny" lenses—just functional shots letting that all-important subject matter shine through.

Sontag's essay presents a "reading" of these images, in which she finds a "self-conscious density of artistic strategies" (p.6). She thinks

that they present "arguments" on subjects ranging from death and aging to pornography and cultural decline. In other words, the book offers both interpretive assistance and self-justification by supplying us, in advance, with a dense critical apparatus from an "Authority." To this, Lehnndorff and Trülsch have added their own theoretical afterwords. Thus the book has an uncommonly complex component of discourse, the implication being that we can't read the images on our own (unless one is to think snidely that the images can't stand on their own). *Veruschka's* afterword reports on her (hardly atypical) dismay as a young art student at having to commercialize the products of her painting: "I was sometimes disturbed by the thought that one day I would have to have a job like everyone else, and the idea of commercializing my painting was very alien to me" (p.145). Well, by now no one could claim she has a job like anyone else's! But the skills at commercialization which she so evidently honed during her super-model years seem to be serving her well even now, in the careful and calculated marketing of the "art-worthiness" of these pictures.³ (The book is, by the way, handsomely produced and printed, and moderately expensive.) Even Sontag remarks that despite *Veruschka's* efforts at "self-abnegation," the volume is also "affirmation of self," a "celebration of one person" (p.6).

How exactly are the images supposed to function as Art? Vast claims are made: that they concern the relation between painting and photography; that they overcome gaps between subject, object, and artist; that they confront processes of aging and death; that they are meditative in a "Buddhist" spirit; that they draw on Christian martyrology; that they are critiques of fame and the cult of personality; that they are anti-pornographic rethinking of sex-role stereotypes; that they are cultural commentary on the ruins of modern civilization. Trülsch's theoretical outpouring is particularly ponderous, with snipes at the "self-perpetuating painterly gestures of the Post-Post-Modernists," whom he dismisses as "amateurs . . . ruled by the idea of novelty" (p. 147). He himself, in contrast, "rid [him]self of the expressive ego of the painter" in the creation of these paintings—these "labors of love" (p.147).

Taken together, these claims have an intimidating grandeur. Taken one by one, they seem exaggerated or just plain false. I think that the images fail to be "about" aging and death, simply because they present an incredibly beautiful woman who remains inviolately lovely. She is distant and serene even when bedecked with crumbling plaster or lichens. Her pose is statuesque. What 44-year-old would not envy her clean limbs, nicely upturned breasts, flat stomach and apparently wrinkle-free brow (though of course it's hard to tell with all that heavy makeup)? Rather than depicting the ravages of time, they present an unearthly woman who seems to have some key to stopping normal temporal flows.

Nor am I convinced by claims about their "meditativeness" (whether Christian or Buddhist). Lehnndorff writes, "As far as we are concerned, I am only a form—the shape of a human female body, with no personal gesture or expression" (p. 146). But Sontag sees the pictures as meditations on emptiness and absence, depicting an "exacerbated pensiveness" (p. 12) and a person who is "lurking" or "hiding" within (p.11). They can't have it both ways! You can't be a pure emptied-out vessel, a statue, the object of aesthetic contemplation, and at the same time yourself a deeply spiritual contemplator, a "presence." Sontag counts *Veruschka's* "absence" as



a sign of inward reflectiveness. Pensive meditation on mergers with window frames does not strike me as a deep or moving reflection on the traumas of being a "personality." I was usually more struck by *Veruschka's* sheer acts of will, in combating the phenomenal boredom and exertion of being touched up yet one more time and positioned up against yet one more wall.

In observations about the images' contributions to links between painting and photography, Trülsch alludes to his use of the age-old fresco technique. This remark is followed by an entirely enigmatic claim that he is continuing in the representational technique of Hans Holbein (p. 148). (This idea grew even more obscure to me after a quickie refresher trip to the MFA show of Holbein drawings, where one is dazzled by the brilliant and concentrated depictions of individuality and presence.) As for the "painterly abstractions" achieved by an attentive examination of peeling window frames, although Lehnndorff pontificates that these surfaces "may reveal to us a secret world, a new aspect," (p. 146) the images have all the novelty of white bread. Where was Lehnndorff when we were all looking at similar pictures by Clarence Laughlin and Walker Evans, by Minor White and Aaron Siskind (with a list of imitators to be multiplied *ad nauseam*)?

As cultural commentary these pictures are especially weak. The longest (and most repetitious) series of the book, "Oxydation," was shot in an abandoned warehouse-like building, the Fish Market, in Hamburg. Lehnndorff comments portentously that these shots of decay "relate to our culture" (p. 146). True, the building is in a state of stupendous decay. But absolutely nothing has been done here to locate it in reference to culture—any culture. (Think, by way of contrast, of the recent British collaborative effort to use billboards and posters to save the decrepit "Docklands" area of London from "development.") This book simply aestheticizes decay, treating all its textures and colors with lavish delight. In a tiny footnote at the end of the book, Trülsch reports on how they "both dominate the hall and are dominated by its field of force" (p. 160). Among other things, they got used to "the dust, the vermin, the stench of urine and excrement" (struggling artists, take note!). Moreover, each morning they had to repair the mad destruction wrought on their work-

place at night by the local bums who sought to "protect their rights to an undisturbed living space" (p. 160). This thought of the "Bums' Wrath" was mind-boggling to me. Imagine what *they* made of this "cultural commentary!" Trülsch studied their environment with a caressing eye, but did he ever once look at *them*? He has only condescension for these real inhabitants (what are they to know of Post-Post-Modernism?). Imagine the book: "Vera and the Bums"; or imagine the *bums* shown disappearing into the woodwork (hmm, might even have involved less effort at applying surface grime). This is to imagine a different book, one set in a different world—the real world of ugliness, suffering, and mortality, rather than the rapid meditations of a beautiful young artist.

Finally we must consider these pictures as constructions of an image, as reflections on sex-role stereotypes and on image-making itself. Sontag comments perceptively on the links between these images and *Veruschka's* earlier fashion photographs, concerned alike with theatricality, beauty,

artifice, arduous posing, and elaborate applications of make-up. She writes that "Necessarily the escape that *Veruschka* makes from her own beauty is staged, and once again, for a camera" (p. 8). But the contrivance here is a purely linear extension of fashion modelling, and not any kind of critical reaction to it. In the cleverly conceived "Mimicry-Dress-Art" series (1973), *Veruschka* "dons" (in paint) the costumes of various male poseurs—whether businessmen or lecherous consumers of pornography. But these images function more as campy transvestite jokes than as thought-provoking comments on sex-role stereotypes. They have a racy, Weimar-Republic style decadence and slick allure (recalling Baron Adolf de Meyer or, more recently, Mapplethorpe). Showing close-ups of breasts painted over with the insignia of maleness—shirts and ties—serves not so much to criticize sexual posturing as to manipulate and "titillate."

In the end there is something disquieting about the collaboration we witness here. Lehnndorff clearly defends the value of her own contri-



bution; it was she who conceived of and began doing the body painting, and in this book many of the photographs are accompanied by her preparatory sketches. However, here, once again, we see the male artist enacting inscriptions on the spectacle of the passive female body. This appears to be a familiar story: it's Weston and Modotti, Stieglitz and O'Keefe, Man Ray and Lee Miller, Harry Callahan and Eleanor, all over again. Sontag muses over this, but drops the subject like a hot potato: "For such work, could one imagine a woman invisible behind the camera and a man in front, trying to disappear into the image? Not easily" (p. 9). It's worth trying to think for a moment, why not? Why didn't they try painting Trütsch even once? Was his body just too hairy to take on the textures of the imitative paint? Was it fat and unlovely? Was he shy about letting us see his private parts? Did he lack the requisite physical endurance? Was he temperamentally uninterested in merging into trees and doorways? Why didn't he share her desire to be invisible? Are they commenting on the fact that in patriarchal culture it is typically man who looks and woman whose body is the encoded visual object? Lehn-dorff justifies this objectification, saying since she's doing it herself, "if people perceive me as an object, I feel that is not my problem" (p. 145). There's a kind of

at his faceless, eyeless creations—images which are "unendurable" in not reflecting back the "ego" of the painter (p. 147). Amidst all this weighty theoretical prose, one has to wonder about the sexual implications of this strenuously physical, weirdly intimate collaboration. Trütsch's very fears of ego-loss may stem from an eroticizing of death, a link which has been clarified by Bataille, as follows:

Dissolution—this expression corresponds with dissolute life, the familiar phrase linked with erotic activity. In the process of dissolution, the male partner has generally an active role, while the female partner is passive. The passive, female side is essentially the one that is dissolved as a separate entity. But for the male partner the dissolution of the passive partner means one thing only; it is paving the way for a fusion where both are mingled, attaining at length the same degree of dissolution. The whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participants as they are in normal lives.⁴

Sontag sees something poignant and generalizable in these images, in the sacrifice of beauty and its merger into vacuousness; hence her description of the images as a "monodrama" or as "narcissism at the stage of martyrdom." But a narcissistic martyrdom like this one is a martyrdom in the service of a cause which is gimmicky, self-absorbed, and ultimately, sterile.

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS IN THE LAND OF THE SONS

By Paul Hester

Mothers & Daughters: That Special Quality. . . An Exploration in Photographs. Essays by Tillie Olsen Edwards and Estelle Jussim. (112 pp, 60 black & white, 24 color photographs. Aperture, May, 1987. Cloth \$24.50; paper, \$18.50)

The title of this new book from Aperture announces the discovery of a new photographic territory, designated by its subtitle: *That Special Quality*. The cover photograph celebrates the sensual aspects of this particular terrain with the hand-manipulated colors of a Bea Nettles print and the presence of a naked infant in the arms of a woman in a two-piece swimming suit. Our gaze is directed toward the child by the mother's adoring attention and the central position of the child within the frame. This is a landscape of blue sky and water, where magical creatures whisper in our ears. In short it is the self-centered existence of childhood, of fantasies and gratifications within our mothers' arms. It is an image of the beginnings of this relationship, one that emphasizes "the pride and joy." It represents the memory of that childhood in its synthesis of a simple snapshot and the layering of blue wash and larger-than-life bird. It is a wistful picture, recalled as if one were in therapy, trying to recreate a long lost moment of intimacy. From this reading, I infer that this book is a gesture on the part of The Daughter to complete her scrapbook of childhood, and fill in or replace those missing photographs of The Mother.

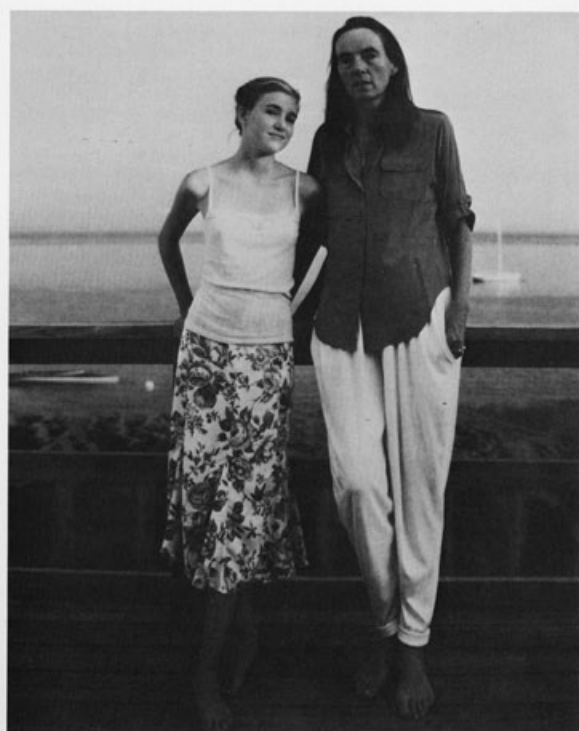
My expectations having thus been raised, I open the book to find this statement by the editors:

Historically, the mother-daughter relationship has been either ignored or trivialized. It is a story sometimes obscured by sentimentality, or seen only through the externalized and internalized pressures of culture.

Was it possible that Aperture was able to rise above these pressures of culture and reveal the "true nature" of this special quality? Surely the subject would provoke a thoughtful criticism of its misrepresentation in the history of photography, and the editors would be able to structure a critical dialogue between those past images, how they had "educated" succeeding generations of daughters for their roles as mothers, and at the same time present a strong rebuttal by the current generation of female imagemakers.

No such attitude exists within this book; no such questioning is apparent on the part of the editors, and, except in rare instances, on that of the photographers themselves.

A disclaimer is necessary: I am neither mother nor daughter. My male position is one of exclusion. Does my resentment shield/blind my eyes from "the central mystery of the bond between women and across generations?" I confess that I search the book, looking for myself. I seize those few that include us. I can't tolerate the thought that these women have been able to define themselves without acknowledging our part in all this. So it does picture territory with which I am unfamiliar—a room with only women. I believe that we are conspicuous in our absence. Have we deserted our families? I can imagine the (your) outrage: "The arrogance of this joker. Must he always intrude?" Please excuse my gender-



Joel Meyerowitz, *Stella and Teresa*, Provincetown, MA, 1985

centric point of view. It's all I've got, and I came to this book in my continuing efforts to expand and hopefully alter it. If I am able to articulate my discomforts in this unfamiliar terrain, then maybe I won't feel that it's necessary to colonize it and subjugate the natives. I would much rather observe the customs and practices, not in an academic sense, but with the goal of acclimating myself in new emotional territory.

It is ironic that I've adopted this pseudo-ethnographic model for describing my reading of this book. I am subject to the same criticism directed toward social scientists who, by observing other cultures, both alter those cultures, and are unable to see them without the blinders of comparison to the values of their own "advanced" cultures. I want to understand an experience that is beyond my anatomy, but am limited to the role of observer. And in my report, I have fallen back on my feelings of being excluded. I approach "the central mystery" because I acknowledge its differences, and yet fail in my attempts at comprehension through an inability to accept those differences. I criticize it for not being a critique of representation, and in so doing, ignore its central position of intimacy. The privacy of a diary is the domain of confessions and fantasies, the baring of emotions. By these criteria, certain images work, and it is possible to perceive some sort of overriding concept.

But in the summer of 1987 it seems fatuous, reactionary, and politically naive to proclaim so boldly that

the images presented here are ample evidence that . . . women are not alone: in passion, conflict, confrontation, and reconciliation; and in the diversity of our life-styles and racial and ethnic identities.

Such a statement is an indictment of the general level of political awareness in American photography. Almost any issue of any "women's" magazine on the newstand would offer more awareness of women's realities. It is as if during the reign of Reagan, photography, too, has reverted to the fifties. Not the incisive, cogent, intense fifties of Robert Frank, but the fifties of Edward Steichen and The Family of Man: an apolitical sentimentality of predigested clichés.

Of course this book presents "passion, conflict, confrontation." But how many of these pictures (which I find provocative as a male

but somehow irrelevant in this collection) are by male photographers? For example, an image by Joel Meyerowitz in his familiar 8x10 Cape Cod color is not the story of mother and daughter, but rather of daughter and photographer; the coyly placed feet of a developing young woman practicing her sexually transmitted behaviors beneath the curiously uncurious watch of a wiser mother. In my description of this image, I have focused on the male presence as the primary element of this mother/daughter pair. This both underlines my disclaimer and reiterates the absence of any critical framework for the book. It can be seen in terms of sexual competition, emotional distance, and, placed in the book across from a black couple on a different sort of vacation spot, a contrast in class. Or is it just a production value that places a color photograph of an upper class pair lounging on the deck of a private beach house adjacent to a black mother and daughter sitting in the midst of a crowded public beach? You do need to group your color photos together for cost cutting, but are we meant to compare the aloofness of monied love with the richness of poverty's pleasures?

Photographs by three other male photographers illustrate this issue of a woman's definition in relation, not to the daughter, but to the male. Milton Rogovin photographed a mother and daughter together on two separate occasions. In the first image, the daughter might as well not be there, as the young mother in tight shorts and brief gives her full attentions to the photographer. Thirteen years later, the daughter, who lives with her grandmother now, returns the gaze of the photographer, but defers the spotlight to her mother. In a photograph by Bruce Horowitz, the young daughter again cannot compete, participate, or even interfere with the successful posture assumed by the mother in her presentation to the photographer. Is the inclusion of these images another instance of The Daughter's therapeutic criticism of The Mother? Could the case have been made stronger through the grouping of these images together in the book?

Too many images in this book remind that the woman's position (even in relation to another woman) is defined by the presence of the male (photographer). The first photograph in the book following the



banal mentality at work here, one which acknowledges the cultural positioning of woman's body, only to perpetuate it.

Sontag calls the works "anti-pornographic," thinking that the push into object-hood here is so strong that Veruschka does not remain a sexual or erotic object. Yet many of the images reveal a sensibility akin to Helmut Newton's: sado-masochistic overtones are rife in the photographs depicting Lehn-dorff with iron restraints against breasts and throat, pierced by what look like gaping bullet holes, or with a heavy iron pipe stuffed in her mouth. True, the majority of the images depict a weightless, death-like absence. Trütsch himself confesses that he feels "sheer horror"

Footnotes

- 1 Vera Lehn-dorff's question after discovering rampant commercialization in the art world, p. 145.
- 2 Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Delta, 1977), p. 93, p. 135.
- 3 *Artforum* writer Gary Indiana tells how Veruschka was advised, early on, that she only needed "one really good idea" to succeed—advice she still seems to be heeding (*Artforum* May, 1985, p.93).
- 4 Georges Bataille, *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986), p. 17.

Cynthia Freeland is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Houston. Her article, "Scenes From A Simulated Seduction," appeared in the June, 1987 issue of SPOT.

title page is one by Bruce Davidson. "Woman with Child in Subway." The child is evidence of this woman's identity, her connection to another male (the child's father), her sexual activity. Her exposed skin glows from incandescent light on daylight film; she holds tightly to her child's hand and stands protectively between the child and the photographer. Several other photographs depict the rituals of transmittal such as bouquet tosses at weddings and cheerleader tryouts, in which the auxiliary roles of women (to men) are passed on from mother to daughter. It is of course impossible to escape completely the dominant mode of discourse unless one chooses to be mute. But this impossibility is not acknowledged, and is actually denied by the unaware, unconscious presentation in this form. In the occasional incident when the male presence is allowed to intrude within the frame of cameras controlled by women, we are shown to be passive, self-absorbed, and withdrawn. When we're not the center of attention, we're seducing either mother or daughter, or both. A photograph by Joan Liftin shows a prepubescent girl hugging herself as she stands without clothes, eyes averted from mom and male making out on the ground nearby.

I am reminded that this grouping of images forces us to accept on faith the editors' and the photographers' assertion that the people presented are, in fact, mother and daughter. This assumption defines our entrance into the images and relationships. But what I've discussed up to now could be said about any group of pictures of women. The social and sexual comments seem necessary to understand all historical photographs whether they are from the editorial pages or the advertisements of any magazine. I am so frustrated with this collection. I would expect more from what could have been an articulate, conscious critique of "a primary female relationship" and instead we get "the family of women." There are photographers, men and women, whose work risks more, offers more. Unsettles. But could *Aperture* market it?

Those images in the book which I find most demanding of my attitudes toward mother/daughter relationships are those in which I sense the photographer's own questioning. Frequently those who are posing the questions are actually posing in front of the camera. Linda Brooks' "Mom at 55, me nearing 30" reveals Mom as an accomplished actress playing to the camera with a conspiratorial, almost seductive charm, while Daughter is

an overgrown, stiff wallflower in the background. Do there exist any male attempts to measure, much less fathom, the competition between father and son? Judith Black, "Laura and Self," approaches the relation from the mother's side. Ironically the most intriguing image is on the back cover and apparently not part of the exhibition but is an ad for Polaroid. Melissa Shook's image consists of two 20x24 inch Polaroid prints. Three generations are included, beginning on the left with the mother next to her mother and father, followed at the right end by her daughter. The two separate pictures are framed in such a way as to include two whole people and allow the frame to cut the third person in half. When the two halves are placed together, half the father joins with half the mother to form a hybrid parent, part male and part female, who occupies the central position. It is so subtle, suggestive, simple, and unnerving. This composite family running from mother to daughter adds to its complexity with a totally passive father who refuses to look at the camera with the rest of the group. The depth of his withdrawal is met with the fabulous drama and wit of the family's shoes dancing heel to toe across the bottom of the frames.

This book reiterates the failure of photography in its traditional practice to elaborate with any precision an emotional territory as complex as that alluded to by the editors. They have in some ways realized the need for a structure to provide context for the images, some suggestion of what came before and after the frozen moment and would offer the viewer the possibility of generating meaning beyond esthetic connoisseurship.

With this in mind they, on occasion, have included quotes from the photographers, which in general have only added another layer of mystery to the pictured events. They have also introduced various poems which, for the most part, only expose the failure of the pictures to fulfill the editors' promises.

Two essays conclude the efforts to "explore what the central mystery of the bond between women and across generations might be." Each functions in a separate territory; the first by Tillie Olsen with Julie Olsen Edwards, raises questions:

What besides appearance . . . distinguishes this as pertaining especially to mothers and daughters? . . . Why are there comparatively few "action" photographs, little of the everyday acts, the experiences which create, condition the relationship?

The second essay, by Estelle Jussim, talks more specifically and in depth about individual images, and

places them within an historical perspective with other photographic images.

Even if they could encompass all the dimensions experienced by living human beings, photographs offer complexities of meanings, no single, precisely definable and verifiable meanings. Like value of any kind, meaning is ascribed by the viewer, the person examining the image in his or her own specific moment of time. We decode a picture the only way we can: through our visual enculturations, interpreting images by means of our idiosyncratic backgrounds as well, including socio-economic class, political bias, educational level, religious affiliation or spiritual inclination, competence with symbolism and other aspects of iconography, and a multitude of other vital influences. Of these, perhaps none is more important than how we relate to our own status and history in the hierarchy of family relationships.

A statement like that makes me wish that Estelle Jussim had been the editor for the pictures. She continues:

The struggle is to convey through concrete physical appearance the ineffable, the indescribable subtleties of a primary female relationship. . . . Photographers will need to be able to communicate these subtleties without reviving traditional stereotypes. So much is invisible in any relationship that it requires great feats of the imagination to conjure up significant meanings that we can share.

Another disclaimer: I came across this book of photographs just as I was finishing a novel by June Arnold, *Baby Houston*, which tells the story of an upperclass woman growing up in Houston during the city's own growing period of the forties, fifties, and sixties. June Arnold has written the story of her own mother, has in a sense become her mother, and told not only what it was like to be a woman in Houston at the time, but with an amazing level of intensity, intimacy, and imagination has evoked much of what is invisible in the relationship between a mother and daughter.

The failure of *Mothers and Daughters* is the inability of photography (and its editors) to image the invisible. Freed from the straight-jacket of its conservative dogma, photography can provide expansive guides for our exploration of unmapped emotional territories. Even within what the poet Adrienne Rich has named "the kingdom of the sons."



Michel Folco, Friday, 31 August 1979, 11:30 p.m.

ON THE LINE: ON THE LINE

By T.R. Mackin

On The Line: The New Color Photojournalism, curated by Adam D. Weinberg for the Walker Art Center, at Laguna Gloria, Austin, Texas, June 26–August 23. Photographers include David Burnett, Michel Folco, Harry Gruyaert, Jeff Jacobson, Mary Ellen Mark, Susan Meiselas, Yan Morvan, Gilles Peress, Rio Branco, Jean-Marie Simon, Alex Webb, and Alfred Yaghobzadeh. The exhibit travels to Carnegie-Mellon University Art Gallery and the Toledo Museum of Art.

It is a minor issue at best: this dividing line between photojournalism and art photography. It is however, also the premise for a very visually rewarding exhibition.

Adam D. Weinberg, in the catalog which accompanies the show, quickly defines photojournalism as being concerned with content and 20th century art photography as being concerned with expression. He interrupts his discussion of definition by briefly mentioning exceptions to these rules—Henri Cartier Bresson, Margaret Bourke-White, and W. Eugene Smith. (There have been and will be artists who do not fit neatly into the confines of one or more categories.) Not content to rest in the vagueness just created, Weinberg decides to justify the importance of the issue. He proposes a cause and effect connection between the issue (which is photographers working "On The Line") and photographers working with a modernist approach. Describing contemporary photography generated in the modernist/traditionalist approach, Weinberg complains of " . . . narrowly conceived issues of form and style. . . . narrowly focused on abstract or esoteric subject matter of little or no intrinsic significance. . . ." Postmodern photographers also bear the burden of guilt for having created a need for these photographers; he acknowledges a Postmodern emphasis on content thusly: "While the concerns of some postmodern photographers are trivial, other

photographers deal with issues so complex and far reaching . . . that the meanings are frequently inaccessible to all but the initiated."

Granted that the work of the 12 photographers in this show deals with content, the degree to which that content is able to engage the interest of the viewer corresponds to its varying degrees of seriousness.

Harry Gruyaert's "March," Waterloo, Belgium, 1976, hangs in the same show as Michel Folco's "Friday, 31 August 1979, 11:30 pm," Houston, Texas. If the successful photograph depends upon how many levels of meaning it produces for the viewer, then "March" is Gruyaert's only really successful piece in the show. In this photograph we see the backs of two rows of full-dress uniformed Napoleonic soldiers. The first row is seen frame left from the waist up. Their dark presence occupies half the frame and is punctuated by their red epaulettes, beside which rest the heads of hatchets. Mid-image a parked car sits in shadow and shares half of the remaining space with three sunlit soldiers who march out of the frame. Weinberg asserts that aesthetics fused with reportage create a tension within the image. "This tension is caused, in part, by the inability of the viewer to easily distinguish the extent to which an image is art or journalism." By journalism he is referring to documentation of the event or its reenactment. (We approach an issue of postmodernism here.) Weinberg theorizes that the title's specificity of time and place should eliminate this ambiguity but instead serves to underline the tension. He concludes that "the coming together" of form and content serve as tension in this photograph. As an unsupported afterthought he adds, "The tension in such an image also derives from the difficulty of seeing current events, in effect daily life, as art."

I do not take issue with these photographers being "on the line" between photojournalism and art photography. I question the relative significance of it but not at the level of even a raised eyebrow. I must raise both eyebrow and issue with his interpretation of this image's merit and with the attendant statements. Form significant to Weinberg

Melissa Shook



in this image is the "dramatic cropping and shifting scale of the soldiers . . . eccentric division of space." For him content is manifest in the viewer's immediate recognition that this is a reenactment and by the viewer's subsequent confusion caused by the "anachronistic, jarring presence" of the car. How much more jarring it is to think of a color photograph of the actual event. We have become so acclimated to this type of representation that Weinberg and perhaps other viewers allow the intrusion of the automobile to date the image. The actual tension in the photograph is caused by this intrusion of the automobile—at first glance this image appears to be an automobile ad. One hardly notices the grandeur of the soldiers other than to recognize them as the hype which frequently accompanies advertising/mass media photography. It is only upon further inspection that one notices that the car is too unfavorably lit and cropped to be an advertisement. It is this ironic reversal of importance which takes place in the image that makes one spend time with it. This image is representative of "daily life" only because one is confronted daily by mass media imagery; it is art because one finds it to work as such.

Folco's work does not hang in close proximity to Gruyaert's, the latter benefitting from this arrangement. The inclusion in the show (indicative of appeal to the rationale of the show's curator) is perhaps the only thing the two bodies of work have in common. Discussing Folco's work (and David Burnett's), Weinberg arrives at the conclusion: "One simultaneously experiences the subject as a live event covered by a photographer and as a television rendition of the event." The violent images from Folco's series "Houston, Texas, Capital of Crime" are similar to Weegee's work, flash-lit night photography. In most cases the starkness of the lighting acts in a sublime, distancing manner. Weegee's prints are black and white. Folco's are color. The dark red, smooth-as-silk pool of blood sells one on the originality/authenticity of Folco's "Friday, 31 August 1979, 11:30pm." Calloused from familiarity with the skills of make-up and special effects artists, one is not distanced by the color and the gore. Instead, the viewer looks to see if the dead man's friends, who witnessed him accidentally blow off the back of his head, are watching the television which is on. Why are none of them kneeling beside the body? Who is going to clean up the blood? Why is the mess so neatly confined to one area? Why is the hole in his throat so small? What was the new job he had? Who will want the dead man's brand new shotgun? Folco tells us that he looked at the life line on the dead man's left hand, that from its length the man should have lived another 120 years. Was Folco looking for a reason, a sign that this man should die at this point in his life? Was the event unreal for Folco or too real? Many of the photojournalists' images resemble still frames from films—perhaps this one does at first glance, but it is certainly more demanding of the viewers' response than the standard representation of violence. This reality could be the result of the lack of certain signs: the people are not reacting in the stereotypically depicted way, the body is not unsightly with predictable gore but instead lies in a serene pool of blood. The sense of reality can also be the result of the presence of certain signs: the homeliness of the linoleum floor, the vulnerable contortion of the man's large-framed body. The credibility of this image lends authenticity to the series as a whole.

Gloria Emerson who wrote the Foreword for the catalog mentions this image of Folco's and several

others, one of which happens to have been staged: "Saturday, 4 August 1979. Nobody was found in the house. . . ." Emerson says of these images, including the one of whose lack of authenticity she was unaware, "Knowing nothing of the case histories we still know that what we see in Folco's photographs is not an artistic invention. . . ." Obviously not all of what Emerson saw was real, and therefore the conclusions she subsequently drew were not true in respect to all Folco's images. By including the staged image in his series, Folco does in fact remind us that experience is mediated, that we cannot truly judge to what extent content and point of view have been manipulated. In his closing statements on the show, Weinberg says: "In addition to the new photojournalism's use of television's visual vocabulary, it also bears a superficial resemblance to that recent television invention, the docudrama, in which fact and fiction are combined in unequal proportions. . . . The docudrama . . . total fabrication theoretically based on fact. . . is lowbrow entertainment. The new (my italics) photojournalism . . . based on fact, borrows from the language of 'high' art and ultimately reveals 'hard information' as much as personal inflection." The staged photograph mentioned is an illustration of a cop jumping a picket fence. It does not have the strength to stand alone as do of Folco's images. "Hard information" is questionable in most.

"Hard information" is particularly questionable in the work of another of the exhibit's photographers, Mary Ellen Mark. Mark has unquestionably succeeded in one thing, creating controversy. It can be said of Mark's images of older people in Florida, that she has (relentlessly) photographed them in the most unflattering, unkind ways. This can be said after first, second and third encounters of the close-up kind. (Except perhaps for Harry Hessel whom the viewer sees looking away from the camera to which he shows a pan of soup. With his diverted eyes and in his one hundred plus years of wisdom, Mr. Hessel seems to preserve his dignity. But talk about mediated—the refrigerator door is open to show us how limited are Mr. Hessel's options. In the next frame, one could imagine his bare bedroom interior, closet door opened to show his only other pair of plaid shirt and pants which also do not match.) The aged women in these photographs have bought the mass media marketed image of youth. They have coded themselves with familiar signs of youth (pose and dress) and, in doing so, have unwittingly coded themselves with signs of the desperately aging (youthful dress and pose on an aging body, bleached blonde hair and bright lipstick against a wrinkled, hopeful face). As viewer, I am aware of and react against these representations, albeit with the subjects' cooperation. I wonder briefly if Mark is trying to deconstruct the concept of aging gracefully. Granted that it is my own (and generally held) notions of the previous conception which rob these people of their dignity, I still hold Mark responsible for having taken the photograph in the manner in which she has. From this and her past work, one knows that Mark likes to pursue her subject and document it in a unique (compulsive, relentless), personally involved, and most successful (in terms of the previous, working definition) way. Perhaps it is the lack of personal involvement that makes it difficult for one, namely me, to look at this work. Although I do not care for this series, I think it merits consideration in terms of the "fact or fiction" issue raised by Weinberg. Everything in and about these images is representation, but not in a fictional sense, which is the interpretation that Weinberg keeps equating with art.



Harry Gruyaert, *March, Waterloo, Belgium, 1976*



Mary Ellen Mark, *Untitled*



Alfred Yaghobzadeh, *West Beirut, Lebanon, February 1984*

In reference to Weinberg's theory of seeing "daily life" as art—it is perhaps more difficult to accept seeing real people, self-represented as mass marketed models of "daily life." If this is not art then it is at least artifice.

Representation as reference to past works of art, intended or not, arises in Jean-Marie Simon's "17 Yr. Old Girl Lifting a 100 Lb. Bag of Coffee." This image in form and content reminds one of the harmony in Millet's *The Gleaners*, an ironic feeling in terms of the facts as presented in the title. Simon's other images of young people are usually mediated with a more contemporary, stereotypically maudlin effect. A second exception is "Soldier Dancing with Indian Girl at Independence Day Dance." The girl's formal body language, downcast eyes, and somber face seem to contradict the spirit of "Independence."

Susan Meiselas' work merits viewing on the basis of the consistency of strong and persistent message in her work. Her images of Nicaragua are not without stereotypes and are not necessarily original in approach; they are loaded and delivered with a masterfully artful touch.

Yan Morvan and Alfred Yaghobzabeh are both represented in the exhibit with photographs of the war in Lebanon. Morvan's photographs use fortuitous lighting and drama (a man carrying a dead baby, lofted in one hand) which mimic film stills. It is the facts of the titles that give credibility to his work. Yaghobzabeh's photographs move in closer: several show the photographer/viewer confronted by a participant. Soldiers posed with their weapons look staged. Again, it is the reality reference of the text/title which enables the work to have an impact on the viewer.

David Burnett's work is coherent and competent in style but unremarkable in content—romantic sports-related (baseball) imagery. Having a background in war (Vietnam) photography, perhaps this is the idealized "hometown" to which he and other Vets wanted to return.

Gilles Peress' work is more about sensual color and dramatic effects. Only upon reading the photographer's statement does one realize that he is documenting rituals that are disappearing from the lives of Indians in Guatemala. Armed with this knowledge, one searches the beautiful images for content and discovers that two ceremonially garbed figures hovering over a fire are wearing Converse hightops on their feet.

Several of Rio Branco's documentary photographs of Brazil also seem to be more about form and pose, much subtler in color. "Woman of Marciel" is holding her head and lying on the bed in such a way as to give no information about herself. It is from the commercial floral bedspread (in focus) in a room with peeling wallpaper (out of focus) that one gets information about her life. The pages of newspapers and magazines (3, out of focus) tacked to these otherwise bare walls make one curious about her as a reasoning being.

Alex Webb's photography seems to be of a less documentary, more individual image nature—about dramatic lighting and color. His work in the show is not consistent or coherent.

Jeff Jacobson's work is consistent in vision if not in content. While his subjects are frequently as bizarre as those of Mark, they are not threatening or challenging any preconceived notions of reality. They are glimpses into a peripheral world as well as statements, in some cases, about the lack of reality in our current world.

T.R. Mackin is a writer/photographer working in Houston.



Susan Meiselas, *Country Club, Managua, Nicaragua, 1978*



Rio Branco, *Maciel community in Salvador*



Gilles Peress, *Palm Sunday, Antigua, Guatemala, 1977*

FAMILY/EXTENSIONS

Family/Extensions, at the Houston Center for Photography, July 3-August 15, 1987. Work by Stephen Brigidi, Geoffrey Brune, Beverly Chiang, Georgian Cordell, Vance Gellert, Mario Giacomelli, Paul Hester, Randy Matusow, Julie Newton, David Reyna, Janice Rubin, Susan Schwartzberg, Andrew Uchin, Rick Williams, and Dan Younger. Curated by April Rapier.



Janice Rubin

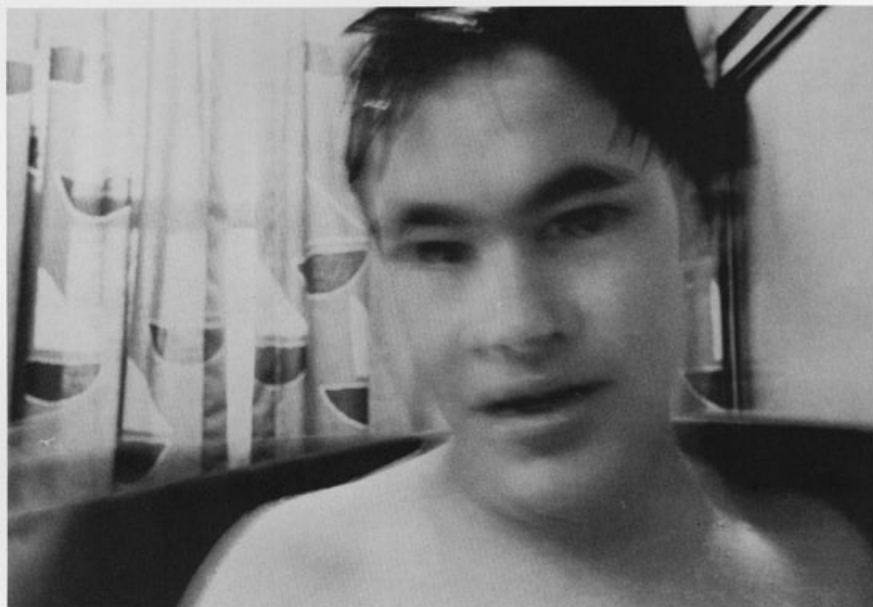
By Cynthia Freeland

In her curatorial statement April Rapier remarks that this exhibit "greatly resembles a family album." It doesn't, actually, but it's interesting to think about the differences. Family albums are weak where this show has strengths: in portrait studies or individual narratives, in expressive images conveying the "feel" of spontaneous interactions, or in perceptive reflections on what it's like to be a family member. Often the photographer for the family album is the one person who is missing from its pages. Although we can reconstruct the attitude, identity, and relationships of this "lost person" from the photographs, the pictures themselves don't effectively reveal that person's own intentions. In this show, perhaps unusually but I think happily, the best emotionally reflective work on family life concerns father-son relationships.

The strong work here merits more attention, but first some words about the show's weaknesses. The exhibit seems unevenly edited. As hung, it is crowded-looking. "Family" is, admittedly, a very loose organizing concept. Here it is *de facto* restricted to focus on contemporary American family life. This makes the inclusion of Giacomelli's scenes of Italian peasants, many shot in the 50's and 60's, so out of place as to seem disruptive. Because several people are represented by only two images, it's hard to get any sense of what their work is all about. Even in Rick Williams' four images there is confusion about who the children are, how they are related to him and to each other. We need more of a story, more context.

The theme dictates that the best work of this exhibit is intensely personal and intimate. This doesn't necessarily mean it must involve the photographer's own family (see below, for example, on Schwartzberg). Conversely, both family "outsiders" and "insiders" have some work here which is so stiff, posed, and controlling that it blunts sympathetic readings. Are the people seen by Brigidi, Cordell, and Matusow having problems with one another, or is the photographer imposing on them a preconceived notion of their relationships? We just don't have enough to go on for interpretation or evaluation.

Narration and individual portraiture occupy Rubin, Schwartzberg,



Beverly Chiang

and Chiang. Rubin has constructed a partial chronology of her grandmother's life, building from her Polish immigration/passport photo from 1920 and finishing with a photograph taken on her last day of life in the hospital, in May of this year. Rubin conveys a strong feel for lifetimes in a sort of Jewish matriarchy. Although the grandmother is seen with her husband, most images show her with female relations—daughter, granddaughters, sister-in-law, great-niece, others, during various holiday celebrations—Hanukah, bat mitzvah, and so on. This matriarchal structure also frames the photographer herself. We see her, presumably, as a little girl on grandma's lap in 1957, and then again as poised adult by the elderly woman's side in the 80's. The final image is especially moving, because in it Rubin has brought her "family" to the hospital bedside, in the form of photographs placed around the room. Images replicate themselves here. They stand in for life at the scene of death, and tell of death after a vividly enjoyed life.

Schwartzberg, more than the others in the show, brings the larger social world into the family context, in telling the life history of Dolores

Maier, a strong woman who struggled in her factory assembly-line job to keep her family going. She has been beset by problems, varying from the death of her husband (from alcoholism) to union pension disputes. Schwartzberg combines photographs matted with bits of text, news clippings, diary entries, and poetry written by Dolores' son William Maier, to construct an ambitious, complex, and many-sided narrative—just part of an ongoing project which could well become an exhibition of its own.

Chiang's pictures show her 18-year-old daughter Alison, who is becoming increasingly aware of ways she is left behind by being handicapped. The mother speaks in her statement about the need for such children to spend time with their peers. She also describes the more-than-ordinary difficulties of "letting go." Some images depict a happy Alison with friends, as at a Special Olympics match. There are also lovingly close yet objective portrait studies. These seem both to reach out, almost clutching at, the growing adolescent, and to recognize her need to be seen on her own for who she is. A blurred shot of Alison in the bathtub is an acute

rendering of this parental ambivalence.

We see "felt moments" of family interactions in the images of David Reyna, Julie Newton, and Dan Younger. Reyna's photographs capture quiet moments on the brink of movement. His use of sharply-angled perspective propels us into family scenes as participants. We become, for the moment, an adult looking down at a boy eagerly waiting outside a screen door, a child gazing up in fascination at the ritual of grandmother's braiding her long hair, or (perhaps) an older child regarding the baby on mother's lap.

Newton's pictures are sad and strained, the most "anti-family" album shots here. She shows a smugly possessive little girl atop her huge pile of dolls and stuffed animals, a tired mother with infant (a shot probably owing too much to Dorothea Lange), or a father, worried and worn, holding the hand of his sleeping son in the hospital. One fascinating image records a bizarre Christmas scene, with some family members ripping open packages, but atomistically—unrelated relations. There is a major discordant element (what Barthes would notice as "punctum"), with a trio on the

couch hugging with what seems to be infinite tragic resignation. What's going on here? Are they shopped out, with holiday blues, or is it truly some sorrowful recollection?

Younger's "Mercedes Portfolio" is also disturbing. He presents a childhood filled with moments of loss, hurt, boredom, or rage. His pink-toned grainy images create a feel of irrecoverable distance, paradoxically reinforced by the out-of-focus close-ups. It's as if we're trying hard to get into this little girl's head but we can't. She lives in another world, and it's not nice. The unexplained aura of loss is powerful, recalling a childhood we might prefer to repress, when we felt confused and out of control.

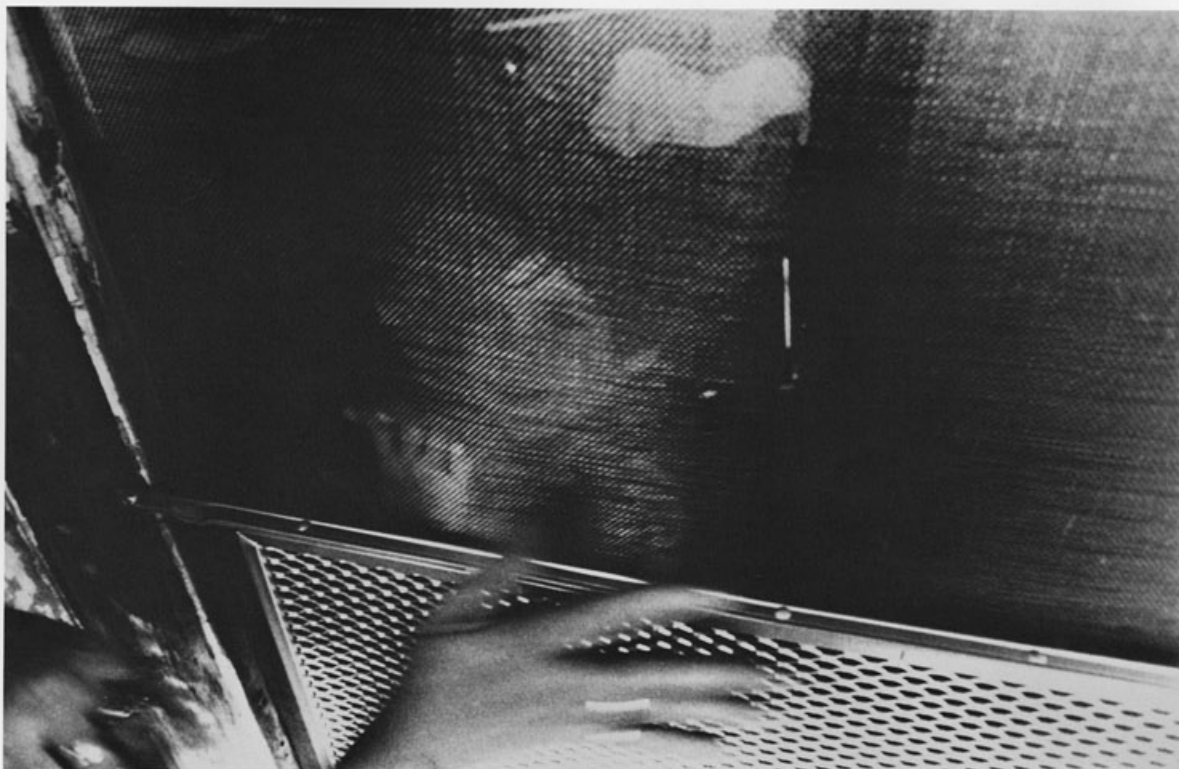
Three of the most interesting projects here deal with father-son relationships. Uchin's "Family Letters" series superimposes a brief "generic" letter from his father upon a host of pictures, some personal and some clichéd, to conjure up a lament about the shallowness of or the obstacles in this primordial male American relationship. As we view classic "growing up" images—the school portrait, a posture lesson, a "he-man" seen from below, a drawing of male sexual anatomy, we re-live scene after scene of a son seeking insight from his father: how to be strong and good, what to be when he grows up, how to deal with love and sexuality. But again and again he is brushed off with the postcard message, "Son, this is an example of what we talked about. Love, Dad." It's as if this longed-for talk never happened, or it happened to Dad's satisfaction but with no chance for questioning and reciprocity. This is a chilling vision of growing up male in our culture, compelling in its honest admission of men's needs for real emotional intimacy.

Hester uses color filmstrips printed sequentially (the sequences vary from two to eight images) to represent the introduction of language into his little son's life. The child plays with large colorful plastic letters, at times proudly creating his own words ("BIG" being noticeable). At other times longer words or juxtapositions (such as "SAY/SLAY") seem forced on an uncomprehending child; sometimes we witness the actual and literal "handing down" from father to son of the orderliness of language. Once the son is shown wandering freely into a wading pool where letters float about, meaninglessly (a joyous and erratic return to the womb?—the impression is enhanced by the side-wise printing used here). In a sequence where the child's mother appears, she watches fondly from the background where she is engaged in a garden project. She sits straddle-legged across the back of the images, and Hester's angle of vision places his son as if newly emerged from her body, about to begin his initiation into the "Law of the Father" (with the letters ominously spelling out the distinction "WORK/PLAY"). Despite the threat in some of these imposed verbal juxtapositions, it is heartening to think that the next generation of young American boys will be gifted with more communicative fathers than Uchin's.

It is impossible to doubt that Gellert's son Carl is also more lucky in having a father who is, albeit manipulative, playfully and caringly so. Gellert's large color images depicting Carl, amidst domestic drudgery gone awry, are so zany and vivid that they dominate the exhibit. Gellert explains that, as a



Dan Younger



David Reyna

doctor's husband, he has become his son's primary caretaker. In frustration he turned his camera on his son, Carl, a sort of perfect Gerber baby, responds with consistent wide-eyed wonder as he is covered in dripping chocolate or threatened by cans of Raid, shards of broken glass, even open red-hot ovens. Gellert puts himself into the situations as co-conspirator or exhausted TV watcher. The colors are luridly bright with a neon-look. TV-image counterparts operate in most shots, sometimes as subtly as a hammer

blow. This is especially true in one scene: Gellert sits, in uniform, at table with Carl. Before them is a mountain of fluffy white rice littered with GI Joes and fake blood, with a TV screen famine-victim just behind. Carl watches with (entirely appropriate) puzzlement. In one hilarious scene Gellert ("Super Dad") poses in the kitchen as both phallic vacuum-cleaner and weight-lifting he-man, while Carl looks on in awe. (I confess to being shocked at Gellert's threat to bake his young son: is Oedipal rivalry erupting so

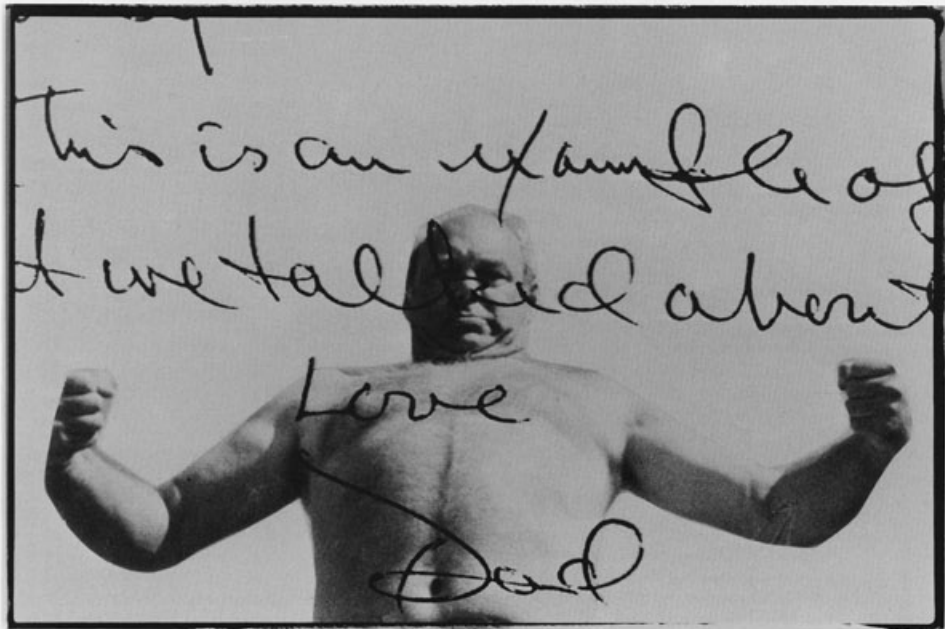
soon, or is this just honest toddler-parent provocation?) The cleverest conceit of all is a multiple-image print showing Gellert at work in his darkroom, where Carl is being simultaneously "exposed" and "washed"; multiple already-finished baby closeups loom on the wall behind. The visual puns on "originals," "reproduction," "exposure," and "creativity" are wild and irresistible.

An afterthought: I was struck by a startling absence of *siblings* in these pictures. There are hints of adult-

sisterly rivalry in Matusow's work, or of boyish horseplay with guns in Brune's, but no extended series of work shown here concentrates on these crucial family ties. Has the nuclear family shrunk to one central child, or is the real new extended family, with step-siblings, half-siblings, and all the resultant complexity, just too much of a challenge for photographers to undertake? I hope not.



Paul Hester



Andrew Uchin, From "Family Letters" Ironman 1987



Vance Gellert, Untitled, from Sons & Fathers excerpts from Carlvision

**HCP 1986
FELLOWSHIP
WINNERS'
EXHIBITION**

Images by Roel Castillo, Bill Frazier, Frank Isaac, and David Portz exhibited at the Houston Center for Photography, from July 3 through August 15, 1987.

By Mel McCombie

Has the passion for text and appropriation taken unshakable sway over photographers? The HCP exhibition of the four 1986 fellowship winners—Roel Castillo, Bill Frazier, Frank Isaac and David Portz—is a public meditation on currently fashionable French aesthetic theories and art history. The work on view is principally synthetic photography, incorporating appropriation, text, and narrative storytelling as essential complements to the imagery. Although one might deplore the loss of the innocent days of Houston photography—straight, unmanipulated, almost classical in the f/64 vein—this work signals a new, more international consciousness among the locals. The problem seems to be that although they are learning the patois, they are not yet fluent.

David Portz's work is the farthest from conventional photography; in fact, he himself has taken no pictures here, but has cut advertising photographs from the *New York Times Magazine* and collaged them onto marbled paper. These collages are then mounted in elaborately tacky gold frames. Portz explains in his artist's statement that these photo-collages form rebuses that when sounded out illustrate clichéd sayings, and relate his work to semiotics. However, these assemblages are far from a profound gloss on the discipline. Portz states that his pictures are deliberately "all clichés. The pictures are all banal." Well, no argument here. The real problem is that they are insoluble as rebuses. Did someone switch the wall labels around? The only way these rebuses communicate clearly is on the purely visual level through the associative juxtaposition of images. I did enjoy the decontextualization of these fashion and advertising images from the *Times*; the romantically dressed male model primly posed next to a punkette poet emphasizes the shallow surface qualities of both. (An ancillary question his work raised was why only appropriate from the *Times Magazine*? Portz does not explain why he limited himself to this one upscale publication.)

This is intellectually ambitious work that makes miserable visual art. I understand that Portz is a poet and thinker of great power; it would seem, however, that he is so obscurantistly linguistic that it impedes his ability to communicate through visual art. I kept wondering who he thought his audience was for these rebuses. I suspect it is really only himself.

Frank Isaac's color portraits of psychics fit into the genre of narrative portraiture and inject a delightful note of levity into the show. These are straight photographs of, well, *characters*, with short statements by each mounted below the picture. Each psychic has read Isaac's fortune vastly and hilariously differently, ranging from the rather Druidic man who explained that Isaac was actually from another planet and would be called back by the space fleet at 3:30 in the morning, to the sharply turned-out woman who told him to place \$5 on the table and make a wish. "No," she says, "you can't wish to have your five dollars back." Although Isaac's work lacks the intellectual ambitions of Portz's,



Roel Castillo *Everything that dies someday comes back*



David Portz *Flattery will get you nowhere*



it is tight and funny in the classic tradition of Southern narrative. Oddly, the most technically beautiful images in this series are photographs of the mechanical fortune tellers from the Santa Cruz boardwalk amusement center in California. Perhaps Isaac found it easiest to orchestrate color and light with these non-human subjects.

Roel Castillo's work fits somewhere between linguistics and narrative. His pieces consist of a long series of photographs and short texts about his sister Cynthia, or Cyn-Dee, who was killed at the age of 18 in a horrible car accident. These pictures are as much expressions of grief and therapy for his loss as they are documentary: I found them to be affecting on several levels, particularly as the subject was unknown to me before I started looking at the series. Castillo's leit-motif is to pair ghoulishly incongruous images, such as Cyn-Dee lying in her casket, lifeless, placid, and carefully made-up, with a staged photograph of her in her high school drill team outfit.

Castillo's texts are both maudlin and moving, with sentiments like "This only happens to others," and "Everything that dies someday comes back." One panel contains a painfully vivid text narrated by the woman who was in the wrecked car along with Cyn-Dee; each photograph is paired with sweetly romantic and slightly tacky studio photos that Cyn-Dee had posed for. One emerges from seeing this series with a heavy heart: Castillo's painful ironies amply illustrate that "those whom the gods love die young."

Bill Frazier's studio "simulations" of famous Monet paintings are provocative meditations on the integrity of art in the age of reproduction and the function of photography itself as replicator. He states that he has been influenced by the writings of Jean Baudrillard (and, it would seem, by Walter Benjamin), and chose his title for the series from Baudrillard's essay of the same name. These are creations of studio artifice in which Frazier has constructed tableaux made of paper and paint in his studio that mimic the appearance of some of Monet's most famous paintings, which he then photographs. The tableaux are modified to reflect the serial paintings that Monet made of the same subject, such as Rouen Cathedral and the haystacks.

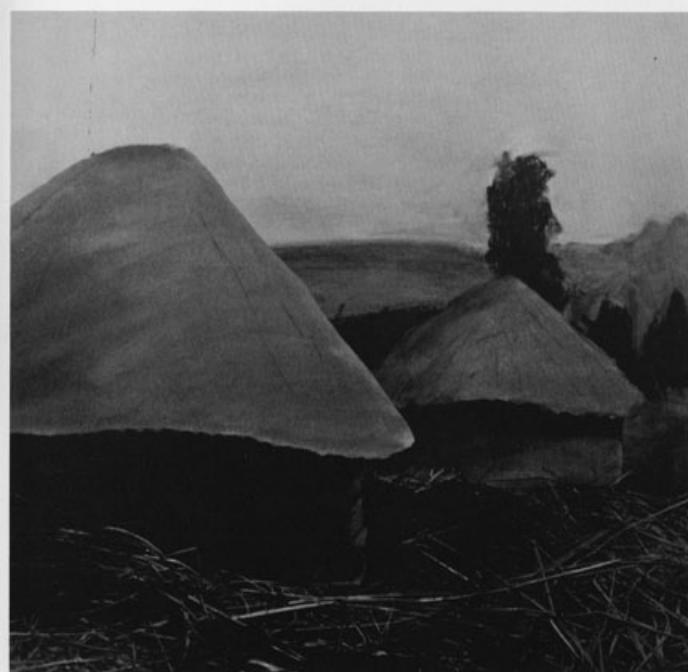
As Frazier points out, Monet is an especially appropriate artist to reproduce, as he was himself compulsively repetitive. I am not convinced as Frazier is that in fact Monet painted little *en plein air*, but rather painted in the studio from other paintings—art historical documentation is unclear on that—but his point that Monet made art about art is well taken; Frazier is extending the metaphor one step further.

Frazier states that he wishes to debunk the myth of originality in making his simulacra, but is hoisted by his own petard: these photographed tableaux are themselves works of art, even if they are art about art about art. Though he is too facile for his stated aim, Frazier's works are nonetheless provocative.

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"Oh, golly, looky there!"
Frank Isaac Untitled from psychic series



Bill Frazier SIMULATIONS Haystacks 1987

You, the reader, will immediately recognize that I can gain nothing by writing a review of my own work. Each reader will be constantly alert for any bias that I should exhibit. The good reactions the qualities of my art had already elicited will be thrown into doubt by my articulating them in their full refinement. Indeed, I risk any esteem I have heretofore gathered as a writer and a critic, by this single, self-serving lapse of taste.

But the reader will also recognize that I can do the least harm of any critic by attempting an assessment of my own art. In a small art community such as Houston's, there is always the danger that written criticism will consist of back-biting and recriminations, or elaborate, unwarranted praise. In either case the community is deprived, because of unseen connections and conflicts of personality, of a thoroughgoing, objective criticism of an artist's work. Here however, the connection is apparent—I can hardly sow the seeds of self-hatred in this short space. Nor can I co-opt myself, grow fonder of myself in response to mellifluous praise. I am constitutionally free of that hunger for curried favor so ruinous to taste. I will render a cool appraisal of my work; I will hold to a critical attitude that nudges the work's failings and its strengths, I promise.

One conception of the critic's task is that he should put himself in the place of the artist (I am sitting in his chair) and examine what the artist wished to achieve. From this sympathetic viewpoint, the critic may observe the work's strengths and failings. Sharing the thoughts of the artist during the entire period that he was producing his art, I became the canniest expert on its content. The artist's opinion however, upon the exhibition of his work, becomes just one of a number of interpretations. This inevitably occurs because every artist will be blind to certain aspects of his venture, and there is the operation of his unconscious to take into account. There is human forgetfulness also, which may disable the artist from remembering important details of even his most significant work. One can only hope therefore, that with my peculiar qualifications as a critic, I can recover some of the artist's insights, which might otherwise be lost.

Over the course of the artist's career, I have observed Portz flip-flop and waffle in the look of his visual art. The artist has adopted a different style for each of his series,¹ sustaining each for only a matter of months. His behavior is inconsistent with what art history is said to expect from an artist: a gradually unfolding aesthetic, a signature style. By contrast, Portz develops each series from a discrete idea, exhibits it, then casually abandons it for something else. If he has a photographic aesthetic, it leaves no traces. It would be clever criticism to trace a connection between Portz's methodology and that of the Conceptual artists—the de-emphasis of hand-crafting, the examination of the medium, and all of that. But I feel certain that Portz would deny a connection to a movement already labelled and deceased—held by pushpins back in the Sixties. For the same reason, I think he would only vaguely acknowledge that he has found interesting much Postmodernist writing and visual work. An artist should be careful sometimes, in his associations.

But in fact, Portz is instinctively disabled from participating in any particular movement, ideology, or creed. He is sensitive, perhaps disappointed, about being left behind as a demoralized Existentialist in this era of rejuvenating faith (Evangelism, Episcopalianism, Ollie-nia)—wistful that art cannot serve him as a surrogate religion. As such,



David Portz, *A Sordid Past*

he can only believe in a project while he is immersed in it, while it is automatic, while he is too involved to fall back and notice its critical lacks. He pines for all the aspects and emotions that aren't expressed in an object on which he is working; he loses his momentum if he takes a moment's thought. Despite his suspicions of visual art's essential vapidness,² he is nevertheless sensible of monsters to express. In each of his series, his effort at meaning and the inconsequentiality he perceives in that effort, shine forth.

Portz's current work is not about life so much, as about reading. It is not the revelation of a different culture (which this critic considers generally the most stimulating art), it is bland and oblique, a woefully cursory examination of America's own. He has chosen to resurrect the rebus,³ a type of puzzle popular in the earlier part of this century, when perhaps we were less reliant on printed words. The rebuses, collages, are arranged to bear syllable sounds that were originally assigned to them by the artist. The pictures from which the collages are constructed are entirely from *The New York Times Magazine*. They are middle-of-the-road, consumerist-oriented, class-pandering, banal images suitable for whiling away a Sunday afternoon. There is little reason to get wrapped up in the component pictures of any rebus—they are cut from their original settings so that they only take the direction supplied to them by Portz. One of my primary criticisms of the work is that the original ads' and articles' context have been eliminated from the examination of the viewer. *The New York Times Magazine* is not 'deconstructed' for anyone who is not already very familiar with it. I would prefer that the rebuses were each accompanied by a little book which showed the pages from which the images were missing. The lack

of context puts a strict limitation on the work's suitability for writers of critical theory.

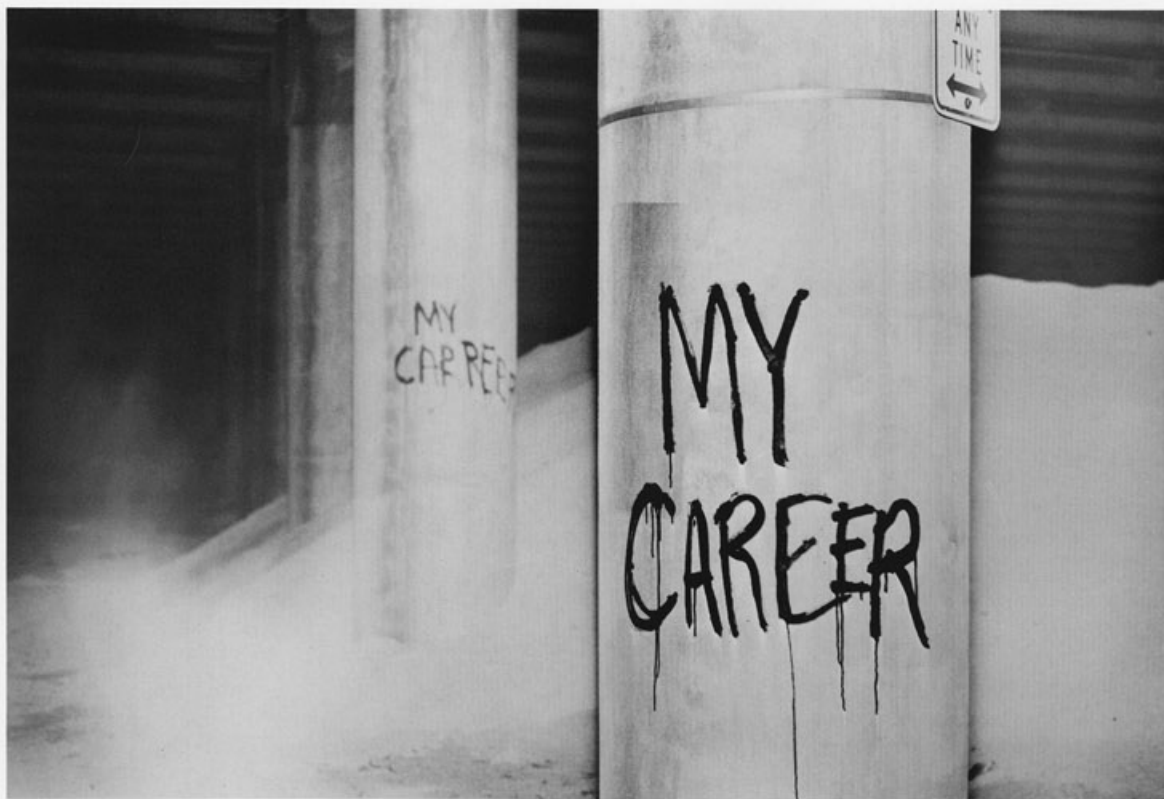
Portz assigns each panel of pictures to mean only one thing: each rebus functions as a word equation. Now many artists, when one of their works has been sold, will admit that they had thought it to have a particular meaning—though they'll continue to nod at their patrons' different formulations. But Portz would have us believe that his meanings are the most explicit possible in a work: more than *Guernica* meant the terror of warfare, Portz says that each rebus has only one meaning to give. We viewers find those meanings unsatisfactory—the solutions to the rebuses are clichés. What's more, we viewers can hardly ever arrive at the intended "word-equations" by the use of our intuition and language skills: the meanings seem arbitrarily assigned. It is certainly no more arbitrary to say that a group of pictures signify the phrase, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," than it is to say that South Korea is a democracy.⁴ It is simply that we expect each series of images to narrate a meaning, to cumulate to a seizable thought instead of the dry equation in its title. For this reason, the rebuses, notwithstanding their definiteness, seem vague.

In fact, of all the pictures exhibited in the gallery during this period, these rebuses were the most vague. They had the scantiest relation to obvious meanings, to literal, pictorial sense. The artist provides no help at all on this matter. He says that some aspect must hover outside the viewer's understanding of a picture in order for the picture to be art. One gathers that he considers vagueness a trick of the artistic profession. The nature of all the other works in the exhibition was that they exhibited a communicative intent: of anecdote, of situation, of material space, or at least, of tex-

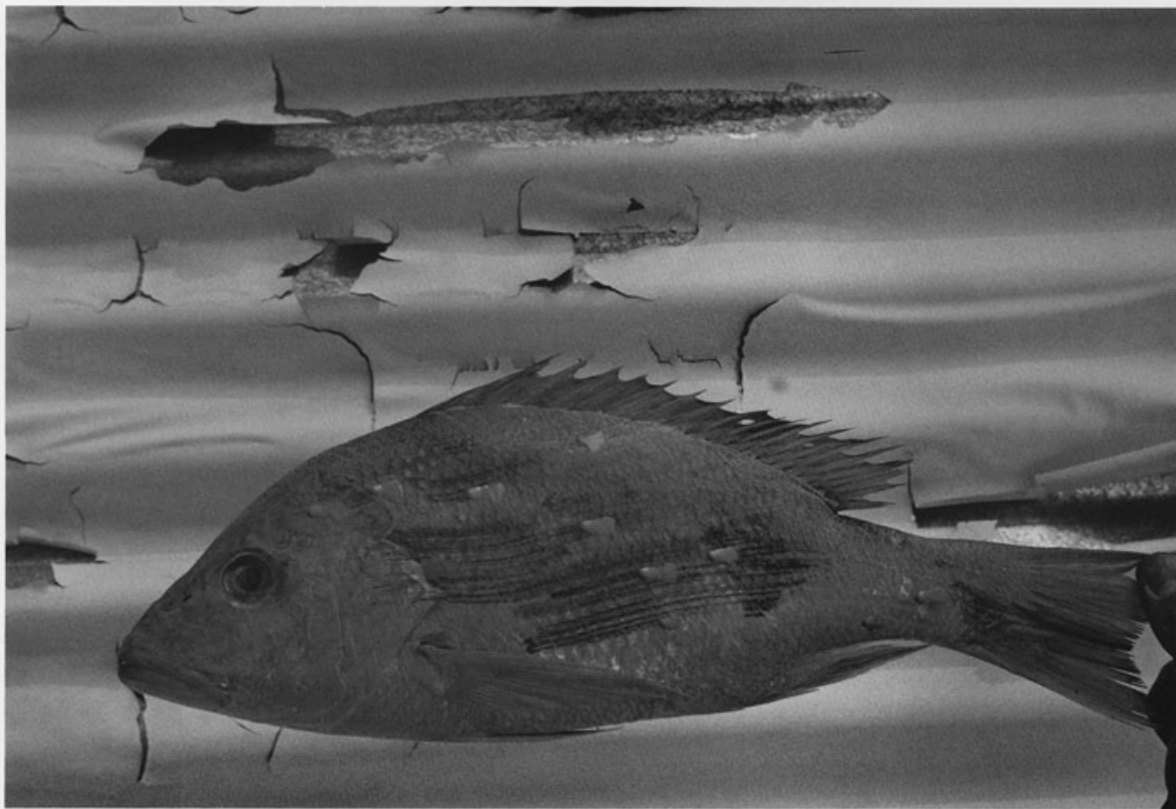
ture. Communicativeness, literalness, are cornerstones of photography, and photographic art.⁵ But vagueness is a cornerstone of Portz's perverse relation to communication, in which he gives his viewers only clichés. It is an outrage, or a piece of meaninglessness, or a very odd joke.

The shorter rebuses (for example, the candy mounted on the voyeur's shoulders) sometimes gave a sensation of magic, or to be more exact, a sensation of Surrealism. Many Surrealists, because of their interest in the human subconsciousness, created juxtapositions of objects or images to give their viewers an apprehension of a metaphysical sense, a skein of irrational connections. By contrast, the echoes of metaphysics seems damped out, tamped out, of Portz's longer rebuses: no comprehensive mystery is left. There are too many pictures for the viewer to sense a connection or find a narrative, though their combination suggests one exists. The rebus work stands in contrast to the aesthetic that, for example, I practice as a writer, the attempted conscious control of all of my meanings. The rebuses cannot beguile their viewers, they do not offer multiple meanings so that interpretation is required. They refuse to assist in mystification, a fundamental tool of the visual artist. Instead, the meaning is left in a heap. As a consequence, the work is a failure in perhaps the most fundamental manner that people relate to art: it does not look like a metaphor, an encapsulation of meaning; there is certainly no penumbra of meaning that implicates magic or the human spirit. I find them, personally, dry as dust.

But some assert, and I must allow for the possibility, that there is an element of humor in this work. Paul Hester has made the comment that Portz's photographs generally look



David Portz



David Portz

as though he had fun doing them (said at the time that Portz used to take photographs). And similar to much work displayed by Hester, Portz's exhibitions have the appearance of "very serious jests,"⁶ comments needfully delivered by the artist in noticably wry spirit.

One must tip one's hat also, as a responsible critic, to rumors that there are "undertows of semiotics" in the work. These rumors, I believe, were started by the artist himself. I have a personal distaste for semiotics, "the theory of the sign." I think it is another idealism, a wish by its practitioners to see more in the language, to the max. Portz has suggested that the work reveals a very interesting intersection between the *langue* of a magazine's pictures and the *parole* of his idiosyncratic speech. As opposed to the *langue* (the totali-

ty of a linguistic system, pre-existing any individual's use of it) and *parole* (the individual's manipulation of that system to produce an utterance) which operate within a single "sign system," (i.e., spoken English, Texas dialect), Portz suggests that he has presented an unreal intersection between two different systems, a magazine's pictures and the English language as it is written and pronounced. I think indeed that this may be interesting, if it's just as Portz represents. Yet I also suspect that Portz could be throwing punches in a darkened closet, to see where issues lurk. I do not know him to have become an expert on semiotics in preparation for this work. One may question whether an artist is expected to be a scholar, or just to go exploring in likely territory, on his own; there are models for

both in art history. At any rate, I am not the critic that Portz hopes for, his huckster and critical theorist rolled into one, as to the semiotics aspects of his work. There are certain matters, however, that I am willing to take up.

That the rebuses are so often made in the configurations of snakepaths, or actual writhing snakes, we may chalk up to the exigencies of standard-sized gilded frames and the artist's wish for a pleasing visual effect. Nevertheless, the rebuses preserve a conventional grammar, reading left to right, and when in doubt, downwards. Other structural language hints were available to the artist, but he did not choose to use them. He could have limited his use of composite pictures to polysyllabic words, or he could have put less important

words, conjunctions, prepositions, in lower relief. An artificial aspect of the work, which distinguishes it from true language formation, was that Portz used different pictures for words and letters having identical sounds. Thus the pictures are not functioning as ideograms or more abstracted alphabetic systems, but unique and unrepeatable symbols for individual words.

Another choice made by Portz was certainly noticed by a number of viewers. Portz said he chose to use *The New York Times Magazine* as his "picture-galaxy" because it is a taste-maker—the magazine has a huge circulation and makes a noticeable, if miniscule, impact on what America thinks. He likes its bourgeois breadth, I guess, and sees in its pictures a panorama of U.S. class aspirations. Portz says he

came to notice that the *N.Y. Times Magazine* was more populist, more celebrity-oriented, more material-wealth-oriented, much more frivolous in fact, than the daily *New York Times* appearing in newsprint. (This surprise at an obvious fact is a reaction one would expect from an ascetic, a visionary.—Ed.) The magazine *does* seem to focus on political hopefuls, megabuck artists, renegade jurists, terrorism, fashion and food, as Portz suggests. The magazine's emphasis is on power, upward mobility, security, and the "good life." It occurs to me that it would be amusing if Portz chose to draw his rebuses from other sources: the cliché-ridden (convention-packed?) pages of *Art in America*, *Car & Driver*, or the hoariest pornographic magazine.

Such a career would become just ho-hum deconstruction however, and Portz would presumably not have the patience for that. Portz will probably proceed to drop this inquiry, having merely skipped a couple of rocks across the pond. "There is so much out there, for the dilettante," Portz is recorded as saying. His is the attitude, rather, of a man with a brand new motorcycle, if I may make bold. I think this rebus work exists only because Portz is something of a hermit, knows very little pop culture, doesn't watch television, and therefore, when looking at the pages of a magazine, is shocked. He confesses as grand an amazement at the magazine pictures as would be expected from the Japanese soldier who surrendered yesterday from World War Two, and is standing today in Tokyo. The work was obviously compelling to the artist for a time, though not so much to us, his more worldly counterparts. If it's not out of line for me to say so, then, I'd prefer that Portz continue the work—I think it could stand some development. He is wilful however, does not easily take advice, and is particularly sensitive to criticism. So he'll have thoughts of his own, I imagine.

Footnotes

1 Portz's various series, in the order of their production, can be set forth as follows: odd color documentary photographs of architectural idiosyncrasies in the Houston Heights; odd color photos of fancifully-painted dead fish; odd self-scrawled graffiti, applied so as to render objects into metaphors; and the current odd 'rebus' work.

2 Modern mainstream visual art, to be precise. The artist has expressed himself in the past as highly sceptical of the activity of making wall-hangings, to sell in a tiny market oriented not toward intellectual inquiry nor societal progress, but rather toward pleasant and unchallenging symbols of economic status and sophisticated taste.

3 Rebus (definition): [L.'by things' abl. pl. of res, 'thing'—more at 'Real'] an enigmatical representation of a name, word or phrase by figures, pictures, arrangement of letters, etc., which resemble the intended words or syllables in sound.

4 As was suggested in the Iran/Contra hearings, presumably because the U.S. is sustaining that government.

5 The parameters of photography are roughly as follows: (1) One must use photographic processes (2) to arrive at a flat or nearly flat surface (3) that conveys (communicates) its literal sense. Creativity (sometimes, success in art photography) often resides in the mild offense of these parameters—photographers challenging the use of the processes, breaking up the surface, or thwarting the literal sense. (In the latter category, place painted fishes, the artist's earlier work, but also all manner of "manipulated environments," fake tableaux, and mystically-suggestive collations.)

6 To borrow Thomas Mann's suggested definition of art.



Maud Lipscomb Kathryn



Maud Lipscomb Handshake

LIPSCOMB SQUARED

By April Rapier

Maud Lipscomb and Sarah Lipscomb, Butera's on Alabama, July 13-September 13

Although the connection isn't addressed, when one sees the portraits of Maud Lipscomb and Sarah Lipscomb as a whole, the influence if not the relation is quickly clear, in cumulative honesty and unencumbered, straightforward intent. There is an essential stylistic distinction between this genre of portraiture and, say, the work of Avedon, who, through an erosive transformation, creates a second person set apart from the real—the sitter—by the infusion of drama and psychological manipulation, and a subsequent third person—the artist—persona as driving force behind the resulting collaborative dynamic. This intrusion of charisma and debris is not evident in the Lipscombs' (mother and daughter) pictures, much to their credit, for the work is solid and strong without that particular layer of hype.

Maud Lipscomb has created an unassuming and passionate record of friends and loved ones. Even her signature and titles are unpretentious (see Misrach for new levels of art signature extremes). At times, the spareness cuts to the bone, so achingly alone do her subjects seem during the moment the image is made. They are prescient moments, to be recalled, which support and renew memory and impression. "Sarah, age 12" is a period piece, and speaks to the difficulties of emotional and personal growth—it was impossible not to attach a memory of one's own to the experience of the image (or, perhaps, to substitute one's own face confronting mother and camera, the two things one can count on to attest permanently). She is equally invasive and personal in a crowd, or with, one presumes, strangers. The visions captured are magical, but do not rely on that magic—it is there incidentally, as if magic were familiar state of being. In Maud Lipscomb's world, babies sprawl naked in Mother's lap, and men, with sinuous arms and veins that echo the wrought iron in a screen door nearby, oversee. In this

particular image, adult faces are cut away. The details are rich and referential. "Tamara, age 5" shows a child with her hands stuffed into cut-off shorts pockets, one shoe standing on her other shoe's untied shoelace. Note that the threat is implied, not menacing, leaving tension unborn. She has a bemused, adultish expression (almost all the close-up portraits of children show an eerie, adult side), and a yard looms empty behind. Other images, such as "Emily, age 3," are simply strange and wonderful. One need not come armed to attach attendant meaning, for the pictures offer joy and solace without further qualification or explanation.

Sarah Lipscomb, a recent graduate of the Art Institute of Houston, is more unabashedly commercial in intent. (Both women prepared statements; whereas Maud spoke of a random entry into photography initially, and a passion sparked, Sarah seemed more involved in self-promotion and acknowledgment.) There exists a comparable level of magic, in this case the result of waiting patiently for the perfect moment. Both women are taken with the directness and honesty of children; both react in kind, with emotions out in the open. The sitters give Sarah Lipscomb a great gift by responding to her with a trust and adoration that leave them, at times, seeming painfully vulnerable. Unaware of performance, these children are on best behavior for her. The most compelling image, untitled, of a boy scout in full dress regalia, leaves the area of highest impact unadorned, to be discovered last—the boy, whose pose and expression are dignified, has teeth rather like the caricature of a bunny rabbit. Although that feature is ultimately hard to miss, it is certainly the least important aspect of the picture. This, and other of her images, rely on a pre-established closeness, one which evolved through compassion, not imagemaking. The pictures are icing on an already special cake. Another untitled image shows a third world mother nursing a baby, and it seems as though she is in a crowd, waiting or walking. The facial expressions of mother and son address the role (and irony) of the boy-child in cultures elsewhere—no matter that the timing is inappropriate, he will be nurtured, and he will not have to wait. Sarah Lipscomb's forte might very well be in the style of a photojournalistic passage through the familiar.



Sarah Lipscomb

RECODING
AMERICAN HISTORY

By Warren Neidich

Americans, having come to grips with 1776, are devouring the real past. Canned philology perhaps, but philology all the same. The Americans want, and really like, responsible historical reconstruction. (Perhaps because only after a text has been rigorously reconstructed can it be irresponsibly deconstructed.)
Travels in Hyperreality
Umberto Eco

Modern man at the brink of the 21st century no longer needs words but reacts to hieroglyphics: shared cultural, visual resonances branding our occipital cortices with holographic engrams. It is only natural that, in such a world, man's relationship to his past would change. History becomes an ever-evolving visual archive. Whether looking at the seven o'clock news or *Life* magazine, we are confronted by a digested visual societal mnemonic to be memorized for future regurgitation. The photographic archive in this country dates back to the early 1840's, and its march forward is marked by constantly revised technologies shifting in order to glimpse an ever "truer" sensation of reality. We know that wet mount processes took one-half to five minutes exposure time. Time constraints created compositional necessity. Portraiture required subject immobility. Thus, people of this time seem stiff and stern. City streets were haunted by ghosts and nature swung its boughs in harmonic synkinesis. Viewing the photo object at this time with a late 20th century mindset brings a skewed sense of people, place and time. Roland Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, states,

Photography transformed subject into object, and even, one might say, into a museum object; in order to take the first portraits (around 1840), the subject had to assume long poses under a glass roof in bright sunlight; to become an object made one suffer as much as a surgical operation.

What we take seriously as mementos of the past are but vagaries of a limited technology. What was nothing but a parlor game becomes, after 150 years, vital information in search of a real past.

The temporal lineage of photo images is lopsided. Today, the sheer number of images being created, destroyed, assembled, dissembled, projected, televised, is astronomical. The use of images has transmogrified. Begun as a way of recording family and friends, the photograph's image blankets our visual reality. We have not suffocated. We have survived. Our visual capacities have grown, our visual logic intensified. We filter the visual incongruities. As we are only sensitive to the visual spectrum between 400 nanometers—700 nanometers, so too have we developed coordinate systems that see only specialized patterns. (We will, like Skinnerian rats, press levers in order to maintain visual correctness.) Photo images taken today are taken and created to communicate in those norms. Straying too far leads to noise and visual death. Visual rightness is visual logic—visual logic that is homocentric and "homotemporocentric" (relating to men of their own time). Consequently, we have become ignorant of our self-imposed limitations.

"Photo images are real, and they are true. They are objective records of a sure past. Instead, they are subjective impulses recorded with a limited, restricted recording device." (Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida).

Photographs included in this series entitled *Photographs and American History*, are structured to show what the photographic archive is not. These images were taken at various historical restorations in the United States: Williamsburg, Virginia; Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts; Plymouth, Massachusetts; Old Salem, North Carolina; historic Bayside, New York; and Calico, California. Some of these restorations were more rigorous in maintaining a museum quality than others. There is a valiant attempt by many of these museums to preserve their antiquity. The utmost care has been taken by the curatorial staffs in their rendering. Clothes, artifacts, processes such as weaving and tool making, have been researched and instituted in remarkable fashion. Even the language of the pilgrims has been preserved at Plymouth. Like a spy from another era, I crept through the past in order to expose its flaws, to peer through its cracks at a more real light. Many times, the flaw was already there waiting to be found. Other times, objects from our own time were placed in the tapestry of light in order to subvert more clearly the "ahistorical" past.

These photos, made by permeating albumen coated paper with silver salts, create a photo relic, an object in its own right. Inspected for the first time, the image subverts our 20th century pigeon hole. They appear as old photographs. But something makes us uneasy. Something is just not right. Slowly the eye moves around the picture to find the "punctum"/aberration. Sometimes it is the anachronistic object, sometimes the movement of the individual or sometimes the style of the image. The relationship of the reader and the image becomes metonymic for the relationship of the photographer and the historical restoration. Once the flaw of the photograph has been uncovered, we begin to question other aspects of it. Is the clothing worn really antique? Are the objects true to that period? The whole photograph and its validity as true document are thrown into question. For what are the objects themselves? Notes in a bottle, floating in a sea of time? What do they say about the differences between the present and 150 years ago? The signs for "No Smoking," "ENTRANCE," "This Is Not An Entrance." Talk about how language has become more and more dominant in directing our lives. Giving us orders, they are acting to control what we do and in this context, how we experience history. Obviously, the directors are subservient to the myth. The curatorial staff would not want us to stumble on an air-conditioning vent or the changing rooms. The beeper in the Williamsburg photo takes on center stage, reminding us that the 20th-century life is one in which people are monitored with electrical exactitude. The couple in the background sit and enjoy themselves, taking advantage of what they have. The dollar bill in the image of historical Bayside subverts the edge of the photo and like an arrow drives toward the center of that image. The money economy drives on minting figures of history to give it greater validity. Each object, familiar enough here, at the end of the 20th century, becomes something else in the historical context of these photos. The power of the photo in the political sense is being re-appreciated by political philosophers such as Joubert in France. Stalin's transformation of the visual archive to exclude Trotsky from the Russian Revolution is a case in point as to how photo images can be manipulated to alter history and truth. Because we believe photographs are real, we do not believe they are not. We have all taken photographs. There is no experience that reaffirms our sense of reality more than taking a Polaroid. Instantly, we have a reaction and a



Warren Neidich



Warren Neidich

reflection. We may re-shoot in order to mold the image to the scene more accurately. It is almost like looking at something with the alternate eye closed. Each reality is slightly different than the other, but each validates the other. Extrapolating further, the newspaper, the magazine, the TV all show what appear to be photos. Our own experience validates them as real, to be believed and perceived. Did the general public feel the same in 1850? Could they make similar inferences? Could they be influenced in the same way then as today? We do know that the photos of Sullivan and Curtis helped populate the West. We know that photo-like images are bombarding the senses to such an extent that, at the very foundation, our memory banks have been infiltrated by media-generated images. The masticated rumen of the political "yes." How, then, can we doubt the power of the visual archive? Who needs to burn books when you can dodge and crop? Computer-generated images like Max Headroom may be the forerunners to computer-generated photographs of pseudo-space travel and pseudo-wars (see 1984). Stalin was not the only one to use these techniques. Goebbels' fascist propaganda machine organized Hitler's photo campaign very carefully. Surprisingly enough, even here, in our own country, photocensorship and reconstruction are going on. We had to wait to learn from foreign photographs published in foreign publications about the destruction and death of the civilians caused by our government's bombing of Libya. Selective omission is just another



Warren Neidich

face of censorship.

This series of photos evolved out of a desire to enter the photo discourse and push its dialogue towards the question of what a photo is and what it is not. Photographers today, fed on Wheaties and Cheerios, are too ready to adapt their TV mentality to art in order to transform themselves from photographers to photo-artists. In attempting to ride the tide of new-Marxism, they claim all Coca-Cola, drunk by all people, is equal. In subverting distinctions, they breed lazy

thinking and, worse, mediocrity. We cannot be flippant in our decisions on what constitutes a mass esthetic. We must harken to the call of beauty, perfection, and truth.

Warren Neidich, a photographer living in New York, is the American editor of Cliches magazine. His photographs were recently exhibited at HCP as part of the exhibition, The Manipulated Environment.



"Leda and the WASP," the high watermark of revanchist ante-postmodernism. Photographer unknown. From the collection of the author.

PHOTOGRAPHY DRIVES: STATE 71E THROUGH LA GRANGE

By Roy Flukinger

"Modernism¹ and Postmodernism² have both gone belly up!"

"That assumes that they were ever well and walking around to begin with!"

Berger and Coleman were at it again, letting the fur fly in the back seat as we coasted into La Grange. I downshifted the Malibu into third, grazing the city limit sign and sliding into the curve that took us onto the bridge across the Colorado. The Iski cams protested and tried to drown out the argument; it was a tie.

"Look, we've stumbled through Benjamin's age of mechanical reproduction and on into the electronic era without finding a significant matrix of iconology beyond the basic eidetic principles which we have stuck onto photography since the beginning of the century. But that doesn't mean that each movement, no matter how sophomoric or brief, doesn't have some aesthetic validity."

"Validity, my ass! What matters most is individual, artistic sensibility, not some artificially enforced parameters that mean nothing to the striving artist and everything to a handful of picayune critics."

"Where are we?" asked Berger, "Philosophically or geographically?" I countered.

"Where in Texas?"³

"This is La Grange," said Caponigro, checking the map one last time before trying to fold it.

"Great! Let's go peek at the Chicken Ranch."

"We can't," I said. "They moved it up to the Metroplex."

"Naw," said Coleman. "They moved it from there. It's someplace in Houston."

"You're both wrong," Caponigro added. "They tore it down. It's in pieces."

"Yeah, just like Postmodernism," remarked Berger.

That set them off again. I decided to circle the county courthouse till one of them succumbed to the inevitable call of a remorseless nature. Caponigro sighed, saw that he got the creases wrong again, and began unfolding the map once more. I took the northwest corner of the square on two wheels while Coleman renewed the attack from the back seat.

"There can be no Ironclad classifications. Photography is an incredibly complex medium. It cannot be easily compartmentalized and compacted."

"Just like highway maps..." muttered Caponigro, adding another unnatural crease.

"Then how do we evaluate anything?" asked Berger. "If we don't create a frame of reference how can we gain both historical and current perspectives? Is the entire 150 years of the oeuvre merely an undefined proletariat struggle?"

"No, Abigail has already picked all the lint out of that navel."⁴

"How about encodings based upon socio-cultural origins rather than arbitrary aesthetic parameters?" I asked, while taking out a half dozen parking meters in the interim.

"It can't be done," said Berger. "You reduce the creative enterprise to an offshoot of historical drives. The spirit of art in photography must evolve from the individual, the student, the teacher, the school. The fountainhead must be cherished."

"Right," said Caponigro, "and the Bauhaus⁵ was just a bunch of drunken German design students who were too lazy to learn either basic technique or traditional pictorialism." Sarcasm won out over map-folding.

"Well, I don't know about the drunken part..." added Coleman.

"Speaking of drinking," said Ber-

ger, "let's stop somewhere. I gotta take a leak and grab some lunch."

It was the call I had been waiting for. I flattened the stop sign at the corner and floored it two blocks towards the eatery I knew about.

We were fifty feet away when Berger dropped the bomb. "Anyway, none of this amateur dialectic can explain away the demise of Ante-Postmodernism."⁶

"What?" I yelled.

"What?" Coleman yelled.

"Stop!" Caponigro yelled.

I took out a bench and a foot of concrete, but we didn't hit the cafe. We all turned to stare at Berger and Coleman summed it up quite nicely: "What is this shit about Ante-Postmodernism?"

Berger smiled innocently while he unbuckled his seat belt. "You mean you missed it? But it was a major flowering of syntactical expressionism which flourished until its recent staggering demise on or about July 1 of 1983. Sorry I can't be more precise."

"Names! Places! Schools!

Images!" We spat out the orders.

"Any number of major American artists. Kertesz's reading series. Lee's Italian work. Duane Michals' first eight series. Anything Ralph Gibson did in 1972. Everything Krause has done since he started photography. George has championed an entire movement and has never known it. Then there's the entire RISD graduating class of 1981. Even Caponigro here contributed a tad with some of his photos of dark rocks." He opened his door. "Cheeseburgers all around? My treat."

"Damn right it is," said Coleman, leaping out of his door. "And you better have a good definition for this 'movement' before we get to the counter."

We watched them head for the front door. Caponigro put his head in his hands: "Just great," he muttered. "I'm part of a movement and I don't even learn about it until it's all over with." I noticed the crushed and open map lying on the floorboard under his feet.

Ten minutes later we were stopped at the last light on the way out of town. Questions and interjections were spread out around the Malibu, along with the cheeseburgers and onion rings.

"It makes no sense," said

Caponigro. "How can work that respects the natural syntax of the camera lens be antithetical to man's reaction to the real world?"

"Simple," said Berger. "If you accept the pseudo-documentary felicity of all the fine art images made between the now-defunct Modernist and Postmodernist periods, then you cannot escape the inevitable conclusion that the material world of the Ante-Postmodernist movement was atavistic towards the inherent spiritualism found in popular camera imagery ranging from the common snapshot to the finest pieces of news photography." He took a bite of burger and put his feet up behind my seat.

The light turned green and I floored it. The Bon-Ton Cafe⁷ had whizzed by on my right when I thought to add: "But what about the revanchist photographic symbiosis of truth and beauty? If the camera has subjugated its reality, and hence its inherent spirituality, to a diametrically negative fecundity, then there can be no movement."

"Exactly," said Coleman, picking up the objection. "And your theory has no ultimate substance. Therefore, it doesn't exist as a movement since it foregoes its parameters with its basic, anti-camera bias."⁸

"He's full of beans," said

Caponigro, taking a long plug on his Tab. I didn't think they made Tab any longer.

Berger started to speak, paused for a moment, and then proceeded to snarf up the last of the onion rings. He started to chew over everything carefully.

Finishing off the last of the food, we settled back for a more comfortable drive. I watched the town fade away in the rear view mirror.

Finally, Berger spoke. "So that was La Grange, eh? Man, I really would like to have seen the Chicken Ranch."

"You can't," muttered Caponigro.

"It's all in pieces."

"Yeah," he replied. "Just like Ante-Postmodernism."

Coleman growled.

I dropped the Malibu into fourth and stomped on the accelerator. It had all the makings of a long afternoon.

Footnotes

1 A movement, preceding Postmodernism.

2 Another movement, which followed Modernism.

3 A state. No, make that THE state. Home of such major things as the Houston Center for Photography, the Texas Photographic Society, the Houston Foto Fest, and great barbecue.

4 See her article: "Get Up Out of the Dirt, You Sucker, and Take It Like A Man!" *Afterimage*, July 1986, pp. 77-639.

5 Pronounced "bow-house." A bunch of drunken German design students who were too lazy to learn either basic technique or traditional pictorialism.

6 What???

7 Where we should have eaten.

8 See also: Rapier, A. "How You Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm, After They've Seen Atget?, or Living in the Postmodernist-Free World." *Afterimage*, July 1986, pp. 75-76.

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Roy Flukinger is curator of the Gernsheim photography collection at the Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.

CAPITOL
PHOTOGRAPHY

By Ruth Schilling

In Washington, we have the same troubles you have anywhere. It's just that here, as I learned when I arrived two years ago, you have an added dimension that can be summed up thusly—in DC, the local nightly news is the national news. The arts scene is intimidated, as many cities are, by the Goliath, New York. It is also threatened by the pull of such news as IranCam (what we need is a good Camscam); our Mayor Barry has his blues with increasing urgency. And you thought Houston had troubles. All this leaves the photography scene hard put to compete with such compelling, happening right here and now, events. It certainly doesn't make photography not important. Witness the hordes who waited patiently at Oliver North's feet every

day, their various long lenses aimed at his every facial twitch. It's just that here the audience that all artists seek is very often quite distracted with other business. Even the artists are quite distracted by this other business. Many of them or their spouses work in, with, or for the bureaucracy. It was jokingly said to me that there are only two and one-half collectors in DC, and maybe not that many. That may be the case, or it may have been the case. In the two years I've been here, I get the sense that maybe things aren't so bleak, and possibly they are changing.

What are the good things about being a photographer in the nation's capitol? You are near some of the nation's best museums and collections. Many travelling exhibitions of note will stop here or originate here and all of this is free. This is not so impressive to Houstonians, as museums there are often free, but it is remarkable to find on the East coast. Since none of the National museums charge admission, the other major collections in town are forced not to do so, either. (Though, like the MFA, they have started to charge small amounts for special exhibitions.) For photographers the Corcoran Gallery of Art has a strong tradition of support for contemporary photography. It also houses an art school whose photography program and teachers have been influential in insuring a source of young photographers.

I should point out here that for this article I am talking about "art" photography in Washington. This of course doesn't fully address the role of photography in DC. It is an important aspect of DC that there is quite a bit of commercial work here. This is not just from associations, news agencies, government, and other types of PR that generate endless "grip and grin" shots. There is also a growing advertising and fashion market.

Indeed there is rapid growth in the whole Washington area. Like Houston with its oil industry, DC is dominated by one major employer, the federal government. There is much talk that this is changing, thereby creating a more diverse and vibrant economy. Though the government has yet to go bust, there are constraints caused by reliance on the federal government. For example, it has probably hurt the art scene that bureaucrats don't generally have the resources or the inclination to be collectors. So there are only two and one-half of them. The government does have needs, though, that translate into jobs for photographers, and these sources of revenue can then help to support their art habits.

In spite of what people say about the lack of collectors, Washington, ironically, does have a number of galleries that show photography exclusively, and others that show it regularly. The oldest of these galleries, Kathleen Ewing, has been in existence since 1976. More recently, others who have been active in local photography opened galleries: Jones Troyer; Martin Gallery, which now shares space with Ewing; Tarrt Gallery; Sandra Berler, a dealer who has added gallery space to her house. Compared to other cities, this is quite a lot of gallery space devoted to photography. It is also remarkable that all of these galleries show mainly contemporary work. Ewing in particular has a strong and long-standing commitment to local photographers. Many galleries have lately clustered in an area around Dupont Circle. In the ongoing attempt to build an audience, they have held joint openings, recently five of them collaborated on shows covering five historical areas of photography, titled "Five Great Moments in Photography." Each gallery examined a period in photo-

graphic history: nineteenth century exploration at Tarrt Gallery; Pictorialism at Ewing; Stieglitz and his circle at Middendorf Gallery; Group f/64 at Jones Troyer; Photojournalism at Martin Gallery. According to Ewing, the event was a great success: it was crowded the day of the opening, in spite of threatening rain.

On the horizon is the newly formed Washington Center for Photography (WCP). Its founder and director, Sharon Kheim, has been a long-time participant in the Washington photography community. The Center is nascent, and what shape it will take is yet to be seen. Kheim has said that she would have liked to use the word "resource" in the title but resisted, to avoid confusion with the Photographic Resource Center in Boston. With that idea in mind, the goal is to bring people to town for lectures and workshops, and to offer a place where people can call or come for information. John Wood will give a workshop here this summer; Andy Grundberg lectured last winter. Another goal is to provide opportunities for photographers to show work. Two shows have already been organized in the area, and the first members' show will be this summer. This has required some effort because, unlike the HCP, which has its own exhibition space, the WCP does not. In a way, this has merit in that borrowing space draws in other organizations and gives the Center some much-needed publicity. In the long run, though, an exhibition space of one's own is probably preferable.

If the Center does get the financial resources to have its own gallery space then it has to decide where to be located. Right now they have a small office in an artists' building on the Maryland edge of DC.

This points to an area of the Washington photo scene that I haven't mentioned yet—its fragmented nature. First, you have to realize that this is both a very small area and yet quite large. The District of Columbia has a population of only 600,000. However, the area we call Washington also includes all the southern Maryland suburbs and an ever-expanding part of northern Virginia. Connected by the ubiquitous beltway, all this adds up to a large population and an area that is getting harder and harder to cover reasonably by driving.

DC remains the focus of the art community. The important galleries are there, as are the museums, and artists have tried to maintain studios in the area. There are no decaying industrial areas with lovely Soho style buildings to renovate in the heart of DC. There are just old department stores and cast-off government office buildings. Even these, however, are coming back into demand, having been left to decline after the riots of the late sixties. More and more, economics are forcing people out to the suburbs. This poses a problem, because if you choose Virginia you cut off Maryland residents, and vice versa. This isn't just a geographic problem. There's a mutual disdain among residents for the lifestyle and ambience (or lack thereof) in the suburbs of the other.

Even though communication among the photographers locally has a spotty record, there is a large community with some potency and demand for a center in Washington. Though area photographers aren't here to serve you (that's your congressman's job), they may decide that there is room in their center for a broader role, one which acknowledges that it is the nation's capitol.

There is one other very important art center in town, the Washington Project for the Arts (WPA). It has over its history wrestled with the conflict between existing to serve Washington's artists or serving to

bring in ideas which are international as well as national and local. The current director, Jock Reynolds, has taken more of the latter stance. This was annoying to some, who feel that bringing in other artists always means less time and space devoted to local talent (neither a new problem, nor one unfamiliar to Houston). Neither community can afford the insular luxury of centers that are just regional. With centers like the WPC, the HCP, and the PRC in Boston, the possibility emerges for a national network of centers capable of connecting photographers in a very direct way. In that sense, the new WPC should consider how it can function vis-a-vis its special position in the nation's capitol.

Once these centers are buzzing with interactive communiques and idea-sharing, what about the photography? What is it that they will be sharing? After all this buildup about the positive aspects of the scene here, why can it can sometimes seem so dull? I've been to several group shows since I arrived. I figured it was a good way to get to know peoples' work. In general, they aren't any more or less inspiring than these kinds of shows are anywhere. There is a certain predictability to a good part of the work in any of these shows, no matter what the theme or context. The work usually breaks down with fifty percent in color, fifteen percent "experimental" (non-silver, hand colored, collage), and the rest black and white. Very little shown is smaller than 16x20 inches and certainly not less than 8x10 inches. Even with great technical diversity there is an amazing lack of new imagery. The ideas are very much the same from show to show. Lack of breadth is

probably responsible for some of my response. It's hard to say from one or two images what a photographer is really about, but a landscape in the style of Ansel Adams is probably not really misleading me about someone's overall work.

Group shows may be the worst place to get excited about work, but they do act as a barometer. And I'm not sure that what gets shown in the galleries is really appreciably different. The work is stronger and conceptually more complex, but not really radical. There may be exceptions. John Gossage's latest work consists of almost totally black prints of the Berlin Wall. Powerful in their look, they are certainly a radical departure from his earlier work. But I'm not sure that Gossage is a Washington photographer anymore. He says that he gets more inspiration from the European scene these days. H. Terry Braunstein, who does strange photomontage works, had a show at Tarrt this winter, but she has left Washington for New York.

Maybe because Washington is the Capitol, it expects more of itself. Aren't we a major city, and shouldn't we then have a vital art scene? As I said in the beginning, it's hard to compete with the vitality of a circus like the Ollie North show. It is true that DC does have a more alive and active photography scene these days, and it will always have the collections of the Library of Congress and the National Museums. My own hunch is that it will never be a hotbed of the avant garde. It is not in its bureaucratic nature to be radical. People will still leave for New York. Those who stay may find that at least now there are more resources and more to do when you're not in the dark or out on the quest.

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Richard Misrach

BOOKS RICHARD MISRACH: DESERT CANTOS

Desert Cantos by Richard Misrach
(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987, 106 pages. \$39.95; \$19.95, paper)

By Ed Osowski

In an interview he conducted with Richard Misrach in September, 1985, Peter Brown asked Misrach to discuss his then current project, *Desert Cantos*, selections from which were shown at the Houston Center for Photography in late 1985 and early 1986. As he spoke Misrach described how the metaphorical quality of the land possessed a great attraction for him and admitted that it was the land as metaphor, as image, as repository of certain ideas, that he tried to convey in this project:

I think the ultimate goal here is using the desert both as a place and as a metaphor, dividing the two; one is visually powerful, and it's a real place, loaded with symbols and meaning. At the same time, because of the extreme nature of the desert, the harshness of the desert, it becomes a strong metaphor with association to the Bible and the history of literature, science fiction, the Twilight Zone. . . The desert is always the big metaphor for life and death, and God and the Devil. I think there's something apocalyptic about the desert. The forces here are powerful.

But now that Misrach has collected approximately sixty of these photographs into a handsome publication, a shift has occurred in how he views his work. He has tried to pull back from the reading he offered to Brown. In the "Afterword" to *Desert Cantos* he makes a claim for the environmental concerns of his photographs and writes, "The desert may serve better as the backdrop for the problematic relationship between man and his environment." In the same Afterword he identifies and terms inadequate two other approaches to landscape photography. In the first of these approaches, which Misrach dates from the seventeenth century (examples could easily be found at least four centuries earlier, however), the world is viewed as the setting for catastrophic events, for the turmoil and terror of the "last days;" as a visual representation of the final struggle of the soul with the forces of good and evil. Quite simply such a view is apocalyptic. The second view which Misrach rejects could be shorthanded to read "Nature as God;" or, as Mis-

rach writes, the "stuff of literary and religious mythology and symbolism." Both approaches read the land as "cultural geography" and both he wishes to avoid. But the clues he plants are too great (and too clear) to allow Misrach to be taken at his word. For *Desert Cantos* draws its great strength and peculiar hold from its ability to manipulate—to expand, play off, and redefine—those readings of landscape Misrach would lead us to believe he has rejected.

Desert Cantos contains four sections, "The Terrain," "The Event," "The Flood," and "The Fires." The progression through these parts is steady, in what might be called a journey of immersion. The early photographs provide a context—hills, roads, railroad tracks, power lines—that is broad and sweeping. Only gradually does Misrach move in to his subject more closely—a group of bushes illuminated with the hot, blazing afternoon sun, for example. But he pulls back from this close reading in "The Event." Surely what we have here is the most eccentric depiction of a landing of the Space Shuttle. Misrach records the landing of Columbia at Edwards Air Force Base in 1983. Only in the ninth photograph of this section does the space shuttle, a mere speck in the sky, actually appear. The spectators could just as easily be waiting for the Second Coming itself. (For a more traditional approach to the same subject, an approach less ripe with metaphoric implications, see Joel Sternfeld's photograph of the Space Shuttle at Kelly Air Force Base, from his recent exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.)

Misrach's section titles are deliberately Biblical, one realizes, and refer to those Old and New Testament passages which predict and attempt to present a picture of the final days. Misrach calls his ongoing documentation of the Southwestern desert "cantos" and has compared his work, conceivably epic in length, to Dante's *Inferno* and, especially, to Ezra Pound's *Cantos*. But what he does not point out is that both poets are guides with a peculiar vision, a vision that brings the reader through a landscape marked by destruction and by spiritual, social, and political turmoil. Both are apocalyptic poets concerned with the "last days" or "end time" and Misrach's photographs are visual equivalents to the verbal terrain of Dante and Pound.

The Old Testament story of the flood seems to lie behind Misrach's third canto. Here, in fifteen haunting and stark works, he photographs the Salton Sea, a man-made disaster of enormous proportions caused by the faulty managing of irrigation waters released from the Colorado River. The irony that inheres in these photographs comes from their great and eerie beauty set against the folly that created them as a subject.

That water would never pose a threat again is the promise that concludes the flood account in the "Book of Genesis." Rather, it would be "the fires next time;" in a phrase borrowed and made famous by James Baldwin, that would signal the earth's destruction. Recalling the fires which followed the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki prepares one for Misrach's last section, his vision of the holocaust.

Flames and smoke sweep across the land, the sun stands a red, glowing ball in the billowing clouds of orange and yellow, the blackened remains of trees and other vegetation stand transformed, yet strangely beautiful, in this last section. In what may be the most disturbing image in the book, "Desert Fire #153," two men stand in a sea of dry grass. One man, smiling, looks at the photographer and at us. His partner, perhaps twenty feet from him, aims a rifle at him. Small flames appear in the lower right corner. Misrach has captured a moment of particularly disturbing emotional dislocation. Is this scene "orchestrated?" Are the men posing? Does the man smiling at us

know that there is a weapon pointed at him? Does he know that he is in danger? Or does he smile because he is looking forward, in some perverse way, to his own death, his deliverance? Certainly, as a metaphor, this is a great photograph, the land about to be engulfed by flames echoing the disharmony which has brought these two men to this point, great because it so eludes a quick interpretation.

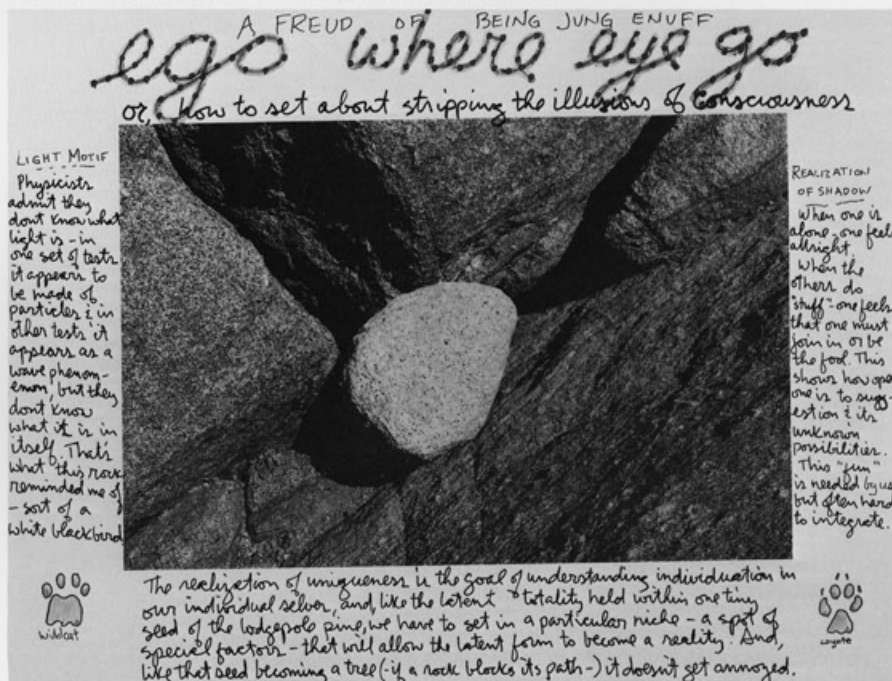
Certainly Misrach is not a "religious" photographer and my reading of his cantos is not intended to suggest this. But Misrach, who received his undergraduate training in psychology, knows that the land, all that is out there and apart from us, is often the only window we possess to what is inside us. And certain religious ideas—of chaos, destruction, the terror of the end—can just as easily be called psychological as they can be called spiritual.

The photographs in *Desert Cantos* show Misrach to be a master of color, light, and atmosphere. He photographs a world aglow with energy and beauty, with a sense of

the implications of light that suggests the nineteenth-century American painters called the "luminists." And he can, as he does in "Salton Sea (Triangle)," create a vision of absolute stillness and calm. But while Misrach's photographs are strong indictments of how we have abused and mismanaged the fragile deserts of the Southwest (his environmental concerns are quite apparent), calling him a photographer committed to the "conservation" of the land seems limiting. For what Misrach provides, in a compelling manner, are glimpses into a world that is specific, concrete, real, that is frequently without people, that is beautiful in the haunting way that destroyed things can be beautiful, where destruction has found a permanent place, where fire and death are at home and all else seems alien.

c 1987 Ed Osowski

Ed Osowski is a librarian with the Houston Public Library System. He is a frequent contributor to SPOT and occasionally reviews books for the HOUSTON POST.



Jack Fulton

JACK FULTON'S "EGO WHERE EYE GO"

2 Saunters: Summer and Winter—1978 (A catena of photography and words by Jack Fulton), was published by Pencil Press, San Rafael, California, 1986. Price: \$20.00.

By April Rapier

Jack Fulton's book, *2 Saunters: Summer & Winter* (1986, Pencil Press), has been sitting on my desk for a few months now, asserting its presence, insistently demanding to be read and re-read. On the surface, it is the kind of book one would want one's child to lust after: beautiful drawings, manipulated photo-collages, explanations, notations, and colorful and artful doodlings. It is a road journal of the most personal sort, yet accessible because of its innocent, rambling quality. I'm not sure that it makes much sense (pointed references to the art world at large, and its arbiters of taste the exception), but I did learn a lot, as did the random sampling of 4-to-9 year olds to whom I showed the book (my colleagues and students like it, too). Having heard Mr. Fulton conduct a symposium in San Francisco, he struck me as a serious, no-nonsense

type (in person). What does one learn of an artist through a document such as this? At times slightly self-conscious, at others, self-effacing, the production quality—its design sensibilities, color overlay upon color photography, trivial-demon subject matter presented in a mock-scholarly fashion, and lists of non-sequiturs, one-liners, and puns—present an alternately flaky and super-ego oriented, post 60s (read burnout) exploration of intellectual remnants, or things more worthy of examination (nature and solitude versus any established standard).

The book as a whole, ideas and motivation aside, is irresistible. The printing is rich and gorgeous, emphasizing the graphic layering, and its structure and density afford a different experience each reading. Charles Schorre's work comes to mind, in that it is an exploration of the internal and external landscape: Fulton fuses the internal and external with text, a ploy sometimes more distracting than enlightening. The book exists more as storyboard for things seen and things to come than de facto memento or fact of life. It is pure fiction, a voyeur's paradise. It is a love letter to a private universe. It is not a post-modernist ideology. It is whatever one chooses to make it.

Wanda M. Corn's introductory essay is quite a story in itself, a chronologue of era and locale. One

assumes a history of elusive definition between them: Fulton in absolute appreciation of an alternate esthetic. Corn in absolute appreciation of Fulton. As she would have us believe, Fulton is a wanderer of epic proportions, his pictures and words tribute to grand adventures, explorations, and discoveries. One is certain that he derives great joy from poetic license and liberties taken therein, as he would have us believe. I came away from the experience, one that requires repeated forays, a believer in Fulton's definition of the world.

TEXAS PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY 1987 ANNUAL JURIED EXHIBITION

August 3-28, 1987, at First City Centre,
816 Congress Ave., Austin, Texas. Juror:
Helmut Gernsheim.

By Mel McCombie

The road toward great photography is mined with clichéd pitfalls of subject and form. It is suprising, therefore, that celebrity juror Helmut Gernsheim was not more aware of these pitfalls when he juried the Texas Photographic Society's 1987 Annual Statewide Exhibition. Have years in Switzerland injured him to the tired aspects of cutesie animal pictures, bland desert landscape scenes, and ubiquitous "artsy" shots of mirrored glass buildings reflecting the sky? Evidently not, for works such as these abound in the show. Of course, Gernsheim had to choose from the material available and not from an unlimited spectrum: yet there are enough exceptional works in the show to suggest that some judicious editing might have been profitably applied to create a smaller but finer exhibition.

Discussing the good news first, the show contains a body of works that are superb images emphasizing abstract composition. Jeff Cannon's Cibachrome image of the juncture of a yellow and a white wall with a triangle of oddly blue sky above is a dynamic postmodern image, slightly unfocused, jazzy, and rendered in juiced-up color. Carol Cohen Burton's "Ballpark," a picture of a closed concession stand, looks like one of Robert Motherwell's "Open" paintings rendered in the glassy hyper-real perfection of Cibachrome. Nancy Scanlon's similarly architectonic shots are also rigorously composed, contrasting color, texture, and disembodied architectural members in a form of visual synecdoche in which the partial members signify the larger whole, yet work alone as purely abstract compositional elements. Randy Ehrlich's "Untitled #3," an intense close up study of a blue and black painted surface, is also masterfully abstract and the best of his pieces in this show.

Several of the standout photographs are black and whites; oddly,

the work in black and white seems more emphatically poetic and subject-oriented than the color work that dominates the show. Tracey Reinberg's contact print, "Self Portrait for Ring," is an emblem of the multiple layers of portraiture: she photographs herself reflected in a store window in which is displayed a framed painted portrait. Judging from Reinberg's work seen in the last year, she is a young photographer of great promise and vision, with an uncanny ability to capture fleeting and poetic moments without sentimentality. J. Michael Short's "Corundas for the Feast of San Lorenzo" is a gorgeously printed image of Mexican women preparing food, distinguished by the picturesque dispersion of detail, textures, and tonal contrasts across the field. The oldest image in the show belongs to Rick Williams, whose 1971 photograph of a "Bird and a Glass" is a text on contrasting texture and evocative subjects. A bird's skeleton lies on a wood floor surrounded by sharp shards of glass; the image is somehow tragic yet its silvery tonality and extraordinarily subtle gradations make it seductively exquisite.

The bad news can be summed up with a few egregious examples. In the cute animal category, the winner is Tracy Gordon's photograph of a squirrel hungering after a bird feeder, with runner up Keith Gordon's "Toucan Bill" (yes, the head of one of those Froot Loops birds). In the banal landscape category, Brenda Day Ladd's "Big Bend Sky" vies with Karen Loke's "Reflection: Leaky, Texas" for the "boy, have we seen it before and better" prize. The Hallmark Card award goes to Suzanne Hurbell's close up of a pair of dandelion puffs (honestly), while the "leave it to Ansel Adams" award goes to Elaine Powell's "Rancho de Taos." Mary Sonier's photograph of the American flag and cowboy bystander in "July 4th" is just too sentimental to take seriously. The final category of gimmicky architectural shots is headlined by James McJunkin's shots of mirrored glass buildings making odd reflections of their surroundings. Mark Nunn's banal contrast of a painted brick wall and mirrored glass building, and Sherry Bryan's shot looking up the sheer wall of an Austin office building.

As much fun as it is to cavil and carp, TPS can be proud of the handful of truly excellent work in the show. Clearly the juror's preferences allowed some painfully clichéd work in the door, but it serves to point up the quality of the best pieces. After all, how many good artists exist at any one time anyway?



Phyllis Liedeker, Port Aransas, Texas

GOOD INTENTIONS

By T.R. Mackin

Spaces in the Heart of Texas, curated by Meri Houtchens-Kitchens for Women & Their Work, Austin, Texas, was shown there July 1-31. The photographers featured are Ave Bonar, Carol Cohen Burton, Mary Lee Edwards, Meri Houtchens-Kitchens, Amy Kwalwasser, Phyllis Liedeker, Sybil Miller, Julie Newton, Nancy Scanlan, and Kathy Vargas. The show travels to Travis County Courthouse, Women & Their Works, a non-profit organization, moved into their own gallery in February of this year.

In her curatorial statement, Meri Houtchens-Kitchens notes that Women & Their Work asked her to curate this exhibit because of her "interest in the ways women use photography to explore the concerns of their hearts." She invited nine Central Texas photographers to join her in interpreting the exhibit's theme because of "the ways they have consistently used photography to communicate about the human condition."

Houtchens-Kitchens makes reference to the literal and metaphorical meanings of both "space" and "heart." The interpretations vary from wholly emotional to strictly cerebral. Limited to six images, not every body of work is able to fulfill the artist's intentions. Houtchens-Kitchens' statement accompanying the photographs of her son Aaron are more moving than the images as edited. While several of the images are evidence of how she as mother/photographer sees the

suffering of her son and his isolation—they fall short of her eloquently stated goal.

Also working on an emotional interpretation were Ave Bonar and Julie Newton—both documenting families not their own. Bonar also seems encumbered by the limit of six photographs. Three of her images are portraits of children; each image is shot without background or peripheral information. Two other images are evidence of family relationship and living quarters. The remaining image is of an empty room where the children in the portraits might live. While the photographs are lovely and well done, one wishes that in content there was more to be had.

Newton's photographs are meant to be illustrative of special relationships. A father leads a daughter down the aisle of a church, sunlight streams in the door behind them. A small girl watches her great grandmother strum a guitar. These images are nice to behold and have wonderful detail, but once again, they do not connote all that the photographer has implied in her statement—"Passages are rites of the heart and always lead to change. No relationship can really ever stay the same."

Kathy Vargas deals with relationships in an abstract way. From her statement we infer that a relationship has ended—that Vargas intends to express the experience of this loss and the subsequent release by "burning" presumably meaningful letters. The hand-tinted photographs are layered images of handwriting, paper, roses, feathers, and netting. The images are so similar that the progression and the allusions to any ritual are unclear. Vargas has said in her statement that she is trying to express what she cannot verbalize—the feeling in the resulting imagery is definitely ephemeral.

Carol Cohen Burton's small color triads represent personal memory attached to things. Burton's ambitions fit and succeed within the limitations of the show. The photographs are arranged vertically, three to a mat, outlined and formatted with black photo-album corners. The family album feeling does not extend to a snapshot feeling—the images are definitely personal references. But metal lawn chairs, black and white hens, and a glass of red juice (Kool Aid?) sitting on shaded steps may serve as mnemonic devices for more than one Central Texas bred child.

Sybil Miller's color photographs were made, she said, after she began to feel at home in the hill country. No clue is forthcoming in the photographer's statement as to the relationship between images—Miller expresses an interest in regional history, the future site of

her home, and a "hidden and displaced subculture" of Middle Eastern students at the University of Texas. While there is no conscious thought process evident in the unrelated images, there is, however, a consistency of feeling present in Miller's work.

Also consistent in feeling are Amy Kwalwasser's water-related, color images. Had Kwalwasser not explained that her name meant "spring water" one might have missed the connection between bathing hippos and reflected clouds and abandoned beach chairs.

Like Kwalwasser, Phyllis Liedeker also took an approach which seems to blend literal and metaphorical intent. Her mostly deserted coastal views do not reflect the elements as they are described in her statement—"enveloping . . . water, wind, sand, and salt . . ." Instead, fallen signs, abandoned areas, and sublime vistas are more indicative of alienated, sometimes decaying, spaces.

Nancy Scanlan worked from a totally literal perspective. Her images are taken in the "heart" of Texas. Scanlan professes to be dealing with "abstract spatial qualities . . ." While the color images are momentarily visually arresting, the objects are not photographed in such a way as to transform the representation into disassociated form.

Mary Lee Edwards' documentary approach produced visual and literal portraits of homeless women. She writes in her statement, "For some it seems, there is no place in the heart of Texas." The stories suffer because they are told in the first person and are written in too consistent a style. A few sporadic vernacular insertions interrupt this otherwise highly readable style. As grammatical references they are meant to lend authenticity to the speaker, but rather serve to question the text's credibility. The spokesperson sounds the same in each, and as a result, the stories do not transmit individual personalities which might have lent authenticity to the speaker's voice. The idea of the project, however, does make one want to see more.

Tracey Reinberg



NEWS

COMMERCIAL SYMPOSIUM AT HCP

A symposium, "Artistic Freedom in the Commercial Arena" will be held at HCP on Tuesday, September 22 at 7:30, in conjunction with the exhibition, *The Art of Commercial Photography*. The panel, moderated by Paul Hester, will include photographers Dave Crossley and Ron Scott, and designers Jerry Herring and Lowell Williams. The symposium will explore such issues as how commercial photographers work with their clients, how award-winning photographs are created, and how to innovate despite the constrictions of conservative clients. The public is invited to attend.

FELLOWSHIP WINNERS

The Houston Center for Photography is pleased to announce three \$1,000 fellowship recipients for 1987: Jill Goodman, Elizabeth Grant, and Carol Vuchetich. They will exhibit their portfolios next year at the Center.

Each year, The Houston Center for Photography awards three fellowships to Houston area artists who incorporate photographic media into their work. The recipients are selected via portfolio competition, and are awarded the money to support work in progress.

Judges for this year's competition were: Roy Flukinger (curator, Gernsheim Collection), Caroline Huber (Diverse Works), and Geoff Winningham (Rice University).

1987 BENEFIT PRINT AUCTION AND SALE

The 1987 Benefit Print Auction and Sale will be held Sunday, December 6, 7-9 pm (with cocktail preview starting at 5). Although heretodate the auction has been biennial, past years' auctions met with such wonderful support that the Center has decided to stage this benefit on an annual basis, begin-

ning this year. Works will be previewed at the Center starting November 30 through December 5. A Preview Party and Silent Auction will be given at the Center on December 3. The \$25 ticket price includes a buffet dinner.

As in past years, the Print Auction will be held at the Paradise Bar & Grill at 401 McGowen. Any prints remaining unsold after the auction will be available for purchase through December 20 at the Center, in addition to some work not included in the auction.

Donations of prints will be greatly appreciated. Deadline is November 6. Please contact the Center at 529-4755.

MEYEROWITZ TO LECTURE

Joel Meyerowitz will discuss his work at the opening of his show at The Houston Center for Photography on Friday, December 11, at 7:00 p.m. Known for his vivid tableaux of the far-fetched heartland, Meyerowitz has been shooting his wry touching pictures for over two decades. Oftentimes shot in garish, even surreal colors, Meyerowitz' subjects range from gypsy dancers, to hyperformal wedding portraits, to men buying hotdogs from vendors. His lecture is free to the public, funded by the Lynn McLanahan Herbert Lecture Fund Endowment.

SPAGNA ON CAPTURED SLEEP

On Thursday, November 12 at 7:30pm, the Houston Center for Photography is sponsoring a lecture by award-winning photographer Ted Spagna. Spagna has been experimenting with sleep photography—which he considers the ultimate portrait—since 1975. His beautiful sequential photographs have been found to have great scientific relevance in our understanding of the sleep process. He collaborated on the landmark exhibition, *Dreamstage*, a multi-media presentation, which has toured internationally. The talk is cosponsored by the Texas Photographic Society, and admission is \$2 for HCP members, \$3 for nonmembers.



George Tice, Lobster boats off Monhegan Island, Maine 1971

GEORGE TICE LECTURE

George Tice will lecture at the Rice Media Center on Thursday, Sept. 9, 7:30pm. Known for his printed portfolios of Edward Weston, Edward Steichen, and Frederick Evans, Tice has exhibited widely and published numerous books. He will talk about his career through the present. This lecture, sponsored by Benteler-Morgan Gallery, Rice Media Center, and Houston Center for Photography, is free to the public.



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SW PW

SOUTHWEST PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKSHOPS

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CALENDAR

FALL 1987

EXHIBITIONS

SEPTEMBER

Benteler-Morgan Galleries, Sept 10 through Oct 30 "George Tice: Photographs." 4200 Montrose Suite 350, Mon-Fri 9-5, and by appointment. 522-8228.

Buffalo Grille, Sept 26 through Oct 17 "C.A. Black, Jr.: Photographs." 3116 Bissonnet, 7:30-2pm, opening recep. is Sept 26, 7-9pm. **Butera's on Alabama, through Sept. 13** "Children: A Mother's and Daughter's Perspective." photographs by Maud and Sara Lipscomb; also, **Sept 14 through Nov 8** "Elizabeth Grant: Photographs." 2946 S. Shepherd, Mon-Fri 7-10, Sat-Sun 8-10.

Butera's on Montrose, through Oct. 2 "David Whitson: Photographs." 4261 Montrose, Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat-Sun 8-10. **DiverseWorks, Sept 12 through Oct 17** "Flesh on Flesh," by Ardith and Armin, a mixed media installation; also, "Blood Ties and Other Knotty Issues," a group show including photography and other media. 214 Travis, Tue-Fri 10-5, Sat 12-4, 223-8346.

Heights Gallery, through Oct 25 "Doubleheader! Baseball and American Music." photographs by Tracy Hart. 1613 Oxford, Tue-Fri 1-6, Sun-Mon by appt. 868-9606.

Houston Center for Photography, Sept 4 through Oct 11 "The Art of Commercial Photography." 1441 W. Alabama, Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat-Sun 12-5, 529-4755.

Lawndale, Sept 4 through Oct 11 "The SMALL Show," an exhibition examining miniature scale works. 5600 Hillman, Tue-Sat 12-6, 921-4155.

OCTOBER
Benteler-Morgan Galleries, through Oct 30 "George Tice: Photographs." 4200 Montrose Suite 350, Mon-Fri 9-5, and by appointment. 522-8228.

Buffalo Grille, through Oct 17 "C.A. Black, Jr.: Photographs." 3116 Bissonnet, 7:30-2pm, opening recep. is Sept 26, 7-9pm. **Butera's on Alabama, through Nov 8** "Elizabeth Grant: Photographs." 2946 S. Shepherd, Mon-Fri 7-10, Sat-Sun 8-10.

Butera's on Montrose, through Oct. 2 "David Whitson: Photographs." also, **Oct 5 through Dec 4** "Sheila Cunningham: Photographs." 4261 Montrose, Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat-Sun 8-10.

DiverseWorks, through Oct 17 "Flesh on Flesh," by Ardith and Armin, a mixed media installation; also "Blood Ties and Other Knotty Issues," a group show including photography and other media. 214 Travis, Tue-Fri 10-5, Sat 12-4, 223-8346.

Harris Gallery, Oct 24 through Nov 14 "Peter Brown: Photographs." 1100 Bissonnet, Tue-Fri 10-6, Sat 11-5, 522-9116.

Heights Gallery, through Oct 25 "Doubleheader! Baseball and American Music." photographs by Tracy Hart. 1613 Oxford, Tue-Fri 1-6, Sun-Mon by appt. 868-9606.

Houston Center for Photography, Sept 4 through Oct 11 "The Art of Commercial Photography." also, **Oct 16 through Nov 22** "Houston Artists Who Use Photography." 1441 W. Alabama, Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat-Sun 12-5, 529-4755.

Lawndale Annex, Sept 4 through Oct 11 "The SMALL Show," an exhibition examining miniature scale works; also, **Oct 22 through Nov 29** "Houston Area Abstraction: An Update." 5600 Hillman, Tue-Sat 12-6, 921-4155.

Tranco Tower, Oct 22 through Nov. 29 "Lawndale At Tranco Tower." Lawndale Advisory Board artists will curate exhibition. 2800 Post Oak Blvd. Mon-Fri 8-6, Sat 8-1, 439-4401.

NOVEMBER
Benteler-Morgan Galleries, Nov 9 through Dec 31 Group Exhibition, to be announced. 4200 Montrose, Suite 350, Mon-Fri 9-5 and by appointment. 522-8228.

Butera's on Alabama, through Nov 8 "Elizabeth Grant: Photographs." 2946 S. Shepherd, Mon-Fri 7-10, Sat-Sun 8-10.

Butera's on Montrose, Oct 5 through Dec 4 "Sheila Cunningham: Photographs." 4621 Montrose, Mon-Fri 7-10, Sat-Sun 8-10.

Butler Gallery, Nov 5 through Dec 31 "DeWitt Godfrey Installation," and "Timothy Greenfield Sanders: Photographs." 2318 Portsmouth. 522-4430.

Houston Center for Photography, through Nov 22 "Houston Artists Who Use Photography." also, **Nov 30 through Dec 5** "HCP Annual Benefit Auction Exhibition." (preview party is Dec 3, 7-9pm at HCP; auction is Dec 6, 5-9pm at the Paradise Bar and Grill, 401 McGowen). 1441 W. Alabama, Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat-Sun 12-5, 529-4755.

Lawndale Annex, Oct 22 through Nov 29 "Houston Area Abstractions: An Update." 5600 Hillman, Tues-Sat 12-6, 921-4155 **Tranco Tower, Oct. 22 through Nov 29** "Lawndale at Tranco Tower." Lawndale Advisory Board Artists will curate exhibition. 2800 Post Oak Blvd., Mon-Fri 8-6, Sat 8-1, 439-4401.

EXHIBITIONS ELSEWHERE IN TEXAS

SEPTEMBER

Abilene: West Texas Photographic Gallery, through Sept 30 "Ron Evans: Photographs." 1140 1/2 N. 2nd St., Sat-Sun 1-4, (915)677-8389.

Austin: Laguna Gloria Art Museum, Sept 4 through Nov 1 "New Works by Austin Artists" (all media, includes photography). 3809 W. 35th St. Tue-Sat 10-5, Thur 10-9, Sun 1-5, (512)458-8191.

Dallas: Afterimage, through Sept 5, "Walter W. Nelson." also, **Sept 8 through Oct 17** "John Loengard." 2800 Routh Street, The Quad #250, Mon-Sat 10-5:30, (214)871-9140.

Dallas: Allen Street Gallery, Sept 12 through Oct 18 "George Krause: Photographs." also "Associates Exhibition: Christopher Runk and Timothy Tracz." 4101 Commerce St., Wed-Fri 12-5, Sat-Sun 1-5, (214)821-8260.

Dallas: 500X Gallery Sept 5 through Sept 26 Installations and performance. "How to Get Into the Modern: A Last Resort." Jill Bedgood; Cristi Branum, wall installations; and George Lacy, mixed media; 500 Exposition Ave. Thur 5-9, Fri-Sun 1-5, (214)828-1111.

Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, through Sept. 6 "Certain Places: The Photographs of William Clift." also, **Sept 4 through Oct 18** "Architectural Photographs from the Permanent Collection." 3501 Camp Bowie Blvd, Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5:30, (817)738-1933.

OCTOBER

Abilene: West Texas Photographic Gallery, through Oct 31 "Robert Gray: Photographs." 1140 1/2 N. 2nd St., Sat-Sun 1-4, (915)677-8389.

Austin: Laguna Gloria Art Museum, through Nov 1 "New Works by Austin Artists." (all media, includes photography) 3809 W. 35th St. Tue-Sat 10-5, Thur 10-9, Sun 1-5, (512)458-8191.

Dallas: Afterimage, Sep 8 through Oct 17 "John Loengard." 2800 Routh Street, The Quad #250, Mon-Sat 10-5:30, (214)871-9140.

Dallas: Allen Street Gallery, through Oct 18 "George Krause: Photographs." also, "Associates Exhibition: Christopher Runk and Timothy Tracz." in addition, **Oct 23 through Nov 29** "Woman's World: Four Artists." (Joyce Niemans, Cindy Neuschwander, Michelle Demanche, Barbara DeGenevieve), 4101 Commerce St., Wed-Fri 12-5, Sat-Sun 1-5, (214)821-8260.

Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, through Oct 18 "Architectural Photographs from the Permanent Collection." also, **Oct 31 through Jan 3** "Elliot Porter Retrospective." 3501 Camp Bowie Blvd, Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5:30, (817)738-1933.

NOVEMBER

Abilene: West Texas Photographic Gallery, through Nov 30 "George Bristol: Pictures and Poems." 1140 1/2 2nd St., Sat-Sun 1-4, (915)677-8389.

Dallas: Allen Street Gallery, through Nov 29 "Woman's World: Four Artists." (Joyce Niemans, Cindy Neuschwander, Michelle Demanche, Barbara DeGenevieve), 4101 Commerce St., Wed-Fri 12-5, Sat-Sun 1-5, (214)821-8260.

Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, through Oct 18 "Architectural Photographs from the Permanent Collection." also, **through Jan 3** "Elliot Porter Retrospective." 3501 Camp

WORKSHOPS

Holography The Anthony Foundation, 3202 Argonne, is offering a cyclical series of holography classes at very reasonable prices. For more information, contact Frank Davis. 526-0006.

Risky Living in the Darkroom Thur Sept 17, 7-9pm at HCP, 1441 W. Alabama. Taught by Sharon Stewart. A concise guide to making your darkroom a safe place to work; mixing, storing, and disposing of toxic chemicals; remedies for neutralizing potentially hazardous situations. \$10 HCP members; \$15 nonmembers. Call 529-4755

Seminar in Portrait Lighting Fridays, Oct 2 and 9, 6:30-9pm at the Art Institute of Houston, 3600 Yoa-kum. Taught by Carey Sutlive. A hands-on practicum exploring creative use of the three-light setup in shooting distinctive portraiture. Sponsored by HCP. \$35 HCP members, \$40 nonmembers. Call 529-4755.

Workshop with George Krause Thursdays, Oct 1, 15, 29, 7-9pm at HCP, 1441 W. Alabama. A development-oriented series of classes involving a portfolio review and project initiation, observation of the unfolding project (contact sheets and sketch prints), and a final critique. \$40 HCP members, \$50 nonmembers. Call 529-4755.

Cyanotype Saturday Nov 14, 10-2pm at HCP, 1441 W. Alabama. Taught by Liz Ward. A demonstration of the cyanotype process from start to finish, making photographic transparencies for use with this process, and discussion of other image-making techniques that work well with this process. \$20 HCP members, \$25 nonmembers. Call 529-4755.

Taking Better Photographs Sat Nov 21, 10-1pm at HCP, 1441 W. Alabama. Taught by Steve Peterson. A troubleshooting session designed for the amateur photographer who wants to take technically better pictures, the class will analyze problems with shooting/printing both color and black and white film. \$10 HCP members, \$15 nonmembers. Call 529-4755.

Color Workshop/Critique with Joel Meyerowitz Sat Dec 12, 10am-2pm at HCP, 1441 W. Alabama. Given in conjunction with his exhibition at HCP. \$40 HCP members, \$50 nonmembers. Call 529-4755. Early registration advised.

WORKSHOPS ELSEWHERE IN TEXAS

Dallas: Allen Street Gallery Platinium Palladium Workshop Sept 19; taught by Chip Panky. 4101 Commerce St. (214)526-5083.

LECTURES/EVENTS

George Tice Lecture on Thur, Sept 9, 7:30pm at the Rice University Media Center. Free Admission. Sponsored by HCP, Benteler-Morgan Galleries, and Rice Media Center.

Cynthia Freeland Lecture on Fri, Sept 10, 4:10pm. "Objections to Objectification: Radical Feminism and Visual Images." Sponsored by Rice Univ. Philosophy Dept. Call 527-4994 for location.

Symposium: "Artistic Freedom in the Commercial Arena," Tue, Sept 22, 7:30pm, at HCP, 1441 W. Alabama. With Houston commercial photographers Dave Crossley and Ron Scott. Houston designers Jerry Herring and Lowell Williams as panelists, and Paul Hester as moderator. \$2 HCP members, \$3 nonmembers.

Lawndale Presents: Dan Workman Sept 26, 7:30pm. First of four interdisciplinary performances at Lawndale. 5600 Hillman. 921-4155.

Focus on Video Oct 1, 7:30pm at Lawndale. 5600 Hillman. 921-4155.

Eleanor Antin Lecture on performance projects. Oct 11, 7:30pm at Lawndale. 5600 Hillman. 921-4155.

Ted Spagna Lecture. Thur, Nov 12, 7:30pm at HCP, 1441 W. Alabama. Presentation and discussion of his sequential photographs of humans and other animals in the state of sleepdreams.

LECTURES/EVENTS ELSEWHERE IN TEXAS

Dallas: Allen Street Gallery George Krause Sept 3, 2pm, 4101 Commerce St. (214)821-8260. **Dallas: Allen Street Gallery, Benefit Auction** (Silent Auction Sept 26 1-5pm. Live Auction Sept 27, 1-5pm), at the Crescent Collections Gallery, 2200 Cedar Springs. (214)821-8260.

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 Spallinger 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 7:30pm 2nd and 4th Tues. monthly at the Bering Church, Mulberry at Harold; programs and critiques. John Moyer 933-4492; Jim Rivers 464-9525.

Photographic Collectors of Houston, meets upstairs at the Color Place (4102 San Felipe) 4th Wed. monthly at 7pm. Steve Guglielmi 524-5361.

1960 Photographic Society, meets 7:30 pm 1st and 3rd Tues. monthly at Doss Park, 2500 Frick Rd. (1 blk. off Veteran's Blvd.) For more info, contact Royse Shaddix, Jr., at 237-3787.

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.

CAFE ANNIE

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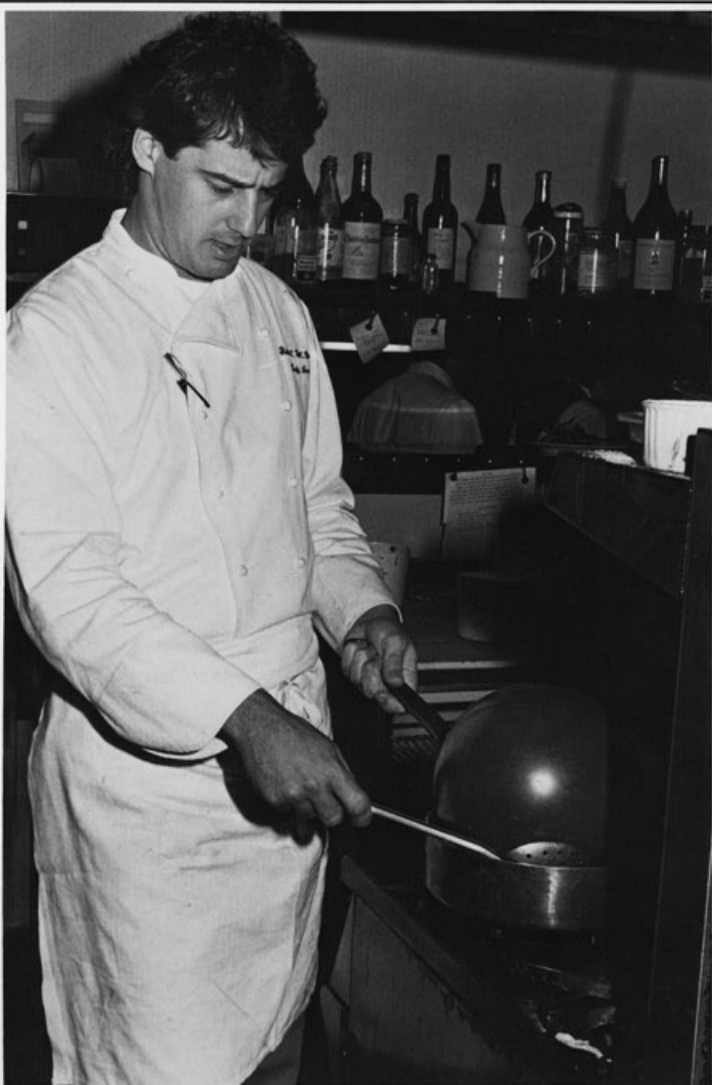
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