

"Exit-Entrance," 1986, by Charles Schorre

READING BLUE VELVET/THE SCHLOCK OF THE NEW: POSTMODERNISM/CHARLES SCHORRE INTERVIEW/INSTALLATIONS BY MICHAEL BERMAN, PATRICK CLANCY, BETH SECOR & ELIZABETH WARD, GUILLERMO PULIDO, MARY MARGARET HANSEN, BEN DESOTO



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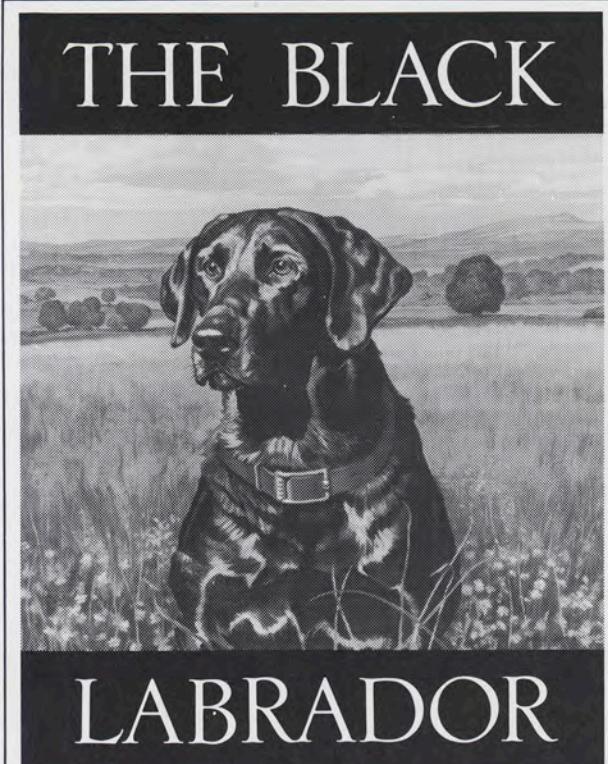
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Astronaut Bruce McCandless II pictured leaning out into space as his feet are anchored in the mobile foot restraint.

"The Right Stuff"

The Houston Center for Photography salutes the relationship between the city of Houston and the National Aeronautic and Space Administration—Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center (NASA-JSC) by presenting a major photographic exhibition IN SPACE: A Photographic Journey. Scheduled to open May 6, 1987 in Houston at Transco Tower, the show will be a first in several areas:

1) the first comprehensive space show in Houston. The show will include over 100 color and black and white photographs; cameras used in space; models relating to space and educational panels.

2) the first show of its kind to trace the evolution of space photography. Its focus is a tour of the universe that would not have been possible without photography. This photographic journey begins with photographs of earth taken from space, proceeds to the moon, then to the planets, and finally, leaves the solar system for deep space. Advances in cameras, film, and computer techniques will be evident. The Houston Center for Photography (HCP) is planning a *Photography and Technology* exhibition in its own gallery at 1441 W. Alabama which will run concurrently with the exhibition at Transco.

3) the first exhibition produced and curated by an arts organization with the cooperation of NASA-JSC, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the Lunar and Planetary Institute, the NASA-Goddard Space Flight Center, EOSTAT for LANDSAT photographs, and various observatories. The show will be unique in that it will include photographs from manned and unmanned spacecraft as well as telescopic photographs; that many of the photographs will be large (40" by 40"); that some of the photographs have not been widely seen by the public; that most of the photographs will be printed by NASA-JSC; and that, after the exhibition, NASA-JSC will use the show as a travelling exhibition.

IN SPACE: A Photographic Journey will be an exciting event for Houston and is scheduled from May 6, 1987 to June 17, 1987 at Transco Tower located in the Post Oak-Galleria Area of Houston. A dinner benefitting the Houston Center for Photography is being planned for May 11, in the Executive dining area of Transco Tower. Senator John H. Glenn, Jr. (D-Ohio) will be honored at the dinner in commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his orbital flight in *Friendship 7*. On February 20, 1962, Senator Glenn was the first American to orbit earth.

Major underwriters for this project are Transco Energy Company and Gerald Hines Interests. Air travel is being provided by Continental Airlines.

For further information, contact HCP at (713)529-4755. Slides, transparencies and press photographs available upon request.

Astronaut Sherwood C. Spring standing on the end of the remote manipulator system.



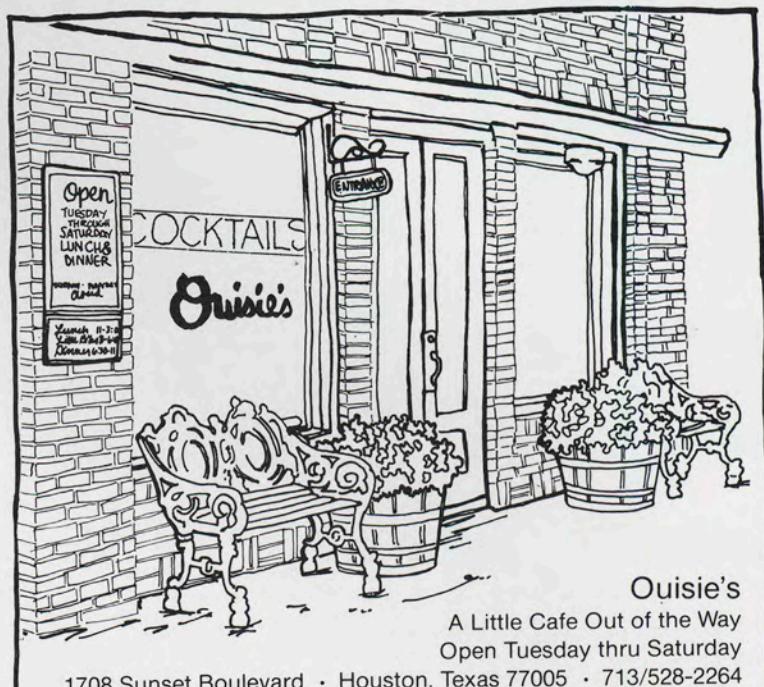
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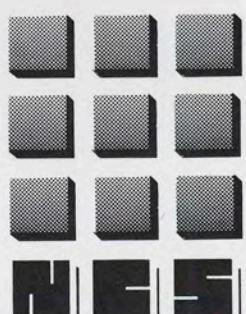


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You're Like Me: READING BLUE VELVET

By Peter Lehman

A candy colored clown they call the sand-man/Tiptoes to my room ev'ry night/Just to sprinkle stardust and to whisper, "Go to sleep, ev'ry thing is alright." In Dreams, by Roy Orbison

Everything is not all right, not for David Lynch in *Blue Velvet*. The film begins with a series of images of small town America which suggest a veneer of security and safety: the



proverbial white picket fence of the opening shot, the image of a fire truck passing down the street as a fireman grins and waves, and a school crossing guard stopping traffic to allow children to safely cross the street. Father is even out watering the lawn. Indeed, everything seems all right. Not surprisingly then, critics have seized on *Blue Velvet* as a film which tears away this clichéd view of small town America to reveal drugs and unspeakable sexual perversion lying beneath the placid surface. While this might be true as far as it goes, it doesn't go very far and it obscures much of what is most valuable about the film. I grew up in a small Mid-western town of 30,000 people. The point of *Blue Velvet* is not that, unbeknownst to me, somewhere hidden away among the 30,000 people, was a dangerous, drug crazed sexual looney.

Predictably, much of the reaction to *Blue Velvet* centers on whether it is a critique of its disturbing graphic sexual scenes or merely an exploitation of them. One critic's review of the film stressed that he had changed his opinion based upon a second viewing wherein he discovered that the film "is also fiercely moral, and that explains its stunning force."¹ Several students have told me that their initial reaction to the film was disturbingly ambiguous since it was not clear to them why Lynch showed bizarre sadomasochistic scenes in such detail. They could not, in other words, detect the desired critique of such behaviour, and felt reluctant to praise a film that, by acknowledging their enjoyment, implicated them in such activities. Looking in such a way for a morality or a critique to justify *Blue Velvet* seems to me simultaneously symptomatic of the film's disturbing complexity and of means inadequate to explaining it.

Blue Velvet destroys simple differences between its apparently "normal" characters and its clearly "perverse" ones. This is most obvious when Frank (Dennis Hopper), a drug crazed, sadistic, fetishist tells Jeffrey (Kyle MacLachlan), an innocent, naive college student, "You're like me." As Jeffrey begins to show strong interest in the mystery he stumbles upon, Sandy (Laura Dern), his high school accomplice, says to

him, "I don't know if you're a detective or a pervert," to which he replies with sadistic delight, "That's for me to know and you to find out." After getting involved sexually with Dorothy (Isabella Rossellini), he hits her during love-making, though his initial response to her request is one of horror ("I want to save you, not hurt you"). The two, of course, are not really opposites since the male desire to save women gives them power over the women they

in her closet, she forces him at knife point to undress while she gives the order, "Don't look at me." Moments later when Jeffrey is back hiding in the closet watching Frank and Dorothy, Frank repeatedly yells, "Don't fuckin' look at me."

Towards the end of the film, Jeffrey and Sandy are driving when a car charges up behind them and attempts to run them off the road. Looking at the dangerously out of control vehicle, Jeffrey yells, "It's Frank." His assertion certainly makes sense since Frank is the only person Jeffrey knows who is capable of such behaviour. But moments later, Sandy looks over at the car and screams, "It's Mike," her boyfriend. Even Jeffrey's mother gets implicated in all of this as she is constantly seen sitting at home watching crime and mystery movies on television. It does not come as a surprise within this context that the police department itself is actually part of the crime. Frank's partner turns out to be Detective Williams' partner. He is literally partners with both the man who should be solving the crime and the man who commits the crime. Indeed, near the beginning of the film, Jeffrey goes to Detective Williams after finding a human ear in a deserted field. They go to the coroner who examines the ear and remarks that it was cut off with scissors. Lynch cuts to a shot of a pair of scissors cutting a yellow police ribbon which warns "Police Line." Are they the same scissors? This complex mixing of the seemingly normal with the seemingly perverse achieves its ultimate image in Frank's "well-dressed man disguise." If everyone else in the film seems a bit like Frank, Frank can also seem a bit like them.

also seem a bit like them. So much for the characters in the film being like Frank. What about us, the spectators, those of us who want to find critiques and morality to explain what we are doing sitting in the dark watching all these weird goings on? In the scene when Jeffrey first hides in Dorothy's closet, we see shots of him looking and point-of-view shots of her undressing. When she is in her underwear, the camera is out in the room with her as she crawls on the floor. Then, when she goes into the bathroom, the camera stays in a long shot view from the living room. We see her as she takes off her bra and her underpants and stands nude with her



the mystery in Dorothy Valen's apartment and his sexuality when he tells Sandy: "I'm seeing something that was always hidden . . . I'm in the middle of a mystery . . . You're a mystery and I like you very much." The answer to Sandy's question is, of course, that he is both a detective and a pervert.

But Frank and Jeffrey are not the only characters implicated in the perversity. Indeed, the film becomes a strange echoing of characters resembling other characters. Dorothy seems to be the terrified victim of Frank's sadistic behaviour but later reveals to Jeffrey that she masochistically loves it. This appalls him, but soon he willingly becomes the sadistic partner to her masochistic desires. Dorothy even talks like Frank. When she finds Jeffrey hiding

in her closet, she forces him at knife point to undress while she gives the order, "Don't look at me." Moments later when Jeffrey is back hiding in the closet watching Frank and Dorothy, Frank repeatedly yells, "Don't fuckin' look at me."

Towards the end of the film, Jeffrey and Sandy are driving when a car charges up behind them and attempts to run them off the road. Looking at the dangerously out of control vehicle, Jeffrey yells, "It's Frank." His assertion certainly makes sense since Frank is the only person Jeffrey knows who is capable of such behaviour. But moments later, Sandy looks over at the car and screams, "It's Mike," her boyfriend. Even Jeffrey's mother gets implicated in all of this as she is constantly seen sitting at home watching crime and mystery movies on television. It does not come as a surprise within this context that the police department itself is actually part of the crime. Frank's partner turns out to be Detective Williams' partner. He is literally partners with us into the intense scenes and images which lurk at its center. (In this regard, the film has its own well-dressed man disguise.) And like the filmmaker, we are likely to be driven by our desire to see those things, however repugnant we may find them on one level. There is, after all, a disturbing kind of fascination which involves a simultaneous need to look away from something and a desire to look at it. Lynch has supplied Jeffrey, our Hardy boy substitute, as our excuse for why we are in seriously, because like Jeffrey, whose amateur detecting is linked to an erotic desire to see the hidden and the forbidden, our position in the movie theater is not entirely innocent. And like Jeffrey, we might feel horror at what Frank does, since such a response separates us entirely from his actions, but also like Jeffrey, we are not totally free from charges of being like Frank. Not unless you believe that the desire to watch erotically charged movie scenes with Isabella Rossellini has nothing to do with fetishism.

What then is the nature of these dark sexual scenes which lie at the center of *Blue Velvet*? They are a virtual illustration of key moments in psychoanalytic accounts of sexual development. First and foremost, of course, is fetishism. Frank may be the ultimate fetishist in the history of movies. He kidnaps a father and a son in order to force the mother to cooperate with his fantasies, which involve listening to her sing "Blue Velvet" in a nightclub and then having sex with him in her apartment while she wears a blue velvet robe. As if all this weren't extreme enough, he cuts off a piece of her robe and thus literally possesses the fetish object.

Jeffrey witnesses this bizarre spectacle from his hiding place in the closet, a virtual recreation of the Freudian primal scene. The child discovers a fearful image of violent intercourse, a point underscored by a primal animalistic roar on the soundtrack as the scene ends. Prior to this primal scene, he has similarly witnessed a recreation of the Freudian scenario of the circumstances surrounding the origins of fetishism. The boy peeking through the key-hole sees the mother undress and discovers the "truth" of the woman's body. She has no penis. Up to this time in his life, the boy has believed that all people must have a penis. But since you can live without one, anxiety is aroused in the boy that he may lose his. This anxiety causes the boy to avert his eyes from the disturbing absence and direct them elsewhere on the woman's body, her face or breasts, for example. This overvaluation of a part of the woman's body (e.g., men can be heard saying things like, "I'm a leg man") relieves the anxiety caused by the sight of the "absent" genital organ. But there is another avenue open to the boy; he may seize on a piece of clothing which covered the woman's body prior to the disturbing revelation (e.g., panties). The clothing fetish eroticizes the body for the man by covering up the "truth." There is, of course, an entire fetish industry of this sort in our culture.

Jeffrey's confrontation with Dorothy after she finds him hiding in the closet is explicit; he watches her undress, she discovers him, and waving a knife at him, tells him to undress. The image of the woman with the knife who looks at the naked man is probably the image *par excellence* of castration anxiety. But notice that even from this brief account, things don't quite make sense. It is Frank after all and not Jeffrey who is the fetishist. Furthermore, a careful consideration of Frank's fetishist behaviour reveals that it cannot be adequately explained by the above outlined Freudian account. Frank's sexual behaviour is inextricably tied to a

desire to be a little boy making love with his mother. Before he appears in the film, Jeffrey overhears Dorothy talking to Frank on the phone. "Mommy loves you," she tells him. Later, while having sex with her, he repeats "Mommy, Mommy" several times and even says, "Baby wants to fuck."

Although the Freudian account of fetishism is the most widely known, it has been strongly contested by a school of thought that places the origins of fetishism in the oral, pre-genital, pre-oedipal phase of childhood development.³ In this view, the mother nursing the baby is a powerful figure. The child develops the fetish to ease the crisis of separation from the desired image of the powerful mother, a direct contradiction with the Freudian emphasis on the fetish displacing the undesired, feared image of the castrated/castrating woman. Frank's desire to be the baby who returns to and makes love to the mother and then cuts off a piece of the robe she is wearing could certainly be interpreted as fitting the pre-genital model. If this is the case, Dorothy is in one scene, the Freudian woman who raises the threat of castration for the boy hiding in the closet and is, in the next scene, the powerful pre-genital oral mother to whom the boy wants to return.

All of the above is not to suggest that *Blue Velvet* is confused, but rather that it is intriguingly complex. It does not offer any single, logical system of understanding its dark imagery; rather, it taps into fascinating structures of sexual development and behaviour that can be richly explored from differing and even conflicting perspectives, and perhaps remain unexplained by any or all of them. The "Hardy Boys go to Hell" part of the narrative is clearly a perverted Oedipal drama bordering on the comedy. Jeffrey is called home because his father suffers a strange attack which totally incapacitates him. The father is not only weak, but voiceless. When Jeffrey goes to visit him in the hospital, the man is hooked up to elaborate life-support technology. He desperately tries to say a word to his son. Walking home from the hospital, Jeffrey discovers the severed ear which leads him to the police and Detective Williams. Detective Williams combines in one figure the Law and the Father. He simultaneously attempts to control and regulate Jeffrey's involvement with both his daughter Sandy and the case. He fails at both. Jeffrey deceives him as to the extent of Sandy's activities and when Jeffrey solves the case, the ineffectual Detective arrives too late to help. In one of the great comic moments of the film, he stands dramatically with his gun drawn and says, "It's all over, Jeffrey." All the father and law figures who are treated so seriously within the Hardy Boys-type film and novel tradition are here ineffectual.

The ending of the movie is a send-up of the restoration of the normal patriarchal familial order. Everything is stupidly in place. The father, miraculously recovered, is in the back yard with Detective Williams. Jeffrey is with Sandy whom he has won in the process of completing

his traditional Oedipal trajectory and the women are in the house. All the imagery has a silly, unbelievable comic veneer to it. As Jeffrey and Sandy look at the robin in the window, they speak of its relationship to the robins of her dreams. Earlier, she has told Jeffrey about a dream she has wherein the world is shrouded in darkness because there are no robins. Robins, she says, represent love and bring light. But, as they stand looking at the robin, Lynch shows a ludicrous close-up of the robin eating a bug. Jeffrey's aunt, looking on with disgust, says, "I don't see how they could ever do that. I could never eat a bug." Aside from the obvious send-

up of Sandy's hokey symbolism of love and light, the moment reemphasizes how the characters in the film wish to separate themselves from what they consider the bizarre and the repulsive. If the robin could talk, it might reply to the aunt, "You're like me."

This scene also points to the importance of dream imagery in the film and I want to conclude by briefly linking that to the music. *Blue Velvet* is a movie of startling brilliance in its use of sound and music. Bobby Vinton's "Blue Velvet" is an undistinguished song which typifies early 60s pop ballads. And David Lynch is not the first to link it up with sexual perversion: Kenneth Anger did it years earlier in his underground classic *Scorpio Rising*. Still, the way that Lynch works it into the plot of the film is a significant departure from the usual way in which pop music is simply heard over scenes in Hollywood films. The most extraordinary use of this technique occurs during a sequence structured around Roy Orbison's "In Dreams."

Frank has forced Jeffrey and Dorothy to accompany him and his friends on a wild joy ride. First, they stop at Ben's place, a whorehouse called "This is it." Ben (Dean Stockwell) appears to be a sort of sadistic gay pimp whose women are all hugely overweight, recalling Frank's desire for the mother (they are reminiscent of the fat woman who erotically dances for the boys on the beach in Fellini's 8 1/2). Ben punches Jeffrey in the stomach and then asks Frank to follow him into another room. He gives Frank drugs and immediately Frank starts talking about "a candy colored clown they call the sandman." After repeating it several times, he walks over to a cassette player, drops in a tape, and we hear Roy Orbison's "In Dreams" which begins with the same phrase. Everything comes to a standstill; this is clearly a ritual of near-religious intensity for Frank. Ben picks up a trouble light, turns it on, and with the light shining in his face, lip-synchs the Orbison song.

After we hear most of the song, Frank forces everyone back in the car (Dorothy has been in a back-room where her husband and son are kept hostage) and they ride into the countryside where they stop the car. Frank takes drugs and abuses Dorothy. Jeffrey intervenes by punching Frank. Frank orders them out of the car, once again says, "a candy colored clown they call the sandman", and again the tape is played. Frank puts lipstick thickly over his mouth and kisses Jeffrey repeatedly. Then he goes into a rapture as he recites the lyrics of the Orbison song in counterpoint to Orbison's singing. Finally, he brutally punches Jeffrey as his friends hold him. All of this is highlighted by the spectacle of one of the fat women from Ben's who dances next to the cassette player on top of the car.

These two scenes are unusually intense, even by the standards of this film, and they defy easy comprehension. Who is Ben and what is his relationship to Frank? Exactly what kind of an establishment does Ben run? Why does Ben lip-synch "In Dreams" and why does he shine a light in his face while he does it? Does Frank's act of putting lipstick on his mouth and kissing Jeffrey link him to homosexuality and to Ben? If so, what is the connection between his blue-velvet fetish and his homosexuality? Why does the fat woman dance as if nothing were happening? And finally, what is the connection between these unanswered questions and Roy Orbison's "In Dreams"? A partial answer to the latter question may help explain the difficulty in answering the others. At this point, the film itself seems closer to dream logic than it does to conscious rationality: the imagery is powerful, concentrated, disturbing, and nearly impenetrable. As is the case with so

many dreams, we feel it means something, but we are left wondering what.

Unlike Bobby Vinton's "Blue Velvet", Roy Orbison's "In Dreams" is an extraordinary accomplishment. Rock legend has long linked the candyman of Orbison's hit "Candyman" with drugs. No doubt, one can read the candy colored clown of "In Dreams" the same way, which is what Frank seems to do. You can imagine what the stardust is. Although Lynch probably had this connection in mind, it would be a mistake to limit either the song or its use in the film to drugs. Everything is not all right in the song, no matter how you read it. Whether it is about a drug-induced sense of well being or not, the point remains that the song begins by welcoming the "magic night" and the dreams which come with it end in anguish over their falsity:

It's too bad that all these things

Can only happen in my dreams

Frank's obsession with the song fits more than his drug addiction. The loneliness and sadness that Orbison sings about in his music goes well beyond teenage heartbreak; he evokes an almost perverse image of a man sitting alone in the dark, looking out into a dark world, full of a sorrow that he knows deeply and faces directly. This is loneliness pushed to such an extreme that it almost isolates one from the rest of humanity. It is no coincidence that Orbison's rock legend is most associated with personal tragedy, dressing in black, wearing dark glasses, and being reclusive. Nor is it coincidence that Frank, who wears a black-leather jacket and revels in saying, "Now it's dark", has become maniacally obsessed with "In Dreams." The song characterizes his very being and the world he lives in.

The "In Dreams" sequence ends with a cut to a flickering flame, an image used several times in the film after its introduction in Dorothy's apartment. A loud noise is heard over it, almost as if the flickering had a sound that was magnified a million times. Then we hear a fading, eerie electronically distorted echo of Orbison singing the line, "Can only happen in my dreams." The moment epitomizes much of what this film is about. After witnessing events so bizarre that we hardly know what to make of them, we are left to wonder what the relationship is between dreams and reality in the entire film. Can these puzzling events we have just witnessed only happen in dreams? If so, whose dreams?

Dreams are spoken about several times in the film and, at least once,

images that we see are retroactively identified as being part of a dream. The latter occurs after a series of brief images which we have already seen are repeated; they culminate with the shot of Frank "roaring" after his sexual attack on Dorothy. Suddenly, we cut to Jeffrey waking up from a dream. Lynch's *Eraserhead* and *The Elephant Man* also involved dream imagery. Although one dream is clearly marked in *Eraserhead*, much of the film is so bizarre that any clear line between dream and reality is impossible to establish. In *The Elephant Man*, at the film's climax, we enter into the "Elephant Man's" dreams. Both of those films share another important feature with *Blue Velvet*—all three films erode comfortable distinctions between such categories as beautiful/ugly, normal/perverse, and waking world/dream world. In David Lynch's dreams our smug ways of judging and responding to these categories are overturned. To simply dismiss Frank as a sexual pervert is like dismissing the Elephant Man as a physical freak or any number of characters in *Eraserhead* as being ugly. Lynch questions the very standards by which we make these judgements and "morality" and "critiques" comfortably maintain the unquestioned lines between the categories. *Blue Velvet* is not just David Lynch's dream and it's not just the deeply curious Jeffrey who is hiding in the closet, wanting to see and know it all. It is also you. And me.

Footnotes

1 Bob Campbell, "Review of Blue Velvet," *The Arizona Daily Star*, Oct. 10, 1986, p. 1D

2 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn 1975), pp. 6-18.

3 For a discussion of the powerful, pre-genital oral mother and her relationship to fetishism, see Gaylyn Studlar, "Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of the Cinema," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, Fall 1984, pp. 267-282.

Peter Lehman is an Associate Professor in the Department of Drama at the University of Arizona. His current work on the male body includes analyses of the films, *American Gigolo* and *In the Realm of the Senses*.



up of Sandy's hokey symbolism of love and light, the moment reemphasizes how the characters in the film wish to separate themselves from what they consider the bizarre and the repulsive. If the robin could talk, it might reply to the aunt, "You're like me."

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Frank has forced Jeffrey and Dorothy to accompany him and his friends on a wild joy ride. First, they stop at Ben's place, a whorehouse called "This is it." Ben (Dean Stockwell) appears to be a sort of sadistic gay pimp whose women are all



THE SCHLOCK OF THE NEW: PHOTOGRAPHY, ART HISTORY AND POSTMODERNISM

Presented at the Fiftieth Annual Conference of the Mid-America College Art Association, Oct 29—November 1, 1986, Memphis, Tennessee.

By Mary Warner Marien

On the day that I began to draft this presentation, I received two mailings on the post-modern. The *New Yorker*¹ carried an ad from Altman's assuring me that "We're entering an era of Post-Modern Poise," an era of "luxurious classics" exemplified by "this fine polyester charmeuse" blouse.

Moreover, I could contemplate the new era over a cup of tea brewed in my "postmodern and practical," "highly polished 2-quart stainless steel tea kettle," with "the dramatically contemporary shape...and the playfully whimsical details..." To some consumers in September 1986, the postmodern meant luxury, poise, practicality, and whimsy. This meant that to an increasing number of others, post-modernism meant nothing at all. In Soho, the Mount Ida of the Post-Modern, the New Museum had just finished an exhibition titled, "Past, Present, Future," which asked the question, "Is there life after post-modernism?"³ To many observers, postmodernism seems to be consuming itself like a mushroom, dissolving in its own insipid trivializations.⁴

Have we gathered here in late October 1986 in the post-post-modern decade, or the pre-post-post-modern moment? Is 1986 the first year of the next demi-decade, the interregnum succeeding the me-and-re-decades, a time that dares not speak its name because it does not yet know it?

I would like to suggest that post-modernism has not yet expired—no matter what they're wearing on *Miami Vice* this season. What has happened, I believe, is that post-modernism, like all powerful ideas in history, has altered over time, within national frameworks, within intellectual discourses, and within scholarly disciplines. It has been taken up by philosophers, social scientists, critics, and artists, who have generated a multiplicity of divergent and conflicting meanings. AND, like all powerful ideas since the middle of the eighteenth-century, post-modernism has its dilettantes and its fads. If there had been such things in 1775, the young could have had bumper stickers that read, "I (love) Young Werther." Imagine Flaubert's T-shirt: "Madam Bovary, *c'est moi*."

Original users of the term, "post-modern," like Arnold Toynbee, would not recognize their progeny. For Toynbee the "post-Modern Age of Western History"⁵, which opened in the 1870s and 1880s, was nothing less than the next cycle of human history. It involved the overturn of the Balance of Power among Western European States⁶, as well as the disintegration of what Toynbee called "an unbroken vista of progress toward an Earthly Paradise"⁷, by which he meant the notion in Western bourgeois culture that history was at an end, that "a sane, safe, satisfactory Modern Life had miraculously come to stay as a timeless present."⁸ The decline of the middle class together with its vision of a terminal future was replaced by the rise of "an increasingly anxious post-Modern Man"⁹ an individual in Toynbee's phrase and our cliché, *in crisis*,¹⁰ an individual stuck between anger and elegy for the Modern past.

As prescient as we may find Toynbee's observations on the post-Modern Age, his notion of the post-Modern is not ours.¹¹ In the 1976 publication of *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, Daniel Bell was using a much shrunken postmodernism. Following Irving Howe in *The Decline of the New* (1970), Bell wrote about postmodernism as if it were a contradiction of artistic or literary culture. Toynbee had suggested that the "Western poetic tradition that had survived the transition from a Medieval to a Modern Age was



being battered by the... violent break that the advent of a post-Modern Age had brought with it...¹² But Toynbee's account could not stand on its own—it was knit into his view of societal stage theories. Bell, however, identified postmodernism as the deliquesce of cultural modernism, a willed and somewhat frantic "decomposition" of the self, exemplified by psychedelics¹³, and having roots in the writings of Norman O. Brown, Michel Foucault, William Burroughs, Jean Genet, "and, up to a point, Norman Mailer."¹⁴

Bell's post-modernism, a burbling up of certain romantic notions about the relationship between art and life, is related to postmodern architecture synchronously, that is, they occurred at the same time. Both literary postmodernism and postmodern architecture challenged a clean, totalized utopian orderliness. But the activities of literature and architecture are not the same. Postmodern practice in each has created substantial medium-specific differences and audience-specific differences that cannot be dismissed however tempting the postmodern generalization.

In art history, postmodernism is still new, and frequently unliterary. It is often seen as a revision of modernist art and art criticism. In the Fall/Winter 1980 issue of the *Art Journal*, Irving Sandler saw the term postmodernism as coming into frequent use at the end of the seventies.¹⁵ Sandler's view was not substantially altered in Clive Dilnot's review essay in *Art History* that appeared last June.¹⁶ Some art historians have felt the hot breath of certain literary critics as they despised the state of art history—I am thinking of Norman Bryson—but many art historians view postmodernism as a term with its roots in architectural theory. Many others see postmodernism as an urban vogue, hot with the museum and gallery crowd. In so far as art historians like to view themselves as oppositional to gallery faddishness, they—we—have come to whisper jokes about the postmodern—how many postmodernists does it take to put in a light bulb—and we are waiting for the damned stuff to go away.

Ask a young artist how she came

to be a postmodernist and you will probably find that she did not pick it up in her Art History II class. She is more likely to say that her notion of representation derives from a combination of contemporary ideas in semiotics, psychoanalysis, and feminism—most of which were ascertained not in classes, nor through the established art press, but in a study group or a support group. Historians and archeologists in the last decade have been good postmodernists, studying to reconstruct mentalities, but they seldom use the term postmodernism.

Postmodernism has been seen as radical, bourgeois, and conservative, and as radical, bourgeois, and conservative simultaneously.¹⁷ One critic warns that postmodernism is a reflection of the life experience of a highly educated post-World War II generation and that it is codified in what is for this Professional Managerial Class an expansive art, scaling from low to as high as any high art has ever been.¹⁸

Like Romanticism, with which it shares certain perspectives, postmodernism is different in the thoughts of its originators, their interpreters, across the arts, in criticism, and in the social sciences. If there was once a singular and coherent postmodernism, which I doubt, there are now postmodernisms.

The analysis of these postmodernisms will ensure the careers of our children's children, should they choose to become academics. It is far too soon to sort out all the meanings. Instead of describing the impact of the various postmodernisms on art history and photography, I want to describe two interrelated ideas that did not originate with postmodernism, but which have found it extremely fertile. Deindividualization, the deliberate downscaling of masterworks and masterworkers, is paired in postmodern thought with contextualism, the deeply felt, highly problematic notion that an artifact is encoded, however obscurely, with the imprint of the cultural conditions that produced it. Deindividualization and contextualism are ideas as old as modernism, and that's part of the point. The contradictions of modernism may have spawned the seeds

of its destruction. Historically, deindividualization and contextualism partially derive from that tendency in the arts, evident since the Renaissance, but greatly accelerated in the last century, to look beyond the subjective self to science for sources and direction, and to see the artist not as a privileged intellect coupled with a rare imagination, but as an agent, a facilitator, an *anamorphosis* of the *zeitgeist*. Today, deindividualization and contextualism have particular reverberations in photographic history and practice, and these reverberations have continued and will continue to have an impact on art history.

DEINDIVIDUALIZATION-CONTEXTUALISM

Art historians with little sympathy for postmodernism often do not realize the extent of Decontextualization in photographic history and museum practice. Several recent events in photographic history exemplify the problem. This June (June 1986) the Museum of Modern Art exhibited 40 prints by Gancel Fitz, a long forgotten and elegant practitioner of the vernacular surrealism we call advertising photography. In the 1920s and 1930s, Fitz made pictures of a prosperous and untroubled middle class. Sometimes people are shown using the products that have given them their serene dispositions, but often the product is missing. We see in Fitz' highly controlled images the association of a product with a style of life. What we don't see are the words and the layouts which surrounded and modified these images. The images have been decontextualized and hung on the wall, not to distort them, but in the name of a high-minded ecumenicism that asserts that all images, regardless of source, can be considered aesthetically, and that all makers of photographs, commercial or creative, are equal under aesthetic law. In the process, Fitz is transformed into a somebody, with a claim on the art world.

Similarly Jacob Riis has been transformed into a photographer. In her article in the May 1983 issue of *Afterimage*, Sally Stein ably demonstrated how Riis, a writer in his own mind as well as in that of the public, became a photographer after his death, as "a direct by-product of photography's recent elevation to the status of a discourse, with its own institutional history."¹⁹ Timothy O'Sullivan, a Civil War photographer and, later, a photographer for the various geological surveys of the far west, posthumously became an art photographer, as did Atget.²⁰

Christopher Phillips and Abigail Solomon-Godeau have described how calotype photography has been aestheticized.²¹ Phillips also wrote a ground-breaking history of the process at the Museum of Modern Art by which photography—art photography, but especially documentary photography and photojournalism—have come to be seen as a "great undifferentiated whole," all well within the province of a museum to exhibit and analyze.²²

Decontextualization may sometimes be political,²³ but more often the decontextualizers see themselves as progressive, willing, while others are not, to let photography be an art.²⁴ The place of photography in museums, textbooks, and journals is presented as if it were a civil rights case, one of aesthetic justice overdue. And if that makes more markets for photographic prints, and propels obscurities into the limelight, so be it. Photography is an Art, and these Artists deserve our attention and our investment.

Interestingly, Contextualization is proving not to be the opposite of Decontextualization. It doesn't simply mean putting back the words and the layouts of a Gancel Fitz photograph, or revising the impor-

tance of photography to Jacob Riis, or repressing our art-historical desire to make only formal analyses of documentary photographs. It means questioning the periodicity overlayed on photohistory from art history, challenging the idea of the masterpiece with democratized social histories of photographs-without-authors, and studying why some objects and literatures are appreciated by certain groups. In other words, constructing a history of photographic use and photographic taste.

Many of the new histories of photography are decidedly not about art, but about the social uses of photographs. David E. Nye's *Image Worlds: Corporate Identities at General Electric, 1890-1930*²⁵ described the ideological uses of photography by the corporation while despairing that photography's modern histories, based on literary and art-historical models that stress individual creativity, cannot come to grips with the sociology of photography. Peter Bacon Hales studied the use of photography in the urbanization of the United States.²⁶ Donald English exposed the *Political Uses of Photography in the Third French Republic*,²⁷ Elizabeth Anne McCauley showed the use of *carte de visite* photographs in the 1850s and 1860s in France,²⁸ and Ulrich F. Keller analyzed "The Myth of Art Photography" around 1900.²⁹ By resisting the internal and external pressures to legitimize photohistory by making it another kind of art history, the work of these photohistorians parallels that of events historians who have attempted to delineate the fabric of everyday life, and the work of certain art historians, like Thomas Crow, who have set out to show what painters have taken from public life.

A major thrust of Contextualization in photographic practice and in photographic history has been to attempt to mend the rupture between the social vanguard and the critical/artistic avant-garde that was engendered by modernism's attention to the qualities of media—to paint as paint, and by modernism's exploration of purely subjective responses. Consequently, in the last decade we have witnessed an increase in the number of artists who are also critics and theoreticians. Photography criticism, too, is looking more and more like social science.

But don't think that I'm not suggesting that the revolution is at hand. A major thrust of postmodernist photography operating through deindividualization and contextualism is essentially passive and nihilistic. It is like turn-of-the-century anarchism in a way: it hates organization, that is the organization of galleries, the organization of museums, the organization of ideas, the organization of social norms, of the avant-garde, of governments. But unlike anarchism, which thrived on the notion of a self-sufficient human personality, some postmodern art and a good deal of theory offer the notion of a media debauched and besotted humanoid who functions at a point in Western History where there is no autonomous space in which the self may develop. Everything has been thoroughly denatured and commodified. Living is going from one role to another. It's all the same, all false, yet inescapable and dreadfully appealing. Cindy Sherman's photographs show a rootless, permeable personality indifferently adopting media and mythic surfaces.

Questioning both the idea of originality and authorship, Sherrie Levine has appropriated images made by celebrated photographers like Walker Evans and by rephotographing them, attempted to make them her own. Barbara Kruger, hoping to expose the prevalence of mass mediated ideas, has created advertising images frac-

tured with slogans. Richard Prince has rephotographed advertising images to expose the theoretical idea that all representation RE-presents representations of representations.³⁰

But something has happened in the last few years that has dulled whatever oblique social criticism these artists may have made. They have been art-historicized—that is, their work has been picked up by scholars and made continuous with artwork and with critical notions of the avant-garde in the twentieth century.³¹ And they have been marketed, at least to the point where so-called alternative galleries routinely show their work, and colleges regularly call upon them for appearances. Rather than stimulating social and political awareness and change, postmodernist photography has helped to expand the art market and expand the museum to new consumers. Alternative art schools, once thought to be part of the solution, have become part of the problem. Biting the hand that commissioned him, Thomas Crow recently observed that "certain schools, such as Cal Arts, have begun to function as efficient academies for the new scene, equipping students with both expectations and realizable plans for success while still in their twenties."³² Page through the ads in *The New Yorker* or *Vogue*, and you will find the appropriated image reappropriated.

Rather than being politically empowering, postmodernism has fed the insatiable need for newness-of-appearance that mass culture exhibits. Its interchangeable time-frames make all images equally meaningless and leave the individual powerless to make judgments among them and unmotivated to dig beneath the quickly changing surfaces.

Oddly enough, the postmodern applications of deindividualization and contextualism have thrown us back upon an observation made by Peter Bunnell, the McAlpin Professor of the History of Photography at Princeton, and no postmodernist, I can assure you. In 1975, Bunnell observed that "the single greatest problem in the study of photography is the establishment of what constitutes value in the medium."³³ What he meant is that one had to determine the criteria for masterworks, but I want to inject a little postmodern irony in his remark and use these same words to establish a different meaning. Having diminished or dismissed the idea of value in photography as proceeding from individual genius—an idea usually considered to be an art-historical borrowing or imposition—photohistory and photography itself have not adequately confronted the problem of value in photography understood as the problem of transcending one's cultural milieu. Simply put, we cannot explain how some of us are critics, and how some of us think others of us to be good critics.

Perhaps because of this, there is a growing (and grudging) awareness that simulacra have rights too. The slightly disjunct copy has created a charm of its own, and has sloughed off an attractive style. How the allure of the fake-for-its-own-sake could have escaped a generation of former Mouseketeers, who begged their parents to take them to Disneyland, I do not know. Nevertheless, we are coming to see that Sherrie Levine's rephotograph of a Walker Evans evades her intention. Its social criticism can be displaced by the audience's pursuit of other goals—the historic or the pleasurable. It seems less like a shallow RE-presentation, than like an evocative image of a sharecropper. It is original.

Arguably Levine may have negated the author of the work, but she has not altered the feelings one brings to the image. Abigail Solo-

mon-Godeau rather desperately recognized the problem when she wrote that "it is in the deconstructive intention and effect that one distinguishes pastiche as an instrument of radical practice from pastiche as a symptom of creative impoverishment."³⁴ And how, and where does one locate intention? Not in the image, but in the criticism that accompanies it.

Perhaps; but, criticism—the growth industry within art history—can become canonic, its edge dulled by ritual citation and anthology. And it can create its own pantheon of alternative auteurs.³⁵ Deindividualization and contextualization have brought photography and photographic criticism to an unanticipated point of realization. Photography, photographic criticism, and photographic history have not escaped the modernist or positivist faith that the mere exposure of facts or images in itself creates social awareness and transformation. They have not succeeded in using history against itself, and certainly they have not destabilized the art market.

The word, postmodernism, is being digested by the mass media now, and it will soon decline into an eternal half-life in art history textbooks. I imagine that the future will call the last half of the twentieth century Late Modern, aligning it with political and economical models. The word "postmodern" is waning, but its core ideas are not. Contextualization and deindividualization are in no way played out in photohistorical studies. Photohistory is a relatively young area of inquiry, and is one that does not know its parameters. Art-historical models of excellence and significance cannot be stretched to cover the great numbers of photographers and greater numbers of photographs-without-authors that are being brought to the public light.

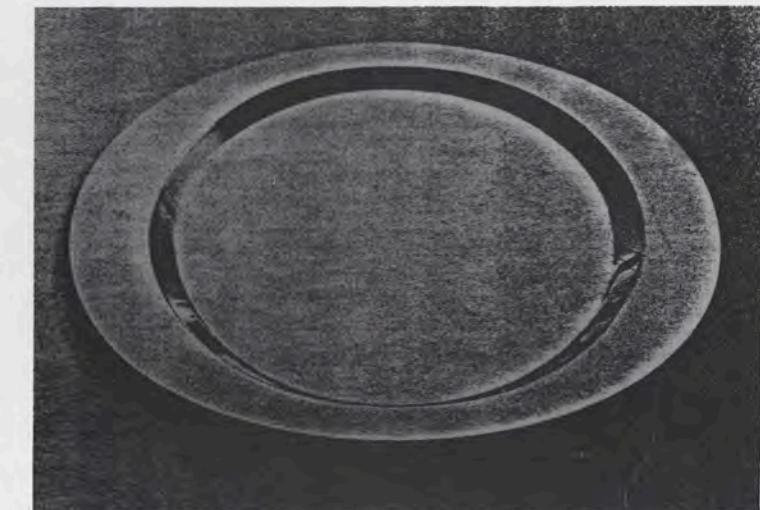
The challenge of deindividualization and contextualism for artists is more poignant. They may have set out to show how impoverished and impotent art was at the end of the twentieth century, instead they managed to show how powerful the art world is in the age of mass media, and how able it is to RE-contextualize and to RE-commodify art objects. Barthes once wrote that "To be modern is to know that which is not possible any more."³⁶ To have been a postmodern artist is to question, deep in your bones, if, in your lifetime, art in the developed western countries will ever be a part of the social vanguard.

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Footnotes

1. *New Yorker*, September 8, 1986, p. 6. Note that the word is spelt Post-Modern, the convention in art and architecture, not postmodern, the convention in literature and critical theory.
2. FUNCTIONAL INC (catalog), Item 1-110, \$80.00. Other catalogs, notably *Plow & Hearth* (Fall/Winter 1986) and *Community Kitchens* (October 1986) and the venerable *Bloomingdale's* (Holidays 1986) carry the same kettle without the postmodern hype.
3. Andy Grundberg, "Photographs of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," *New York Times* July 11, 1986, p. C 1.
4. See, for example, Ihab Hassan, "Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective," *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 12, No. 3 (Spring 1986), especially p. 504.
5. Arnold Toynbee, *A Study in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937-1961), IX, p. 235.
6. Toynbee, IX, p. 234ff.
7. Toynbee, IX, p. 166.
8. Toynbee, IX, p. 421.
9. Toynbee, IX, p. 341.
22. Christopher Phillips, "The Judgement Seat of Photography," *October* No. 22, (Fall 1982), p. 63.
23. See Allan Sekula's arguments in "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," which has been widely anthologized. It is available with Sekula's other writings in *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973-1983* (The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design: 1984).



10. Toynbee, IX, p. 341. Modern Western culture to Toynbee was "a phase of Western cultural development . . . distinguished by the ascendancy of the middle class . . ." and the post-Modern Age was "marked by the rise of an industrial urban working class . . ." Toynbee, VIII, p. 338.
11. For instance, Toynbee conjectured that only Western culture still had the stamina to create a unified, peaceful world culture. We have a different word for that notion today.
12. Toynbee VIII, p. 374.
13. Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1976), p. 29.
14. Bell, p. 51.
15. Irving Sandler, "Modernism, Revisionism, Pluralism, and Post-Modernism," *Art Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 1/2 (Fall/Winter 1980), p. 346.
16. Clive Dilnot, "What is the Post-Modern?" *Art History*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (June 1986), especially p. 247.
17. Radical/Douglas Crimp, "Pictures," *October* 8 (Spring 1979); Bougeois/Fred Pfeil, "Makin' Flippy-Floppy: Postmodernism and the Baby Boom PMC," in *The Year Left: An American Socialist Yearbook*, 1985, ed. Mike Davis, Fred Pfeil, and Michael Sprinker (London: Verso, 1985), pp. 263-295; Conservative/Denis Donoghue, "The Promiscuous Cool of Postmodernism," *New York Times Book Review*, (June 7, 1986), p. 1 and pp. 36-37; Radical/Bourgeois/Conservative/Andy Grundberg, "Postmodernists in the Mainstream," *New York Times*, (November 20, 1983), H, p. 27 and p. 443.
18. The critic is Pfeil, see above.
19. Sally Stein, "Making Connections with the Camera: Photography and Social Mobility in the Career of Jacob Riis," *Afterimage*, (May 1983), p. 9.
20. For a critique of the art-historical handling of O'Sullivan and Atget, see Rosalind Krauss "Photography's Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View," *Art Journal* Vol. 42, No. 4, (Winter 1942), pp. 311-319. For Atget, see Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Cannon Fodder: Authorizing Atget" *Print Collector's Newsletter* Vol. 16, No. 6, (Jan-Feb. 1986), pp. 221-227.
21. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Calotypomania: The Gourmet Guide to Nineteenth-Century Photography," *Afterimage* (Summer 1983), pp. 7-12. Christopher Phillips, "A Mnemonic Art? Calotype Aesthetics at Princeton," *October* No. 26 (Fall 1983), pp. 35-62. See, also Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Winning the Game When the Rules Have Been Changed—Art Photography and Postmodernism," *Screen* Vol. 25, No. 6 (Nov-Dec. 1984).
22. John Szarkowski, "Photography—A Different Kind of Art," *New York Times Magazine*, April 13, 1975, p. 16 & pp. 64-68.
23. (Cambridge: MA: MIT Press, 1985) p. 161.
24. Peter Bacon Hales, *Silver Cities: The Photography of American Urbanization, 1839-1915* Philadelphia: Temple University Press: 1984).
25. Donald E. English, *Political Uses of Photography in the Third French Republic, 1871-1914* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press: 1984). See p. 161, n. and p. 164, n. 1.
26. Elizabeth Anne McCauley, A. E. Disdéri and the *Carte de Visite Photograph* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
27. Ulrich F. Keller, "The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis," *History of Photography*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (October—December 1984), pp. 249-275.
28. The procedure is hardly new. Every pharaoh understood that his ka statue belonged to him only when his name was placed on it. Further, the statue owed nothing to the sensibility and originality of its maker, nor was it a portrait.
29. See Linda Andre's study, "The Politics of Postmodern Photography," *The Minnesota Review*, n.s. 23 (Fall 1984) pp. 17-35.
30. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "The Stolen Image and Its Uses," *Contact Sheet* No. 35, n.d. (1983), n.p. Lightworks, Syracuse, New York.
31. Peter C. Bunnell, "Can There Ever Again Be A History Of Photography? Print Collector's Newsletter Vol. 5 No. 6 (Jan-Feb. 1975), p. 144.
32. Thomas Crow, "The Return of Hank Herron," *Endgame: Reference and Simulation in Recent Painting and Sculpture* Boston: The Institute of Contemporary Arts and the MIT Press: 1986), p. 18.
33. See, for example, Lorraine Kenny, "Problem Sets: The Canonization of Francesca Woodman," *Afterimage*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (November 1986), pp. 4-5.
34. Quoted in Yve-Alain Bois, "Painting: The Task of Mourning," *Endgame: Reference and Simulation in Recent Painting and Sculpture*, p. 47.

INSTALLATIONS

REDEEMABLE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE LANDSCAPE

Trinity: A Site-Specific Installation was exhibited at HCP, December 12, 1986—January 25, 1987.



Michael Berman, Trinity: Installation

By Nancy Spector

Michael Berman's photographic installation, *Trinity*, participates in the romantic tradition of Western landscape photography. In his references to nature in its most primal state, he shares with Carleton Watkins, Edward Weston and Ansel Adams a faith in the spiritual essence of the yet unsullied landscape. For Berman, however, the photographic metaphor of natural vista as symbol of the sublime is merely a point of departure. It is this metaphor—at the heart of 19th and early 20th century landscape photography—which he extends and deconstructs in order to place it within a contemporary critical context.

To begin with, Berman's installation is in itself an environment, a simulated landscape. It does not depict a specific locale, nor does it allude to a remembered site. The scene has no geographic origin, rather it has been constructed in the gallery as a site-specific environment. The actual landscape images—hundreds of tiny black and white prints—have been radically displaced from the gallery wall to the floor. In their relegation to the ground, these pictures of fields and forests adopt the very physicality of the scenes they depict. These environmental referents are thus more metonymic than metaphoric. Collectively, they become the "landscape." Only when viewed individually do they offer views of other distant places. The installation, however, is not about geographic areas seen and captured by camera. At its source are ideas and concepts involving contemporary society's relation to nature, its lack of spirituality and its indifference to ritual.

The installation is organized into three adjoining, frontally placed bays which embrace the viewer upon entry into the gallery. The religious connotation of the title, "Trinity," is reinforced by this tripartite arrangement which resembles at once three shrines and one immense altarpiece. In each bay, the same hierarchical design prevails: a large, centrally placed photograph is flanked by smaller collaged works on paper, and beneath it, on the floor, are the piles of miniature landscape pictures. The works on paper divide into two series. The first is composed of rather murky images of two discrete square shapes in which webs of graphite scrawls surround and almost conceal a single, tiny photograph. The division into separate squares seems arbitrary, and the inclusion of photographs appears to be an afterthought. In the second series, the squares are enclosed within other squares recalling Eva Hesse's late "window" drawings. This time, the



photographs of trees, birds and other natural phenomena are veiled behind layers of thinned, white acrylic paint, scribbles of conte crayon and graphite markings. Although no more coherent than

the first series, these images are far more beautiful compositionally—the abstract element is finer-tuned—and more acceptable on a purely formal level. Robert Rauschenberg's collaged paintings and Cy Twombly's

ghostly, calligraphic canvases are also evoked by these works on paper. What distinguishes Berman's collages and saves them from being too derivative are their glossy, photograph-like surfaces, which he achieves by polishing them with a shammy skin.¹ This reference to the photographic medium, in combination with the allusions to windows, plays with the notion of photography as a view into nature. Yet such an interpretation is held in check, even subverted, by the impenetrability of the painted haze. If anything, these collages can be read as stained glass windows, signifiers of the spiritual, to be looked at, but not through.

The three large centerpieces each created from a grid of twenty black and white prints, depict from left to right: two bare feet standing on a wooden (barn) floor near the body of a dead baby bird, a framed portrait of Jesus Christ across which is strung a network of wires, and an open, verdant field. The photograph of the tattered painting of Christ behind its wire barrier is clearly a reference, however subversive, to the Holy Trinity. Collectively, the three central images suggest another trinity—culture, religion and nature. The introduction of religion and, hence, the spiritual, into the traditional dichotomy of nature and culture is a key into one reading of Berman's installation. In the artist's mind, the spiritual can serve as a mitigating force between these two opposing realms. His sense of the spiritual at work in the world is embodied in the ancient rituals of Southwestern Indian tribes, whose religious ceremonies acknowledge the powers of nature.² Yet the ritualistic enterprise that Berman is seeking need not be so specific. The triptych-like appearance of the installation, the time it requires to view and decipher, and the sense of secure enclosure it offers suggests the ritual of art making and art viewing as possible alternatives.

The floor constructions have the strongest iconic impact. Created from tiny black and white landscape photographs piled around or under old bricks, a rotted window pane, a rusted metal circle, rocks and broken glass, these assemblages have an enigmatic, reliquary quality. Berman's poetic use of found objects—remnants of an industrial wasteland—link him with the Italian artists of the *Arte Povera* group who, during the 1960s and 70s, transformed the most banal elements of modern life into art of great beauty. Like Jannis Kounellis, one of the foremost *Arte Povera* artists, Berman creates from a moral impulse in the belief that art can and will affect the world in some redeeming way.

Footnotes

1. Interview with the artist, December 13, 1986.

2. Ibid.

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FIELD DISTURBANCE/ PATRICK CLANCY'S 365/360

Patrick Clancy: An Installation of 365/360 (The City and the Plowed Field) was exhibited at HCP, December 12, 1986—January 25, 1987. 365/360 (The Crossroads), a multi-media performance with Patrick Clancy, Gwen Widmer, Matthew Sommerville, and Michael Cummings, was presented by Diverse Works December 13, 1986. Installation, performance and lecture were co-sponsored by Diverse Works, Southwest Alternate Media Project, and the Houston Center for Photography.

By Margo Reece

The imaginary... no longer a property of the heart... evolves from the accuracy of knowledge. Dreams are no longer summoned with closed eyes, but in reading; and a true image is now a product of learning (not direct experience); it derives from words spoken in the past, exact recensions, the amassing of minute facts, monuments reduced to infinitesimal fragments, and the reproduction of reproductions. -Michel Foucault, *Fantasia of the Library*

Patrick Clancy's imaginary journey 365/360: *The City and the Plowed Field* is a journey dreamed with both eyes open. One summoned by him, no doubt, in the library. A vague reverie induced by research: *The Complete Works... The Almost Complete Works...* previously unpublished works, revised, 3rd edition, 1963, see footnotes.... Interpretation persists as recreation... What is your strategy? Assimilated associations develop, merge, split-off, contradict, coincide, condense and finally slip silently away to settle back, an echo, hidden in the type, in the text, on the page, in the space, in the book, on the shelf, in the library. With Marcel Duchamp's myth hovering ("I entered the city... From out here Marcel was a floating figure [one not easily pinned down] and his 1918 trip to Buenos Aires ostensibly as model Clancy proposes a voyage ("enter Champs d'experience") by anything other than traditional means. Meaning not by land or sea. Via "relay/really".

The relay really functions in Clancy's piece as a metaphorical device reverberating and amplifying itself through the text, throughout the installation and out into the world via ourselves the spectators. Clancy is interested in the transference of information in our culture and provides a multiplicity of means to relay his communiqués albeit in comunicado. He employs a cast of characters (with a confusing array of roles to assume), a narrative text (part of which is printed in reverse and unreadable without a mirror) and a series of color photographs of reproductions hermetically sealed under layers of 4-color reproduction techniques, half-tone dots, and glaring granulation; all of which seem designed to frustrate the viewer in the twin acts of reading and looking. However, things are not always what they seem. Clancy clearly desires that we turn our attention to what's around us, to the seemingly smooth seamless surface of our own present.

The two main characters in Clancy's narrative are Arthur Cravans and Marcel Duchamp. Cravans is a poet, professor of boxing, and a performance artist who (significantly) prospects for silver and whose site is the world. Clancy refers to Cravans as a "colossal absentee rolling to the incandescent memory". The use of reproductions, reenactments and reinterpretations of already existing materials (especially as related to Duchamp) and the expression of a self through the replication of a model (Duchamp and the Buenos Aires trip) all point to Clancy's absence. The "incandescent memory," being light produced memory, refers to photography and the pervasiveness of reproductions in our culture. Clancy is interested in the continuum of the past and the present. His relationship to Duchamp belies a certain nostalgia for a particular moment in the past and a longing to be another that borders on the problematic. His affection for "Marcel" can also erupt into ironic irreverence, as in his fabricated incident in which the *Sculpture for Traveling* comes loose from its moorings and Clancy allows Duchamp to be slapped in the ass by his own invention (actually the piece disintegrated). The other two characters: the Marey runner and Mina Loy play minor parts, especially Mina Loy who really seems like part of the scenery. Cravans and

Mina plan to rendezvous with Duchamp in Buenos Aires.

A globe is mapped out with various routes, notably, featured is one to South America (probably Duchamp's original and Cravans' implied destination). As further preparation and in his desire for the "original", Clancy has located what appears to be the same geometry text which Duchamp exposed to the elements in his *Unhappy Readymade*. Clancy quite knowingly turns to the same page, same problem, and ceremoniously (in a self-conscious relationship to what's gone before) douses the book with water in simulation of the natural elements (the natural can only be approached through its cultural representation).

Enter the Marey (as in Etienne-Jules Marey) runner "afloat... alone" outfitted as a recording device and literally depicted (in a humorous demystification of the means of production) as putting one foot in front of the other, camera viewfinder pressed to the eye (a regular modern day scribe). A cable runs from the camera down into his mud encrusted shoe where the cable release is secretly embedded in the sole (is this what Marcel meant by going "underground") so that with every step an image is recorded (foot notes). In the amassing of facts, Clancy intends a thorough random sampling (displaying

light" into what else—photography, i.e., reproductions), to the subliminal in images where the outcropping of grain is of such proportion as to have eclipsed the image entirely from our view; we realize we are dealing with something more than the traditional symbolic notions of grain (as in representing time, truth etc.). The grain is that infinitesimal fragment, the bearer of the code, the transferer of information. Below the threshold of our consciousness the supernumerary grain is growing, multiplying, dividing; an invisible agent acting upon us. Like the word plays in Clancy's narrative the grain acts to both reveal and conceal. The sheer magnitude of the grain implies a completeness that continues to allude. In Clancy's work a layer of grain blankets all, referring to the pervasiveness of photography's reproductive syntax. We begin to grasp the significance of the plowed field "Fragments turned into loam"... "a field larger than the span of our attention" (beyond our grasp). Clancy's field is representative of the dominance of mass culture in our post industrial age. As we peer into the distance across Clancy's panoramic field of grain (a virtual sea of grain) seductive and mind numbing in its vastness and repetition, we pause to consider if we are not like Clancy's cowboys who shanghaied awake (not know-

a different space."

Unlike the artist as mediumistic being who worked his way out of the labyrinth to a clearing, the artist now finds upon reaching the clearing and pausing to look around that the ground beneath his feet is giving way to reveal one more labyrinth. The possibility of origins tantalizes but will never be apprehended. Clancy's means make reading problematic with shifting narrative, obscure references, reversed text and words with multiple meanings. Far from being elitist, these methods work to increase the possibilities of interpretation (they open the work rather than close it). Clancy's art grows (like the grain) from the field of produced works: books, printed material, photographs, electronic data. The accumulation of received ideas is the field in which we toil. No point of view encompasses all, no matter how convincing or thorough. There will always be something left out. Something we missed. A stone left unturned. Clancy's hermeticism is not unlike Duchamp's or Rousset's. He conceals things in such a way as to render explanation difficult but possible. Clancy's work reveals meaning as being problematic in relation to the conventions of language and representation in our culture. He wants to avoid the reduction of the art work to a simple formula or mes-



Patrick Clancy, "Crossroads" from performance of 365/360

the surrealist's mandate to adopt an egalitarian attitude toward subject matter).

In the wake of the Marey runner we find ourselves awash in the text "navigating by mirage." We have lost sight of our guide. The discourse flows on unabated. The narrative shifts... "Now, then repeat after me". . . The voices clamour. Relay-characters rise to the surface only to recede again in the depths, each covering only a specific portion of the text. Who's speaking please? We struggle to maintain a point of view. There is no one viewpoint. No one person telling the story. We are presented with fragments ("MICRONARRATIVES"), bits and pieces with gaps, jumps, unexpected switches and associations. We cannot follow all routes. Cravans has disappeared, covering his tracks. We glance in the mirror. The lights of Buenos Aires glimmer in the distance.

We are smiling to ourselves at Cravans' fancy footwork. "CLICK." Something occurs... We have mistaken ("FOCUS") an image of gargantuan grain for the lights of Buenos Aires. Clancy's predilection for grain at first seemed innocent enough, but now has become more disturbing. As the grain shifts in Clancy's work from the actual (sand, wheat), to the artificial ("giant combines circling convert silver and

ing where they were or how they got there).

The shifty characters, the cardboard scenery (rudimentary reproductions probably derived from out of date postcards, travel brochures, art history texts), images of turquoise pools, cliff diving in Acapulco, Duchamp's readymades, the Great Wall of China, the omnipresent grain, the words that won't stay put, all form a single sight (like looking in a rear view mirror). The words, the images taunt us with their materiality. They flaunt their fragmentary nature and try to convince us of their printed appearance. The words, the odd sounds, purposeful misspellings, transposed letters, tempt us. We read into every word, none are without suspicion. Multiple meanings point to a space behind the text, beyond the surface. "More radical than any Futurist endeavor" (the Futurists and Duchamp were interested in a static rendition of movement in

2-dimensions as in Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*). Clancy's text moves 3-dimensionally, spatially, perpendicular to the surface expanding and contracting. We are up to our elbows excavating, penetrating deeper and deeper into the substratum. Eventually we reach a point where we lose sight of what we were following. The picture blurs. "A small model of chaos... I am in

sage.

Meanwhile, giant combines circle electric fields. Huge satellites orbit silently. The air is alive. "Pneumatic motion" scatters particles out of the blue. The grain is protean. The universe is expanding or contracting or both. There are limits: the ambiguity of phenomena. A realm of uncertainty awaits. Derivations depend on your method of questioning. What is your strategy?

Margo Reece is a photographer and printmaker whose work was exhibited in the New Texas Photography exhibition, San Antonio Crafts Center and HCP.

MEDIA INSTALLATION 1987 GRANT

A new media installation work will be selected and installed for exhibition at Visual Studies Workshop. The artist selected will receive an honorarium of \$1000. Artists living anywhere in the U.S. may apply. Deadline for proposals: May 15, 1987. For information and application write or call Media Installation, Visual Studies Workshop, 31 Prince Street, Rochester, New York 14607. (716) 442-8676.

TO REMAIN IN DOUBT: AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES SCHORRE

Painter, photographer, book designer, teacher, and former art director, Charles Schorre's paintings have been shown in the exhibitions *Fresh Paint* and *The Texas Landscape: 1900–1986* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The photography series, *Pages from Books*, Unpublished was exhibited at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston. His photographs were selected recently by Walter Hopps, director of the Menil Collection, for inclusion in *The Texas Annual at the Laguna Gloria Museum*, Austin, Texas. He is showing currently at the North Light Gallery in Tempe, Arizona, in the exhibition *Five Houston Photographers*. Since the early sixties, Charles Schorre has produced several artist's books, and has received numerous awards, grants, and an NEA Photo Fellowship.

By James Bell and Lew Thomas

You can easily see by this interview that what I'm about is disorientation. I used to be about orientation . . . direct orderly communication . . . now I'm about disorientation, mystery, polarity, sometimes confusion . . . questions instead of answers.

Q: We've come here to find some of the answers.

A: No answers, just a lot of questions.

Q: We're here to ask questions. We want to get some background. Charles, You started out in commercial art.

A: I started out . . . I have a degree in painting and sculpture from the University of Texas. I was exhibiting paintings in the *Texas General Exhibitions Annual* (Dallas, Houston, San Antonio Museum Show) before I graduated from the University of Texas. I got a job here in 1948 at the Museum of Fine Arts making 50 dollars a month teaching at night. My wife, Maggie, went to work. I painted . . . realized I'd have to do something so I got a job in an advertising agency where I learned how to draw and paint because I didn't learn rendering at the University. Later, I became a freelance art director, illustrator, graphic designer. I did a lot of art direction . . . I won awards and made a very good living. I won medals in New York and Europe for work I did for *Look* magazine, *Psychology Today*, *Playboy*, science fiction, Schlumberger, Hughes Tool, all kinds of stuff. Lots of fun. Went on some trips. Then when I was teaching at Rice in the school of architecture, I did work for The National Institute of Mental Health about community mental hospitals. And that was really great. It was fun. I did some editing, some photography, some drawing . . . put two books together on community mental hospitals. At that time no one knew what they were. I consider everything I've ever done as part of my work. In Europe they don't separate much of it; unfortunately they separate too much here. Everything is categorized. Like if you're a photographer, how can you be a painter? And if you're a painter, how can you be a photographer? And if you're an art director or if you're an industrial designer, how can you have a photographic thought? I don't believe in that. So. That's about it.

Q: That's your career?

A: I got an ulcer in an advertising agency and, really, that's when I got out of organized labor. That was in the early sixties, late fifties. Didn't take long to get an ulcer in the advertising agency.

Q: You were successful. You won prizes.

A: Yeah, I won prizes as an art director, but as soon as I got out and started freelancing, that's when I really began winning awards in this country and some in Europe and got published in Japan, different things.

Q: You've always lived here in Texas?

A: Yeah, I was born in Cuero, Texas, (9 March 1925). Came to Houston after graduating. I like the freedom this place gives me.

Q: Houston?

A: Yeah, lots of freedom. I don't have to run off to see a lot of shows. If I were in New York, I'd run myself to death. I don't know what I'd be. I have a great interest in jazz . . . I might not be alive if I lived in New York. I also wanted to maintain a family and we are doing that. We have three daughters and seven grandchildren. I'm just a very close family person.

Q: You spent some time in the Marine Corps.

A: I was in the Marine Corps for 3 1/2 years . . . but I'm really a pacifist now. I was stationed on Guam . . . all the action I saw was accidental . . . people coming out of the jungle, not knowing the war was over. I



Photo by Rick Gardner. Outside Schorre's Studio

Charles Schorre. Drawings and Notes, 1974–1986

I deliberately go to this work place each day. Other than that I try to let things happen to me as against making things happen.

was a sergeant in the infantry. I became angry when I was still at the OCS in Quantico and lost my commission . . . had a fight with a colonel. That probably kept me from being killed. My being sent overseas was delayed. I believe in capital punishment, but I don't believe in war. I believe that if you highjack a plane and threaten people maybe you ought to be shot on the way out of the plane. Since I was in Saudi Arabia I believe that. Because I could put my camera and sketchbooks down on any street corner and come back and pick them up the next day.

Q: Because . . .

A: They would cut off your arm for stealing. But that's not the only thing I liked over there. I loved the desert, and the huge contrasts and conflicts of moral and religious and industrial interests. You felt like you were in Jesus' time on one corner and then on the next corner you felt like you were in Europe. So that was a wonderful influence being there. Very strong, intense. Like taking a real strong pill for a month. I just had a month, but I stayed awake most of the time.

Q: Did it have anything to do with the intensity of color?

A: Actually, less. It was all sand and sandblasted automobiles and rust. In the desert you don't see anything but the white male costume or the black female dress. And rust . . . everything was very camouflaged. Dirty. The only colors were Pepsi bottles, trash thrown out of automobiles, tin cans that wouldn't rust. Except in the city where you had the garish contemporary architecture which is a little bit of everything. There's one beautiful campus in Dhahran . . . The minerals and petroleum university . . . a friend of mine from Houston designed it. And the Saudis are real proud of it. They think they did it. I love the country, though, and the peasant people. You could be closer to the women and the men in the rural areas where in the city everybody was sort of paranoid . . . and you were not allowed conversation with women. Saudi Arabia was like one huge unfinished painting . . . I guess that is my main reason for loving it . . . just a big piece of unfinished art.

Q: You went over there on an exchange basis?

A: No, a Mobil Oil artist in residence grant from New York. It came out of the blue. I didn't apply for it or anything. It just showed up.

Q: Great!

A: Yeah, it was really a shock. I got a National Endowment grant as soon as I got back and I thought it was a joke.

Q: When did you receive the grant?

A: I think it was the latter part of '79.

Q: For a photo fellowship?

A: Yeah, it was one of their large grants. For the *Pages* that I'm doing now.

Q: So what was the date when you made the commitment to pursue your personal art?

A: I've always pursued my personal art, but getting an ulcer allowed me full time devotion. I was really learning how to draw in this advertising agency. I learned about color. I also learned to photograph because I was in the bullpen, they called it, and I was sent out on the oil rigs with a Speedgraphic to shoot what they called round trips for Hughes Tool rock bits. And I shot photographic information for other illustrators who were better than I. I didn't know how to use the Speedgraphic and they taught me. I'd go out and sometimes spend all night on an oil rig. But that really laid a foundation for what I'm doing now. I really learned how to see with a camera. My first camera was a Rolleicord. I had some work during 1956 and 1957 in *Popular Photography Annuals*, my straight photographs. And *Creative Camera* was another one and so I was doing photography and painting all the time. I was either painting or photographing and I saw that by taking the photographs I could integrate the two. I started out as a realist and became abstract. The birth/death or the life/death series that I'm actually still working on, the constant conflict and the closeness of life and death, that started in the early fifties, soon after Maggie and I got married. The series was also started by ecumenical church activity, by meeting Paul Tillich and reading Kierkegaard and different people like that. I realize that although I'm an attempted Christian I really have never read the Bible and probably never will. I mean in its entirety. Even if I did I probably wouldn't think much differently than I do right now.

So . . . I met a lot of people and when I did the Bishop Pike book for *Look* magazine there were several people in the book that I already knew. They were personal friends and still are.

Q: You seem to identify the "life/death" business with the different ways you use art, the painting and the photography.

A: Yeah? I think it's the polarity . . . the seesawing, the tension between light and dark and realism and abstraction, ecstasy and discovery. I believe in this tension. If I started a series that I would really enjoy and it would catch on and people started buying it, I would stop. I would just literally stop.

Q: You'd stop producing that kind of work because . . .

A: It would also be boring. I need the money and sometimes I'm desperate for money, but I don't paint for money. I paint for discovery. I mean, wow, gee whiz, I never

have done that sort of thing before . . . for the awe of it.

Q: Because of the polarity between photography and painting?

A: Absolutely. I know it's imagined, but I think it's real too. A lot of painters don't want to get near photography or they don't want to use it or manipulate it, and I think people like Warhol and, well, even Picasso . . . any kind of collage work gives us permission to use anything. In my collage work, I like to use my own material. When I taught collage at the museum several years ago, I wanted my students to use their own material. I think it's more difficult and more edgy to tear up your own material than to use the printed matter of someone else.

Q: So you're relying on your own content and material to create these collages rather than appropriate from other sources.

A: But I don't sit down and say I'm going to manufacture some collage material. It's just residue from other work I do. I mean I've got stacks and stacks of material. You can imagine. 'Cause I like to produce and I'm a very tight critic. My wife's the best critic I've ever seen. She's ruthless. So I also destroy a lot of stuff.

Q: Does she have an art background?

A: No! But she is a natural . . . has what I'd call a perfect eye and feeling for relevance in visual and conceptual work. All this is native to Maggie.

Q: Can you give us an example of how that operates in a particular case?

A: Okay, I can take three paintings in the room there and put them on the wall. Three different paintings, mine or someone else's; it doesn't make any difference. And I'll come back in there and if she's rearranged them it's obvious that's where they belong. Theme wise or value wise or size wise . . . it would even have all the wit and humor that things juxtaposed have.

Q: Were you pleased with your show at Meredith Long?

A: Very pleased. I was not pleased that I didn't have the whole gallery. I had to cut the show down. I have a show every two years. So I did a lot of changing at the last minute. But I was very pleased with the way it came out.

Q: What do you mean by being pleased?

A: I liked what I had up and I liked the response of people. I got some surprise feedback from people I consider to be good critics and I got some super feedback from some buyers and from some people who said they didn't know anything about art. They responded to the contrast of the work. Asked me questions about the black paintings, they called them. These things were no nonsense questions, they were serious. When I can get that kind of

variety. I believe that's fine. I'm really not trying to communicate with anyone. But if someone gets something out of the work that they can tell me about, that's what I really love. I worked so long being a communicator that I'm not trying to sell a message anymore. That's always troublesome for the public, to think that artists are not primarily into communication. Many people find that a contradiction.

Q: If you're not into communication, what are you doing? Creating something original?

A: I would rather try to make some mark for the spirit, the soul, the silent nature or aliveness of a thing than to reproduce the obvious noise of a thing. When I was an illustrator, I was sometimes reproducing the obvious noise of something. I might be saying, "Dammit, this is it and I want to hit you over the head with it." I'm not doing that now; I'm exploiting myself instead of other people.

Q: The artist should exploit him or herself?

A: Yes. If it's a housewife or a computer operator or anyone, I'm saying exploit yourself. If you start looking inward instead of outward for signs, then you'll see your own sign and your own directions and you can move. You might move into areas you never dreamed of.

Q: You're a real intense guy.

A: I've had some friends who've committed suicide, young and old. And I believe if you want to say something, for God's sake say it. But don't wait for the proper time because there is no proper time.

Q: Is this a personal philosophy, or have you developed it from readings?

A: I don't say it's the answer for anybody. If you want to "get ahead" it's not the answer. It's my answer. I'm not saying I have an answer for anything. Because the reward is no reward, the answer is no answer. This is just the way I feel. For instance, right now I have no concept of whether it's morning or afternoon or Monday or Tuesday or Wednesday. I'm in no hurry to go anywhere; we are doing this interview. I've actually gotten into my own automobile into the back seat and wondered who was going to drop me off. Everybody does those things, but I realize that you can really get into some kind of horrible accident that might even be a life and death situation by not being present.

Q: You'd better tell us that again, Charles.

A: Okay. I'll tell you . . . if you're driving an automobile for instance, and really not driving the automobile. That's dangerous. Or there's a humor thing. You want to be at your place of work and you've got two kids to take to a movie that morning. It's cold and raining, and you've got to urinate, and you're in a line with thirty people. But you're thinking about work, and you get up to the ticket booth, and he asks how many and you open your raincoat and unzip instead of giving the guy the money. Now that's a humorous example. But you can do that in a dangerous situation where it's an automobile or an airplane. Or by not being present or alert when you're on a highway or walking across a street or in your own work.

Q: And you feel that way about your work?

A: I feel that way. Right now, doing this interview is the most important thing . . . I'm not painting . . . I'm giving this my full attention, believe it or not. But you can easily see that what I might be about is disorientation. I used to be about orientation . . . orderly, "to the point" headline communication . . . Now I'm about mystery, polarity, sometimes even confusion . . . questions instead of answers.

Q: That's the way your art looks. It has a kind of gestural intensity.

A: Well, I appreciate that. I hope it has.

Q: There's a physicality to it.

A: I hope there is.

Q: That's important to you?

A: Oh, it is . . . I love beautiful photographs but God, you can bore yourself to death, become guilty of visual/creative suicide looking at beautiful photographs.

Q: Do you consciously push yourself towards awkwardness in order to reach some other edge of meaning or experience or aesthetics.

A: That's true. I don't like being so awkward that it's ugly art on purpose, ugly drawing, or what I call inept. Because I have a facility and I don't want to betray that facility. So I like to juxtapose photographs and paintings because they don't belong together. The surfaces are different and if you don't believe me, if you're a painter and have never collaged a photograph in the middle of your pretty painting, try it sometime. It's just hell to work out.

Q: The issue of awkwardness and intensity is obvious in your work.

On the other hand, you seem to rely on the language of cubism as a compositional device.

A: Hmmm. I didn't know that.

Q: The use of planes, organizing from the level of the two dimensional plane in order to set up your contradictions.

A: Contradictions?

Q: Well, your contradictions, your messages, the signs expressed in your paintings and collages even though you say you're not a communicator. And there's a flatness to some of the work. It seems to me that you're coming out of a cubistic tradition. Your references to Picasso . . .

A: Hmmm. Yeah.

Q: You reference the masters in a number of your pieces.

A: Yeah. I guess I do. Matisse and Cezanne and Rodin and Gorky and Gauguin . . . yeah. But Gorky and his Mother. I think that's one of the finest paintings of this century.

Because it's unfinished. That's why I like Stuart's *George Washington*. because the damn thing's unfinished. It brings in, in a very simplistic way, the viewer. He's actually on board, because he tries to finish that painting every time he looks at it.

Q: You sound like Duchamp.

A: Yeah. I believe in that.

Q: It's also a postmodern position come to think of it, because the reader has become influential in making the decision about experiencing art. The viewer, the reader, has to make a commitment.

A: I believe that when I finish a painting, it's half done. And if others attach themselves to it, they have an opportunity to finish it. If they buy it and look at it for a long time, I hope they get messages out of it for a long time. It's like an open-ended story. It continues. That's why I like going on a trip. A trip extends itself. You think about it a lot. That's why I like drawings.

Q: The trip is fresh?

A: Yeah, the trip is fresh. You've got that trip on your back. That's why I like drawings, because a drawing is a shorthand of something, yet it's just as abstract as you can get. That's why I say good realism is abstract and good abstraction is realism. I get the message pretty fast if it's a realistic piece. But if it's a super-realistic piece, a real piece of art, I can sit there and get as much from it as from an abstraction. I'm still trying to look at something and see it like I've never seen it



Charles Schorre, Poster, Houston Opera, 1976

before, and that extends its presence.

Q: You don't think you're perpetuating stereotypes?

A: No, absolutely not. I might be doing the opposite.

Q: By creating it so that it looks fresh?

A: Yes. Different. I used to go to different places in my backyard when we had a big yard. One time I went and sat up on top of the air-conditioning unit. Or under a table. I just believe that our expectations are so strong that we live our expectations and sometimes they have nothing to do with reality. Repent. Turn yourself around.

Q: Can you tell us about your methodologies. Do you have a different methodology for painting in contrast to photography? Do you work in a series? Do you work on four or five things at the same time?

A: Sometimes six or seven. I work on the *Hand Series* like that, whenever it occurs to me. That's something I know that's there and I can go to it. The hand stuff . . .

Q: It's an ongoing project?

A: Yeah, it's ongoing. I have over three hundred of these, same with *Pages From Books Unpublished*, close to four hundred now.

Q: The collage photographs?

A: They're slowly getting into the bigger paintings. The *Artists' Handbook* series and *Pages From Books Unpublished* are two series that have been going on for a long time. And this life/death stuff has been going on for a long time. But along with all this other work, some short stories have come. I've got about three or four. One science fiction and some straight pieces. All of a sudden, I'll sit down there drinking coffee and it'll be like those bone drawings up there. That's what I call them. That's how they came. One afternoon, after a nap, they were all in a sketchbook and I transferred them to handmade paper. The only way I could possibly reach those is through solitude.

Q: The resume said that around 1970 you really separated yourself from a lot of professional organizations and societies. What was that all about?

A: It was a way of gaining time. The only way I could do it was to just do it all at once.

Q: So it wasn't anything personal you had against those particular societies?

A: Yeah, it was a protest too, against things like the American Watercolor Society, juried shows, invitational

shows, any kind of organization. I just got fed up.

Q: The other thing I've observed or think I've observed about your work is that I can sort of see the progression that you've made going from the graphic arts and the illustrator background to something that seems to be just a commitment made to your personal expression of things or your intuition of things. And I wanted to ask you if it's as much of a progression as I think it is. You started doing artists' books like *Pages From Books Unpublished* and you incorporated photography in a lot of your work. But in some of your recent work that was in the gallery you do not incorporate photography. It's a total painting. Is that what you're moving toward?

A: No, I don't really think that way. The only way I can see trails is to look back at my slide collection, pull it out as an intuitive, unintentional thing. I don't organize, like come in today and say, I'm working on this and by the end of the year I should have this or this. I want it to be sort of out of control. I want it to be as out of control as I can get it without losing touch with it. I want to be totally aware of what I'm doing. I want to be totally aware of the manipulation but I want it to be out of control.

Q: Right. But you don't think you've drawn upon your background?

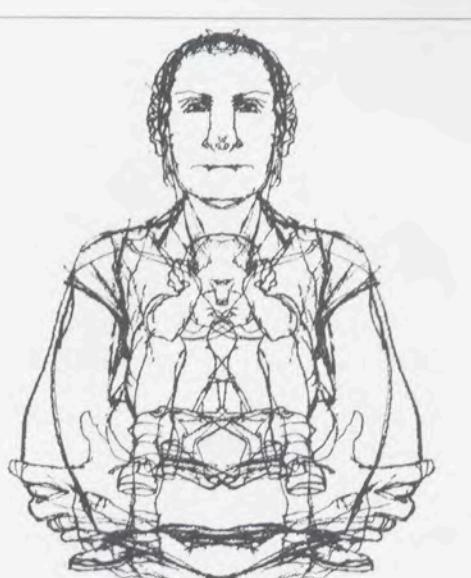
A: I've deliberately drawn upon everything I have available. Other than having somebody play a saxophone by one of my paintings. I just cut off music, the participating in the playing of music, because it's a different thing.

Q: So those things you were involved with in the past as a professional are serving you.

A: It's all a part of me. Christianity is a part of me. Any kind of spiritual activity is very, very important to me. The silent language is very, very important to me. Your interpretation of what happened is great. That's what I like about the silent language bit. Because you don't have my words, you have your own feelings. It's like being in love. That's what it is.

Q: How do you view the photograph in relation to an entire piece. Sometimes you'll be working on a painting and you'll just see a photograph and it just seems to fit. Is it really that haphazard?

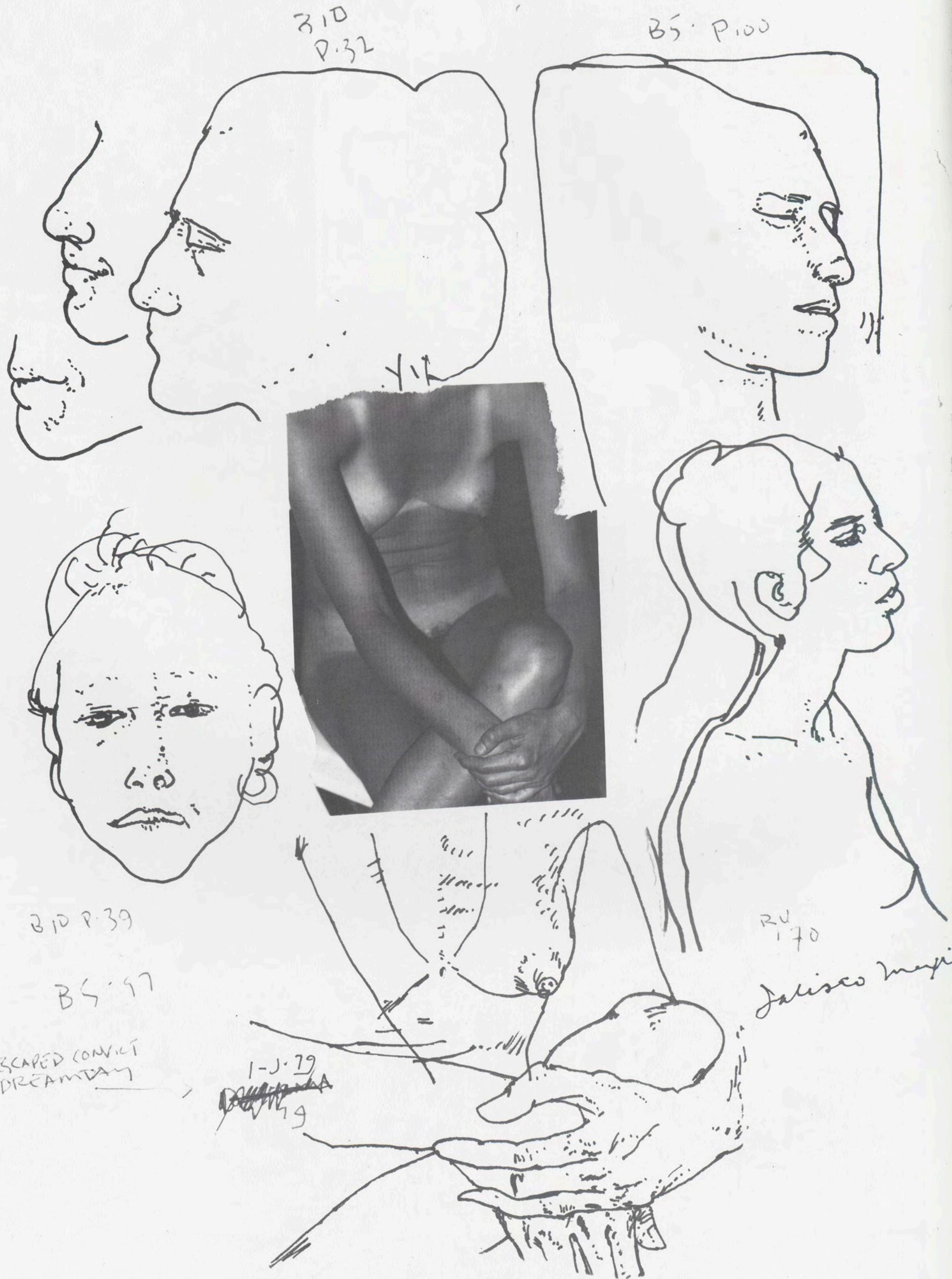
A: Yeah, it is. I use a photograph as a hammer or a brush. Only it's more of a complete thing, more of a mechanical thing. It's a tool. It's like

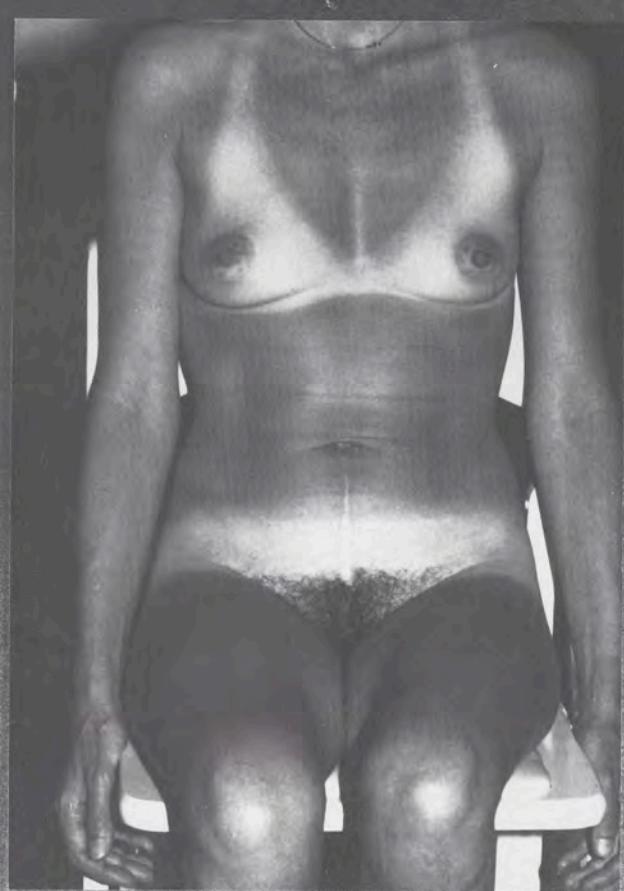


For a book on Planning & Design for Community Mental Health Centers, Schorre conceived line drawings that were printed on the page and also on a clear acetate sheet that produced a dramatic schizophrenic effect as they overlaid



Photographs by Schorre for literature & programs for a design conference of architects and psychiatrists on planning mental health centers.





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a computer in way. It's something I can use. And I'm not afraid of it. Like Thelonious Monk said one time, "I play stuff I didn't even know I could play." That's what I'd like to do, just go, "Gosh, did I do that?" Not just to amaze myself, but that's part of waking up.

Q: Then one starts to work with and against the other?

A: Yeah, they start talking to each other. They start going with each other.

Q: One of the issues in your work, and it's something that came up recently at the Center because of the Patrick Clancy installation, has to do with accessibility. Looking at your work, photography seems to be a key in some way to gain access to the painting. Have you heard that before or thought about it yourself?

A: I haven't heard it before and have not thought about it, but that's very good. I believe that. I believe that's true. It also could be a key for someone turning off the whole thing.

Q: Aside from the fact that it's an applied object that's going to change in some way, visually, the image, the photographic element seems to open a door into the rest of the piece.

A: It opens a door, but I can also say the same for the painted part. It might open a door to the photograph.

Q: So you're really working one with the other?

A: Yeah, they're seesawing. And I don't want one to gain power over the other. That paint is not a background for that photograph. But sometimes it becomes so. And if it works, I leave it. But most of them are not backgrounds, they're well-integrated, they're juxtaposed parts...they interlock.

Q: Why do you feel the need to push it beyond that one surface?

A: Because the other would be too easy for me. There's another thing I want to say about the photo. I wish more than once a week that I did straight photographs and they sold and I could go to the negative and make another one. I wish that. I cannot do that with these pieces. There's no way that I can repeat them. I wish more than once a week that I did, like a lot of friends of mine, straight, even sports' paintings...and had people waiting in line for the paintings and I could charge big prices for them. I wish that at times. But then I say, I can't do that. I could do it, but I might go crazy in about five years, just go strictly bats. I mean, never come back. I'm having too much intriguing fun. I can go into this studio space, which is very crowded, but I can go into this space sick or well or any time of day or night and wander around in here and get attached to something. I'm not bored in here. I've got a million things I want to do in here. That's the reason I don't travel as much anymore.

Q: You've created your own world in the studio?

A: Like Rothko going through "his own museum," he called it, seeing his own stuff on people's walls. Someone else called it that, Picasso. I think. I use the slides as a vehicle to go through my own museum. I did a lecture on the eighth of January and just getting a little slide tray together for that particular time, 20 minutes or 30 minutes, caused me to go through my museum. And then I deliberately ask, "What are you going to say that might be valid to those people?"

Q: What would you like to say, Charles, without the interference of questions? Your point of view, Charles.

A: I would like to go back and say what I said when we started. Whether you're young or old or just starting out or even consider yourself a professional, if you aren't following your own voice, silent voices or whatever, your own feelings, if you've never tapped your own voice

as the source, I think you're really gypping yourself...even if you're a twin, there's something unique about you in particular. And there's something you can do with that as an artist.

Q: What can you suggest to someone who doesn't have financial independence or the...freedom...it's a little tougher. perhaps...

A: Start grabbing 5, 10, 15 minutes a day, like you're writing a book. Like you go to the bathroom, like you spend the time to eat, like you watch TV. Just a little each day. And call it your own, in a chamber, someplace where you can go quietly and sit down...let's say you're writing a book or let's say you're doing an eight-foot square painting. If you put 15 minutes for 365 days on that canvas, you're going to be through with it in a year. You might even be through with it six months from now. You're starting...you can't eat the whole thing at once. I mean, you've got an elephant to devour there and there's no need to say, "I gotta eat that sonofabitch

A: Plenty adequate, yeah. The support system is weak. That is what I really feel bad about. There's little courageous collecting going on. There are a few pockets of collecting and thank God for that.

Q: Do you want to be specific about the...

A: I really can't. But I know that I've been fortunate. I know also that I could count three people that I could call really, true collectors who buy...have large collections of my work. But gosh, that's nothing. In New York if you had three, well, maybe that's all you need. The only thing I see where anyone exerts any large amount of money is in cowboy art or sports or something like that...and it's unfortunate.

Q: The institutions contribute to that?

A: I think the institutions can be as guilty as any of us. I think we all contribute to it. But I think the institutions are locked up as tight as a drum.

Q: The alternative spaces are active. They support experimental art.

A: Yeah, and it's getting bet-

key to why I think I might be here. There are some gaps and those gaps open things up. Now, this is what I like about it. Because those holes and those voids those places, those hard times cause people to be very innovative. I think there are a lot of good signs. That's why I started spouting out at Diverse Works a year ago, or a year and a half or two years ago. I happened to be at a little open forum. There were not many people there, but I just started spouting out. And using HCP as an example of somebody doing a publication, somebody doing something that's beyond regionalism. I'm not saying they followed my advice or anything but look what's happened down there.

Q: You're pleased with the way Diverse Works has developed?

A: Yeah. I mean, it's exciting. They're doing things that people haven't thought of. I'm sorry they're not closer by. I'd like to walk over there every afternoon. But the point is that it's getting done. Sure you do a lot of things that don't work, but you do the workable, too. I still hold SPOT up as a shining example. I mean it. And I don't care whether you agree with that particular issue or don't agree with it. It's not just regional. And that's mainly what I'm interested in. I'm not a regional painter, but I'm classified as a regional painter. I don't do cowboys.

Q: Do you think the opening of the Menil collection will bring some added...

A: Oh, it's going to be fantastic. I mean, that's a monumental situation. No one can compete with that. And the fallout from that is going to be glorious. It's going to put everybody into a competitive spirit. It's going to excite the other institutions. The main thing that's happened this last year is the interchange between Diverse Works and HCP. That didn't exist before.

Q: Do you think it's necessary for the younger artists in Houston to build a network among themselves for showing their work, writing about it?

A: They're barracudas. Now it's barracuda-ville. You talk about network and that's all they think about. That's just like the yuppies. They don't think about protesting on a campus or supporting that, they're out there making money and putting it in a box. I think in a way it's just real tragic. But yes, you have to network now to survive.

Q: What do you recommend the artist pursue?

A: Work. There's no doubt about it...what we do is work. I have a lot of friends who are highly talented but they don't have the passion. And they're still wondering what's happened to them. And nothing will ever happen to them. They're dilettantes.

Q: Do you have any recommendations for the Center or SPOT? What do you think are its strong points, its weaknesses?

A: I really don't know what they are. And I don't know what is really the strongest point. I think the sustenance, the continuation of SPOT is more important to me because you're going to have some issues that bomb and some that are unique if you're experimenting at all. And I think you should experiment.

Q: In what way?

A: In a literary way and a visual way. Both ways. The way you did in the last issue, use valid letters to the editor. Because there was something going on there. And it extended the article.

Q: Unfortunately it's not easy to get the letters.

A: Well, one of the things we might do is get some feedback from New York, San Francisco, or L.A. and really get some hard criticism. Ask for it. The way you're asking for it from me. But I'm so close to it...I just want it to continue. I just love seeing

that thing happen. And once it stops I'm going to be very disappointed. I hate to say it, it might be even more important than the exhibits. Because it's still sitting there after the exhibit leaves. I think another thing that the Center could do and should do as quickly as possible, if they have to steal to do it, is get some audio visual equipment for the speakers who come through here. We're missing a fantastic opportunity. We ought to have a library of videotapes. But I like the Center because I'm really not a photographer or a painter. I'm a person over there. I don't threaten anyone. I may do it, but I'm not aware of it. And if I do I don't intend to threaten anyone. I just want to pick somebody up every now and then, including myself. But I think the Center, just like Diverse Works, is doing a very valid thing. It's doing it on eggshells. It's not doing it on any solid foundation at all. Isn't that right? And when you're doing stuff on eggshells, you're doing a dance. I mean, you're really doing a highly creative dance that might explode anytime and you might disappear. Just vanish. Gone. There just has to be some hope.

Q: There are very few people out there where you are.

A: I can't be there all the time but I'm aware of that position when I'm fearless. And I'm in the other position when I'm devastated too, just scared to death. I mean, where I feel like I have no control over the situation. And I really feel sorry for someone who says, "Oh I want to be an artist," and they really don't have any passion. I'm not talking about having the facility or the vehicle. You don't have to draw to get there. You don't need to even know how to use a camera to get there.

James Bell and I wish to thank Julie Lee, assistant editor of SPOT, and Professor Cynthia Freeland, University of Houston, for their time and patience in the editing of this interview.



Charles Schorre, Texas Gallery, 1972

tonight." But start finding...keeping a daybook and asking...even interviewing yourself. And finding what's going on inside of you. Why do you hate so-and-so? Why are you here? What brings you here—the money or the ecstasy or, you know, what the hell are you doing? Or what do you really want to do? Do you really want to make a lot of money for one year and jam it down someone's throat...and then get on with your life?

Q: Now you've talked about your daybooks before.

A: Yeah, the daybooks. Now, I never believed in daybooks. I told the students to use them but until

about...oh, I guess ten years ago, I

started using them. And...they're all over the place...my encyclopedia of me.

Q: And you just go back to them at random sometimes?

A: I go back to them as reference.

For instance, if our anniversary

comes up, I'll go back in the index

and see if I've written anything

about that. A poem—I'm not a poet,

but I've got some poems in there.

Any kind of new vision you can get

or any kind of new feeling you can get...that's why I like the Center so

much. Every time I go over there,

there's something new. But I don't

give it that much time because I'm

anxious to get back here. So it's

really a source place. And that's

what I like about making yourself

your own source place.

Q: You seem very positive about

Houston. You know, when we first

started the interview, you spoke of

the freedom here.

A: Yeah, I...I have the freedom

here...it's in kind of a negative

way. I couldn't work in Aspen or

Guadalajara or anyplace in Europe

where the scenery's really great.

Q: Well, how about the dialogue

that exists in a place like Houston?

Is it adequate for you?

ter...there's really a lot happening here.

Q: How about the area of publication?

A: It's better than it was. You can't just go out and publish a book. But there are a lot of people living here who are writers and photographers that do have their stuff published. So it's getting better.

Q: Is there a lot of interactiveness among these different groups, like writers and painters and dancers?

A: I don't know...haven't invested enough time.

Q: What about the level of criticism here?

A: Very sad...it's always been an "up for grabs" wasteland, but it seems to be getting better...people out there making some discoveries for themselves, getting some courage...it's moving along in slow motion. Critics need support also in order to do what they do.

Q: The schools?

A: Well, we're regional.

Q: How do you feel about the universities here, their art departments. Do you feel like they're fairly strong?

A: No, I really don't, but then again I have not given them enough time to really know what's going on. If art was making news in the universities, it would be hard to avoid.

Q: Then you have the other schools

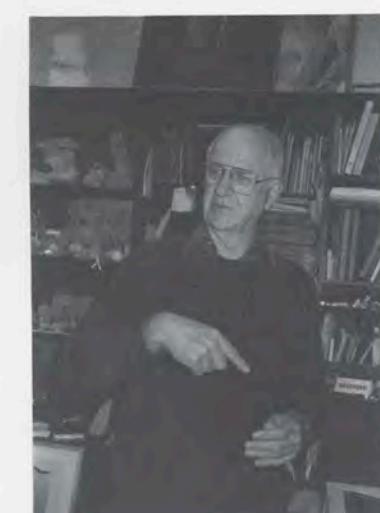
like Glassell.

A: I think that they're improving and they've got their own curatorial thing now for shows and they're doing better. I think it's very healthy looking. There's more life in the art community now. If it weren't, I wouldn't be here. You're here. Why are you here?

Q: Yeah, there are some gaps in the structure here that make it possible for people to create work I believe would be more difficult to do in other cities.

A: In a locked up city. You hit the

Photo by Lew Thomas, Inside Schorre's Studio



CHARLES SCHORRE

OUTTAKES

Schorre critique of other people's images held at HCP, September 23, 1986.

By April Rapier

"I've never done it before, because I don't believe in it." With that inauspicious warning serving as introduction began a heartening stream-of-consciousness examination—and, not surprisingly, self-examination—by Charles Schorre, artist and inspiration of some fifteen-odd portfolios. His explanation had to do with lack of follow-up or continuity, "not enough time to hold your intentions intact". He stated plainly that he had no plan, then, engaging the audiences' participation, went on to illuminate pictures that ranged from backyard to conceptual (the public was invited), invading each artist's self-awareness alarmingly and thoroughly. A most stimulating conversation transpired over the next two hours, and nobody went away mad. The following are some of his questions and ideas I'll remember for a long time.

In dealing with all varieties of work equally seriously, he declined intellectualizing, favoring a more visceral response to the images: "How many people react negatively? Positively? Do you feel this is you?" One senses that he both loves and hates photography (and certainly uses it in his paintings, drawings, and collages, saying, "You don't have to learn anything to do photography—just buy a camera. Lots of money and a good eye will give you the goods.") In thinking about fantasy and illusion, he said (seriously) he saw "Roger's nude in the room" (referring to a nude self-portrait by Roger Cutforth, spotted peripherally, during one rambling spurt), thereby illustrating the power of daydreaming—forcing oneself someplace else just for the fun of it. Schorre believes in disorientation, and likes to "make out like I'm someone else—it helps." This is confirmed by being in his studio, which is rather like being on an archeological dig, with stuff all over "from fifteen years ago". Great discoveries lie in the cast-off. On disorder, he said, "What's so great about crisis is you're not worrying about what clothes you have on. You're there—present—ears and toenails picking up stuff. Whether you realize it or not, we don't have control. You get screwed up for a while, but then you got more options—you can continue or not." With an anti-art bearing, he incited people to "do things you're not supposed to do: if you're poor, buy film with the food money. Figure out how to beat the rap." And, to be an artist, "you have to search for magic, be crazy, trust yourself, doubt yourself, and live between that." Any advice imparted seemed to bode more in the direction of self-awareness and discovery: for one, he said "find your vein, attach yourself and find out who you are". To another, in ever so gently unmasking artless sentimentality, he said, "if you want to get jolted, you can go someplace and get jolted, and then you can come back. But if you're not trying to prove anything, it's a wonderful way to do a diary." The sternest and most general statement was vaguely psycho-political: "We're not in a naive state anymore. There are people out there with knives and bombs and they're out to get you".

The difficulty and beauty of a one-nighter is that one can't retract advice or admonishments; should they prove, even as they're being spoken, to be b.s.: Schorre's poetry had the grace of allowing the "student" an extension of what he or she already intuitively knew, a perfect way to be heard. But Schorre the augur, divines facts and omens alike.

INSTALLATIONS

K(AFKA)'S CASTLE AND MEDIA-MYTHS AT LAWNDALE

Installations. A Retreat for K., by Beth Secor and Elizabeth Ward, and Lip-Sync by Guillermo Pulido, recent recipients of the Lawndale Art & Performance Center's \$2,000 grants for interdisciplinary projects, were presented at Lawndale, January 3—February 2, 1987.

By Bill Frazier

In Franz Kafka's novel *The Castle* the protagonist K. tries unsuccessfully to transcend his humble earthly origins and gain admittance to a higher order. The presence of two levels of spiritual existence, the earthly and the divine, are represented by life in the village and life in the castle which is situated on a hill above the town. The promised deliverance from the mundane leads K. to spend his life in the village trying to ascend to his desired state of grace in the metaphorical castle.

Elisabeth Ward and Beth Secor have made *A Retreat for K.* in which the weary Land Surveyor might escape the frustrations of his daily failed attempts to get past the bureaucratic goons which prevent his admittance to the castle. The installation which they have produced is both comforting and alien, and parallels nicely the duality of hope and denial in Kafka's unfinished novel.

The entrance to the retreat is guarded by towering stacks of books which lean and threaten to fall on those who venture past. An entrance beyond these columns gives way to a meandering path which leads to an inviting, intimate space lined with bookshelves. The room is furnished with several chairs and a television. As I rested in one of the well worn overstuffed chairs, my own retreat was interrupted by a ringing telephone. As with the phone in the castle above the village, this phone rang for no apparent purpose, and went unanswered.

In the living room of this retreat, the television plays a series of dream-like vignettes in which the artists have chosen to interpret various segments of the novel. Rather than present a synopsis, they focus on events which convey some aspects of the personalities of K., Frieda, and the Count. While parts of the video gave a sense of these principal players in Kafka's novel, other segments of the video were unclear and were not helpful in decoding the installation. An audial track, playing over the video and telephones makes further references to K.'s plight. Ironically, the cacophonous combination of telephone bells, television, and audio track presented a specter which made it impossible to find rest there.

Ward and Secor have carefully neutralized all color in their installation by painting all books, chairs, and other objects in a black/white/grey scheme. These tones might also be used in a por-



Lip-Sync by Guillermo Pulido

trait of K. who put limits on his emotional responses. He preferred to concentrate on his obsessive quest for access to the castle with its promise of salvation, rather than accept the varied colors of life at hand. The artists have fashioned an environment which conveys the writer's obsessive nature and interiority perfectly well.

In the next gallery bay, the multi-media installation LIP-SYNC combines video, projected still imagery, and sculpture in a spare environment. Artist Guillermo Pulido addresses some of the myth systems which operate within our culture. Sculptural representations of a fallen Latin cross and a goddess on a pedestal are each entrapped in a web-like cage. By focusing our attention directly upon the image signs of the cross and goddess, and placing them within the gallery, Pulido strips away the cultural context in which these objects are usually presented and forces us to consider them as just another myth symbol.

On a video monitor cultural artifacts from antiquity and the present are superimposed on a variable color field. A space ship

reminiscent of the Enterprise from *Star Trek* travels through nebulous color fields past images from cave paintings, and small fetish carvings like the *Bison with Turned Head* (c. 11,000 - 9,000 B.C.) and the *Venus of Willendorf* (c. 25,000 - 20,000 B.C.). As the Enterprise travels through time/space/history, it appears that Pulido is taking us on a voyage to locate the origins of the signs which are present in our culture today, trapped like ancient organisms in the amber of history.

The generalities of these image signs are contrasted with a voice over audio track of people reading personal histories in their native languages. The layering of these histories and cultural artifacts puts us in a position to contemplate our own present, and our relationship to the myths which inform our cultural identities.

A Houston photographer, Bill Frazier's work was shown recently in the exhibition, New Texas Photography, HCP and San Antonio Crafts Center.

Photo by Ron Ziebell: *A Retreat for K.* by Beth Secor and Elizabeth Ward



ANGELIC INSTALLATION

Angels Angels, hand-colored photographs by Mary Margaret Hansen were installed at Butera's on Alabama, December 8, 1986—January 4, 1987.

By Geoffrey Brune

The concept of using a single theme, manipulated against itself to produce a body of work, has long been a method of exploration for artists of all disciplines. Bach, in creating the Royal Theme as a basis for producing his *Musical Offering*, offers an example of one of the most sophisticated series of reinventions upon a single theme ever devised. The idea of a canon is that one single theme is played against itself. Bach escalates the complexity when the "copies" of the theme are staggered; when the speeds of the different voices are not equal; and when the theme is inverted upon itself, read backwards or improvised upon. All of this results in multiple readings and interpretations of the original theme.

Mary Margaret Hansen's photographs are based on a theme, defined by the use of a single image to produce a series of work. This



Mary Margaret Hansen, Angels, Angels: Installation

theme, an angel, is the consistent photographic image that is played against itself and augmented by the addition of other elements to create the multiple readings of the original theme.

Scale, as an element of photographic reinterpretation, is well employed in these works. The large size of the prints in their montage causes the viewer to focus on the details of the images presented. In "Five of Us are Here" we do see that angels may have freckles; that these angels have a more human reading beyond their cast concrete exterior.

In conjunction with the upscaling of the image size is the redefinition of the frames. These images are not contained by the typical exhibition glass and metal, but enhanced by surrounds intended, we assume, to be an integral part of each work. When the frame takes on this importance, it must interact with the work itself. In "Four Seasons" we see the best use of the frame as an element

that defines a reinvention of image within the image itself. This also occurs to some degree in "Five of Us are Here"; as the coloring of the images and frame shift in concert from one side of the work to the other.

The addition of language as an inner frame layers another level of meaning to each of the works. We find that in "Five of Us are Here" the images are redefined by a shifting viewpoint created by their relationship to the corresponding text. In another work, "Angels are not Birds", our vision of an angel as transparent is put in stark contradiction with the image of a cast concrete angel: "angels are not swept along by the wind as many birds are."

Included with the four two-dimensional works were four shadow boxes. These pieces attempted to redefine the original theme by the addition of objects related to the images. The distance of reading between the photographic image and the actual objects was too great to allow a meaningful interaction. The reinterpretation of the objects in a similar media would have facilitated this interaction much as the hand painting of the photographs and their frames, in the same manner, fuses their mean-

ings. At the same time, the text and juxtaposition of the images and objects resulted in a delightful humor.

Angels, Angels was well suited for the space in which it was exhibited. The nature of the work for the Christmas holiday season was certainly appropriate. The willingness of the artist to present work outside the conventional gallery/museum environment is commendable. It is also very encouraging to have an establishment such as Butera's exhibiting a wide range of photography. It would be interesting to learn of their clientele's reactions to the work and to what extent future exhibits may challenge our perceptions of the world.

Geoffrey Brune is an architect and photographer who teaches design at the University of Houston.

INTRUDER IN THE PUNK

An Anthology of Punk and Other Ill-Defined Attitudes by Ben DeSoto was shown at ONWAUGH, January 10—February 4, 1987.

By James Bell

There is something historically attractive about Houston that encourages independent action and entrepreneurial spirit. A town created by speculators, settled by pioneers, populated by opportunists, whose economic climate is regulated only by the extremes of boom and bust, just has to be an exciting and often frustrating place to call home. We glorify the wildcat and create our own systems for accomplishment.

Part of the excitement being created in Houston comes from the energy of independent artists and musicians working totally outside the normal systems of galleries, clubs, schools or other institutions. These artists are the risk takers, the wildcatters. Their work falls somewhere outside the existing language of popular "ART" and sometimes falls flat on its face, and that is what risk is all about.

Ben DeSoto gets paid by a major newspaper to be the intruder...to photograph a portion of some life or event that will make the viewer feel a part of it. When DeSoto is on his own time he still plays the intruder, photographing subjects of his own choice and interest. One of these interests has been the punk club scene, and that was the subject matter for an exhibit at ONWAUGH gallery. DeSoto presented images that were made to document the punk scene which he admits actually died about 1980. Included in his images are the punk icons and artifacts, hair styles and behavior that represented the punk experience. DeSoto has actually rephotographed most of the original work to gain quality control over exposure, cropping, and the addition of borders and captions to the images. This recreation of the original image is done in an obvious manner and in some cases is meant to soften the impact of potentially offensive subjects by distancing the viewer from the immediacy of the original.

The installation of the photographs was done by nailing them to the walls in an appropriately punkish style. It appeared as if this might have been done with an air powered nail-driver from across the room. The images were generally arranged by location or featured performers. The lyrics of DeSoto's favorite punk songs were spray painted on every square foot of wall space not covered by photographs, adding yet another layer to the experience of the opening night crowd who in turn became another layer to the experience.

After a viewing of the work one might question Ben's anticipation of the audience's sensitivity. Traditional photographers would be less upset by the subject matter than DeSoto's irreverence toward the silver gelatin print. A study of the images reveals that this irreverence is well founded and in this case served to enhance rather than detract from the success of the show.

James Bell is a photographer and reporter-analyst of the Houston avant-garde.



Ben DeSoto, Installation at ONWAUGH

EXHIBITIONS

HIP/COOL SEVENTIES PHOTOS

Ralph Gibson's photographs were shown at Bentler Morgan Galleries, December 5, 1986—January 16, 1987.

By Paul Hester

Knowledge changes every day. People like to have their beliefs reinforced. Don't lie down after eating a heavy meal. Don't drink liquor on an empty stomach. If you must swim, wait at least an hour after eating. The world is more complicated for adults than it is for children. We didn't grow up with all these shifting facts and attitudes. One day they just started appearing. So people need to be reassured by someone in a position of authority that a certain way to do something is the right way or the wrong way, at least for the time being. Don DeLillo, *White Noise*

Why are these pictures so grainy? What is going on in these pictures?

What is going on outside these pictures?

Most of the photographs in this installation at Bentler-Morgan Gallery were initially presented by Ralph Gibson through the self-publishing project of Lustrum Press under such titles as *Déjà Vu* and the *Somnambulist*. The images and titles represent some nadir of hip/cool photography in the seventies. The sequence of images within each book suggests a highly significant narrative. But this particular installation ripped the images from their position within the book's structure and considered them only as isolated objects for connoisseurship.

It is important to question the function of such an exhibition. A museum exhibition frequently retrospectively reviews a photographer's work over several years, placing some context upon more recent or known images. The photographer is certified in the process as a worthy recipient of such institutionalized attention; his or her seriousness is noted by the demonstration of a sustained effort.

A gallery, on the other hand, in the more overt operation of profit-making, has a choice. If it exists in a market noted for purchase of so-called avant-garde production, it

can offer the appearance of hot items, freshly minted. A timid market, unsure of knowledge and instincts, will lead a gallery toward the reassuring postures of "old" masters.

A non-profit gallery such as the Houston Center for Photography, without the need to certify distinguished careers or produce an exceptional profit, can be uninhibited in its commitment to an educational role. If it becomes pedantic, it loses the confidence of its audience; but as long as it sustains didactic positions, the challenges directed against it become a measure of its success.

If the provocative installations presented recently in the HCP have demanded more participation than you've been willing to extend, perhaps this Gibson exhibition was correctly positioned. Its seventies' minimalism was sufficiently arranged against naturalism to give it the air of radicalism, and it simultaneously invited an interpretive romanticism to fill in the blanks of its suggestive posturing.

Perhaps, I'm being too harsh. The gallery could just as easily have opted for John Sexton landscapes to reassure the market's craving for the predictably picturesque. Perhaps Gibson is considered risky business for a gallery in postboom Houston. If I was irritated by his contrasty, grainy prints and resented his narrow vision and reductivist imagery, then it was useful for the gallery to retrieve these fifteen year-old prints for this instructive demonstration.

But the private, reflexive meanings were even more obscured by an indiscriminate installation. Without the narrative sequence, the works appear as random curiosities, odd fragments of a myopic vision. The possibility of reconstructing a coherent viewpoint is deemed unimportant. Presumably each jewel is there to be admired in its formal beauty. But what about the sly, covert voyeurism, the formal equations that imply profound relationships between the line on the road and the board in the hand.

Surely the simple-minded appeal of reducing the rich and complex world to a connoisseur's emotionally cold and detached pleasure must be in some way resisted, analyzed, or at the very least not concealed by the installation.

The appearance in the photographs of an intimate distance within personal situations seduces the viewer into believing that something has been probed; that he/she now knows, through a graphically distilled grain-structure, the essence of a mystery.

But in fact the essentials have been removed: reduced to shadows, formal echoes and minor gestures. The mystery is perpetuated at the expense of understanding.

the essay before seeing the book: in much the same emotional framework am I disappointed to have seen the exhibit first, without benefit of Grundberg's walkthrough, such was its ability to re-open a mind that had been put off by the exhibit's sad neutralization in a museum setting. As a book, the pictures are concentrated, willful, extreme.

In spite of Grundberg's clear-headed persuasiveness, I went into the book thinking along dogmatic lines, seeking the equilibrium of a connection between pictures and text, which may or may not have emerged. Nor did it have to. Although Turyn's details are well-attended to and wholly intact, the reader labors under a bewildering array of ambiguity: many readers will throw up protective intellectual blinders. At the same time, however, one is emotionally eased away from the barricade of unrealistic expectation by a feeling of being taken into Turyn's confidence. (Her storytelling stance is such that one sees beyond, as if sneaking back uninvited for more.) This brings out the voyeur in the most well-intended of us.

Turyn divided the book into four parts: "Dear Pen Pal," "Lessons and Notes," "Dear John," and "Flashbulb Memories." The book as a whole serves as notice of a dying culture: one watches for secret messages, encoded subtextual updates. Information is buried, often as nonsensical as dreams. In all four sections, prose is spare, rather like short stories that echo unfulfillingly, mockingly. Narration (language) can be that of the non sequitur, and flows the way thought patterning fires and reverberates, exploding in a thousand directions at once. If not inclined to participate in this pessimistic vision, one is, at the least, left with the reduction of a culture steeped in ultimate frustration, disbelief, and hopelessness. I like her attitude.

The most overtly propagandistic (in intent and result) movement in the suite is "Dear Pen Pal" (1979-80); one is offered an opportunity to participate in satire after an absurdist parable model. This is radical stuff, and one is inclined to start sniffing the air, instincts bristling. Her function as Chicken Little is to tell us that the natural order of things isn't working out as planned: having been thus informed that John Galt is dead, one begins the search for an exit or punchline. One feels that the point of view is neither singular nor unique, but a synthesis. The photo set-ups here are illustrative, devoid of any humor or charm whatsoever. The messages are written in felt on a Big Chief tablet; someone got an A in printing (cursive falls off dramatically elsewhere). The lessons here are fragmented and compartmentalized, their outcome more or less selections from swill; in "Lessons and Notes", the terror of the hypothetical is met as captions are presented. One is inspired to conjure up equally banal maxims and slogans, evoking a combative response.

The photographs in "Dear John" (1981), are most cryptic: the icons of courtship are fetishistic and the body language between participants is menacing. What occurs immediately in response to the text is the uppermost thing in one's mind in similar situations, and also the one thing that never gets said. There is evidence of second thought: in plate 36, for example, a white-gloved hand prepares to accept a gift as the other hand, hidden behind the back, shows the camera the letter; plate 27 demonstrates that things could change, just as the note might get torn up. Most of the point of the text in this section is, unfortunately, the joke or the pun, which debases and sidetracks the seriousness of the ideas. The photographs far exceed the text in intrigue. In some, "real" photographs

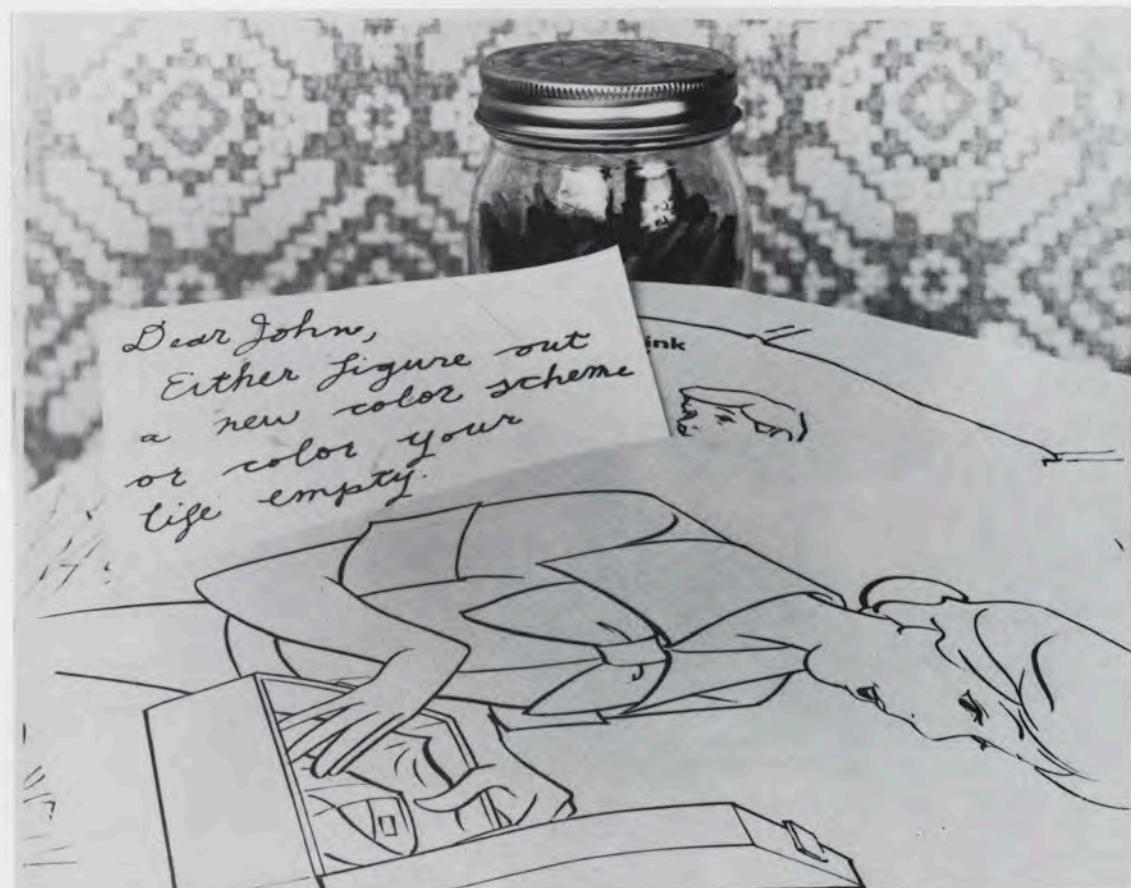
of happier times are interjected and act as a device to firmly establish the fantasy; in others, a character might seem to address directly the audience, stepping outside the fiction. However, all these tales of foolish ardor, whether letters are being presented concurrently or after the fact, seem to bait a reply or reaction from the viewer. As the pace accelerates, one fears confrontation (vicarious) as inevitable, whether both characters are present or not. None of the letters is signed. Plate 37 is particularly grating, for two reasons. The recipient of the letter, which is tacked to the outside of the door, reads and knocks simultaneously, filthy fingernails and filthier seersucker suit standing out. The note itself (in fact, all the notes) is written in a rather eccentric hand, little squiggles crossing T's. Surely one is to take it all in, especially if one is the least interested in mark-making. One wishes to see more of the ilk of plate 38 (subtle references to departure, the letter sealed in an envelope) and less like plate 32, in which text goes one line too far.

"Lessons and Notes" (1982), explores, one suspects, a bit of oddness for oddness' sake, so disjunctive and surreal are many of the objects contained within a given

The section "Flashbulb Memories" (1986), is preceded by a little definition, which reads convincingly (the definition was not found in the O.E.D.—one speculates as to whose definition is being presented as fact . . .). One also speculates as to whether the headlines that blaze across the frames like a ticker tape aren't fabricated as well, so appalling is the content of their messages out of context. Trouble is, they and the images seem to be interchangeable. One expects, and looks for, some serious symbolic posturing or objectification, but the images offer more insight into prevailing style or fashion (Turyn, through the images, has junk-store aficionado written all over her). In fact, they begin visually as illustrative, sparse, period piece camp and escalate shrilly. Yet the pieces uniformly resonate from the ordinariness that prevails over our lives in spite of universal and personal mad comings and goings. Perhaps Turyn is projecting what the mind might visually do to create order from something truly awful. In plate 71, "8.15.1945", tools of the journalistic trade (typewriter, telephone, and what looks to be a very early model of an electric pencil sharpener) act as primitive portents of the future

your thinking?

In the spirit of this magnificent book, I now assume the first person and create my own conceptual model. I am aboard an airplane, influenced by a pretty unreal block of time in which to contemplate art, life, what have you. My photograph is made out of the window, as another plane crosses below at a 45 degree angle, leaving a snowy contrail. Under the influence of the Turyn model, my headline or lesson would be the one from a recent sleazy and ridiculous tabloid, about the family that spent Christmas aboard an alien spaceship. I'd leave the picture of the proud and happy family in, to ground the mountains and grids and smoke and shiny river ribbons and miniature vulnerable towns below. I would try to include the head of the passenger seated directly in front of me (whose seat back has remained bolt upright), and maybe a stray lock of my own hair over the lens. But the camera is packed away, and I digress. This sort of wretched excess is precisely what is inspired, just as a need to confide and unload, to share similar feelings and mutual experiences (except in great and thorough detail, a departure from her synopsis) unleashes itself in a torrent. This is



Anne Turyn, Dear John

frame. On one level, small world/big world representation is examined through dysfunctional role-playing and option-exploring; on another level, the presentations act more as morality plays. Both conclude with global resonance a foregone conclusion. If one could do childhood over, fully armed this time, these are the things one would like to have thought and said. (See plate 43.) They pose the question one isn't permitted to ask; they are the lessons to be gotten early on, and maybe forgotten. One begins to hope that this meddling might alter or sway the inevitable end.

Children are ghostly soft blurs, faces dark or away from the camera. The symbology is overtly loaded and hard to pin down, so dire is the predicted outcome. Plate 56 deals with *de facto* truth, rules that are nowhere written and critical to a particular level of survival. The children seem to be processing (or co-processing, the duality and sometimes contradictory nature of the messages acted out between chalkboard and erasable plastic tablet and information charts) in much the same way that they dream, without resistance or intent. One wonders how children function at all in a world where inappropriate measures, pressures and roles imposed are the norm.

our conversation.

When re-reading the text in the list of plates, one has a wholly different experience of it. In headline/picture context, much is sublimated; the product is incomplete. The text is associative: TV, pictures, accompanying stories fulfill one another. Our conjunctive reality is solidified and enforced by pictures and the visual memory of them. The headlines back in context refurbish the memory, a post-mortem memorial. Rarely is one offered the chance to legitimize something for ourselves by mourning it second hand, to reflect extra-morally on the absurdity and randomness of life.

PARABLE MODEL FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

Missives. Anne Turyn, Alfred van der Marck Editions, essay by Andy Grundberg, 1986. \$35.00

By April Rapier

In the introductory essay to Anne Turyn's book *Missives* Andy Grundberg informs and advises, explicating, calling upon literary history and modern art (including various high priests and priestesses of the East and West coasts), even invoking the venerable ghost of Count Dracula. One is wheedled and, when all else fails, manipulated, in order that the images not be derailed in advance of being understood—or go unexamined for want of appropriate preamble. I am glad to have read

A BIG HIT IN HOUSTON

Slide show and exhibition of George O. Jackson's photographs of the Houston skyline were presented at Transco Tower, December 12, 1986—January 9, 1987.

By Patsy Cravens

As our autumnal calm turned to Christmas panic, we were fortunate indeed if we took the time to attend the audio-visual presentation of Houston images produced by the Foundation for Modern Music and created by three Houstonians—George O. Jackson, photographer, Art Gottschalk, composer of electronic music and associate professor of music at Rice University, and Doug Killgore, producer of slide shows. The event played to enthusiastic audiences for one evening at Transco Tower. It is listed as an official Texas Sesquicentennial event.

The photographic images are the creation of GeorgeO who began the project 30 months ago when he moved into a 28th floor apartment in a building situated between Houston's downtown and the Herman Park-Medical Center area. He found himself enchanted by the view and decided to put his energies into recording his new-found cityscape. On his balconies which face west and north, he set up two cameras on tripods and began the accumulation of over 20,000 images on slides. He is still at it.

Day, night, twilight, storm, sunrise, sunset, lightning, fog, all are here, plus street dramas such as police raids, house fires, and bike races. You feel, talking with him, that nothing of note in the last three years has escaped his eager eye and his trusty 500mm lens.

The show was the result of GeorgeO's desire to exhibit his photographs, and it was a good decision to show them as slides instead of prints and to put them in this form, with music and numerous projectors, because the musical and visual rhythms so enhance the pictures. They come alive and dance. When seen individually as prints, the images have a heavy, static quality about them and lack the spark and pizzazz they had in the slide show. We all have regrets about the life and illumination lost when our works go from slide to print, but sometimes this loss seems especially pronounced as it does here. It's a shame because some of them are quite nice pictures.

The audio-visual show is 14 minutes long and uses multiple projectors. It has five sections distinguished by changes in the musical mood as well as in the imagery. It begins with an introduction to the downtown buildings, followed by a more syncopated part which introduces people in the streets, a darker section with heavy music and pictures of smog, smoke, industry and a growing storm, the aftermath of the storm set to a Latin beat, and finally nighttime with lights, the moon, and sultry, swinging nightclub music. One of the really disturbing problems with the production is the abruptness of the changes from one part to another. One section ends "boom!", followed by an awkward silence, and another part begins. These jarring breaks disrupt the flow and jolt the mental and emotional continuity for the viewers.

Another distraction is an occasional awkwardness with some of the technical devices. Sometimes the slide sequencing seems contrived and gimmicky. Images shown straight on and reversed side by side are ho-hum. A skyscraper seen statically with the sun moving over it through the day is okay once, a yawn after that. And I ask, why display three slides simultaneously



George O. Jackson, original photo in color

unless they enhance each other in some way. I think that the dissolves and fade-outs and flashing of images should be retained when they are effective and eliminated when they are not. The show is so successful when it succeeds (and it usually does) but it becomes slightly heavy and labored once or twice and would benefit by being shortened some. There seems to be a climax with the lightning storm and a dramatic respite with the following rainbow and after-storm shots; so why return to showing us more banal buildings? Dramatic impact is lost. Probably the most annoying thing to me besides the awkward transitions was the trick with the moon enlarged to gargantuan proportions to tower over the buildings. In my mind, the images can carry themselves and do not need or benefit from that type of production.

On the plus side there is a verve, a liveliness, a *joie de vivre*, and a fun and captivating beat to the show that works very well most of the time and sends our imaginations dancing. The photographer's joy with his project comes across clearly and enlivens the audience. The construction of the slideshow is successful on the whole (even though it was assembled very quickly). The music, which was created for the event, is marvelous. It is all electronic until the end when a saxophone and a bass guitar join in. It helps a lot in creating the mood as it rumbles, soars, swings, hisses, chimes, and boogies as the scenes require. It works.

If asked for my advice, it would be to clean and dust off the slides, replace the weaker images, smooth the transitions, simplify the projection devices slightly and shorten it

all just a little. GeorgeO says he wants to rework portions of the presentation and show it again. He has lots of interesting plans in the works including a video of this production. That sounds great.

I suggest he reprint the images in a lighter, more ethereal fashion... shorter exposure times or whatever would make the pictures less heavy... or just use them as transparencies and forget prints for now. Anyone can photograph Transco Tower, but not everyone can create such a delightful ensemble as this.

The most evocative and memorable image in the entire piece is the last one. Almost a Japanese print, it is a long shot of a cluster of skyscrapers rising eerily in the far distance out of a foggy scene in which housetops are barely visible. Is it heaven and hades? Is it Camelot? The photographer's secret vision of Houston? He should play more with the mysterious. GeorgeO has got some unusual qualities, among them a quirky sense of humor, a fey outlook on life, a pleasure in watching people and a wonderful whimsy. I wish he could employ these qualities in his picture taking. When he describes a current project using a "family" of carved wooden figures that enact various dramas daily in his apartment, you feel happily sure he is going in the right direction.

Would this show be interesting to people in other cities? I'm not sure. But it is a big hit in Houston and that is enough for now.

Photographer and writer, Patsy Cravens' work was exhibited recently in The Texas Annual at the Laguna Gloria Museum in Austin, Texas.

slide film, but they are all the more beautiful in their uniqueness.) He sets up the shot so that the audience can discover for itself the surprises available, always including a bit more than necessary in the frame.

To travel is a great privilege: Cozens refrains from gloating over his good fortune by practicing measured visual restraint, which increases proportionately to the inspiration of the location. The image entitled "Uluru" gives pause regarding what man could possibly have in mind in his supposed "great" moments of design and ingenuity: a vast red mountain of rock is divided (dead center in the photograph) by metal poles and chain, the loopy shadows as tactile and solid as the actual fence. As one puzzles over its presence, it leads the eye to infinity and a blue sky over the mountain edge. "Little Uluru" is an image of similar bare, red terrain, the sky threatening inclement weather. Although there are various people and dogs gathered, no one performs for the camera—he is in absolute control of the moment. Cozens chooses not to disclose the reason they are assembled in such a seemingly unlikely place. In "Olgas," the sky is darker and heavier, scale interplaying with grandeur, mood, and space. A large landscape entitled "Taos" evokes all colors of the earth in a very visceral manner—it is the elemental composition of the place that is seductive, not its visual composition.

Cozens catalogues petroglyphs and paintings or rocks and potted palms on boardwalks with a similar disengagement and design sense: two images stand out in contrast to this approach. One, "Adelaide," is a self-portrait in an enormous glass building front. All the other buildings that reflect around him are reversed and diminished, as is the scale of everything by or near the oversized sidewalk in the foreground. There is a sun flare dead center in the window, distracting the eye away from Cozens, who, but for the presence of the camera, appears to be a bystander, so casual is his stance. The other, "Dai Well," infers far more, relying less on a clean visual design to tell a distinct story. Blurry things rise and swell in the distance, through windows and deteriorating walls, and illegible signs in characters warn and tease. Nature pokes around the sides of what one finally discovers to be a structure. Conclusions are not presupposed in either of the images.

Seeing the photographs is well worth the oddness of experiencing them over half-eaten plates of abandoned food, or discreetly approaching tables to look over private conversations, only to have them stopped cold. The lighting is subdued—fine for dining, less than perfect for appreciating the subtleties of art. Cozens has created lovely reminders that double as incentive to roam.

Robert Cozens, Cibachrome Diptych: School House



AMAZING POWERS OF OBSERVATION

By April Rapier

Geoff Winningham. A Place of Dreams: Houston, An American. Rice University Press, 1986. \$39.95

Geoff Winningham's book and exhibition (September 5 - October 8, 1986, Sewall Gallery, Rice University) began as a project, commissioned by the Houston Office of Urban Investment and Development Company, to photograph the central city, bounded by Loop 610. Encouraged by the impending sesquicentennial, the project aspired to become a survey of the entire city, a "photographic record of Houston's landscape, architecture, and people of all social strata, evidence of the city's roots and history, its myths and energy." It is a tribute to Winningham's good sense that he chose to overshadow the obvious—the platitudes and clichés, the guaranteed glamour shots, adumbrating the imminent decline, and so forth, concentrating, rather, on the quirky vision that resulted in other of his books, *Friday Night in the Colosseum* and *Going Texan* affording the best examples of this vision. By leaving the necessary dirty work—chirpy pap, historical background, and entertaining profiles of ordinary residents—to Al Reinert's text, he was able to tell a very visual story. Houston has two distinct physical faces: one is characterized by the abundant greenery, difficult to contain or control, an extended growing season produces; the other is a modernist vision and its extremes, from cosmopolitan—the architectural envy of the twentieth century, to the wastelands of barren subdivisions and hundreds of identical apartment complexes. (The city, sadly, has lost some great historical sites to an unchecked building frenzy that will be remembered, mainly, by poor planning and thoughtlessness.) Our freeways, another distinctive feature (extremes, both good and awful, constitute a subtle theme of the book) are examined, set apart as formidable entities of their own devising, worlds unto themselves. Winningham's exploration neither patronizes nor takes sides; inhabitants of the best and worst the city has to offer are perceived as equally vital. The landscapes function as anti-landscapes, so deliberate is their lack of grandeur, that tiresome and incomplete characterization of the southwest as one wide-open vista after another. Sky and trees do engulf city and neighborhoods; elegant and exclusive areas and the run-down inner city are seen alike through a veiled aloofness (haze descends indiscriminately). The contradictions are most interesting when Winningham shows schisms as overlay: a phallic Oz of glass and steel pokes around corners, meekly asserting its presence as overseer, its stature reduced to relatively minor when seen through bayou landscape or as backdrop to the ghetto.

Winnigham wields his fair share of sleight-of-hand by allowing the city's structure to speak for itself. At times, pictures with undeveloped land as foreground preclude the possibility that alternate aspects exist. Other images show the city proper as a dim relic, a remnant surrounded by civilization in decline and nature at its zenith. The contrasts don't seem at odds, nor is there a sense of, for example, the imminent displacement of stylized, bucolic areas he portrays as static, immutable. The icons and emporiums that remain standing endure but do not thrive, they and their proprietors documented with affection and admiration. Although the commerciality of recent years subsumes, all is well or at least hopeful



Geoff Winningham, Under the Main Street Bridge, Allens Landing

in Winningham's world.

The book is sectioned, with Reinert's essays leading off, so that the idea of Houston begins quietly and accelerates as the reader is brought downtown. Stylistically, it migrates from journalism in passing from slick annual report commerciality to seasoned pro playing the crowds to that which is highly personal and deeply felt. One is thus prepared for the visual onslaught to come. (The stories function in much the same way.) The manner in which Winningham translates these monoliths is identical in spirit to the rodeo and wrestling pictures, and is greatly different than his dealing with funky landmarks and residents in passing; his physical point of view, enhanced by a wide angle lens, layers the pictures with an invasive intentionality that transcends interpretation. (This is clearest in his "society" pictures, discussed later.) The attendant details in any given image are as important as the subject itself. But the details don't pop—information is immediately available, design trickery foregone. Winningham's vision and the material he catalogues need not be enriched by such practices.

Politics invade subliminally in most instances, layers of internal and external structuring most obvious in images of the upper crust. His is an insider's view, and by maintaining a low, uncontroversial profile, he earns a large measure of trust and invisibility. These images, oddly, take one back to rodeo days, where spandex-popping figures and somber tones are accented by red fingernails and catchlights bouncing off bejewelled costumes. The more interactive and confrontational portraiture takes one away from the memory of former work, bringing to mind Winningham's work in Mexico. The city's eccentricities slip in without fanfare or too much explanation, caught in the act rather than performing to odd reputation.

Galas, cultural events, proms or quinceañeras are all lit alike: the light is strong, exposing the immediacy in the foreground and the continuum in the background. Prominent players and functionaries exchange roles and degrees of importance as positions shift. The ballet is dealt with exceptionally; Degas' influence upon this vision is profound, just as it is in the wrestling imagery (in this case a parallel more so than an adulation). Part of what makes Winningham's work such a bizarre cultural examination is his role as distant observer. He seems to avoid immersion and palling up to those he scrutinizes. The result, whether observing drooling and terrified champion livestock being photographed by the press, or the wealthy and powerful who, when

cornered by obtrusive cameras, compensate for an equivalent terror with cheesy smiles and hollow aplomb, is in part due to his cutting his subjects so wide a berth, allowing one and all to react however they please. This, coupled with a

singular attention to detail and observation powers enhanced by the luck of the decisive moment produced a body of work that will endure in tribute to that which Winningham clearly loves.



Rosamond Wolff Purcell, Poison Arrow Frog

CREATURE PICTURES

Illuminations: A Bestiary. Rosamond Wolff Purcell and Stephen Jay Gould. W.W. Norton and Company, 1986. \$35.00

By April Rapier

Rosamond Wolff Purcell's intellectual interests and visual pursuits are grand and diverse, her thoughts never still. Her languaging is that of one who constantly draws connections from a puzzling world, acute, sensible connections and parallels that instill a sense of well-being and hope. Her pictures have been called upon to fulfill disparate roles, many of which she would reject, without hesitation, as non-applicable. She has stated quite plainly, however, that she learns a good deal from the fuss. In *Illuminations: A Bestiary*, the most recent of her books, a collaboration with Gould (and a perfect one at that, given the levels of interest, participation, and processing of the natural order of things), creatures are suspended, no visible means of containment or support to be seen, floating and fragile. Yet for having endured the rigorous indignities of age and preservation, the specimens are vibrant and warm, removed from laboratory associations. One is enabled, by this presentation—a willful act—to look at life and death squarely, so animated are the remnants in their stillness.

The text gets read inevitably, for Gould is a very moving writer and

thinker. But one turns to the images repeatedly for a strange comfort (death is rendered beautiful and only slightly scary in this context) and visual joy. A good portion of the book's intrigue is due to the lighting—rich and warm, from natural sources. Shadows are tactile, textures and forms run deep. Fragments of bones serve as metaphors for the creatures, as a rich interplay between subject and surrounding calls upon time itself to act as guide and interpreter. (Purcell, a wholehearted collector of junk, brought in her own backgrounds.) The details seem enriched, as though an act of marking or overlay intervened. Inclusion in the frame is spare, every square inch perfectly filled, and Purcell's interpretation of subject is lyrical and referential, providing the ideal contrast to Gould's pedagogic, factual storytelling. The two together weave a powerful spell.

One begins to experience an unassailable and unlikely affection for the wizened animals, in much the same way that one is both attracted to and repelled or saddened by Purcell's earlier images of stuffed and stitched monkeys. The pictures are terribly interesting, compelling on many levels, both visceral and intellectual. Their color-saturated beauty, due to the injection of various tracing stains, bridges an important gap between the importance of art and its ability to be instructive. Gesturing as if alive, the beasts' rebirth sends

imagination reeling, in the process of anthropomorphizing and assigning all kinds of inappropriate feelings and characterizations to their subliminal animation.

The book possesses the rare ability to operate for children and adults equally, appealing to all who will encounter it (although the text might be a bit advanced—something to grow into). The pictures are as pure a loving look at animals and the way the world works as one is likely to experience. Few attempts are made to be all-inclusive or demonstrative, Purcell's bits and pieces having all the more clarity for subtlety. Whether creating interaction between species or between cotton batting and skeletal structure, the stories are complete and insightful, her understanding and empathy uncanny.

Purcell's afterword is as eloquent and clarifying as the pictures are intuitively striking and emotionally in communion with nature. She thinks and speaks as she sees, authority and openmindedness at peace and in parity.

Note: The Texas Photographic Society mounted an exhibition of Purcell's pictures, entitled Man and Beast, at the Amdur Gallery (November, 1986), in celebration of the book's publication.

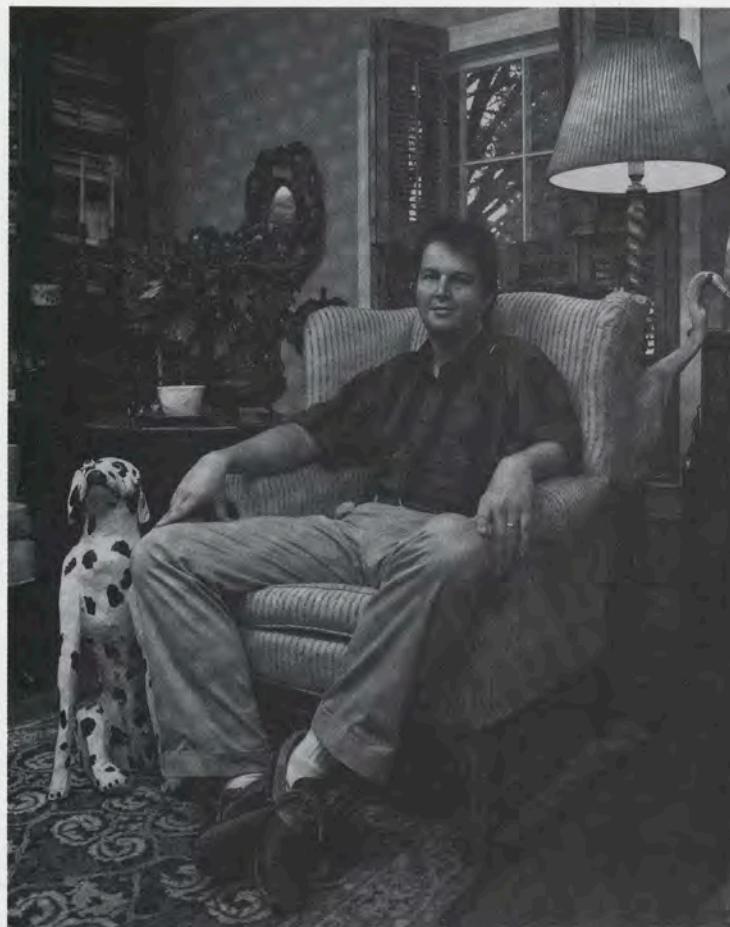
GAY BLOCK'S PORTRAITS

50 Texas artists: A Critical Selection of Painters and Sculptors Working in Texas by Annette Carozzi, photographs by Gay Block, was published by Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1986. \$35.00

By April Rapier

The book 50 Texas Artists perpetuates the fun-with-numbers, men-to-women myth: a 38-man-to-12-woman ratio strikes one as disproportionate. Oh well, no one said women curators were any more open-minded or just than men. That discordant note aside, the book is a curious and entertaining personality profile about artists—some interesting, others not. What is of great interest are Gay Block's portraits—collaborative pieces about secrets and inadvertent revelations. They, in conjunction with the "personal statements" and one representative artwork adjacent to the photographs form a compelling psychological tale. However, one mistrusts the vehicle, and justifiably so: most of the statements read like fiction or stream-of-consciousness prose; those that don't are discomfited or embarrassed. (One envisions a good deal of acting-out having transpired.) The notable exceptions—Bert Long and Gael Stack—rely upon humor and naive forthrightness, with just a touch of device, to see them clear.

It is impossible not to travel back and forth between the portrait, the statement, and the art: they form a triad that leads inconclusively elsewhere—to a vacuum. The photographs provide the escape back into the realm of possibility. Within the context of the photograph the artists try and hide things about themselves, whether emotional or physical; in the statements, subterfuge is the mandate or structure. Making an authoritative statement about one's work is generally viewed as living hell, and one is tempted to revert to anything but honesty in short order. These are the kinds of things that sound ok when spoken, but simply don't wash via the written word. One begins to wish not to be made privy to such innermost confidences: the artwork itself is a far better forum and sounding board. Hyperbole is rampant, as is narcissism: the photographs are free of much of this overlay. One wonders about the degree of sitter input in the final



Gay Block, David Bates

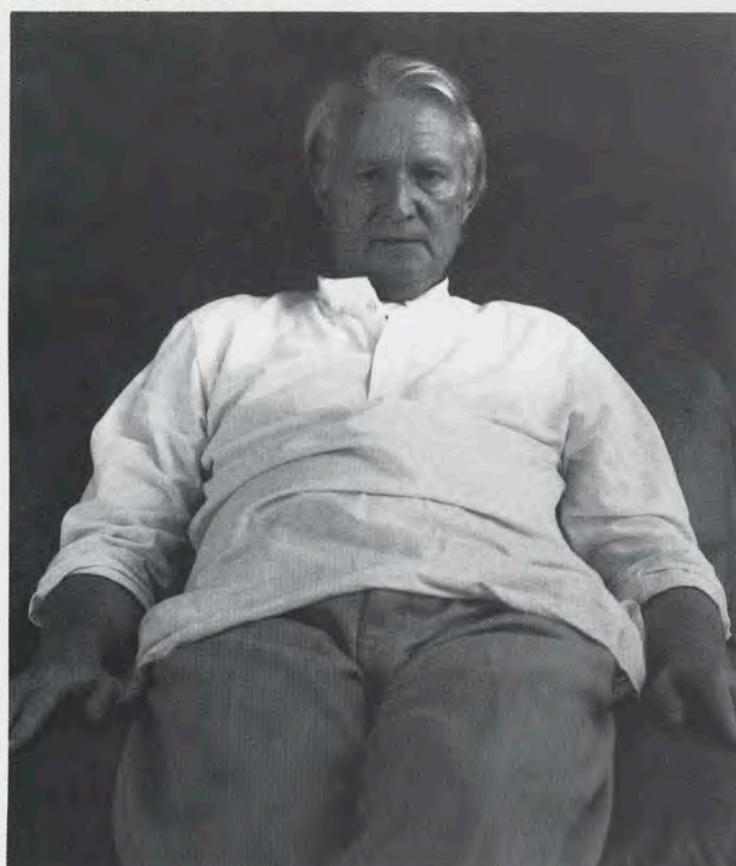
selection process; Block clarifies in her statement that there was a good deal of pre-production participation about location, inclusion of people, animals and props in frame, and intention. (All the dogs are pretty funny interlocutors.)

Minute details are enthralling: on the reverse side of this coin, the worst aspects of portraiture are exaggerated, so that smug translates *really* smug, eccentric blossoms into twilight zone. Disposition echoes in body language: there is a lot of seated elongation, controlled by Block's vantage point, tenseness in hands, deliberate neutrality in expression, the latter perhaps an attempt at being straightforward. Block's attention to detail belies comfort or ease in most of the portraits, for it is still a universally unsettling experience. Physical manifestation of artistic style shows up as uncanny coincidence in, say, pattern in clothing fabric and in canvas. The hands and fingers take on a life of their own, seeming removed or animated by a different set of stimuli.

Just as some artists habitually speak in incomplete sentences (the

act of creating an artwork being the completion of thought and communication), so do they offer here unintentional half-truths or outright fabrications to the camera. Surely Block's reassuringly rosy statement overlooks some measure of difficulty. The portraits that are unqualified successes at cutting through nonsense and going straight to essence are those of Gael Stack, Earl V. Staley, and James Surls. The joy and pain (and a vast range of emotions in between) are understated, and ring quite true. The portrait of John Tweedle is another simple moment, the three windows behind him acting as a triptych containing secrets to be decoded. Susan Whyne's stance is both defensive and defiant, a complete mystery. The inclusion of the painting of a large, scantly clad woman as backdrop in Bill Wiman's portrait is equally befuddling. But the beauty and grace of Block's work, characteristically, is that she takes only what is offered and renders it unmistakably humane, or inspired, or at the very least, intensely real within the context of one precise moment.

Gay Block, Joseph Glasco



THE RIVER OF LIGHT: LATIN AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Fondo de Cultura Económica, the official Mexican publishing agency, has issued the first eight of a projected 40 volume series documenting the course of Latin American Photography.

By Ed Osowski

In 1979 the International Center for Photography, in an exhibition titled *Fotografia Polska*, traced the history of the photographic image in Poland from 1839 to 1945. At the time the exhibition opened Hilton Kramer observed, "There is virtually nothing in it that anyone here has seen before." Remarkable for the breadth and variety of its images, *Fotografia Polska* was more instructive for how well it demonstrated the continuity of certain aesthetic and political issues shared by photographers working within and without Poland. Its effect was to correct gaps in our knowledge for we regularly tend to forget that photography as an art has been practiced in countries besides our own, France, and Great Britain.

Now, at a time when its financial resources have never been worse, the government of Mexico has initiated a remarkable project whose aim is similar to *Fotografia Polska*: to extend the range of our knowledge of those images that comprise the history of photography, and to pay special attention to the trends of the past twenty years. Called *Rio de Luz* (*River of Light*) and begun in 1984, its goal is to issue a series of publications, eventually to number forty, which document the course of Latin American photography. The first eight paper-bound books, printed by Fondo de Cultura Económica, the official Mexican publishing agency, have appeared.

Two volumes, *Historia Natural de Las Cosas* (*The Natural History of Things*, 1985) and *Jefes, Heroes y Caudillos* (*Chiefs, Heroes and Leaders*, 1986), serve as introductions to the entire project. From these two volumes emerge two traditions around which the series, to date, revolves.

Jefes, Heroes y Caudillos prints a wide selection from the Casasola archives of works that cover the revolutionary years 1903-1924. Some will be familiar to the viewer of the Casasola exhibition at Blaffer Gallery in Fall 1986. But here they "read" as object lessons in history. They are excellent examples of informed and committed "political" photography, one of the two traditions of the series. What they document is the development and persistence of the revolutionary spirit among the Mexican people. They locate in their subjects—Villa, Zapata, Huerta, Madero, Diaz, Obregon—those heroes (and villains) who failed to fulfill the hopes and trust placed in them. These are the secular saints who failed to answer the prayers addressed to them. As compelling as these photographs of known figures are, more compelling among the Casasola selections are the anonymous "everyman" and "everywoman" figures who embody the ongoing revolutionary virtues of heroism, valor, and strength.

The tradition that sees the ordinary person as embodying certain traits worthy of imitation is didactic, then, for how it encourages the viewer to find himself in the image. Hector Garcia's *Escribir con Luz* (*To Write with Light*, 1985), and Nacho Lopez' *Yo, El Ciudadano* (*I, the Urban Person*, 1984) are all examples of this tradition. They rely on the conventions of documentary and photojournalism to present images that are safe, at times cute and sentimental. In their books, lovers embrace, men ogle women on the

streets, students sit at their desks, parents and children pose for the camera. Yampolsky's photographs possess a deep, brooding quality and she invests her subjects with a sculptural weight. Lopez contrasts nicely with her for he favors a more frenzied, active approach to the life on the street and its inhabitants. Joining this group is Victor Olea whose *Los Encuentros* (*The Encounters*, 1984) recalls the examples of Henri Cartier-Bresson and André Kertész. Olea reminds us of those encounters with the unexpected that shape and transform life. In him, one finds wit, humor, a realization that life is not always grim.

If the four photographers I've mentioned can best be understood within the political context that the Casasola archives volume provides, then the two remaining photographers, Pedro Meyer and Graciela Iturbide, represent the other tradition, the one *Historia Natural* expresses. *Historia Natural* is a very peculiar book. While it includes images dating from 1867 to 1985, it is not really a survey of Mexican photography. Rather, its aim is to identify surrealism as the dominant tradition, at least for the past twenty years if not for the entire course of photography in Latin America.

Surrealism is based on a fascination with the power of things to startle and alarm us when their normal contexts are removed or changed. And it demonstrates a breakdown in the normal patterns of expectation, in the disintegration of rational hopes. In Mexico it has been fueled by the influence of Roman Catholicism with its peculiar yoking of the bizarre, humorous, tragic, inconsequential, sexual, and, of course, religious. In *Historia Natural* one notes that there are no humans, only things—dolls, Easter eggs, masks, a table in the sun, hats on a sidewalk, manikins—all depicting a reality heightened, loosed from the bonds of normal expectations. These "things" are peculiarly disturbing, threatening.

In Pedro Meyer's *Espejo de Espinas* (*Mirror of Suspicions*, 1986) hooded, cloaked, and masked figures are caught off guard in processions, journeys, private moments. For Meyer celebrations of sacred events parallel passages into the blacker corners of the soul. His figures are alert to the terror of evil and the grip of pain which inform their religious practices, which inform life itself. Iturbide in *Seunos de Papel* (*Paper Dreams*, 1985) is attracted to the strange, the bizarre—a woman whose head is crowned with stuffed lizards, figures in masks, individuals who stand in a landscape that is unsettling, threatening. Her subjects participate in their own rituals, their own private acts, whose meanings challenge yet slip away from us.

The first eight volumes in the *Rio de Luz* series establish a high standard. By avoiding the numbing images of what Mexico means in the "popular" mind and by choosing a more difficult, more distinctly modern selection of images, the editors have increased our understanding of how the photographic tradition in Latin America has developed.

Ed Osowski is a librarian with the Houston Public Library System. A frequent reviewer for SPOT, he also reviews books for the Houston Post.

CLASS PORTRAITS

August Sander: *Citizens of the Twentieth Century—Portrait Photographs, 1892-1952*. Edited by Gunther Sander. Text by Ulrich Keller. Cambridge, Mass. The MIT Press. \$55

By Peter Bates

The front cover of this impressive tome shows three young farmers with hats and walking sticks, ca. 1914, apparently on their way into town. In *About Looking*, John Berger interprets this photograph: "There is as much descriptive information in this image as in pages by a descriptive master like Zola. Yet I only want to consider one thing: their suits."

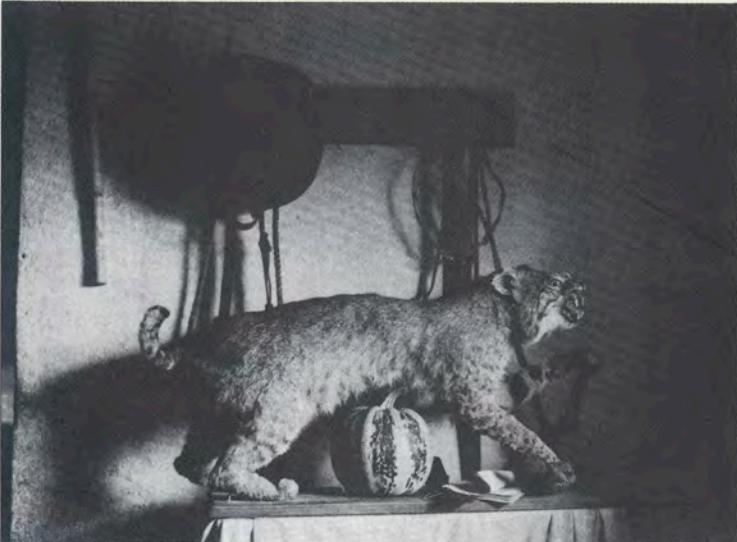
Berger's approach is valid: Clothing is an important constant in Sander's portraits, as crucial as granite crags and fissures are in a landscape by Ansel Adams. In Weimar Germany, where nearly everyone posed in their best for photographs, Sander took the challenge and penetrated this shell of appearance. As Berger points out, the farmers' trade pokes out of their ties and white shirts—they are not at home in their ill-fitting suits. Similarly, the welfare recipient's eyes and hunched posture tells us more about Germany's economic woes than his shined shoes and spotless coat do.

Sander was very conscious of this and used his camera to span all classes in his human comedy. He discovered that cravats and vests do not mask the quirky dispositions of managers and magistrates. The portly pharmacist, trousers wrinkled from hours of sitting, exudes confidence, as does the languid bank officer and the smug hotelier. However, they are wearing clothing like a frail shield, which one crisis could shatter in a moment.

Sander believed his mission extended beyond competent portraiture and into sociology. As Ulrich Keller points out in the astute and exhaustive introduction, Sander believed more in the medieval notion of guilds and craft organizations than in the Marxist dictum of class antagonism held by many of his "New Objectivity" colleagues. He grouped his photographs in archaic social categories, like "Farmers", "Workers", "Women", "Occupations", "Artists", and "The Last People". Within these categories he subdivided the portraits. "Occupations" not only includes officials, doctors, soldiers and students, but also National Socialists (an occupation only for some). Manufacturers appear in the "Workers" section with artisans and craftsmen, instead of with aristocrats and businessmen.

If Sander's sociology is old fashioned, so is his style. In his 60-year career, he rarely deviated from his posed German citizen, staring straight-on at the viewer with nary a smile or a grimace. Trying to equip his subjects with articles indicative of their trades, he often unintentionally produced jarring effects. The artist Gottfried Brockmann stands before a painting, holding five brushes as if asking the viewer to pick the one he should use. A conductor waves his baton at an offstage—and probably imaginary—orchestra. A sower holds a handful of seeds, as if pretending to throw them; he probably has to hold the pose because of Sander's slow shutter.

Sander never adhered to the theories of his contemporaries nor adopted their styles; in fact, he never really "experimented" at all. There are no nudes among the 431 plates, no action shots, no dabbling in sandwiched negatives, double exposures, or darkroom prestidigitation (he did do a few photographs). He preferred to set up his unwieldy 18 X 24 cm. view camera rather than snatch candids with a stylish



Mariana Yampolsky, Gato Montés, Tlaxcala, 1984



Graciela Iturbide, Mano Urbana, Mexico, 1973

August Sander, Mother of Twins



August Sander, Workers' Council

Leica like Erich Solomon did. And despite the theories he propounded on radio, he founded no school, nor took on any students.

None of this matters. *Citizens of the Twentieth Century* is the most comprehensive catalogue of between the wars society ever produced. No other photographer pursued his vision as consistently as Sander did. He photographed the communist and the democrat, the beggar and the clergyman, the peasant and his landowner. He originally wanted to include 600 prints in his collection, but the ascendancy of Nazism prohibited his further publication and exhibition. Proclaiming his photographs "decadent", they forced him to "retreat into the landscape", where he photographed uncontroversial rivers and quiet mountains. Surreptitiously, he compiled a 1938 portfolio of middle class "Persecuted Jews" who, despite their formal attitude, exude tension and apprehension. His "City Charac-

ters", "Itinerant Tradesmen", and "Last People" are at once poignant and frightening—they demand repeated viewings.

These pictures not only provoke speculation about the character of the subjects, but also about their histories. What circumstances shaped the attitudes Sander captured so robustly? What happened to "Persecuted Jew", Dr. Kahn, who peers out at us so incisively? Did the young Nazi soldier photographed in 1945 go on to open his own butcher shop in Westerwald?

Questions such as these "tease us out of thought" like Keats' Grecian urn. Sometimes our feelings about Sander's photographs depend on what we know of German society. More often the impressions they produce are so riveting that they make us think for hours about the protean face of history.

Peter Bates is a writer who lives in Boston.



Francisco Barragán, Untitled

GLOSSY DREAMS

The first U.S. exhibition of Francisco Barragán's photographs was held at the Brent Gallery which features work by contemporary Latin American and Caribbean artists.

Francisco Barragán is a twenty-six year old commercial photographer living in his native Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico, and a recent graduate there in Communications from the Universidad Regiomontana. This exhibition has been put together from the photographer's first body of work. Barragán's other solo exhibition was organized by IMEVISION, Channel 8, in Monterrey where it opened this past August. Barragán participated in two group shows organized by the Centro de Arte Vitro in Monterrey in 1984 and 1985. This is the first time his work has been seen outside Mexico.

The photographs are loosely based on images of Barragán's

dreams. Glossy, utilizing bright colors in the context of isolated elements such as butterflies, rusted tools, and red- and black-painted rocks, the work is obviously influenced by United States advertising. Monterrey, Mexico's third largest city, just three hours south of Laredo, Texas by car, is noted for its fascination with the United States culture. A revealing statistic is the fact that Monterrey has more satellite dishes per capita than any place else in the world, enabling the local population to tune into much of the same television broadcasting we get here in the United States. Of interest in Barragán's work is his unusual, and often sensuous, magnified juxtapositions of such things as fish and flowers, or rough and smooth textures, or his construction of bizarre scenes, for example, of raining bell peppers, or lone red snapper diving in and out of artificial red mountain pools.

LETTERS

The producer of *Dick Talk* replies

Before I react to Peter Lehman's review of *Dick Talk*, I must correct a mistake he made at the outset. This mistake may have contributed to his conclusions. He says: "According to the producer, the reason for the anonymity was to protect these women, none of whom are independent of men in their lives."

Lehman either failed to read critically enough my statement that accompanied the video or he simply misunderstood what I said: "I promised them and myself anonymity because I didn't want to hurt family members and friends who would not approve of such talk. And, none of us is independently wealthy."

I understand the last sentence to mean we all have to work for a living, and our jobs or professions might be in jeopardy if our identities were made plain. Nowhere does that sentence describe dependence on men.

Lehman says this absence of identifying faces eroticizes the tape and creates an unnecessary aural voyeurism. He also criticizes the absence of background information on the women because it denies the audience the chance to see the speakers in terms of their historical positioning. Again, the women asked that there be no references to professions or to names of intimates. That request seems to me to say a lot about "historical positioning".

What could we see and hear? We could see they were relatively young white women. They were sufficiently articulate so we knew they were literate. Some had a slight southern accent and one referred to her third husband, while another referred to her husband and young children. One referred to her early Catholic school education and another talked about coming of age in Bryan, Texas, and the parental and cultural restrictions she had experienced. They were sitting in a middle-class room and they wore middle-class clothes and they sounded, for god's sake, like what they were: middle-aged, middle-class white women in Houston, Texas in 1986!

Now I will answer Lehman's basic charge: that *Dick Talk* lacked critical analysis and failed to give insight. It failed, he said, because it did not intend to give insight, but intended only to do what it said it would do: gather women together who wanted to talk about their experiences of the sexuality of men's bodies, especially their penises. Lehman declares that the descriptions the women gave of their experience were not "authentic": that they, and especially the moderator are unaware that they are the victims of the structures of culture, the main one being patriarchy, whose symbol is the phallus.

Dick Talk, because it was conceived, organized, taped, edited, and exhibited says it wants to be taken seriously. But it does not say it wants to be overtly analytical. It may indeed be about more than it says it wants to be. It is the self-assigned job of the good deconstructor to break the code. He or she is ready to tear away the cultured flesh of conditioned meaning from the bones of real meaning underneath. This is good work. But after all, deconstruction is a methodology and not to be confused with reality itself. Whether or not a story about a penis is "authentic", it is. And I, X, fully of my time, did not intend to make a video with women who talked about talking about dicks. I intended to make a video with women who talked about dicks.

Sincerely, X

Of course we sounded like some men do sometimes. Of course shit rolls downhill. And of course some of us liked Calvin Klein's romantic fantasy of sexuality and of course some of us thought it ridiculous. We were there to be as close to our own stories as possible, not to perpetuate the shame visited on us by the culture for feeling and speaking as we do. First you think and feel, then you check it out with others as honestly as you can. If, as we did, you become aware you feel undiscovered sexually, you can then choose to do something about that. You can, for example, decide to analyze and investigate how you came to think and behave as you do. Recording our stories in all the visual and aural freedom possible probably encouraged not only our own further questioning but obviously encouraged Lehman and the four women who anonymously reviewed it before him.

Lehman's ideas about the ways patriarchy and its symbol, the phallus, operates to preserve itself were not new to me. What I had never heard was what other women think about men's penises. I want to reveal I'm also the moderator of *Dick Talk*, the same person in the tape who says she likes a big penis. Lehman says I revel in a love of big penises but seem unaware that "that attraction betrays another way of being trapped in a patriarchal shaping of her desire." He assumes I'm talking about the sight of a large penis. I thought it was clear in the video that I liked the way a big dick feels, and wasn't at all referring to the way it looks. A penis too small for me to feel in my vagina is not a pleasure. Sex may indeed be in the head, but first, you've got to get my attention. If I can't feel you, I'm not going to think about you. Lehman seems to be saying I have to first think about you, using culturally determined ideas, before I can feel you. That sounds like the old idealist argument.

I could have added analysis to *Dick Talk* through on-the-screen text, voice-over, probing questions, or a post-*Dick Talk* critique, ("Dick Talks Back?"), but then it wouldn't have been what it was. It would have been documentary. And it certainly wouldn't have been funny. Patriarchy may be oppressive but it can also be very funny.

If I cannot create a work unless it intends to break the code, what will I make? What if I don't want to strive for the invincible security of deconstruction? Shall I become silent and only the professional intellectuals speak?

Since I'm not arguing against understanding but for intelligent action, my answer will be about the choice of means, the artist's means: the acts of imagination. In making *Dick Talk* I guided the talkers and talked myself as far from the documentary tradition as I could and toward the tradition of fiction, satire and imagination. It seemed to me that inserting analysis at the moment or even later would in fact have brought to our time the very patriarchy Lehman finds implicit. And I have often wondered if deconstruction isn't itself a supremely patriarchal act.

With the exceptions I have mentioned I don't necessarily disagree with Lehman's analysis of the content of *Dick Talk*. But I reject his attack on its form. It reminds me of the joke about the man who could never attract women. A friend asked the man how he acted with a woman he desired. The lonely man said he usually prepared a nice dinner for his date, played romantic music, then danced with her, all the while gently leading her to his bedroom. By the time he put his shoe trees in his shoes, he complained, the woman was gone!



Photo by E.L. Johnston

Hello Muse!

How do you think about the Art of Photography? Mechanical or mystical? Can you do it alone?

This is only for the artist who realizes nothing is done alone...even selecting those sliced illusions from the whole theater of life. I mean you can't walk across the floor without help.

First, from whatever helps your electro-chemical system respond properly to the cosmic energy pouring through you from space.

Then, if you want to expand your mystical possibilities, the second kind of help becomes vital. I'm talking walking into unexplored aesthetic realms. Are you ready?

Webster's Dictionary says there are nine Muses—one for each major art. First written about in Greek Mythology. Apparently a poet was the first to notice that inspirations came from a Muse encountered daily at a favorite rock, tree or peristyle.

Today, I know professional artists who not only appreciate the Muse in museums but know the personal name of their spirit guide which they use to request help before starting a project.

"What are you doing, Virgy?" I kidded a friend caught in the act.

"Uh, er... talking to my higher self!" with a tight grin.

If you are in touch with yourself, you may have a favorite term for the help you feel when everything falls into place: *intuition, master within* or, perhaps, *subconscious mind*.

I notice the mere act of admitting the task is beyond me opens the door a little. But Hey, When I ask for help...! It is like a friend's advice when I have a problem.

"Let go of it!" they may insist. The implication that I will get help is right on. When I think I have to do everything myself, I do have a problem.

But some photographers, apparently having secret doubts about being genuine artists, don't talk to painters or writers. Breaking tradition, why don't you butter up an active outspoken artist?

"Hey Van, do you feel you get unexplained help when you work?"

This should convince you and save me from interviewing locals—as I am lazy. Besides, I have already heard the answer from a dozen artists from China to Paris.

Not surprising, some of us camera-artists don't receive very well. But can we blame the Muse? However, occasionally you do find a stupid Muse. (Hope my Music Muse doesn't read this.)

There may be more Muses than first thought. Perhaps one for every aspect of creating that possess a magical quality—which our pictures cry out for. How about healing and

cooking? Surely, those can be arts. And the highest art—that of living. Some lucky suckers do that very well.

Surely, you have met beautiful citizens who are beloved of many Muse. Original songs, photographs, writing and dancing surround successful lives. Quite disgusting.

This type of person has no compunction in shrieking out, "Hey Muse! Get over here and help me with this soufflé!" or, "Quick! Help me shoot a masterpiece of my nude lover!" Fortunately of unfortunately, this fountain of talent usually does nothing permanent. Hell, you and I can beat that.

Fortunately or unfortunately, after more than ten years of working with these happy creatures, I have discovered the one which suits me best, and is good friends with all the others: the lazy artist's Muse, the Muse of Love.

So, occasionally, when I am writing or doing a graphic with a great attitude: peace of mind and proper gratitude for my life, family, friends, the sun, etc., *something is added*. Usually, it's not what I thought I wanted, but magical just the same. I take it, instead, everytime.

So, if you want to fight alone against dragons of artist's block, be my guest.

But, if you *never* want to be alone again in a crowd of artists—in the theater of life, say "Hi there!" and blow a kiss to the Muse of Photography.

E.L. Johnston

Hello Muse! was sent to the editor in response to the winter issue of SPOT whose content he felt was overly serious and excessively dense.

NOTES

MELLON POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP IN HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

\$23,000. Two year appointment at Rice University, 1987-88, 1988-89 to teach the History of Photography. Teach one course per semester as well as pursue own research. Ph.D. must be complete by August, 1987 and must have been received no earlier than August, 1984. Include resume, references, and description of research. Application required as soon as possible. Contact: Peter Brown, Chairman, Search Committee, Department of Art and Art History, Rice University, P.O. Box 1892, Houston, Texas 77251.

UTE ESKILDSEN

LECTURE

Ute Eskildsen, writer, lecturer and curator of photography at the Folkwang Museum in Essen, West Germany will show slides and discuss European Photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Brown Auditorium, Sunday, April 26, 4pm.

The lecture is co-sponsored by Goethe Institute Houston, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Houston Center for Photography.

JOEL STERNFELD: AMERICAN PROSPECTS

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston will feature an exhibition of 75 photographs that surveys Joel Sternfeld's work for the last decade. He has crisscrossed America, photographing in luxuriant color America's magnificent vistas, small towns, cities, and suburbs. The beauty of his vision first catches the eye, then the viewer perceives a twist of irony or the signs of an actual or foreboding disaster. In counterpoint to the message that there is trouble in the nation's paradise, Sternfeld pays homage to the quiet beauty of America. He photographs farmlands and fresh water streams as well as individuals encountered in his travels. Organized by The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston with funding provided by Target Stores, the exhibition is curated by Anne W. Tucker. The exhibition is Target IV in the series The Target Collection of American Photographs.

On Sunday, April 5, 4pm, Joel Sternfeld will speak, "Behind American Prospects." Lecture will be held in Brown Auditorium, and is free to the public.

PHOTO-TECHNOLOGY EXHIBITION

Call for Video Tapes: Photographers working with high technology, i.e., digital/computer generated, manipulated, or transmitted images may submit video tapes documenting work in progress, process, or finished work.

Include documentation and bio. with 1/2 inch VHS tape. Tapes will be shown during HCP's Photo-Technology Show, May 15-June 28, and returned. Send to: The Houston Center for Photography, 1441 W. Alabama, Houston, TX 77006. (713) 529-4755.

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CALENDAR

SPRING 1987

EXHIBITIONS

MARCH

Benteler-Morgan Galleries, through March 13

"Bruce Barnbaum—Visual Symphony: A Photographic Study in Four Movements," 4200 Montrose Blvd., Mon-Fri 10-5 and by appointment, 522-8228.

Houston Center for Photography, through March 15

"The Manipulated Environment," 1441 W. Alabama, Wed-Fri 11-5; Sat-Sun 12-5, 529-4755.

Moody Gallery, through March 21

"MANUAL: Ed Hill and Suzanne Bloom," 2815 Colquitt, Tue-Sat 10-5:30; 526-9911.

Butera's on Alabama, March 2 through May 2

"Photographs by Jim Olive," 2946 S. Shepherd, Mon-Fri 7-10; Sat-Sun 8-10.

Lawndale, March 14 through April 20

"East End Show," 5600 Hillman, Tue-Sat 12-6, 921-4155.

Butera's on Montrose, March 16 through May 16

"Charlotte Land: Snow Melting," 4621 Montrose, Mon-Fri 7-10; Sat-Sun 8-10.

Glassell School, March 18 through April 5

"1987 Core Fellows Exhibition," 5105 Montrose, Mon-Fri 9-5; 529-7659.

Benteler-Morgan Galleries, March 19 through May 1

"Photographs by Martin Parr," 4200 Montrose, Suite 110, Mon-Fri 10-5 and by appointment; 522-8228.

Houston Center for Photography, March 20 through May 3

"Sixth Annual Members' Exhibition," 1441 W. Alabama, Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat-Sun 12-5; 529-4755.

Temple Emanu El, March 20 through April 12

"Remnants: The Last Years of Poland," Photographs by Tomasz Tomaszewski, 1500 Sunset Blvd., Mon-Fri 10-4; 529-5771.

APRIL

Temple Emanu El, through April 12

"Remnants: The Last Years of Poland," Photographs by Tomasz Tomaszewski, 1500 Sunset Blvd., Mon-Fri 10-4; 529-5771.

Glassell School, through April 5

"1987 Core Fellows Exhibition," 5105 Montrose, Mon-Fri 9-5; 529-7659.

Lawndale, through April 20

"East End Show," 5600 Hillman, Tue-Sat 12-6, 921-4155.

Benteler-Morgan Galleries, through May 1

"Photographs by Martin Parr," 4200 Montrose, Suite 110, Mon-Fri 10-5 and by appointment; 522-8228.

Butera's on Alabama, through May 2

"Photographs by Jim Olive," 2946 S. Shepherd, Mon-Fri 7-10; Sat-Sun 8-10.

Houston Center for Photography, through May 3

"Sixth Annual Members' Exhibition," 1441 W. Alabama, Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat-Sun 12-5; 529-4755.

Butera's on Montrose, through May 16

"Charlotte Land: Snow Melting," 4621 Montrose, Mon-Fri 7-10; Sat-Sun 8-10.

Glassell School, April 9 through April 30

"1987 Studio School Exhibition," 5105 Montrose, Mon-Fri 9-5; 529-7659.

Sewall Gallery, April 21 through May 9

"24th Annual Rice Art Student Exhibition," 6100 S. Main, Entrance #2, Mon-Sat 12-5; 527-8101.

MAY

Benteler-Morgan Galleries, through May 1

"Photographs by Martin Parr," 4200 Montrose, Suite 110, Mon-Fri 10-5 and by appointment; 522-8228.

Butera's on Alabama, through May 2

"Photographs by Jim Olive," 2946 S. Shepherd, Mon-Fri 7-10; Sat-Sun 8-10.

Houston Center for Photography, through May 3

"Sixth Annual Members' Exhibition," 1441 W. Alabama, Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat-Sun 12-5; 529-4755.

Sewall Gallery, Rice University, through May 9

"24th Annual Rice Art Student Exhibition," 6100 S. Main, Entrance 2, Mon-Sat 12-5; 527-8101, ext. 3740.

Butera's on Montrose, through May 16

"Charlotte Land: Snow Melting," 4621 Montrose, Mon-Fri 7-10; Sat-Sun 8-10.

Museum of Fine Arts, through June 7

"Joel Sternfeld: American Prospects," 1001 Bissonnet, Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-6, Thur 11-9; 526-1361.

Blaffer Gallery, May 3 through May 17

"Master of Fine Arts 1987 Thesis Exhibition," University of Houston, University Park, Mon-Fri 10-5, Sat 1-5; 749-1329.

Butera's on Alabama, May 4 through July 4

"Photographs by Carol Gerhardt," 2946 S. Shepherd, Mon-Fri 7-10, Sat-Sun 8-10; 528-3737.

Transco Tower, May 6 through June 21

"IN SPACE: A Photographic Journey," (curated by the Houston Center for Photography) 2800 Post Oak Blvd, Mon-Fri 8-6, Sat 8-1; Opening reception is a benefit for Houston Center for Photography, May 11. Call 529-4755 for further information.

Benteler-Morgan Galleries, May 7 through June 19

"Photographs by Philipp Scholz Rittermann," 4200 Montrose Blvd., Suite 110, Mon-Fri 10-5 and by appointment; 522-8228.

Houston Center for Photography, May 15 through June 28

"Photography and Technology," 1441 W. Alabama, Wed-Fri 11-5, Sat-Sun 12-5; 529-4755.

Butera's on Montrose, May 18 through July 18

"Landscapes," by Joe Dominick, 4621 Montrose, Mon-Fri 7-10, Sat-Sun 8-10; 520-8426.

LECTURES, EVENTS

MARCH

Lecture: Roy Fridge, March 24, 7:30pm

Houston Center for Photography, 1441 W. Alabama. \$2 members, \$3 nonmembers.

Field Trip: Studio of Ray Bolinskas (art conservator), March 31, 7:30pm

Contact the Houston Women's Caucus for the Arts, 520-7840.

Lecture: Sylvia Plachy, March 29, 3pm

Glassell School of Art, 5101 Montrose Blvd. Open to the public.

APRIL

Lecture: Tomasz Tomaszewski, April 1, 7:45pm

in conjunction with the exhibition at Temple Emanu El, "Remnants: The Last Years of Poland," 1500 Sunset Blvd.

Lecture: John Wood, April 3, 7:30pm

in conjunction with his "Making One-of-a-Kind Books" workshop, Houston Center for Photography. \$2 members, \$3 nonmembers.

Lecture: Joel Sternfeld, April 5, 4pm

in conjunction with his exhibition at the Museum of fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet, Brown Auditorium (MFA). Free.

Discussion: The Trial by Eberhard Fechner at the Goethe Institut, 2600 Southwest Freeway. Moderated by Hannah Decker. Free. Screening is April 6, 7pm at the Rice Media Center.

Tour: Joel Sternfeld exhibit, April 10, 12noon

Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet. Free.

Lecture: Duane Michaels, April 12, 3pm

Glassell School, 5101 Montrose Blvd. Free.

Lecture/Film Premiere: Alfred Behrens, April 16 7pm,

Goethe Institut, 2600 Southwest Freeway. Suite 110. Behrens will introduce his film, *Walkman Blues*. Free.

Lecture: Fletcher Mackey, "Fantasy Island," April 22, 7:30pm

Houston Center for Photography, 1441 W. Alabama. \$3 members, \$2 nonmembers.

Lecture: Ute Eskildsen, Curator of Photography, Folkwang Museum, Essen, Germany, April 26 4pm,

Museum of Fine Arts, Brown Auditorium. Free.

MAY

Lecture: Paul Hester, May 4, 7:30pm

Houston Center for Photography, 1441 W. Alabama. \$2 members, \$3 nonmembers.

Lecture: Pat Jones, May 13, 12noon

"Photos of Earth from Space," showing the ecological problems developing on earth, in conjunction with the "IN SPACE: A Photographic Journey" exhibition, Transco Tower, 2800 Post Oak Blvd. (Transco Auditorium).

Lecture: Richard Underwood, May 20 12noon

"Journey to the Moon," in conjunction with the "IN SPACE: A Photographic Journey" exhibition, Transco Tower, 2800 Post Oak Blvd. (Transco Auditorium).

Lecture: Jim Ragan, May 27, 12noon

Topic to be announced. In conjunction with the "IN SPACE: A Photographic Journey" exhibition, Transco Tower, 2800 Post Oak Blvd. (Transco Auditorium).

FILM/VIDEO

Houston Center for Photography:

Eisenstadt March 17, 7:30pm: *The Photographer (Weston)* and *The Photographers* (five still photographers)

April 14, 7:30pm: *The Woman Behind the Image: Photographer Judy Dater*, and *Weapons of Gordon Parks* May 12, 7:30pm.

Goethe Institut: Film series: Werner Herzog March 4-April 2. Film Series: Eberhard Fechner April 6-30.

Most screenings will be at the Goethe Institut, 2600 Southwest Freeway. Free. Call 528-2787.

Lawndale: "Focus on Video" Series

March 5, April 2, May 7, 7:30pm. 5600 Hillman, Free. 921-4155.

Rice Media Center: Heimat

March 16-March 19 (mini series), University at Stockton, 7pm each evening. Call 528-2787.

Critique: Peter Brown, March 12, 7-10pm

HCP, 1441 W. Alabama, members free, nonmembers \$5. 529-4755.

Making One-Of-A-Kind Books:

John Wood, April 4-5 Hcp, 1441 W. Alabama, \$30members.

\$40nonmembers. Call HCP for enrollment. 529-4755.

More Light: Achim and Nele Lipp, April 25-26

Glassell Schoo], 5101 Montrose Blvd. Free. Sponsored by the Goethe Institut, this two day workshop concerns the use of light in art, from fire to photographs, from lightbulbs to lasers. Early registration is required. Call Jo Ann LeQuang, 528-2787.

Dallas: Bath House Cultural Center, through March 31

"Community Show," for information, (214)821-8260.

Dallas: AfterImage Gallery: through May 2

"Walter Chappell," 2800 Routh, the Quad, #250, Mon-Sat 10-5:30, (214) 871-9140.

Dallas: AfterImage Gallery, May 9 through July 3

"Michael Johnson," 2800 Routh, The Quad, #250, Mon-Sat 10-5:30, (214) 871-9140.

Dallas: 500X Gallery, through March 29

"Pauline Hudel, Bryan Florentin, Connie Cullum, Tom Orr," 500 Exposition Ave., Wed 6-9, Thurs-Sun 1-4.

San Antonio: Guadalupe Theater Gallery, through March 12

"Third Annual Juried Women's Art Exhibit," 1301 Guadalupe St. at Brazos.

WORKSHOPS

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.

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