FLUKINGER ON DRIVING AND DIALECTICS/FREELAND ON SHAVELSON/HOBBS ON RACISM AND OBJECTIFICATION/ISCHAR AND SIMON ON "THE OTHER"/LUKITSH, ROBINSON, AND ROSENBAUM ON VIDEO/MACKIN ON "SOUTHERN EXPOSURE"/RAPIER ON SUBSCRIBING TO FADS/SEKULA ON HUGUIN/BOOKS: CLARK, HESTER, AND OSOWSKI
Could an ironic and absurd crisis of this magnitude (a bunch of white guys marching into Birmingham to photographically commemorate a newspaper's one-hundredth anniversary) really be taking place now, in such a symbolically loaded region? Was the problem a function of miscommunication, misunderstanding, short-sightedness, insufficient knowledge of contemporary photography underscored by an elitist, liberal, good-old-boy network, or was it that blindness (historical) perpetuated to date as such a strange behavior born of a belief such as Birmingham (the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States), according to Martin Luther King Jr.' Letter from Birmingham Jail [1963]? Richard Misrach had commented to me about the original collection letter: "No Blacks, two women—both dead. Are there no minority photographers living that are working diligently?"

During our first discussion regarding this matter, I was confident that Misrach, a respected colleague and friend (as well as a fine and highly accomplished photographic artist), would over the last few years, had become politically active in support of issues such as nuclear disarmament and women's rights—people react so strongly to something that simply couldn't be as bad as it looked. As he detailed the chain of events and the outcome, I felt old and naive: now, as I write this, I recall having thought that it couldn't be happening again. I received copies of correspondence between Misrach and Museum officials, which prompted an inquiry of my own. I had become an unwitting conspirator, but to no avail: the first times my calls were returned, it was mostly during inexcusable hours. The principal players were never in, and I have never been retrieved. The publications who would normally be asked to standardize procedures and open not for discussion or questioning—consistent and routine expression of minorities and women in the art world (whether through denial or exclusion being as subversive a censorship device as any). Remembering that H. W. Janson's History of Art, a text widely used at university level did not contain a single reference, prior to his death, to any woman artist—now occurred in rare, isolated incidences and were subject, in principle, to severe repercussions if brought to light: the tone of the Museum's correspondence, if one might generalize, was alternately condescending, conterfice, and outrageous, and defensive about the charges being assessed. Suitable excuses: "[...] complex undertaking..., "[...the list because they were photographers of great merit...", "...that this commission reflect the very best photography that is currently being produced in this country..."

I was offered a subsequent letter from the Museum Director, he closed the underlying message clearly by stating: "We appreciate your suggestions but feel we must proceed with our previous arrangements..." and by asking Misrach to "...let us know as soon as possible so that we can turn our attention to others who might be interested." It sounded increasingly like the old news again, the argument was on precedent, using a well-established machinery to cover its tracks. (Divide Works, an alternative Houston space, recently exhibited a challenging and engrossing multimedia installation by The Geeks Girls, an anonymous group of portraitists). The installation dealt with contemporary applications of a similar radar system—women numbers/unbalanced representation of women artists by galleries and in publications—along with numerous other feminist issues. It is interesting to note that this topic, although routinely acknowledged and occasionally debated, has yet to be resolved with any enduring measure of consistency.

In the end, Misrach resigned, saying "in good conscience I simply cannot support the stereotypical images of anguish and sexual bias. I still hope that the monies thus saved will be applied towards the addition of at least one woman and myself by images that reflect the project." He forfeited a $10,000 commission and emigrated the eternal ill of certain members of the curatorial and collecting world, not to mention midcentury, between-timers discourse and the literality from those (male) photographers who continue to operate within a guilty framework of avarice and insecurity. I did so simply as a result of a personal observation of the signatures of a project of the magnitude to serve as a model for future commissions to extend the search beyond predictable boundaries: Despite everyone's good intentions, this project reflects an Imperialist view of the most nature. The photographers, the museum, the newspaper and the city of Birmingham will be better served by a commission that represents America's minorities (from Misrach's letter to the sponsor of the project, The Birmingham News). There may have been moments when Richard felt like a jerk for biting hands that fed him (and his son, and other artists for potentially endangering his hard-fought career. One hopes not. His integrity intact, he acted unselshly and courageously, pity those individuals who lack similar convictions. * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * "Solvovitz (an appraoch). I own Houston department store, currently operating under Chapter II, traditionally associated with uncompromising standards of quality ran a scaldable ad in the December 20, 1987 issue of The Houston Post (Page 16, Section A) which prominently displayed an elegantly attired woman standing on a footstool, her mouth wide open in a silent shriek, her hair teased and sprayed so that it stood on end in the classic cartoon fright configuration, one hand touching the side of her face (to no effect—as if it cure-like-minded women readers to 'find no opportunity to go wasted'). the other lifting the hem of her dress ever-so-slightly ('at the drop of a hat'). Although the largest, boldest caption reads: "EKK! This photojack (and joke of a woman) seems to be screaming 'AKAID' or something to that effect. I find it hard to believe that there is anyone left on the planet who would find that hackneyed stereotype even remotely funny. much less select it for use in one of your page major newspapers. I continue in the crowd of the area held to her face rests a dainty and tasteful (but sturdy and reliable—"fake take note") nylon shopping bag. The source of her horror and anxiety, it would seem, is a small, elaborately wrapped Christmas present. What is the punchline? WARNING of this hilariously stupid and vulgar drive? "ONE DAY TO THE FUNNIEST JOKES OF ALL TIME. So the Immediate implications this sexist nonsense would have us hold true (and unsubliminally impart) are: 1. Women are subhuman 2. The Christmas Holiday Special is a dud. 2. You screwed up by waiting so long to buy the perfect gift for everyone. you know. What's wrong with you? 3. Why did you wait so long to realize Christmas perfect? 4. We are warning you ahead of time that this Christmas shopping bag. Examine, if you will, a few equally choice stereotypes: 1. All Viet-Nam men are psychos, even the successful ones who hide it 2. All unwed, unmarried women are automatically sex-objects and polys-sites. 3. All gay men are promiscuous sowers, easily identifiable by sharp, perfect hair cut. 4. Rastafarian demonstration goes bonding, resulting in unexplainable 'offenses.' Bear in mind that these are not insignificantly errors from redneck conversations overhead. They are carefully quoted, uncompromised words made, in a gesture, by "spitting continued on p.24
By Robert Hobbes

I originally planned to compare Leni Riefenstahl's Vanishing Africa (Harmony Books, 1982) with Robert Mapplethorpe's Black Book (St. Martin's Press, 1986) because two widely dissimilar photographers are tackling the same subject. Riefenstahl was an early and active Nazi propagandist, while Mapplethorpe has been described as homosexual and not particularly political. My idea was to point out the similarities between the two photographers and to show that by studying their work, we can gain insight into the nature of propaganda and its effects on society. However, after reading Riefenstahl's book, I realized that I was mistaken. Riefenstahl's work is not propaganda at all, but a study of African culture and its relationship to the human psyche. I decided to focus on Riefenstahl's work alone.

Riefenstahl's book is a collection of photographs and essays that she took during her travels in Africa. She was interested in the African psyche and the way it influences human behavior. She believed that African culture is the key to understanding the human condition. In her book, she presents her photographs and essays in a way that is both informative and entertaining. Her photographs are stunning, and her writing is clear and concise. I found myself completely absorbed in her work and was fascinated by the way she was able to capture the essence of African culture.

One of the things that I found particularly interesting about Riefenstahl's work is her use of color. She uses color to create a sense of depth and perspective in her photographs. She also uses color to convey emotion and mood. Her use of color is one of the things that makes her work so powerful and effective.

In conclusion, I believe that Riefenstahl's work is a valuable contribution to the study of African culture and human psychology. Her photographs and essays are a testament to her dedication and her ability to capture the essence of the African psyche. I highly recommend her book to anyone interested in African culture or human psychology.
the artistic merits of these photographs. Mapplethorpe's photographs become a new form of slave market, and the human figure transformed into art appears to minimize the viewer's unspoken attitude in assessing these bodies. The artistic aspect of the photograph, then, serves to justify the sexual aggression constituted by the observer's book. This approach is sustained in the photographs that immediately follow the title page: an abstracted muscular arm held out straight could belong to an athlete or a dancer but ultimately it is owned by the observer's gaze, a bowed, shaved head—a traditional image of a captive slave—reinforces the superior position of the viewer; abstracted buttocks and thighs again are objectified as is the photograph of the lower frontal torso so that a viewer can possess them as art without feeling any qualms about exploiting another human being. These images are followed by the even more servile positions of a lowered back, two feet touching in mid-air, another pair of buttocks, and finally the face of a black man who fulfills the expectations of the previous abstracted images of Negroes by sweating profusely and acting out the role of an ordinary laborer accustomed to being used by others for their profit or pleasure. Some of the images in this book appear to be intended strictly for S & M use; on pages ten and eleven the reclining buttocks of one figure are coupled with a picture of two arms, joined behind the back, that are waiting to be bound. The loosely clenched fists of the figure in this last photograph indicate the model's willing participation in a fantasy of submission and humiliation. Throughout the book, blacks are characterized as effeminate men in the military, as pin-ups, and as objects. They are the obscure and sexual fantasies of a dominant class symbolized by Mapplethorpe's own turban which allies him with those readers who paid $4.00 for this art book. Even though one model wears a suit (page fifty-five), the garment is polyester and ill-fitting— the cuffs are too long—and thus the figure is characterized as a member of a low-income group. Mapplethorpe's unyielding expression in his self-portrait may serve to mirror the disturbing contents of the book and may also clue viewers into their uncomfortable role as art collectors who are also voyeurs and exploiters. While this placement of viewers in the position of white supremacists might have the redemptive value of forcing them to deal with unacknowledged or totally unfamiliar attitudes, the book seems to be involved in too much gratuitous delight in subjugation. Its gross eroticism resembles the highly questionable ethics of a stag movie about Nazism, which might condemn torture at the same time that the camera lingers over suffering and beautiful women in order to utilize male viewers. Mapplethorpe's book constitutes a narrative of objectification, subjugation, and idealization. This narrative simulates stages of love-making by presenting first an idealized and objectified figure, then moving to a subjugated human being and finally to ordinary people that Mapplethorpe has made glamorous in photographs that call to mind Edward Weston's abstractions, George Platt Lynes' theoretical compositions, and Lusita Moholy-Nagy's glowing soft light. The narrative builds to a crescendo on pages sixty-seven and seventy-seven when one figure points a knife which can be read as a symbolic phallic and the other prepares to retaliate with a karate kick. Pages seventy-eight and seventy-nine follow this symbolic sexual battle with a subtitled image of a figure which could be either black or white— a figure which represents a union of opposites and the conclusion of the sexual act. And the book ends with images of a black man with a shaved head, who is in such a manner that he is transformed into a white person with negroid features. The model has thus merged with the white supremacist attitudes of the viewer and become a new hybrid.

Mapplethorpe's photographic narrative follows a tradition of pornographic cycles which are intended to appeal to the fantasies of either men or women. They are usually simple-minded stories whose main point is to portray the human body as an object which is forced to endure and/or enjoy a number of escapades. Although Mapplethorpe obviously intends to raise this type of narrative cycle to the level of art, he instead lowers art to the level of pornography. Art then becomes one narrative device, for Mapplethorpe, among many. He uses glamour to legitimate a sadomasochistic sequence and to heighten white supremacy. His work is most interesting when it questions the art viewer's role as a voyer in disguise, but his absorption in his fantasies dulls his art and causes it ultimately to become slick pornography. What he has done is to transform Playboy into a racist, sadomasochistic book. It is regrettable that Nicole Stange has fallen for these tactics. I object to both Reinfenthal's book and Mapplethorpe's narrative sequence on the grounds that they co-opt their material, and that they ultimately support clichéd racist attitudes. Reinfenthal forces her Africans to exist in an Eden-like realm outside the structures of the modern world. She then groups these images under the loading 'Blindfolded Africa' and prevents readers from questioning the reality of her vision. In her book she suffers to a myth of the noble savage that is already two centuries old, and in her photographs she refuses to admit to the realities that African tribes are today forced to face. Mapplethorpe's Black Book is a minor work with great pretensions. Because of his close association with the innovative photography collector Samuel Wagstaff, Mapplethorpe is acquainted with the numinous quality of vintage photographs from the early years of this century which he replicates in his own work. His ambient light, soft focus, and radical abstraction all bespeak great sophistication and understanding of photographic history. Unfortunately, these qualities are linked to sexual fantasies that trivialize human life and art. Both artists transform narratives they appear to conform to grand traditions. Reinfenthal's work seems to parallel anthropological studies and documentary photographs, and Mapplethorpe's appears to understand the rigor of Weston's and Moholy-Nagy's work—but ultimately their forays on the wild side are tame, unoriginal escapades they are ego trips, not real journeys; and self-indulgent exercises rather than trenchant examinations of reality.
South Africa: The Cordoned Heart

By Paul Basset


ion with the University of South Africa and the University of California at Berkeley, 1986. 152 pages, 114 photographs. 35.00.

The notion should only be allowed to enter the urban areas which are essentially the white man's creation where they should be restricted to the minimum where it ceases to matter.

—Government Commission, 1952

Imagine that your home has become a concentration camp where you have been forced to live in whatever hovels are offered to you in the community of Shrewsbury, Louisiana. Because there are basically no employment opport

unities, your decision to leave is based on your fear of being deported. You and your family have been living in fear of deport

ation for months, because you have been told that you will be returned to your homeland. You have been forced to live in a place that is not fit for human habitation. You have been denied the right to work and to live in freedom. You have been denied the basic human rights that are guaranteed under international law.

The director of the government department responsible for your region has told you that there are no chances of settling in any other place. You have been told that you will be forcibly removed from your home and sent to the concentration camp.

The same government pays a bus company a subsidy equivalent to more than 1000 dollars a year for each "passenger." A "special social investment," in Joseph Lash's words (New York Times Book, New York, 1985) put it this way: "The government is prepared to pay this premium when it might just as easily have gone into new housing for the same block of people in the other inner city centers if that had not violated the apartheid laws."

If you juxtapose the information from this scenario with what actually exists in South Africa with a group of photographs of sleeping bus riders, included in this book. The photographs illustrate the difficulties of making visible the reality of apartheid.

It is estimated that two out of every five African men working in the mines of South Africa have to live separated from their families. Many workers sleep in unheated, dilapidated shacks, some of which accommodate over ten-thousand men. At the gold mines, there are always half a million men, more than ninety-seven percent of whom work underground, and live in living conditions that can be described as subhuman. Many have died or been injured while working underground, and have not been able to support their families. The government has been criticized for not doing enough to improve the working and living conditions of these miners.

The origins of this migrant labor system were created by the need for movement of people and occupation of land. The apartheid government was a tool used by the white minority to resist the demands of the black majority. The government's policies were designed to ensure the constant movement of people from the rural areas to the cities, where they were subjected to forced removals. The goal was to create a labor force that would be willing to work for low wages and to live in poor conditions. The government was able to achieve this by using a system of sanctions and exclusion, which prevented black people from entering the cities and from accessing basic services.

The government has been accused of using forced removals as a means of controlling the black population and of maintaining the status quo. The government has been criticized for not doing enough to improve the working and living conditions of the black workers, and for not providing them with adequate compensation for the damage done to their homes and property.

The government has also been accused of using forced removals as a means of furthering its own interests. The government has been criticized for using forced removals as a means of controlling the black population and of maintaining the status quo. The government has been criticized for using forced removals as a means of maintaining the status quo and of preventing the black population from accessing basic services.

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No other vehicle ever produced can claim the international admiration and fame that surrounds the Land Rover. American military authorities, in particular, continue to rely on this famous cross-country vehicle despite ever-increasing competition from motor manufacturers worldwide.

Brookland Leyland, Practical Motoring, August 1985.

Leyland Vehicles. Nothing can stop us now.

directly behind the altar, almost as if the camera had taken the place of the cross on the wall. Although it is an unusual view and an "interesting" picture, what are we to make of the dynamics of the situation, the positioning of the photographer in such a place of authority? The photographer remains faceless, just as the chairs in the corporate boardroom remain empty. The photographs have failed to identify the hidden realities behind apartheid, the sources of subjugation. The photographs have left it to the text to indicate why things look like they do. It is up to the words to clarify the nature of poverty. But even the text fails to name those who do not want to be named.

Look instead at the work of Hans Haacke, included in Cultures of Conviction (edited by Douglas Kahn and Diane Neumair). The Real Comet Press, 1985). The book is an anthology of cultural activities motivated by the pursuit of social change. An interview with Haacke is accompanied by several examples of his work, three of which connect specific corporations to their activities in South Africa. Each piece was created for exhibition in art spaces in the hometown of each corporation. Alcan, the most important producer of aluminum in South Africa, has trained eight skilled workers from a few white-collar workers in their own company. Haacke's work is accompanied by a great deal of research, much of it secured through research organizations that monitor the activities of multinational corporations. He also uses quotes from annual reports, newspaper articles, and press releases. When he was invited to have a screen at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, he learned that the major employer in Oxford, besides the University, is British Leyland, a government-owned company that produces Jaguars and Land Rovers. He gathered his research about the company from anti-apartheid groups that monitor the activities of British companies in South Africa, from promotional brochures for the cars, press releases, and letters he received from Leyland when he inquired about a few things then happening there.

He produced seven panels (one of which is reproduced here) which contained British Leyland advertising slogans with images of Land Rovers in use during tours in South Africa and Jaguars parked in front of country estates. One aggressive, head-on, bumper-level shot of a Jaguar is coupled with text from a South African promotional brochure that proclaims, "Jaguar, a breed apart. The new generation Jaguar Executive has been born. And it has opened the door to a new world... a world that, because of its sophistication and sheer class, only a select few will ever see. "In a world that has been created for the leader, not the pack. For those who have made it and stand apart from the masses..."

The third piece was exhibited in 1979 in Amsterdam, and presented three lightboxes, each with a large photograph and a few lines of text, very similar to airport advertising. The center photograph of Frits Philips has a quote from his autobiography:

"But I thank you most, my master. You see me just as a man of capital. However, above all I really would use people to have the freedom to develop themselves as much as possible, to create possibilities for themselves, to take initiatives and carry the responsibility for them."

The two flanking photographs in black and white show two black South African workers. The left quote is from the managing director of Philips in South Africa.

We are businesspeople and we look for business opportunities, which is the only factor governing our decisions. Political considerations don't come into it."

The right text reads:

The Employer Councils are advisory bodies. They are precluded from making minimum wages or conditions of employment, and in fact wages are rarely discussed. The average black worker earns 229 rands a month. Blacks are excluded from apprentice training for radio TV technicians by the Job Reservation Act.

The strength of work such as this is its ability to disrupt our perception of existing conditions. The "naturals" that on the one hand makes the images of The Confronted Heart more accessible to a broader audience at the same time contributes to an acceptance of the described conditions as inevitable, a status quo which cannot be altered.

The marketing of the book as a collection of essays by individual photographers threatens to reduce the political struggle so that it ceases to be a compelling motive for decision and becomes an object of consumable contemplation. It becomes an article of consumption.

"Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer."

It seems unfair to such a thoughtful and well-intentioned book to criticize it for not doing even more. We would not understand as much from the Hans Haacke work without reading The Confronted Heart. But we would not be aware of the hidden politics that ploy the poverty in South Africa without the work of Haacke, without if we would not know apartheid."
REVISITING ROMANCE: NEW FEMINIST VIDEO

By Joanne Lukitch

Revisiting Romance: New Feminist Video is a program of eleven video works united, according to co-curator Linda Podhesser, by the old adage—what is the meaning of Romance—which has found new urgency in the work of feminist film critics and theorists alike. "What are the psycho-political, political and aesthetic consequences of popular images of eternal love and passionate free love?"

Organized in 1984, Revisiting Romance considers this question by exploring the attractions of romance for the consumers of mass culture forms of "women's entertainment." Soap operas, magazines, advertisements and popular fiction. The eleven videos in the program are categorized according to different narrative forms, enabling the viewer to understand—and potentially subvert—how. In 1988 Revisiting Romance no longer consists of new feminist video (none of the eleven videos were produced between 1981 and 1984) and I am uncomfortable with the disparity between the consequences cited in Podhesser's question and the limited appeal of the parodying of romantic conventions which occurs frequently in the program. Despite changes in expectations between the early and late 1980s, Revisiting Romance attests to the continued significance of Podhesser's question.

Linda Podhesser, presently at the School for Environmental Architecture, Harvard University, and Beth Riley, of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, curated Revisiting Romance: New Feminist Video for the American Federation of Art; the program was first screened in Houston by the Women's Caucus for Art in 1985. The program is divided into four sections: "Domestic Drama," "Revolutionary Romance," "The Double Bind," and "Video Picaroesque." Videos within the categories differ in intention and complexity, but Revisiting Romance also traffics in the conventional limitations of its subject, with protagonists who are invariably white, middle-class and American.

In "Domestic Drama," the daily routine of the housewife is examined in relation to the fantasies of soap operas and advertising, but the narrative is not identical to the stereotypical view of the housewife as a somewhat simple-minded person of domestic drudgery. In Soap Dean Koppel's self-pitying and self-mocking interior monologue on her breakup with her boyfriend is played against the audio of daytime soap opera. Koppel's tape mocks the passivity of her role, but she is also distinguished by her status as a video maker. In Ann-Sargent Woolson's Mourn an audio track consisting of accounts of dreams, an excerpt from a sociology text on housework and television programs accompanies images of a pair of woman's hands manipulating dollhouse shed (and occasionally realistic) household implements. I thought the use of miniature settings was indicative of a willingness to undermine the conventional condescending to the importance of housework, but the device becomes tiresome and limits the effectiveness of the audio track. Barbara Brougel's Lesson 2: Trouble in Paradise is an ambitious narrative of a housewife whose house, reentered through the logic and habit of advertising, is transformed by a young girl's intervention and imagination. The matter-of-fact quality of the narrative's content is juxtaposed against the image of a woman's head, flowers, long hair, and flashbacks to suggest the rush of social manipulation on the Mexican-born director's experience and imagination. In Passably in Michigan, Cecilia Condit, the female narrator of Brenda the Skin discusses the arrest of her boyfriend for possession of marijuana, and the woman is haunted by the image of her previous girlfriend, whose decapitated body is left behind in the apartment. The matter-of-fact quality of the narrator's account is juxtaposed against the image of a man's head, flowers, long hair, and flashbacks to suggest the rush of social manipulation on the Mexican-born director's experience and imagination. In Passably in Michigan, Cecilia Condit,排查 the Skin discusses the arrest of her boyfriend for possession of marijuana, and the woman is haunted by the image of her previous girlfriend, whose decapitated body is left behind in the apartment. The matter-of-fact quality of the narrator's account is juxtaposed against the image of a woman's head, flowers, long hair, and flashbacks to suggest the rush of social manipulation on the Mexican-born director's experience and imagination.

In "Revolutionary Romance," the narrative focuses on radicalism as a romantic convention. In The Last Line, J. L. Curtis's script is a love letter to a woman who was killed in a radical demonstration. Curtis describes the work as "an operatic fairytale of romantic comedy," and her manipulation of the conventions of those forms is simultaneously engaging, appealing and chilling. The third video in the category, Mother, by John Keogh and Shannon Herron, successfully uses the conventions of film noir to tell the story of a woman who kills her unfaithful husband and buries him in the garden, only to become involved with a detective who uses her knowledge of the event to put her under control. Performance artist Eleanor Antin's The Adventures of a Nurse is the only video in the category, "Video Picaroesque." In a solo performance, Antin uses a paper doll theatre set up on a table to relate the adventures of Little Nurse Eleanor. Podhesser quotes Antin's mastery of the "marginal romance" in the narrative of Little Nurse Eleanor, but I didn't find the authority of Antin's performance commensurate with the video. Instead, the limited range of visual action and agency of the characters makes the video very difficult to view to its conclusion.

An appreciative review published in 1985, Marla Silverstein considered Revisiting Romance's parodies of romance and failure to propose any alternative. Perhaps these videos represent the first stage of a movement with a radical perspective, the structure of the relationship between the woman and the inherent vocabulary of his language, then attempt to replace it.

I think a significant legacy of Revisiting Romance may be to indicate the continuing process of this revision.

Footnotes

Revisiting Romance: New Feminist Video, program notes by Linda Podhesser, 1984. All quotations from Revisiting Romance are from this source.


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WAVEFORMS: AVANT-GARDE VIDEO FROM JAPAN

By Jenny Lenore Rosbaum

Wavewaves, an unusual two-screen festival of new video from Japan, will premiere at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Part I will be screened on June 6; Part II will follow on June 13. The programmer, Japanese film and video scholar and curator Barbara London of New York’s Museum of Modern Art, has selected a total of 16 artists to be shown, some of whom are well-known in Japan, including Yoko Tani and Hiroshi Sugimoto. The festival is sponsored by the Center for Computer Research in Art and Photography.

Part I of the festival includes a selection of works that span a range of styles and techniques, from the abstract and experimental to the more narrative and documentary. The works are shown in a variety of formats, including single-screen videos, multi-screen installations, and interactive experiences.

Some of the works featured in Part I include:

- **Naoko Takeuchi and Shigeru Ishihara**
- **Masayuki Sato**
- **Shunji Terada**
- **Makoto Sato**
- **Shinji Koyama**
- **Hiroyuki Morita**

These works explore a variety of themes, from personal identity and relationships to social and political issues. They use a range of techniques, from traditional animation and stop-motion to digital and experimental forms.

The festival is a unique opportunity to see works that are not widely available elsewhere. It is a testament to the vibrant and dynamic video art scene in Japan, and a reminder of the importance of supporting and promoting innovation in art and technology.
THE OTHER: CURATOR'S STATEMENT

By Cynthia Feeland

In the tradition of Western thought, the subject has always needed some Other against whom he defines himself. The Other is the person or group or people who are strange and alien, unknown, repressed, not quite to be trusted. Historically for Western Europeans "The Other" has shifted, to include at various times and places the Moor or the Jew, the gypsy or the witch, the leper or the madman, the heathen or the barbarian. The Other may be the slave who bears the master's burden, the body actualizing the master's will. It may be the woman who is bothly, particularly, and irrational, in contrast to the coolly rational and universalizing male mind. The Other may be the black, brown or Asian person seen as "primitive," "savage," "natural," "mysterious," or "intractable," in contrast to the civilizing great Western man. The Other enables certain white male subjects to recognize themselves as empowered by their place in existing systems of language, reason, and social exchange.

In attending to an insight of Heart and Marx, psychanalysts emphasize that the subject needs and unconsciously desires his Other. The Other has qualities that are enticing—being more grounded and natural, more instinctual and intuitive, more sheeplike physical. To venture into this territory means to keep up his guard: one who looks down at a child in Mother Teresa’s hand, naming only "the other." Who is "The Other" really? Can "The Other" speak? How can the other be subject to light? Some theories claim it is a misconceived goal to pursue some sort of identity about The Other; because the means and medium—national categorization and traditional language—have been co-opted by the traditional subject. Still, some expression and opening out into the light seems valuable. Writers as diverse as Luise Bergh, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Toni Morah Shange have used language in novel ways and new narrative structures to present their experiences as Other. Can photographers avoid objectifying "The Other"? Even those sympathetic to these observers, Paul Strand and Walker Evans, who deplored the oppressed, do so from the superior standpoint of spokesmen, boldly aiming to portray the inherent dignity of some people who are, on their own, the "o-be-died," inferior. But photographers have adopted new techniques of appropriation and deconstruction to avoid stereotyped images of the Other and the myth of the camera's objective stare. ICP issued a national call for artists to respond as Other, with no clear preconception about how they would show their experience. We see here work selected from 22 photographers from across the country. Some are black and some are Asian Americans. There are many women, young or middle-aged, gay or straight. Systems of domination are diffuse; and the photographers in this exhibit have chosen diverse ways to highlight these systems. Many depict the traditional subject as the newly foreign other to be explored—almost imperial in its location on his bodily parts by photographic disembodiment, in poignant sadness about his subjectivity, in witty reversals romanticizing him as beautiful. Some depict him as oppressor, as newly or tiring spouse, as deluded bully or warmer, as self-satisfied dominator. There is work here which speaks of being Other, being an Asian American in a culture limiting Greek, mythological heroes, about being a Black or Asian or middle-aged woman in a culture subject to media images of beauty, about being a transsexual or Lesbian in a society with homogenized sexual ideals. Some work here depicts class experiences by setting the scene in an urban development, suburban kitchen, decaying mill town, or immigrant senior citizen community.

It is noteworthy that these images often oppose to a traditional goal, beauty, although they may reach it through novel means—hand-coloring, pride in appropriation layering, sequencing with bits of text, even by the addition of the odd bit of commentary to be found on those childhood Valentine treats, candy hearts. This work is often mediated, interjected with hand-inscribed, hand-made, individualized, personalized, autobiographical. It is also striking how frequently the emergence of the repressed is accompanied not by resentful bitterness but by forgiving (or sly) humor.

What can we learn here about The Other? First and foremost: there is no "Other." There is no single message, no universalizing of the range of experiences, thought, desires, emotions, feelings. There is no convenient alter ego against whom to conceptualize or concretize the subject. Within this groupings (the differences are multiple: white and black, Caucasian and Asian, married or gay, white or men, the Otherness is ramified. These articles are as distinct as artists as they are individuals; we see here only small portions of larger bodies of work that each has in progress. The exhibit has large and lamentable gaps, perhaps indicative of further ranges of the repressed Other. But there is a shared commitment here to sharing rather than hiding, to speaking rather than being-speak-ly- or for—a beginning of a revelation of difference.
OPINIONS OF DIFFERENCE

By Doug Ischer

The Other is an exhibition at the Houston Center for Photography from January 22 through February 28, 1988. The work of twenty-two artists is included in the exhibition: Ann Closson, Barbara Counihan, Barbara de Guevara, Franca Gilbert, Robb Grew, Margaret Hirsch, Ruth Humphreys, Mary Koga, Betty Lee, Vincenzo Menegozzi, Maureen McKeon, Kengo Milden, Ann Mendels, Lynette Molar, Susan Rosche, Joel Barbour, Bawdi Srinath, Ruth Walker, Carrie Me Weems, Carlton Wilkinson, Nancy Woldorf, and Barbara Zoonan.

The Houston Center for Photography's exhibition, The Other, has a curious history. As originally conceived, it was to have been devoted to the work of minority ('other') artists who had turned the discipline's gaze back on its inventors (and still monopologists)—artists who had usurped the tools of representation with deconstruction, vindication, or vengeance in mind. One assumes that the objects of this work would have necessarily been straight white males and the subjects would have been drawn from the ranks of all and sundry 'others'—at least those sufficiently empowered to conceive such projects and bring them off materially. But as an idea and/or history would have it, not enough such work materialized. This fact is the odd ambivalence of the original call for work finally brought to light in which the artists variously variously images her/himself (or her/his subculture) or images and critiques the traditional male subject (and his past and present as (male)presenter).1

While the idea of an exhibition based on all manner of photographic responses to otherwise seems smart and viable at first glance, it was in fact far from problem free. To begin with, the two types (or directions) of response mentioned above—self-imaging or 'intimal' representation and deconstruction or 'table turning' representation—are very different projects with their own specific problems and divisions. They bespeak not only different priorities arising from diverse experiences of difference and exclusion but, to some extent, different levels of empowerment to respond as well. For the other/artist, the possible modes of response are not open ended. They are, rather constrained by particular and often painful experiences of oppression, exclusion and difference and by the ways in which visual, literary and oral constructs have been used to impose and enforce those conditions.

The central problem with The Other is the way in which its catch-all diversity threatens to reduce and homogenize its artists' various responses to difference. In this regard, it risks reproducing the utility (for the straight white male dominant order) of the 'others' inferiority and mystery by reducing diverse experiences of oppression to a functionally determined, generic category and serving them up, slavish-like, for a mostly non-'other' audience.

This reduction could have been avoided either by establishing curatorial priorities based on specific (sub)cultural concerns rather than theoretical abstraction or by limiting the show to work which uses theoretically derived abstract concepts as clear points of departure. While theoretical models may have been useful to some of these artists in defining their individual positions, none of them foregrounds theory in their work. What are foregrounded in most of the work included in The Other are the particularities of exclusion and oppression based on, or prompted by, the individual artist's lived experience.

In addition to this (indirect) convention, I believe undermining of particular difference in the service of abstract 'either/or,' the curatorial and exhibition machinery employed in conceiving and assembling The Other is on two important accounts at odds with attempts by recent artist-photographers to construct and exhibit effectively oppositional works.2

Contemporary artist-photographers have become increasingly aware of the need to establish and control the context in which their work is shown and read. They have learned the lesson of the opacity and contingency of photographic meaning in a number of ways: by seeing their own and other artists' work fail to communicate due to inappropriate exhibition contexts, by the study of recent critical writings about the construction of photographic meaning,3 and by a critical review of the history of photography. In their subsequent attempts to define and limit meaning in their work, I believe the chain of flat-taping signifiers,6 to paraphrase Roland Barthes, these artists have employed a number of strategies. They include: the use of text—with varying degrees of image-text integration; the adoption of formats borrowed (in part) from other media such as slide-tape and installation and, relatedly, the development of large-scale integral works in which inter-frame syntax takes precedence over (or at least qualifies) the often obfuscating ambiguous single image. Group shows like The Other in which large works by numerous artists are truncated and compacted together are clearly at odds with both the aims and methods of such artists. Instead of supportive forums for a few integral works dealing with related issues, they provide samplers of 'highlights' from otherwise dissimilar works. In the case of works that are redundant or in need of editing, this can be an ironic advantage. But as regards complex large-scale works where structure and scope are essential or series work where narrative, linear progression, or cumulative effect are essential, shows like The Other are detrimental. In oppositional work where meaning is imperative, the line is not merely one of 'formal integrity,' but rather one of coherent communication. Often the difficulty of showing such work under any circumstances these days, marginally positioned artists are often forced to swallow their intentions and take what exposure they can get.

Obitolic number two is the curatorial idea/theme show itself. In all its myriad manifestations, more often than not with shows of this type, the idea/theme precedes the fact of the work(s) in a bafflingly unempirical way with the result that the work that turns up must be wrenched into varying states of suffused compliance. Even when this is not so, when exhibitions are based on curator's prior knowledge of existing work, the curatorial idea/theme frequently runs roughshod over the separate artist's intentions. In such cases, works which, considered on their own terms, were pointed and coherent become blunted elements in a curatorially determined syntax—often a very different syntax from the one they lost.

To reiterate, the syntax lost by the works included in The Other is those of specificity and particularity; the acquired syntax is
By William Simon

He had a rescue when he joined the marines that the country he was skying out of was a known locale, with a character that was exact and coordinate and that would, no doubt, damn well be a damn well known locale. A thing you could go back on if you had a reason. But that patronized seat just got disrupted somehow; as though everything whole had separated a little inch, and he had dropped back in between things, to be on the periphery without a peripheral perspective.

—Richard Ford, *The Ultimate Good Luck*

It is wholly appropriate that considerations of representation invariably lead to considerations of doxa, the popular belief in the generic phenomenon is created in the discovery of the other. The condition of desire and judgment is intrinsic to representation permanently tosses all human experience with hierarchies, hierarchies being the transformation of the other into the distance. And it is this perceptual tint that provides the multiple sense for the evolving images of the self.

The other, then, prefigures our personal identities and social identities, the "I" and the "you" of our being: by opposition, the other defines what we are by highlighting what we must not be; not merely by exemplifying what we must prepare not to be, but by being the dramatic paradigmatic between the "us" and the "them," the escape route with reference to gender, class, ethnicity, and most importantly that which discriminates the "conforming" from the "deviant," the more the definition of ourselves is given dimension by what we attribute to, and use to identify, the other. The work of photography is a negotiation of self, and our relationship to the other is central to its function.

Two particularly successful examples of recent large-scale photographic works are Conny Flock's three-part slide-talk *Seeing the States Quo*, and Alan Sekula's *Geography Lessons: Canadian Notes*. In particular, see Roland Barthes's "The Rhetoric of the Image" in *Image Music Text*, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, and "Death Today" in *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang.

Doug LaChete in a Writing Assistant Professor of Photography at the University of Houston. He will be exhibiting his photographs at HCP in July 1988.

THE OTHER(S) AND THE US(S)

Barbara DeGenevieve, The Jack Strap (original hand-colored)

However, the multiple pluralisms of the contemporary world tend to require almost constant attention to what traditional and more formally hierarchic settings could commonly ignore: the other's acceptance of what they were expected to be. Responses to the other are increasingly contingent upon a reading of the other's motives and feelings. Typically, as we move from servants to services, the other becomes more complexly visible; a managed cordially, we mask our concern for their judgments less than before any claimed enlightenment.

The definition of the other stabilizes our relationship to it or to the social order. At the same time, however, it also plays a critical role in the interpretive negotiations of our divided self. The very idea of the "other" self, we explore, has historically been the most of the legacies of Freud, suggests that at any moment aspects of the self are experienced, often with great distress, as belonging more to the other than to us. Some versions of the other tend to frighten us and never more so than when we suspect ourselves of harboring the characteristics of the other within our own ecology of desire. Thus, the typical adolescent male's anxieties about homosexuality are anecdotally similar to the possibility of not being heterosexual and even more so of not being a man. The problem of the politics of representation of the other emerges, then, not as a problem of objectification—what must be taken for granted—but as a problem of the explanations implicit in representation.

Implicit in conventional art's representations of the other is the confirmation/recognition of the values (judgments and desires) that shape such explanations, i.e. those points at which the difference becomes a matter of better or worse, superior or interior, acceptable or unacceptable. From this point of view, representations are not only complex texts that are products of social life, they also reproduce social life. Conventional representations of the other, particularly representations of what is described as the inferior, the deviant, and the stigmatized, tend to instruct and confirm the viewer in the naturality and legitimacy of that inferiority, devaluation, and stigmatization, e.g. women, blacks, lessees, gay men. Such representations tend to reify our conscious perceptions; the "representing other" assimilates all prior judgment and corrections the viewer to preserve the permanence of being other than the other or, in the case of the other, to accept those judgments.

The art of the other challenges the naturality and legitimacy of conventional representation, even, or especially, when utilizing the identical images. The art of the other tráchizes the judgment of inferiority, devaluation, and stigmatization, it problematizes the difference. At times it provably accepts the difference and question the significance of the difference not as the desire of the other, but as what is coercively
desired for and imposed upon the other; at times it calls into question the reality of the difference by compelling the viewer to recognize not only how much is shared amid the difference, but how much of the difference itself is shared by those other than the other.

What is called art is not privileged, nor is it immune from the reclassifications and denaturalizations of history. Where once it may have provided models for life, it now must increasingly offer itself as a catalogue of different ways of living what are often virtually identical lives. Art in this context, at its best, offers us the possibility of a "peripheral perspective," one that asserts what many fear: that there is no compelling, shared center, but only a constantly evolving and possibly enlarging totality of differences.
Bill Viola, The Theater of Memory, 1985 (video still, photo by Kiva Paris)

Bill Viola, Anthem, 1983 (video still, photo by Kiva Paris)

**POETICS OF VISION**

By Sean Mean Robinson

Bill Viola: A Survey of a Decade, exhibited at the Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, from February 13 through April 17.

Years ago while using an electromagnetic device to neutralize magnetic fields on the television screens, viola in rubs bill viola impishly placed his head in the instrument, expecting a consciousness-altering experience. Alarmed at what he had done, he thought, "Oh, God, I promised I'd remember what I was doing before and he was nothing happened. And the question of his identity is secure. That subtle but intuited parallelism of systems—the brain and the instrument and their image-making capacities—fueled an experimental approach to the medium that has made Bill Viola one of the major video artists of the last ten years. It also clarified his intention to make the phenomenon of perception the subject of his work.

In Bill Viola: Survey of a Decade at the Contemporary Art Museum we can see how he not only has altered the technical means by which imagery can be presented through the electronic eye, but has shown us as well that the mediated act of perception can have a metaphysical dimension. The exhibition consists of seven video tapes and two separate installations produced from 1977-1986. His identification of universal and archetypal themes, and his ability to fuse them with the structural properties of his medium, have produced a body of work that has been characterized by one writer as a "poetics of vision." Fundamental to Viola's work is the belief that vision and cognition spring from, and bind us to, our surroundings. Our existence is expansive and infinite, but it is based on the empirical. Experience is specific and subjective, but all that happens is connected with nature, and can be re-presented in video by simulating the rhythms of nature, diurnal, seasonal—and eternal, through the paradigm of regeneration.

Another anecdote. When Viola was eight, and the accidentally fell into a lake.

I remember the amazing experience of this world and I had no idea at all. I just braved through it all. It was incredibly beautiful, and I wasn't scared at all. There was the green emerald light everywhere, filtering down, and I could see the sandy bottom, and plants moving back and forth, and fish. Then a big hand came down, and grabbed me, and waked me right out of the water.

In Reflecting Pool the artist emerges from a woods and leaps above the edge of a pool. The camera freezes him mid-air in a fetal position, but the water below continues to move and reflections appear on it. Night falls, day comes. He has faded and reappears, rising out of the water to re-enter the trees. The split screen has abandoned real time, which area do we watch? The event is archetypal, he is reborn through a sacramental cleansing.

Viola straightfacedly films nudes in a January snow in Self Lile. In cleavage he aims at his eyes as if to pierce their first sight, prolonging the shots until we absorb the implications. What is primed real time. Which image into the world look like when there are no previous imprint? Viola says that pre-verbal sight is the first strain of knowledge, that language results from the need to articulate what is first seen. "That is why a quest for purity of perception comes up in my work, a restating of the way to see." He flips to the panoramic in Close of Euphrat filmed in North American blizzards and the heat of the Sahara. He wants, he says, to reach the limits of the visible. Depth is extinguished in these light-lit scenes, only incremental movements separate near and far. Chot el-Qozan is spell-binding to the view. The wishes of dancing color, the heat waves carrying rippling objects stop the horizon, are unforgettable in themselves. They are seemingly hallucinatory yet genuinely optical, not video manipulations. He marries the landscape to the physical medium: waving bands of light fill the field of vision, invoking the awesome and the sublime, the terrifying and recalling visionary paintings. Ancient of Days and Humane View treat the same themes—cycles of nature with elaborate interludes of shifting focus, directional movement and alterations in tempo. He prolongs or shortens motion. He zooms from microcosmic and mysterious detail to explicit and mundane resolution. He creates virtual images out of edited fragments based on mathematical units of many hours and many feet. In these and other works his panoramic scans are vertical, horizontal or giddily circumferential. His tapes are run forward or backward at real time or in fractional ratios—sometimes based on contrapuntal musical form. Temporality is objectively determined and symbolically structured, not mechanical and chronological, thus enhancing the visual values and the spiritual ramifications.

Each of Viola's two installations, Theater of Memory and Room for St. John of the Cross is a meditation on the mystery and invisibility of thought, the one secular and the other sacred. In Theater of Memory an uprooted tree is strong with blinking lights behind which a large monitor displays images of water. The setting is warm and earthy, the lights and screens suggest the electrochemical processes of thought. Illumination and images are separated by gaps of space and time like the synapses between nerve endings in the brain. Room for St. John of the Cross shows a chamber with a light, room, each with monitors showing mountains. The tiny one is still, blurred, while the outer one is noisy with winds and charged with turbulent skies, craggy peaks and a sweeping eagle. This is an allegory of transcendence, the spiritual survival of the Christian heretic from nine months of torture in a cell by his inquisitors. His is a dual return, with pain in the present and passion in the eternal, the two defined by the opposites of agitation and calm.

Viola's ranger quest for self-knowledge, art-interest, not hermetic and inaccessible, although he demands much of the medium and often much of the viewer. In The Not Known What it is I Am Like he sweeps through woods, forests, caves, animal and bird sandwiches, dig stakes and acts of violence, fire-walking rituals and back to a decayed and resurrected fish. Our animation of the sequences and recognition of the continuity may come retrospec-tively. He says of this tape, "I see it as a simultaneous whole, and that's why the most important piece exists in the memory of someone who has seen it, rather than in the experience of viewing it."

But what is the meaning of the concentric circles on the tape, his peak? The pivotal segments present the artist, late at night and by the light of a lamp, in a "sacramental" supper, ceremoniously eating a silvered fish on a silver awl. A water glass contains, in an illusionistic revelation, a "Tree of Life," and in its shadow his memory of a live snail, which emerges from it to slip away, across the table. Ultimately most of the world is about solitude: "The language I'm most interested in is the language of solitary experience." Central to this experience is a reverence for the coolness of his capacity for the imagination to invent allegorical journeys which can be implement by the technology of video.

**Footnotes**

5 Ibid., p. 63.

Jean Robinson has taught art history at Case Western Reserve University and the University of Houston. In March she will give her until now unpublished "Pandora" paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and at Rice University.
A SUMMER’S DAY

By Ed Osowski

Joel Meyerowitz, A Summer's Day, was on exhibit at HCP from December 11-January 18.

Aaron Siskind, Edward Weston, Ansel Adams, and Harry Callahan are four photographers among others who, while very different in their approaches to the photographic subject, raise difficulty for the critic because of the almost unrelenting beauty of so many of their images. Their appeal to the senses is so direct, so immediate, so spectacular that at times one is forced to stand back, aware that to enter into a verbal dialogue with their photographs may end in defeat. Only by resorting to analogies with works from other artistic media—the abstractions of American painting from the fifties with Siskind and the writings of the American transcendentalists with Adams, for example—does it seem possible to write about them at all.

Selections from Joel Meyerowitz’s book A Summer’s Day were recently seen at HCP in an exhibition organized by the Brooklyn Museum. The works challenge the viewer much like the works of the four photographers named above. The 32 photographs, some monumental in size, are breathtakingly beautiful, absolutely lovely in their colors, in many ways almost perfect in their composition. To be familiar with his book Cape Light (1978), the catalogue of superlatives applied to Meyerowitz should not surprise. Throughout his career he has worked at finding that “sense of wonder” he writes about in Wild Flowers (1983). But for the past decade he has moved away from the bulky, active, somewhat humorous works collected in Wild Flowers to images which record stillness, calm, harmony.

The world Meyerowitz photographs is a dreamlike construction where one finds peace and happiness, where illness and death hold no power. The title of a Matisses work, L'usine, Colone, Vaupele, comes to mind when looking at Meyerowitz. It is deliberate because he photographs a Matissean world of fullness and richness, a world where nature and man coexist.

Consider the photograph titled “Eric.” In it a young boy offers raspberries from a glass bowl tilted toward the viewer, a gift. Light lovingly plays across his body. Like the other photographs of older children in the exhibition, “Eric” tells us that youth faces no dangers, that one can offer a stranger (the viewer) raspberries knowing that his gift will be graciously received. Meyerowitz’s young girls pose with their arms crossed to cover their chests not to protect themselves from a threat but out of modesty.

What gives a Meyerowitz photograph its special appeal, its easy grace, stems from what is noticeably absent, the weight of metaphor. His photographs are, at their essence, closely viewed observations. So “Dinner Table,” which shows the remains of a meal, flower petals fallen onto the table, wine glasses and dessert bowls nearly empty, carries none of the resonance of a Dutch still life painting, none of the hints or warnings that death lurks around the corner and hides in the middle of pleasure. Similarly, Meyerowitz’s empty rooms, washed by rich shades of color and light, are without the heavy burden of meaning.

A brief essay, titled “Summer Time,” appears at the conclusion of the book A Summer’s Day. In it Meyerowitz recalls the summer of his childhood. His memories are telling because they are of a time before life took on any threats. He recalls, especially, those presexual moments before the distinctions of gender emerged. What he has carried with him to this project is a memory of a time before the world would become the hostile territory for the battle between the sexes. At the beach his mother brings him to the women’s locker room to change. He writes,

“I looked up at these naked women above me, stretching into and pulling on their suits and caps, and saw their abundant bodies rolling and swaying in the sunlight and shadow coming through the Dutch door. My first image of women. Although I seemed to be in the men’s locker room, I found it difficult to be in a locker room among the women. I sensed in the cool of the water.

It would seem that Meyerowitz owes debts to certain American painters. The works titled “Buy, Sky,” which depict the same spot, where ocean, land, and sky come together in a variety of different lights, seem connected to the paintings of the nineteenth century Minimalists. Informing his works is the example of Milton Avery, the great interpreter of Henri Matisse’s “Lonzoon Beach” strikes one as especially close to an Avery painting in format and feel.

The HCP space did not encourage viewing the photographs as they are arranged in the book. These are not photographs taken on one summer’s day but are. Meyerowitz writes, “The distillation of seven summers. They are my way of taking in and examining with a finner hand the effects that moments in time have had on me.” Their effect is to abandon time to create a new type of time, much as Thoreau did in Walden by condensing and rearranging the events he described. Meyerowitz writes, “Time is flexible if you care to see it that way.” In the book the photographs are arranged from the first light of early dawn to the dark,inky blackness of late night.

Certainly the photographs on view at HCP are never boring. Twenty years ago when Meyerowitz was just beginning to publish his work, the influence of Robert Frank was great. Over the years Frank’s influence has waned as Meyerowitz has emerged to create images free of the anxieties and tensions Frank so well observes. Meyerowitz’s photographs hold out the promise of a world of sanity, safety, and grace.

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SPOT 15

SPRING 1988
I'M NOT CRAZY, I JUST AM A PHOTOGRAPHER

By Cynthia Freeland

I'm Not Crazy, I Just Lost My Glasses, an exhibition of photographs by Lonne Shanor, was shown at HCP, January 22-February 28, 1988. A book of the same title was published in 1989 by De Novo Press, Berkeley, CA, with an Introduction by Martin J. Caidin and a Foreword by Stanley J. Kornkan.

Lonne Shanor's book and exhibition present "portraits and oral histories of people who have been institutionalized for mental health conditions." The project radiates moral sincerity and an unflagging faith in human potential. Shanor says that he "wanted to find a way to circumvent this insidious public view of what crazy people are all about" Profesor of Psychology Jorkins himself is a～prehensive, sympathetic, and skillful. Photography critic and historian Colestock says that the exhibition "reaches a real contribution to the public debate on issues of mental health. To top it all off, we can read the fine print before the Library of Congress catalogues the book. It is marked that the book is available at a discount to those involved in self-help efforts for those with 'mental disabilities.'"

In her book we find three dozen black and white portraits of the "mentally ill." On the face page each portrait is printed a bit of self-narration by the subject. The (exhibitions and audiotapes are a continuation of the self-narrative.) Shanor says his procedure was to find people (though sometimes they found him), gain their trust and get them to describe their experiences, edit the resulting tape and discuss the final version, the book, with them, and only then make the portrait with the "message we wanted to convey."

Now, even someone with a minimum of knowledge of photograpic techniques may not be sure how she or he will look when photographed by someone in some way, that gives them the benefit of the doubt, we must conclude that a lot of these people wanted to be photographed. Lonne Shanor says that the people in his book, it is because of bad press."

"I'm not crazy. I just am a photographer."

The book makes no concrete political suggestions. Shanor's introduction contains us by suggesting that "people will be healing." ("What could be more healing?"") by being listened to. This importune an suggested an exacerbation of our mental health problem, as well as presenting a simplistic notion of the nature of mental illness. His belief that this book will help families members or others closely involved with a mentally ill person is simply to stigmatize and too individualized. We may agree with Darwin Dian, who says that "the system is a madness machine," or feel outraged with Sam Watts, who says, "I'm going to be over a thousand crazy people on the streets because of Reagan's cuts," but will such indignation prompt social action? In fact, the "first show" aspects of this book may show very well perpetrate attitudes of doubt and despair about, say, allowing a halfway house into one's neighborhood. After all, it does reflect a variety of strange and aggressive-looking traversals, a man who plays a 'lil black to" (prefix President's poster) and various other people who hear voices or have hallucinations. Sometimes, the full front, harshly lit photographs link Shanor more to Arbus than to Warhol, even, and somberly to Op Art. Arbus too, we are told, was able to gain the confidence, trust and voluntary cooperation of her subjects; but does that make them any less "crazy"? (And if they told her their own stories, would that make them less "crazy"?)

SPOT

Lonne Shanor, Bradie Johnson, from I'm Not Crazy, I Just Lost My Glasses, 1986.

"I'm not crazy. I just am a photographer."

Lonne Shanor

Karen Moors from I'm Not Crazy, I Just Lost My Glasses, 1986.
hints of another whole kind of experience. Clementina Thirty-Seven says, "I have uncommon knowledge that needs to be shared." Karen Moore says, "I want to be psychotic again. You strip bare this rotten personality and rebuild a new one." Anne Bidois says, "Everyone has the possibility to have out of the body experiences. But people are so afraid that they block their ability. And when it does happen, they say it's a sickness." These hints aren't much evocations of experiences as allusions to them. It's like a war photographer taking pictures of war victims who tell him "War is hell," when he hasn't even himself been near the scene of battle. Shavelson's project is flat-footedly conceived as he. He is an objective. If sympathetic, recorder of madness, its documenter in both photos and words. Like a clinician, he nods his head while taking notes. In no sense is there any convergence here of madness with art.

Foucault's complex history of madness from the 1500s to the 1980s emphasizes the gap between the experience of unreason and the naturalized phenomenon of madness. "Madness" is the comfortable terrain of a designated pathology, an illness, a deviation from the norm. It is open territory for controlled (objective, scientific) psychiatric exploration. Photography has followed suit. "Unreason" is what threatens to break out of the boundaries of this circumscribed terrain, challenging all categorizations and even the world itself. Foucault carries his own history a narrative about silence in relation to this experience of "unreason": there is a gap here between objective logic does not cross.

As for a common language, there is no such thing: or rather, there is no such thing any longer; the coalescence of madness as a mental illness at the end of the eighteenth century affords the evidence of a broken dialogue, points at the separation as already effectuated, and draws into oblivion all those stammered, imperfect sounds without fixed syntax in which the exchange between madness and reason was made.

Since the rise of scientific psychiatry, there has been left to some few artists to represent that unknown, threatening realm of unreason—Foucault cites such examples as Goya, de Sade, Nietzsche, Artaud, and Van Gogh. Has there ever been a great mad photographer? Is photography the medium for the experience of unreason? Without an example, the possibility seems unlikely. The limitations on photographic narrative in particular seem too severe. I do not know of any photographic equivalent, for example, to the hallucinatory narrative of madness told in Mark Van Horne's autobiographical novel Eden Exposed. This book, because it is composed in both personal and artistic terms, manages to convey something of the inside of the unreason experience—tells us to the scene of war, telling us what it's like to lose reason, someone's corporate responsibilities, achieve insight into the universe, have "astral sex," and so on. The representation is frightening and harrowing, not comfortingly humanizing, like Shavelson.

Footnotes
2 See Martha Rosler, "In, Around and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography)," in J. Wee (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), also Allan Sekula, Photography Against the Grain, especially "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)," (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984). Some radical photographic writing which criticizes the documentary tradition of showing victims Ironically reproduces the kind of victimization it opposes, by assuming a vanguard position of knowing what is best for these very victims, who once again fail to speak for themselves.
3 Foucault, op. cit., p.x

Cynthia Freeland is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Houston and a frequent contributor to SPOT Magazine.

BOOK OF DICK


By L.R. Mckin

Speaking of the other, out of Germany comes an ambitious collection of nude photography—Mr. Darcy's Delight (The Hidden Picture) appears an historical representation of male nudes in 19th and 20th century photography.

Photographic genres presented are many and varied. Notoriously absent are images which incorporate text or other signs which appear to reconstruct male sexuality and related myths in a less traditional way: Joel Peter Witkin's "Androgynous Breeding a Fetus, 1981" and "Bodachth Anamnath, 1986" are the last two images in the book. While their presence can be seen as redemption or as at least a challenge to traditional depictions of male sexuality, it is much more likely that they are included under the broader heading of The Curious, subhead "The Gnome" (maybe heading, subheading, not Weimeran's). Also included under The Curious: The Beautiful would be Sandi Fellman's "The Trust and Ornaments, 1985" in which two bodies photographed from breasts to below knees, are colorfully, ornately tattooed—including genitalia (exclaim and grimace here).

Man as Natural Form, where a sand encrusted nude contours within and becomes part of an eroded rock formation, describes "Emergencies V 1984" by Gilbert Corrmano and Pierre Missa. Imrems Cunningham has penned "John Bovington 2, 1929" as an Annual Form. He is not the object of feminine desire inasmuch as he is a woman responding to the image. His beauty and his decoratively hidden genitals might however—because of the nature of desire—inspire lust in someone. There is also Man as Abstract Form: John Coplien's "Back with Arms above," 1984, presents a scrotum hardly, surprisingly rectangular block of flesh with two smallish (in proportion to the immensity of the rectangle) fists adorning the upper end.

There are nude Revolutions which reveal some romantic object of either sex. In a Marsha Burns' image, c. 1975, a semi-nude male draped in a dark kimono strategically opened to reveal his softy lit member, appears to be saying, "Not tonight dear..." There are images with homosexual overtones and with-out—born between meaning and beauty or seeking sex within the other. There are images of erections alluding to masturbation or narcissism. Some appeal to prurient interest and others do not. Some nudes are crocked by the bottom frame of the photograph. One of the photographers responsible for the castigation is a woman (Eva Rubenstein). 'Nick, New York, 1981') and other such extrusions have been done by men. One of the book's most exciting portraits is Mark Morrisroe's "Martha's Portrait," 1982 in which he has castenized himself (figuratively and in color) by the photo's bottom edge. It is not the idea of his self-castigation which engages the viewer's interest.

Narratives and Fantasies abound from Hippyboy Raydor's "Auntie's portrait, in Neve, 1840" to Ben Hansen's image of a man writing in distant, dark overgrowth, geni-ta obscured (1974). Also served—Belkac (Ben French, 1951) or Couch Potato (Herbert Tobias, Hamburg, 1970) with ninety-five photographs (without headings), there is much in this book for any voyeur or artist to contemplate and/or to assimilate.

Roger Bunker, Old and Wiser, 1984

Marsha Burns, c. 1975

In distant, dark overgrowth, geni-ta obscured (1974). Also served—Belkac (Ben French, 1951) or Couch Potato (Herbert Tobias, Hamburg, 1970) with ninety-five photographs (without headings), there is much in this book for any voyeur or artist to contemplate and/or to assimilate.

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by Roy Flukinger

Don't be afraid to try the greatest sport around.
Catch a wave.
Catch a wave.
Those who don't get good get hit down.
Water-tudios on, turn and nose.
And Boys.
That's all there is to count the score.
You gotta.
Catch a wave and you're sitting on top of the world.

"Watski shat arsopuld cippcuts, noot me?" I yelled into the rear view mirror.
"Watski shat arsopuld cippcuts, noot me?"

Seuka was throwing out another question for us. I guessed that the flat out we had won with the Highway
Pan dol this side ol League City
didn't do him up. I hated to
shut down Brian and The Boys
since they made the miles go faster,
but I popped the tape out anyway,
sent the Woodie back to a com-
fortable 95, and threw him another
What?"

"It said, this whole question of
the ultimate influence of the I.D. 1
turns upon Melody's teachings
and, don't you see?"

I saw Cunci's large white sun hat
turn as she shifted to face him.
"No," she said. "Help shield the
classes from my eyes.
"Look," said Cunci. "It all goes back to an interview he gave in 1946.

"To Philosophy?" asked Young,
turning to join Cunci in shooting
Seuka a glance.
"Unimportant. What does matter is
what he was able to observe:
When I was young I was always
very anxious. But now I realize how
Watski wants it to be always
calm,"

"Great man," said Cunci.
"Great sentiment. I said
"Don't be kid in '46." asked
Young.

"Yes," said Seuka.
"Great timing, too."
SOUTHERN REVIVALIST PHOTOGRAPHY

By L.T. Mecklin

The exhibition, Southern Exposure, at Bentley-Morgan Galleries from January 7 through February 12, 1988, is a collection of photographs of the American South by seven photographers: Debbie Fleming Caffery, Michelle Campbell, Sandra Russell Clark, Mary Peck and Sharon Steward.

In the show, Southern Exposure, the most unforgettable images are several more recent ones by Debbie Fleming Caffery—remarkable portraits which convey not only the artists' feelings for the place and the people but also a sense of what these people feel about themselves. Fifteen pictures from her ten year documentation of the sugarcane industry are all that one has to go on in this exhibit.

"Sharon Mag.," (1987) and "Roadrunner/ Harvesting," (1983) are portraits without faces. These portraits are elusive—not just because of the lack of face but because of the way in which the face is obscured. In the latter image, a nicely made, striped t-shirt is revealed and framed by a triangular opening in a window screen. The wearer of the t-shirt reaps his black hands triumphantly on the wooden window sill. His face is identifiable through the screen—the form of a nose—are those two eyes—the rest is lost.

In the other portrait one contemplates bristles protruding from a shaving mug before noticing that the old-fashioned shaving utensils sit in front of bent and crumpled wire screen. The fabric of the screen absorbs one's interest and leads it up to notice a delicate black hand gingerly holding the top of the screen.

In "Sharon Mag.," (1987) young legs with bare feet extend out of a blanket which is not just gathered about the body but growing bell shaped as if in imitation of the flower children in those distant childhood fairy tales. The child's stance and vulnerability in her blindness remind one of the Hollowed-out-Costumed Scout in To Kill A Mockingbird.

None of these three, nor the project as it is available for viewing, can be said to rob these people of dignity or even to speak for them. There is no attempt here to lead these photographs with signs of poverty or desperation. These images speak more of a continuity of life, a consistency in cultural tradition which is not to be judged.

This culture exists, perished without readily identifiable signs of current mass market mediation.

Four of the earlier portraits are documentary, straight photography in the FAA project style. These are poor black people photographed amidst the humbleness of their surroundings. There is not, however, a sense of exploitation, neither incidental nor inherent. Caffery does not feel sorry for these people nor do they feel sorry for themselves. There is no feeling of oppression.

Two landscapes are definitively not of that straight photography school. "Enterprise Sugar Mill," (1980) and "Sugar Wheatfield," give abstract form and little detail. Within the context of the other photographs, the effect of these landscapes is romantic, quiet, mysterious and elusive.

Two more of the portraits can also be called romantic and they court sentimentality. Of "Pudgy" one sees her floppy, blurry hands gently cupping an equally blurry, flabby chin. The photograph's soft qualities (graininess, slight out of focus) are projected by the viewer to the subject. "Harry's Hands on a Tub," (1984) does not rely upon the subject's physical properties—in fact it has more in common with the straight photography of the four previously mentioned. His hands rest on the circular bottom of an almost full, large galvanized washtub. Focus is sharp enough to reveal ridges and splits in his very worn hands. This portrait reveals much as the above mentioned Caffery image. The viewer responds to the dignity implied by the sweat curls of his good jacket—just visible over the roughness of his aged hands.

Michelle Campbells nine photographs in this exhibit are of Hispanic culture in Austin, Texas. Her style is straightforward, more journalistic. These images are loaded with signs that produce bias. In one image a young boy sits on an old, previously ornate dresser which resides on a bare wooden porch. Beside the dresser and at one end of the he is in a baseball mitt. At the other end a juicer is visible. The spoon or fork sitting in it suggests that it held a person not a pets food. The young boy is holding a large, large box. This new age icon—a portable radio/cassette player with large speakers—appears to have replaced or at least superseded in importance the baseball glove and the juicer. Any image with these particular signs provides a viewer whose value systems differ from those portrayed, a predisposition to judge the values system of the Hispanic culture as it is represented.

In another image, a young woman wears her clothing too tight, constricts us soberly, if not slightly warily (one hand is clenched), and stands against a bleak wall with the graffiti, "MI VIDA, LOCA (My Crazy Life)," visible to her side. A bare to the waist man exhibits two ornate and two meager tattoos. His gaze does not imply trust any more than the aforementioned woman; his arms are folded and he is turned slightly away. Other of the photographs refer to the tendency of some Hispanic households to load their environment with Catholic sick and religious icons. In the eight photographs here it would appear that the documentation of this aspect of Hispanic culture is narrow and suffers from bias imposed by distance.

In Sharon Steward's Magic Valley Sunflower Series V, (1987/88), she has produced an animated landscape of one surreal sunflower shooting into the horizon to the wide-eyed adoration of the field of sunflowers growing uniformly below and behind it.

Mary Peck has six panoramic landscapes of the Florida Everglades. Although beautiful, little happens in these photographs other than the intrusion of tropical plants into woody underbrush.

Sandra Russell Clark hand colors (pale pink and green predominates) infrared landscapes which are titled, Louisiana Dreamscape.
By Susan L. Clark

The concept of photography in its necessary relation to literary image/visualization fundamentally informs and gives clues for reading/understanding Marilyn French’s new novel, Her Mother’s Daughter. This is so not only in the overt imaging/repetition of inherited patterns over the generations promised by the title, but also in the novel’s unique narrative technique and sense of perspective, and in the spread of photo montages that separate major sections of the work. Author French inserts the photographs to make a telling point about being or not being female. To make words is, in effect, to make pictures, and French thus chooses a heroine who looks back over her past life as if it were a family album. Trying to find words to express what she has experienced, she stoiks at making overly explicit pictures of those around her, while she can shoot, with compassion, those who mar suffer the same plights—poverty, under-valuation of women’s work—but who are distanced from her. French knows how to portray a heroine’s feeling of displacement extraordinarily well, and she does by creating characters who are always seeking to capture likenesses: they make snapshots or bake cookies or hang wet prints on dry over bathshelves, but they are always reproducing something. According to French’s heroine, the daughter does construct the language and actions that surround work and leisure, whether a photographer, writer, or mother. An extraordinary novel, Her Mother’s Daughter is not only a troubling image with the interleaved images of photography, written text, and literary language, and memory. It actually becomes a picture-in-text in every chapter or subchapter, told primarily by a photographer, but retold from different line of sight and camera angles, over four generations.

The primary focus of this modern-day family saga—depicted through photographs and through what are in effect the same “snapshots” narrates in on Polish-descended Anastasia who, as New York-based professional photographer Stacy Stevens, shoots everything from impoverished Indian mothers and children to the kind of art-shot children’s pictures that could find and grow over in places like the Eddie Dell. In the former case, Anastasia, while distanced by the “golden-skinned women in their brilliant saris, red, blue, yellow, against the sere, color-scarred sand, the pale green scrub trees, the sky that stretched unbroken blue for miles,” still cannot but see the hunger and fatigue and always must turn with her subjects “that way it seems less like rape and more like encounter.”

In the latter case, Anastasia uses her camera’s eye as a way out of poverty and as a way of trying to understand what family pictures reveal. When she and her first husband quarrel and eventually divorce, she confronts poverty, as did her mother and grandmother, and parallels her success with the camera into income in order to survive by capturing engaging likenesses of cute toddlers (and saving the less appealing negatives for private consumption) for up-and-coming middle-youth in her 1960s New York suburbin neighborhood. Anastasia comes by her love of capturing images, French contends, by studying family photographs and making up fantasies ("her face in the wedding picture is fine and sensitive, even noble") and by fitting her personal history into those images chronicled by, among others, Jacob Riis, who works to show the realities of poverty. Riis’ photographs of homeless boys sleeping in alleys are supposed to reflect Anastasia family history, since her uncles and aunt were for a time wards of the state. Even the camera

photo from the author’s collection, Her Mother’s Daughter, by Marilyn French

Uncle Eddie buys Has "accroision plates" that reflect Aunt Eugenia’s "blue chiffon dress with accordion pleats." They do much as Anastasia sees in an evocation of how she has been taught to see-she has been groomed as a child prodigy in everything from piano to drawing to photography—and of what possibilities language offers. Anastasia grows up with all the word pictures her embittered mother gives her, yet, in the interval nursery’s segments, the reader finds the mother’s narrative, as well as her mother’s tales, and Anastasia’s daughter’s tales, all of which are "shifts" from different perspectives. The images on film become words in the texts that these multiple narrators tell, sometimes in first-person narrative, and quite often in third-person, mirroring in literary terms again the photographic process, so that a persona in front of the camera is an object, just as a text becomes an object to be "read.

These are female/feminine texts in Her Mother’s Daughter, and photography offers Anastasia not just as much satisfaction as writing novels offers a writer. Moreover, photography gives her an anmatch such as any more female role models than she finds in painting or sculpture: I discovered thru Roy and Cecil Beaton and George Rodger; Corinna-Brown; and Elzbieta and Walter Evans. And then, oh heavens, I'd known about Margaret Bourke-White, but now I also discovered Imogen Cunningham and Berenice Abbott, and Eve Arnold. WOMEN Last of them, we met one Cecil Chasindie, the very strong, a fact that so disheartened me when I wasirteen that I abandoned (notably) my ambition to become a camera woman.

Anastasia prides herself on having developed a "narrow, keen, sharp eye" when she studies the photographs of her family, but she takes her time in figuring out how she fits into the picture, as if were. Shouldn’t her camera image be different from that of her mother and her grandmother? But why, then, does she sit up late at night, smoking, as her mother did, resenting a philandering husband, and why does she even feel toward her independent and sudden daughter, as both her grandmother and mother did toward their daughters, whom they characterized in the same way? And why, then, does she feel unable to deal with unemployment and under-valuation? Does that make her Compare to her foremothers did.

Getting the picture is what Anastasia’s personal and professional life is about, and author French sensely uses the link between the camera eye and the literary image to show how life patterns repeat over generations.

The truth is not in the shots of the fathers that descend unto the third generation, but the stories of the mothers. But when I was a young woman, I believed I could break this chain by sheer will.

Anastasia doesn’t break the chain, but she learns, as does her literary forebears in the Bild-quote, the forebears an this novel is very like the early Be- man and like Gardens The Tin Drum, except that it is much more extensive and more woman-oriented that knowledge comes through scrutiny and survival comes through labor, and that dealing with images—whether they are photographic or literary ones—comes by examining which ones are chosen to be made, which ones, once made, ought to be and perhaps are examined, and which unmade ones need to be made.

Susan Clark is a Professor of German and Slavic Studies at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where she teaches courses in Women’s Studies.
By Ed Osowski

Photography, doesn’t really interest me. I do know that I want to do something with it though. I thought photography was a substitute for something else—work, for one thing, I wanted to write.

Ward Evans

For the writer, a problem, perhaps the problem, that repeats itself is how to approach the body of events—the flux of human activity and the fluidity of emotional interaction—and then shape that material into a coherent whole. The act of shaping is, of course, the act of creating something that is not, unseen, but different from those fluid events. The framing and the shaping, the act of imposing a willed order, is what makes fiction. Two recent books by students of American literature, Carol Schlos and J. A. Ward, suggest that for certain writers the aesthetic question of how to write is answered by their knowledge of certain photographs. The photographs are nothing short of major efforts to bring photography into the mainstream of aesthetic criticism and to place photography on equal footing with other arts—writing and painting, for example. Both writers argue brilliantly that photography itself has brought about subtle shifts in perception which have allowed the writer to go on and write as he did. Schlos explains it thus: “It is impossible not to continue to see that one of the most surprising problems in our literary history is the problem revealed to us by the camera. The problem of coming upon, or approaching the public, etc.”

That the writer of fiction was a somewhat didactic figure troubled Nathaniel Hawthorne, the first writer Schlos examines. The writer of fiction stood apart, spying, uncovering truths perhaps best left unrecorded, Hawthorne held. In the daguerreotypist Hawthorne found the perfect analogue for the situation of the writer. Between 1840 and 1860, Shlos reports, over 100 daguerrotypists practiced in Boston. Hawthorne visited several. And, in the pages of Atlantic Monthly, he read essays on this new medium. In his essay, “The Photographer,” he writes: “I have seen the daguerreotypist create a situation in which nothing is as it seems, and only through the secret craft of the daguerrotypist does truth emerge. Hawthorne’s anxiety about the probing and prying in which the writer engages, almost medical in its terminology, finds expression in the realization that the daguerreotypist does not just a simple mechanical recording of the sitter, but that certain psychological truths, a web of unrevealed, in Schlos’ words, are revealed in it and weigh down the photograph. Schlos goes on to examine the writers Henry James, Theodore Dreiser, John Dos Passos, John Steinbeck, and Norman Mailer and their photographic contemporaries. Alvar Aalto, Louis Sullivan, Alfred Stieglitz, Jacob Riis, Dorothy Lange, and the Soviet cinema. But the issue, if that word can be used, of Walter Evans and James Agee is the best example of one approach expressed through two media—photography and writing. Their Let Us Now Praise Famous Men represents a union of approaches about which it cannot be said that the photographs merely “illustrate” the text or, conversely, that the text merely “captures” the images. Rather, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men is the result of a shared way of seeing, expressed through words and photographic images, neither exclusive of the other, one reinforcing the other. Ward writes that the very techniques of association with prose—narrative, chronological, dialogic, historical exposition—Agee rejected in an effort to “pull language in the direction of photography.” He goes on:

Agee not only abolishes from his writing those techniques, impolitical or unaccomplished to photography, but he seems to want that writing and could be photographic.

Ward and Shlos devote their longest analyses to Evans and Agee and to their Let Us Now Praise Famous Men because that document rests at the very center of a cluster of artistic/political issues. The sense of the real or the concrete is never absent from Let Us Now Praise Famous Men. Evans’ photographs insist upon the “thinness” of what they record. And Agee’s linguistic trick, the cataloging of words he offers when he surveys a room, is the verbal equivalent of Evans’ emphasis on what is real and concrete. But the effect of the close renderings is to make the concrete specific into something else, something different, that which is “famous” (or sublime). Evans and Agee thus demonstrate what is characteristic of much American writing, the movement from the real to the abstract. Their vision is, in a sense, Emersonian, transcendental. Their words and their images freeze time and thus erase time. That their works appear to be documentary is part of their artifice. Ward’s sharp, insightful reading reveals.

It would be unfair to Ward and Shlos not to point out how their books differ. In Visible Light impressively sweeps across a century and a half of years of literature and photography. And, in its claims for how certain writers and photographers addressed key artistic questions, it attempts to place photography firmly at the center of critical debate. But Shlos at times reaches too far. Her passion of John Dos Passos, for example, seems hampered by the weight of academic jargon and strategies to convince the reader that Dos Passos’ experiments with shifting visual and montage effects are as much to be selected in Russian avant-garde cinema. Ward, almost too casually, suggests that one can understand Dos Passos by knowing Walter Evans, and that photographs like Evans’ “Penny Picture Display, Summer,” which depicts dozens of different but interchangeable faces, captures the proletarian feel and multiplicity of voice for which Dos Passos is known.

Schlos breaks the hundred year time frame of her book to examine the works of Norman Mailer and Cindy Sherman. Sherman is so surpassingly unsatiable as she links the narrative perspective of Mailer’s Naked and the Dead to his experiences of surveillance photography during World War II. She concludes In Visible Light with a quick glance at Cindy Sherman but fails to understand how Sherman’s manipulation of the “props” of pop culture (the movies, the tv commercials, etc.) are based on an inability to maintain narrative argument.

American Silence is much less a bravura performance than In Visible Light. Ward’s stated goal—to examine the theme of “silence” in certain American realist art—narrows his focus considerably. But his close readings of Evans, Agee, and the painter Edward Hopper are never narrowed themselves. Rather, they are examples of the research that emerge from close “textual” analysis. His analysis of Evans’ photographs, for example, shows that he has looked at those works for an extended period of time. That chapter alone deserves to be read by anyone who believes that the photographs is a text and that

The printed page can be examined for patterns of meaning, for theme and idea. Ward and Shlos suggest approaches to the interactions of photography with fiction that are rich and challenging.

Ed Osowski is a librarian with the Houston Public Library System. A frequent contributor to SPOT, he occasionally reviews books for the Houston POST.
February is Black History Month, and the Houston Public Library is participating by displaying, in celebration of a most vital and profound sociological aspect of Black heritage and culture, an exhibit titled, "Get The Jazz." These black and white and color photographs were made in the 1960s, during various musical performances ranging from festivals to lessons and informal sessions. They feature Black jazz and blues musicians from Houston and throughout the state.

One assumes Gerri's involvement with the project began as an act of respect and love, as much as from a desire to document the mortal essence of an immortal medium. A musician himself, Gerri perhaps fellow musicians, whether legendary or otherwise, as archetypal, larger-than-life, yet witheringly accessible, in a series of luminous black and white, formally-structured portraits. Other images, made during performances, have an uncanny spontaneity, remarkably free of pre-mediated camera-pandering on the part of the musicians, attributable to Gerri's careful (read: fortuitous) framing and familiarity with the environment of the musicians. From a distance, one can only imagine the constant interaction between the musicians and their audience, the spontaneous moments captured in the photographs.

This project, begun as a publicity campaign for the I/O Gallery in Amsterdam, where ten Broeke is Director and Co-Founder, was a joint effort with the Houston Public Library. The photographs were on loan to the library from the Vermont State Museum.

By April Reiper

The exhibit "Get The Jazz," with photographs by Gregory Gerri and Inge Larrey, was on display from February 2-28 in the Central and Julia Ideson Buildings of the Houston Public Library.

RUTGER ten BROEKE: LOOKING AT STRANGERS

By April Reiper

Dutch photographer Rutger ten Broeke traveled to various cities in the U.S. during the latter part of 1987, confining an international portrait project (which had originated in December 1985) whereby he photographs strangers who seek him out from his temporary storefront studio might be set up. Accompanied and assisted by his wife Blenda, he visits portrait sessions within the bounds of formal contracts (salute background paper, traditional studio lighting, subject placement just so). At Galley's one Sunday night last December, a group of images made that evening (selected from nearly one hundred) are reproduced here.

Rutger ten Broeke's innate wanderlust spends its down time engaged in insatiable curiosity, one functional and demonstrable result of which is ongoing inquiry; subsequent debates (which seem to occur spontaneously) are characterized by a sense of freshness and openness. All arguments, positions, and data are considered with an equal measure of seriousness and respect—a style of discussion, whether applied to teaching or to conversations with one's peers, which draws out the most repressed opinions and encourages an extended and lively exchange. He photographs in much the same way, gently extracting bits and pieces of information of interest, mostly by listening and watching with patience appropriate to a somewhat less frenetic travel itinerary.

This project began as a publicity campaign for the I/O Gallery in Amsterdam where ten Broeke is Director and Co-Founder (in addition to his position with the gallery, he teaches photography and maintains an extensive exhibition schedule). He invited a population of gallery-goers who habitually scowled fleeting but appreciative glances while walking by the space, and he began to wonder if that population might become more creatively involved if individuals were exhibited as subjects, engaged as passersby.

Directives are sent during the course of a sitting: one is asked to pose in precisely the state in which he or she arrived, with suit being carried, work paraphernalia, or bulky and often-coordinating winter wear. Rutger ten Broeke requested of the subjects that they not laugh, laughter a diversionary tactic which draws authenticity from the moment. His intentionality, and the strength that underlies knowing exactly what to wait for, move the sessions effortlessly. I noticed that once the crowds attention was diverted to his performance, increasing numbers wanted to participate. Perhaps a voyeuristic aspect of the project overides his appearance as philhannic, empathic, and interested, with slightly-supernatural applications in attendance for good measure. He enters an unknown amount of energy, generating a force field that by all appearances is difficult for potential sitters to resist.

Rutger ten Broeke speaks of the "rich spectrum of behavioral, sociological, and demographic information" which emerges from an exhibition of the work. More important, he allows and encourages the sitter his or her own fantasies, thereby creating a space where the legend in one's head might take over, if only...
THE OTHER GALLERY:
NOT JUST ANOTHER PRETTY SPACE

The Director of the Barnes-Blackman Gallery was quoted by the Editor of SPOT, for a description of her gallery, and a "Director's Statement," which is printed below.

By Michelle Barnes

Five Contemporary Black Houston Photographers, an exhibit featuring the work of Gregor Brandau, Raymond Cronshaw, Emile Hadhaj, Jeffrey S. Mary and Louise Martin, is on display at the Barnes-Blackman Galleries from March 24 through March 31, in conjunction with Bay Fest '88.

Jacob Lawrence, in his forward written for Art, African American, stated that:

In the history of American art, the contributions made by Black people are significant and understudied. There is the need to make known the uniquely creative, graphic, and philosphical expression, social criticism, and critique of the Black artist throughout the development of art in the United States.

Samella Lewis, author/editor, affirms, in the text of that book, and with each issue of her quarterly publication African-American Art, that "Black artists have been given too little attention. The source of the attention must come from within the community." By focusing attention on Black artists through the gallery, they are heard, their voices are heard, and the art is visible through the galleries and cultural centers which have nurtured them.

A similar initiative is played for any public space that brings together a cross-section of the Houston community for good, but our society applauds more loudly and consistently for those who take care of our own. Houston is the home to the Barnes-Blackman Galleries is a commercial space, and although it has physically existed for less than one year, the gallery is trying to represent well its artists and on and off. However, the gallery is constantly seeking opportunities for artists to gain recognition and broaden exposure outside the gallery.

It never ceases to amaze me that other people are constantly surprised by the ever-growing list of those who choose to show their work. Having choices suggests that there are alternatives. For too long, those choices have been limited to not showing rather than selecting from several galleries. A gallery should be more for the artist than walls and lights. A meeting place is provided by the Barnes-Blackman Galleries for the artists and "others." It is a home base and conduit through which ideas are exchanged; support is offered. The gallery helps the work of local Black artists, in particular, to become immediate and consistently more accessible to an inquisitive public. It is a place where the sphere of art patronage and collectibility can expand simply through awareness of the existence of the person and personality behind the work. It is a place that moves art acquisition out of the otherwise closed realm of activity usually reserved for those who denote what art is and what it is not.

Beyond the ethnic label that is generally afforded for public convenience, the work displayed at the Barnes-Blackman Galleries is eternally described as honest. Enthusiasm is the primary characteristic of the gallery-enthusiasm for the work that must be done and shown, enthusiasm for the artists who choose to share with the larger Houston community the products of search and self-discovery, enthusiasm for sharing a resource that badly had gone untapped, unacknowledged, and ignored for too long. Welcome.

Michelle Barnes is the Director of the Barnes-Blackman Gallery, a Houston art space which exhibits original work, primarily by Black artists. She also teaches art at The Kinsey School, and on active with numerous civic and arts organizations.

Terry's Brookes, Our Sister, My Brother, 1984

THE PHOTO FORUM

By Joan Morgenstern

The Photo Forum is a new group formed as a part of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in conjunction with the twentieth anniversary of the Museum's permanent collection, it has been designed as a response to growth of the Museum's permanent collection, in order to increase members' knowledge of fine art photography outside the frame of the collection. Photo Forum members will be given the opportunity to discuss contemporary issues in photography, such as its emergence as an art form, with leaders in the field. The Photo Forum will provide an opportunity for greater numbers of Houstonians interested in photography and collecting to participate in the program, beginning in September, as members will vote on photographs to be purchased for the collection at the final meeting of each year.

There will be four meetings per year, and be announced, including a discussion of several of the pieces exhibited during Photo Fest '88. The dates and times will be announced in the MFA, Houston Colloquium News bulletin. The first meeting will meet with a tour of the exhibition. The second meeting will be a tour of the Museum of Fine Art. In addition, the group will tour private collections not open to the public. The last meeting of the year will be a presentation of photographs that the Museum wishes to acquire. In order to join, members must be in current. An additional $150 for a husband or wife is required. Funds raised through membership in the Photo Forum will be used to purchase photographs for the Museum collection. For further information please contact Joan Morgenstern at 920-1360.

Keynote Speaker: John Szarkowski, Director of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. To be joined by Nathan Lyons, Director of the Visual Studies Workshop, Aaron Siskind, internationally acclaimed photographer and educator, and several other founders of SPP in a panel discussion on the history and development of the organization and the field of photography over the past 25 years.

Giselle Freund, well-known French photographer, social historian, and author of Photography and Society, will be the Society's Honored Educator and Honored Photographer.

Edward Said, Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, will discuss "After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives," a photographic essay on the lives of the Palestinian people by Mr. Said and Jean Mohr, a Swiss photojournalist.

Yvonne Rainer, renowned filmmaker and educator, the Independent Study Program of the Whitney Museum, will present and discuss her film, The Man Who Enviomed Women.

Helen Hughes, an American photojournalist known for her work in the area of human rights in Chile, and Chuck Kleinhans, Professor of Radio, TV and Film at Northwestern University, and Co-editor of Jump Cut, will also speak.

Society for Photographic Education
25th National Conference
March 3-6, 1988
Hyatt Regency Hotel—Downtown
1200 Louisiana Street
Houston, TX 77002

The SPE National Conference will be held in conjunction with the Houston Foto Fest and the Association of International Photographic Dealers Conference.

Additional panels will address: Personal Expression in Contemporary Art-Making, Economic Survival, Women in Photography, History and Theory (Programming subject to change without notice.)


Guaranteed hotel reservations, until January 30, 1988: $80.00 per night, double occupancy, Hyatt Regency Hotel-Downtown. Phone: 800-258-0000.

Ernie Hadhaj, My Sister, My Brother, 1984

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MESSAGES
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professionals (in the 25-54 age bracket) active, established, and respected in Houston’s yuppy uppercrust. The myth of “The Other” is perpetuated outside anti-racism (degradable and manageable) cultural-economic strata because it exists, as a model, beyond these strata as fact, opinion, rule, or at the very least, amusing. Good-natured diatribe is intellectual disagereement, a response which merely is concurrence. Having recently been instructed, during a dinner party, by a group of young, late 20s professionals that vehement protest, no matter the issue, is “un-ladylike.” I must conclude that nearly every human has a blind spot, that short-sightedness and narrow-mindedness (the lesbian who, in the course of fistic baton conversation, uses the word “nigger”—which I repeat here for example and effect, with feelings of conflict—without flinching, yet in the same casual context objects to the word “gayer” are endemic to a culture which has so thoroughly institutionalized discrimination that most people, when queried, no longer find it a relevant issue. Is a myth, heralded for its degrading ideo-political hygiene? I would argue that degrading the issue of discrimination an inexcusable-by-product? Consider those questions the next time a “friend” or acquaintance or “colleague” tells a racist or sexist or homophobic joke or anti-racism a response for you can count on, and the urge to laugh—let’s weigh heavier.

The past month has been spent monitoring the deconstruction of an old garage apartment behind my house. Does a practical model of or definition for the post-modernist lexical “deconstruction” (to single out one of many, impossible to the lingua) exist by way of example? Something one might apply outside criticism? Although my cohorts and I use this and other companion terms liberally, I subconsciously dread committing crimes of extra-continental usage. Even more distressing is the realization that I might some day find evidence of having been syntactically influenced by the over-used, unspeakably dull inventory of post-modern buzz words, the use of which seems to issue two things: first, the writer will experience immediate and substantial reinforcement, and second, somewhat down the line, said writer will be vilified and ridiculed for using incomprehensible and archaic logocentric jargon.

In the summer of 1987 during an interview I conducted with Stan Grundahl, an award-winning photojournalist with the Boston Globe in Japan (Fall 1987), the issue of documentation emerged in the nature or name of the oppressor notwithstanding—as in conjunction with the inability, whether through neglect, recreation, or opportunity, of such a group to speak for itself. Incomprehensible objectification or misrepresentation seem to be inherent issues in, say, documentation staring Haitians, although both intention and result are often positive. Our discussion was not the first to address this issue; hopefully, as conversations progress, weeping and rerouting dialogues (along the lines of gender cause-and-effect; for stirring) that short-fruit rational and creative thinking will yield to innovative solutions. Paul Hester and Robert Holli examine other aspects of oppression in book reviews within, as does Cynthia Freeland in her discussion of Lenny Shavelson’s exhibit. This issue of SWOP looks at some erasing of and about issues concerning “otherness” as much as its structural conception. The conceptualization that which is agreed upon as socio-politically problematic thereby elevates it beyond workable parameters, entering in part for the relentless and influential hold it maintains, or the rifts that seem at once simple-minded and immediate. 

April Rapier

SEKULON HUGMIN

January 17, 1988
To the Editor,
No critic, historian or theorist can expect to control the uses to which his theories and images will be put by other writers. Indeed, one should perhaps feel complimented more that his written word finds useful vehicles for other writers. In a recent article in SPOT, "Hugmin’s Heineken’s New-Physiognomy" (Summer 1987), James Hugmin was kind enough to acknowledge my essay "The Body and the Archive" (Oct 19, Winter 1986). However, I do not attribute his recognition of the Heineken’s work. While I would have preferred Heinekens’s "dubious" experiments with physiology, a contrary reading seems to me within the issue is not Heineken’s work as such; rather the larger body within which the politics of representation of the body are contested. Some readers of JSP may be unfamiliar with the context in which I proposed that the term "neurophysiography" might be of value in explaining the "return of the body" in contemporary art. In 'The Body and the Archive' I argued that two novels systems of description of the body emerged in the 1880s, within the context of a new scientific/patrician/epistemological faith in optics. Both attempts were focused at the attempt to salvage the distant vision of visual physiognomic evidenced through recourse to more abstract mathematical models. The contingency of optics was made to submit to the logic of the scientific facts of the average man ("homeomorphic") constructs like the Belgian astronomer and statistician Adolphe Quetelet in the 1830s. The Paris police officer Alfred de Tocqueville invented the first modern system of criminal identification. But the immediate, combining instantiated front and profile photographic portraits with numerical series of nine bodily measurements on a single arch; and second, by originating these data into a massive filing system based on their relative positions in a statistical distribution. The English physiologist and founder of eugenics, Francis Galton, invented a method of cephalic portraiture ("pictorial statistics") in an attempt to produce actual photographic impressions of abstract, statistically defined bicoal types. He was especially concerned with the isolation of a distinctive "criminal type" engendered by heredity.

Bertelwit’s practical nominalism and Galton’s theoretical essentialism constitute the two methodological poles of positivist attempts to define and regulate social deviance. Their notions of the relation between image and archive were diametrically opposite. Bertelwit sought to uner-
ningly and efficiently embed the image within the archive. Galton sought to embed the archive within a single image. Although their projects were specialized and idiosyncratic, they mapped out the general epistemological parameters for the bureaucratic handling of visual documents. Until recently, Bertelwit and Galton are still with us. "Bertelwit" survives in the operations of the national security state, in the condition of intensive and extensive surveillance of a variety of citizenry, as a kind that every day life and the geopolitical sphere. "Galton" lives in the fenced-off authority of biological determinants, founded in the increased hegemony of the positivism in the Western democracies. Galton’s spirit also survives in the neo-nazi imagery of some of the new biotechnologies.

The complex method developed by Galton enjoyed an enormous popularity well into the second decade of this century. Subsequently, a variety of spiro-
grammatical bent have been drawn to constitute perception, with only a limited awareness of the technical concepts. A provisional list would include the "arch-spy" Noy in the 1890s, and more recently William Wegman, Nancy Burson, and now Robert Heineken.

Citing my brief negative assess-
would the Connie Chung com-
poe read for an Asian woman
who has been refused admission
at UCLA after her high entrance
examination scores, simply
because administrators fear the
emergence of an overly Asian stu-
dent body? While I certainly don't
blame Heincke for policies pur-
pursed by the admissions officers
of the institution at which he is ten-
ured, I would urge him (and
Hugonin) to ponder this question.
But perhaps it is just as well that
Heincke aims at a target so few
his reach, since I suspect that his
"gorilla esthetics" (Hugonin) have
more in common with the sympa-
thies and concerns of the right than
with those of the left.
Allan Sekula
Allan Sekula, photographer and
critic, is the Program Director for
Photography, California Institute of
the Arts.

To the Editor:

I have just finished reading
"Challenging Corporate Comfort." Paul Hester's review of The Art of
Commercial Photography, in the
Winter edition of the Houston Con-
tender for Photography's publication.
SPOT. Despite the fact the "review"
failed to mention anything specific
about any specific photograph
there were some points brought out
that merit further attention.

One thing I found particularly
annoying was the labelling of the show as an exhibit of "prosthetic
imagery." Are we sup-
possed to believe that each and
every artist represented in the show
had an "imagination"? Most assuredly,
there are some that are moti-
vated strictly by money but I'll bet
there are a lot of other motivations
involved. Motivation like not star-
varying, or covering our children's
arses with more designer jeans,
but how about it: do I believe I want
pictures? My pictures? Just because
a photograph is labelled "commercial" and it was paid for
does not mean that it is "artisticly
inferior." The photographs in the
exhibition were of course, not labelled
as such, nor were they part of the
photographer's personal work (as
was the case with many of the other
photographers whose work I was
impressed by). They were straight
commercial work and it was paid for.

But what is even more distressing is
that those very rules of corporate
comfort affect even the most ideal-
istic of fine-art photographers [sic].
I hear a faint cry for "different work"
and all that's left is to try and find
of that non-profit motivated oppo-
tional work in a gallery here in
Huechison. You can't find it in com-
mercial galleries because corporate
comfort has eliminated all but the
most decorative work from these
spaces. Why? Because corporate
collectors don't want to walk into
their offices walls, and the corpo-
rate collector is the target audience
of the commercial galleries in this
city. That leaves one to search the
alternative spaces for something
else, and what do we find? Usu-
ally art-school level ideas of socio-
political themes which will be ren-
dered meaningless with the next
Presidential administration. Add to
that low technical quality that
seems to accompany a lot of "art"
photos and you get pictures that
are useless as decoration or even
as backdrops for products. Even
the HCP, with all its [sic] influence
and resources does not show par-
ticular risky work. Just have a
look at the Joel Meyerowitz show,
there's no risk involved there. It's
safe [sic]... There is not a thing offensive or "oppositional" about it,
just pure decor with name recogni-
tion. The prints are in color and
even mushy, which as why not
effective to a safe and comfortably corpo-
rate commercial gallery and show
something oppositional? Does the
HCP fear to offend? Or has corpo-
rate comfort dilated our aesthetics
to the point that most of us actually
believe that this is cutting-edge
stuff.

It seems distressing that when good
photographs emerge from the safety
of the corporate graysnow they get critically for being "prosthetic-
natured." Interest does not deter-
imuline quality. If you don't get paid
for that last brochure you shock does
it mean your pictures are better?
Not Comfortable
Not Comfortable
1988

[Editor's note: Mr. O'Dell's letter
was first published in the American
Photographers' Newsletter.]

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EXHIBITIONS ELSEWHERE IN TEXAS

MARCH
Dallas/Ft. Worth

Amor Carter Museum March 5-April 24, "Supreme Instants: Photographs of Edward Weston."

Amor Carter Museum March 11-May 16, "Western City Views: Prints and Photographs."

APRIL
Dallas/Ft. Worth

Amor Carter Museum March 5-April 24, "Supreme Instants: Photographs of Edward Weston."

Amor Carter Museum March 11-May 16, "Western City Views: Prints and Photographs."

MAY
Dallas/Ft. Worth
March 5-April 24, "Supreme Instants: Photographs of Edward Weston."

Amor Carter Museum March 11-May 16, "Western City Views: Prints and Photographs."

FOTOFEST

Workshops
Fotofest March 4, 3-5pm Symposia: Art Networks Monday, March 7, 6pm Arthur Tress: His Work Wednesday, March 9, 6pm Christina Rodriguez: Spanish Photography Thursday, March 10, 7pm Mary Ellen Mark: Her Work Saturday, March 12, 6pm Margarita Tlapayev: Contemporary Russian Photography Sunday, March 13, 1pm Megan Jenkins: New Zealand Photography

Brown Boy Lectures at the Rice Media Center
Tuesday, March 1, noon Carl Aigner, Australian Photographic Journalist. Wednesday, March 2, noon Herbert Hooversfeldt, Dutch Photographer. Thursday, March 3, noon to be announced. Friday, March 4, noon Ray DeMoulin, American Kodak. Monday, March 7, noon Robert Blank, New Photographic Journalism. Tuesday, March 8, noon Philippe Salmon. Wednesday, March 9, noon to be announced. Friday, March 10, noon to be announced. Friday, March 11, noon to be announced.

ASSMP (American Society of Magazine Photographers) meets second Monday of every month at the Graphics Arts Conference Center, 1324 Clay. Social Hour starts at 6:30pm, meeting starts at 7:00pm. 771-2220.

Association for Multimage, meets third Thursday every month. Contact Steve Sanderlin, 667-9417. Baytown Camera Club, meets at 7pm, first and third Monday of each month at the Baytown Community Center, 2407 Market. Contact Vernon Hagen, 424-5681. Brook County Camera Club, meets 7:30pm, second Tuesday of each month at the Brook County Library, 8th St. Meet at 7:30pm. Contact Ken Bowers, 635-3222.


March 11, 12 and 13
Larry King: Discovering the Intuitive
Mary Ellen Mark: Documentary Photography
Neil Slavkin: Environmental Portraiture George Tice: Making the Fine Photographic Print

APRIL
Houston Center for Photography
Fridays, April 15, 22, 29, and May 6, 13, Carey Sutlive: Portrait Lighting. Satm and Sunday, April 16 and 17, Keith Smith: Artist Book Workshop.
Sundays, April 23, 30, and May 7, Bill Frazer: Beginning Photography. 1411 W. Alabama 529-4755.

MAY
Houston Center for Photography

Clubs

The Houston Camera Club, meets 7:30pm, second and third Tuesday of each month at Baylor College of Medicine. DeBakey Bldg, Room H-112. Contact Glenn Stevens, 529-5813. The Houston Photographic Society, meets 7:30pm, second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 1211 Edloe. Contact Curtis Sidick, 656-5877. FM 1960 Photographic Society, meets 7:30pm, first and third Tuesday of each month at Deau Park, 2501 Prick Rd. Contact Joyce Shudd Jr., 237-3877.

Margaret Bourke-White: Vintage Photographs
André Kertész: Vintage Photographs
L’Ubo Stacho: Recent Photographs

In cooperation with the Jane Corkin Gallery, Toronto
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