

Sophie Ristelhueber, Mar Elias, Beirut, 1982



Rudy Burckhardt, Astoria, New York, 1940

FRENCH PHOTOJOURNALISM:

GISELE FREUND INTERVIEW

BEYOND THE IMAGE

DEPARDON'S *SAN CLEMENTE*

NEW DOCUMENTARY REALISM

JEROME LIEBLING WORKSHOP

FOTOFEST COMMENTARIES

EXHIBITION REVIEWS:

NAN GOLDIN/EXPLICIT IMAGE

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Gisèle Freund emphatically remarks, in her interview with Julie Lee published in this issue, "...I am not a photographer who believes photography is an art. For me, photography is a document. It's a document of our life." Even so, as Freund herself demonstrated in her book *Photography and Society*, the very fact that photographs seem to be straightforward documents of how things are leaves them open to manipulation: their meaning is altered by changes in captions, texts, and contexts.

Even so simple an act as juxtaposing two images, say, the two pictures of Mobil signs on our cover, opens up new meanings. Sophie Ristelhueber's photograph references the sleek and stripped-down, words-only logo of the multinational mega-corporation. The bullet holes, which speak in their own way about advanced technology, raise immediate questions about context: what's the source of so much hostility? The caption and dateline provide further important information. We begin to see beyond the sign to the scene: Beirut. In the afterword to his book *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (reviewed by Paul Hester in this issue), Edward Said wrote on the forces leading to the "ruin" of Beirut: "Beirut's real heyday, when it became a great world center of financial and commercial services, was the result of the oil boom, which had the effect of accelerating and exaggerating all the processes already at work in Lebanon generally..." (p. 171). Ristelhueber's photographs of Beirut's landscape, ravaged by the 1982 Israeli bombing, were included in HCP's *Beyond the Image* show (reviewed below by William Simon). "Beyond" this image alone lies a complex tale, involving the development of American oil interests in the Middle East, our continuing support of Israel, and the self-destructiveness of our efforts to preserve U.S. interests in the region—where bullets are literally directed back at the signs of our presence. From this current perspective, Rudy Burckhardt's picture looks even more firmly and securely rooted in a mythic past of small-town America. It conjures up "memories" of a rest stop to catch up on local news as well as to "fill 'er up." The sign itself, with its shield shape and beautiful Pegasus motif, is as antequely touching as the old-fashioned cars on the street. How much has changed since the days when you saw the oil company in terms of that local gas station man "beneath the friendly sign of the flying horse."

Juxtaposed, these two photographs also bracket the boom years of economic expansion here in Houston. In the 1940's things were just getting started; by 1982 OPEC had begun to flex its muscles. One man who profited perhaps more than any other from this boom was (in Freund's words) "the biggest billionaire in America," J. Paul Getty. Freund is currently a Getty Scholar at the recently established J. Paul Getty Center for the History of the Arts and the Humanities in Santa Monica. When Getty died in 1976, he willed most of his fortune to the Getty Art Museum. Now operating with an annual budget greater than the combined annual budgets of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Gallery, the Smithsonian Institute, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Getty Museum (again in Freund's words) "has so much money they have to spend it." They spend it in part to sponsor such scholars as Freund herself, but also, more recently and more spectacularly, to purchase art, including photography. Major collections purchased by the Getty in 1985 add up to a huge holding; as Freund put it, this has given "a new impetus to collecting, to make out of photography an art." Getty himself confessed that his collecting gave him guilt pangs about keeping so much art to himself. In his autobiography he wrote, "I take quiet pride in the knowledge that much of the profit I have personally made through our still-somehow-surviving capitalist system is used in an effort to reduce the numbers of cultural barbarians in our society."

The name "Getty" comes to mind not just because of Freund's position but because FotoFest wasn't the only big Houston event of recent months. The notorious Texaco-Pennzoil legal battle over Getty Oil was finally settled this April when Texaco sent \$3 billion by computerized transfer to Pennzoil's account here in the Texas Commerce Bank. Neither the Texaco nor the Pennzoil buildings downtown housed FotoFest exhibits, but the Texas Commerce Bank did, as did such major corporations as the Shell and Chevron Oil Companies. (And it was convenient enough to cut through the lobby of Pennzoil's double black trapezoidal headquarters on a trip across town to see shows.) Many of my photographer friends said they hated seeing shows in these downtown corporate spaces. They felt out of place and underdressed; they found the sites unfriendly to the art. True, the huge postmodern glass boxes, with their intimidating aura of international enterprise, can dwarf both artwork and viewer. But sometimes the photographs *in situ* were a source of unexpected visual delight. Mario Giacomelli's contrasty black and white images, aerial shots of landscapes, looked spectacular set off by the shiny black marble walls and low white coffered ceiling of the Allied Bank Plaza building. The *Windows* exhibit at Chevron floating high in a glass eyrie above the street opened on all sides to countless other windows of all sizes and shapes, prompting further reflection on views and frames.

Sometimes the settings livened up dull art, though in ways that the photographers probably would not have appreciated. Bernard-Pierre Wolff's inexplicably assembled montage of scenes from New York, Paris, and India seemed just one more element pastiched into Philip Johnson's pink-and-gray Republic Bank Building. Buckets of nuts, berries, and squash depicted in Austrian photographers' rural scenes appeared to have fallen like botanical freaks from the double row of ficus trees shading these pictures in the Allen Center lobby. Shoji Ueda's stylishly empty landscapes looked right at home in the empty spaces of Two Houston Center; instead of pondering sand dunes to the sound of the ocean's roar, one heard the hum of giant escalators endlessly delivering their empty steps to the third-floor lobby.

"What happens when you try to turn a whole city into a museum and invite a million people to participate?" asked FotoFest mastermind Fred Baldwin. I didn't see anyone looking at these exhibits except a few fellow enthusiasts checking off entries in their guidebooks. (Exhausted, I counted 49 in my own case—a mere nothing compared to HCP member Stanley Moore's "score" of 77. His obsessive trek, described below, contrasts with David Lazar's more selective tour.) A friend who works in one of the downtown buildings assured me that people there did look at the photographs, but confessed that no, he himself had not done so. Photographs' dependency on context raises special issues about their public display as art. It's not just a matter of aesthetics (of sites "unfriendly to art"), but of meaning and purpose. Corporate exhibition and sponsorship of art is inherently conservative; imagine a bank showing Allan Sekula's *Geography Lesson: Canadian Notes* or an oil company displaying Chauncey Hare's photos of workers burned in on-the-job accidents. Typically textless and contextless, the art was, if not thrust on the public like Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, then left on its own to stand as discreet lobby decoration.

Though the effort to reach out into new venues was one of the more innovative aspects of FotoFest, it was not true that most of its exhibitions occurred in novel contexts. Most work was shown in the traditional site of the commercial gallery or museum, where it was organized in standard art-historical fashion according to artist, country, epoch, or subject-matter. FotoFest was, for the most part, a festival of the photograph as "work of art" and a celebration of the photographer as "artist." This is not surprising; why should there be a

"festival" of the banal, pervasive, familiar uses of photography? Still, there's a paradox involved in ignoring or downplaying these everyday, accessible uses so as to turn the city into a museum or an art gallery: it becomes the effort of a self-elected elite to foist photography as "art" upon the public (the cultural barbarians). As Baldwin put it at the FotoFest "PostMortem" (held at HCP on May 4th), "One-quarter of a million office workers walked by good photography every day (my emphasis). Once in a while they must have stopped and looked." What is gained if the public is taught its lesson in art appreciation? To what extent did FotoFest challenge people to *think* (rather than encourage them to *buy*)?

This issue of *SPOT* takes off from Gisèle Freund's claim that photography is a "document of our lives." Freund's admirable book is organized into chapters describing the social uses of photography—in portraiture, art reproduction, news reporting, politics, mass media, pornography, home life, etc. So also does this issue of *SPOT* focus on some (of course not all) of these social uses of photography: in fashion, erotica, the family album, documentary realism, photojournalism, and psychiatry. It is important to stress that such a study does not begin from the view that all uses of photography are equal or that art photography is somehow silly. This latter point seemed to be the message of an irksome NBC "Today Show" reporter who managed to package a month-long, 80-show enterprise—with all its cultural and economic implications for our city—into a tasty 4-minute breakfast snack. It is one thing to ridicule intellectuals, as the show did by editing people's comments at Rice's Sewall Hall exhibit of trendy postmodern work. It's quite another thing to quiz nervous children on camera about their "artistic influences" and "motivations." Whether the aim was to deflate all art-photographic pretensions or to reduce children to stammering idiots, the effort was contemptible. The Children's FotoFence, involving children of various cultural backgrounds in a hands-on art experience which produced a public installation, struck me as an exemplary part of FotoFest—one undeserving of such inane media coverage.

Sources on Getty and his museum: As I See It: The Autobiography of J. Paul Getty (Prentice-Hall 1976) and Oil and Honor: The Texaco-Pennzoil Wars, by Thomas Petzinger, Jr. (Putnam's Sons, 1987.)

Cynthia Freeland

LETTERS

MORE ON THE BIRMINGHAM PROJECT

April 13, 1988

Dear April Rapier:

Having seen your column "Messages" in the Spring 1988 issue of *SPOT*, I believe a reply to Mr. Misrach's statement is in order.

The exhibition, *Birmingham 1988: The Birmingham News Centennial Photographic Collection*, was conceived to document the diversity of life in Birmingham, Alabama, today. The committee that oversaw the selection of photographers weighed many variables, but placed the highest value on the established quality of the candidate's work. In this category were a number of women and minority photographers who were seriously considered for the project. Both Linda Connor and Olivia Parker were invited to participate, but unfortunately declined. In addition, several minority photographers were asked to come to Birmingham during the fall, and we were fortunate to be able to include Gordon Parks as one of the six participants.

We made a sincere effort to include women and minority photographers in this exhibition. While I appreciate Mr. Misrach's and *SPOT*'s concern over the racial and sexual composition of the group of participating photographers, I feel your condemnation was premature. In neither intent, process, nor result did the organizers of this show ever exclude minorities from giving their vision to this project.

I enclose a copy of the catalogue which was produced in conjunction with the exhibition. I hope you will agree that the show accomplished what it set out to do: to document the diversity of life in Birmingham today. If you would care to publish some of these excellent photographs, we would be delighted.

I thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,
Ruth A. Appelhof
Curator of Paintings, Sculpture and Graphic Arts
Birmingham Museum of Art
Birmingham, Alabama 35203

Reply by April Rapier

April 29, 1988

Catalogue in hand, courtesy of Ms. Appelhof and the Birmingham Museum, I can see for myself the end product of much controversy and anguish on the part of many players. Response to Misrach's letter and efforts has been overwhelming and positive; conflicting information remains unresolved; many allegations and facts remain undisclosed. The bottom line: no women were included in the project, a commission of wide scope and importance. No women, one black—asked to participate after Misrach had resigned from the project in protest over this absurd exclusion. Gordon Parks was asked to participate, it would seem, as a token gesture, to "cut losses," as Misrach so succinctly put it. The fact that no women and no minorities were asked to participate in the original selection is unacceptable policy. No offense is intended to the participants in the project, for they are fine photographers. But the selection committee may as well have met at the Book-o-Rama and pulled their choices from the "established photographers" shelf. One concludes (considering that being "established" seemed to be the dominant criterion, as well as wondering by whose definition "established" was determined) that the selection committee doesn't see fit to acknowledge the great number of established women and minority photographers beyond this predictable and short-sighted selection. One wonders why, for example, Mary Ellen Mark, who according to Misrach was very interested in participating in the project, isn't considered "established."

When I discussed Ruth Appelhof's letter with Olivia Parker, she told me that Appelhof had contacted her to participate in the project. Although Parker's schedule was somewhat busy, she was "very interested" in participating. She did not decline to participate in this project; she was not contacted beyond initial correspondence. The museum still has not returned her material.

On April 25, ICP doled out twelve categories of awards in photography—not one woman received an award

(continued on p. 22)



Gisèle Freund photographed on her terrace, Paris, Summer 1987
(photograph courtesy of G. Freund)

FROM HOUSTON: HOMAGE A GISELE

By Julie Lee

On March 4, 1988, Gisèle Freund addressed the Society for Photographic Education Conference, scheduled in Houston to coincide with FotoFest. I had written to her requesting an interview for SPOT. Quite characteristically, she was openly agreeable to meeting with a total stranger and invited me to have coffee with her in the morning following her address. A *raconteur par excellence*, she probably has several stories for every entry on her lengthy *curriculum vitae*. Someday I would like to hear them all. But I will give only the barest details of this remarkable life, so that readers may enjoy getting to know her through her stories.

Gisèle Freund was born in Germany, where she lived until she was twenty. In 1933 she had to flee to Paris because of her involvement with an anti-Nazi student resistance group. In Paris she continued her studies in sociology and art, writing her doctoral thesis on the history of photography in France during the nineteenth century. She began taking pictures to support herself and to finance her studies. In 1936 she became a naturalized French citizen, received her Ph.D. at the Sorbonne, and published her first picture story for *Life* under the pseudonym "Girix." The same year she published her thesis and married. In 1940 she fled to the south of France when the Germans occupied Paris. In 1942 she was sent to Argentina by the literary magazine *Sur*. In 1947 she joined the fledgling cooperative Magnum and returned to South America, now divorced. In 1954, once again in Paris, she left Magnum but continued to write and photograph. She has published eight books: *Photography and Society* (1974, France; 1980 USA)¹ is the best known. Her work has been exhibited in museums and galleries all over the world. She has also made several films. She is a 1987-8 Getty Scholar at the J. Paul Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities; she will return to Paris this summer.

The stories, themselves, are very entertaining. She makes it all sound rather easy. Still, there must have been times when she felt discouraged and frightened. But we are encouraged by the example of a woman who was able, time and time again, to relocate and reposition herself and remain purposeful, resourceful and lively. The ideas she explores in *Photography and Society* are certainly timely today. One tends to forget that they were published in 1974, and that they flow out of a body of work which has spanned a lifetime. The stories are deceptive in one respect; while the story-teller is expansive and amiable, the writer/scholar is reductive, flinty and to the point. *SPOT* readers are encouraged to read, or re-read, her book so as to enjoy both sides of this remarkable woman.

[NOTE: The actual interview has been slightly edited.]

Julie H. Lee: Could you tell me something about how you became a photographer?

Gisèle Freund: Oh, that's quite easy. I became a photographer by accident. I was a student who had to flee from Germany, where I was born, because I belonged to a little group of perhaps six people who published a rolleographed (sic: mimeographed) paper against Hitler. And this was distributed secretly at the University. In this little group (we were all about twenty) were two girls. I was one, and there was another young girl who distributed it and who had been arrested by the Gestapo. A few days later her parents got a coffin: she was dead. I realized that I had to flee immediately if I wanted to save my life. And two hours later I took the train to Paris. And in Paris I have stayed half a century.

Now I went to Paris because my thesis was about the history of photography in France in the nineteenth century. Because I studied sociology of art, and my professor suggested I take this subject. I stayed years there at the National Library to find out what I could about photography and society. My book *Photography and Society* came out in 1975, but my doctoral thesis appeared in 1936. I did my Ph.D. at the Sorbonne. And to make a living, this friend who was a director of an illustrated magazine suggested I should try to make stories, photo-stories. He explained to me in five minutes how I could make a story with a central photograph and about six other pictures and give the details. And I tried it. In those times it was not like nowadays where hundreds of thousands of photographers do the same. There were very few people who did this, and I could sell the story. With four stories a year I could pay my living expenses and my matriculation at the Sorbonne.

My father was a big collector of art, and I had been raised in art, and we were surrounded by artists. So I was interested in art. This was the reason why I studied sociology of art, which did not exist. When I went to the Sorbonne and said I intended to study sociology of art, they laughed.

JHL: It didn't exist as a discipline?

GF: No. But they accepted my thesis and later I used it for my book. The thesis was printed and immediately was sold out. Many writers wrote about it. This was quite a thesis because I discovered all the things which are now absolutely logical and everybody knows about this history, but the origin is my study, you know. I found out. And in those times when I asked for photographs I got boxes at the National Library. The pictures were not enregistered [inventoried] in those times. I could have become a millionaire if I had not been so honest. Anyway, I have not the spirit of a collector. I met Mr. Cromer, who is now also known, who wanted to sell his collection. He was perhaps sixty, he was very old for me. And he gave me hints of what I should look for. He showed me his collection. So in 1975 I published this book which has become the school book over the world. It has appeared in twelve countries.

JHL: What did being a photographer mean to you at the time when you first started doing it? How did you think of yourself?

GF: Well you see, when I had no money was just the time when *Life* was started in 1936. And in France for the first time one could buy 35mm color film, Kodacolor and Ektacolor. I tried it out. But I was very poor, and the color cost so much and had to be developed by Kodak. No other professional photographer would use it, because they couldn't make money with it. So I was the one who tried out [experiments], and I found out it was absolutely fantastic, because I could use the Leica. And I have all my life photographed with a Leica. So I bought the film and I did some pictures. I photographed the window of a hairdresser and for the first time in

my whole life the lights on the street, green and red. I have always been interested in literature. I had no intention to become a photographer. In those times photographers were mostly chosen for their strength, because the cameras were very heavy. There were very few amateurs.

I have not dealt with the role of photography in the women's press or in advertising. With rare exceptions, however, all photographs published in newspapers and in magazines perform an advertising function, even if this is not immediately evident. (Preface, *Photography and Society*)

Life was already ready to print color from the first edition. And so they turned to me. I was the only one in France who did it. The first story I published in *Life* was without my name. I put it under another name because people said to me, "How can you put your name on a story, because you are a doctor, and this is not a profession which is important? They are uncultured people...and so on. And you will ruin your future." But the second one has my name. It was during the war, and the Americans wanted to know what was high fashion in France during the war, so they asked me to do the photographs. I had no studio. I lived in a very little place. They rented a big studio, rented some models, and they came with two enormous boxes of champagne. I photographed all the fashions of the famous *couturiers*, and some of the pictures were published in a story about how Paris looked during the war.

And I got so interested in photography that I became a professional photographer. But I have never been in a school. I went to Man Ray and wanted to learn from him. But he asked me a price which was exactly what I needed to live for a month. So I could not accept it. Then I went to Florence Henri, who was very well known too. And she was much more modest in her price. But after the fourth lesson she threw me out and said I would never learn anything, and she didn't want me throwing my money away. She still worked on plates, and retouching was very important to her, because the portrait photographers of those years had to retouch—otherwise they couldn't make a living. But I could not retouch Leica. My ideas were all different.

JHL: How did it happen that you photographed Joyce and other famous writers?

GF: Ever since my first photographs I had the idea to photograph my friends of the literary world. I photographed a number of writers who were my friends or whom I admired because I knew their work. Today almost all have become famous. So I did the first color pictures of Joyce, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Cocteau, de Beauvoir, Sartre. So for three generations I photographed my friends and then I kept the collection. In 1947 when Capa founded Magnum he asked me to join him. I was the first woman to join an agency to distribute my photographs. But I never gave them those portraits because I didn't give them any value. I had photographed all these people out of pleasure and friendship, and never asked them a penny. They were terrified, because nobody did realistic portraits in those times. It was a new way of seeing human beings, you see. And it was quite interesting for them because they had never seen that before. I had been very influenced by the New Realism which came from America, by Dos Passos and all the other important writers of the epoch, who, in their books, wrote about the economic situation in America and the whole movement. I also knew very well the Surrealists, and I photographed them too, but I made very little, because I am not a photographer who believes photography is an art. For me

photography is a document. It's a document of our life.

JHL: Tell me a little more about your work with Magnum.

GF: At Magnum were about eight or ten people. We split the world between us. One went to Latin America. This was Gisèle; this was myself, because I already knew Latin America a little bit. Then another one covered the wars. Capa went to photograph wars. And Rogers covered Africa. This was the way we split the world. And I went to Argentina in 1942 because I was on the list of the Gestapo. Meanwhile I had married a Frenchman who was in the war. And he became an escaped prisoner, and they were looking for the wives of escaped prisoners. The Gestapo came also to the house where I lived three days after Paris was occupied by the Germans and wanted to arrest me. But I had told everybody from the porter to my friends to tell them they had never seen me. I didn't exist.

Now when you work for magazines, I found out very quickly, they change the pictures as they wish. One famous story of mine was about when King Edward wanted to marry an American divorcee, Mrs. Simpson. The whole press in England wrote terrible things about it. They didn't want the King to marry a divorced woman from America. Now *Life* made an enormous spread about Mrs. Simpson, and in the middle of this story appeared pictures showing the two million people out of work in the North of England. It was a terrible economic crisis because industrial plants which had been built there had become old-fashioned, and the proprietors preferred to go out of this country and build new plants, but left behind a population which was starving and had nothing to live on. And *Life* sent me to this country in the north to photograph. When I arrived there was this terrible, miserable life for these workers in the north where all the shipyards were. And I photographed. Then I find in *Life Magazine*, in the middle of this marvelous story about Mrs. Simpson, the photographs of the distressed area in the north of England. A poor girl without shoes, misery. It appeared there next to a portrait of Queen Mary in beautiful clothes, full of jewels. The contrast was so strong. It was to respond to the English press which refused an American who was divorced. "But look at what is happening in England!" This was the liberal American revenge by criticizing the English press.

Before the first press pictures, the ordinary man could visualize only those events that took place near him, on his street or in his village. Photography opened a window, as it were. The faces of public personalities became familiar and things that happened all over the globe were his to share. As the reader's outlook expanded, the world began to shrink. (p.103, *Photography and Society*)

JHL: So the American press could do that about other countries, but they must have had a different set of rules for what they could publish about America. They would not have published something so obvious about America.

GF: Probably not. This came out during the war. During this [unclear] war one of my friends, John Morris, represented *Life Magazine* in England. And each photograph he sent to *Life* was looked at by the censorship. You could publish all the misery that happened in Vietnam and the people who died, but you could never publish the misery which happened to the American soldier, so as not to frighten the population. That's always like this in a war. Now, for instance, on the other side, where the impact of a photograph is so strong, is the picture of the little Vietnamese girl who was burned and who was

running, half-naked; when this was published, it did more to finish the war than any other thing. But you see this came later, when foreign correspondents, not Americans, made photographs of Vietnam, because they saw a different version of the American soldier.

JHL: So during the Second World War each country sort of operated on a code that was understood as to what was permissible to publish and what wasn't? Was it a sort of self-censorship?

GF: No. They were censored by the censors. They saw every picture. And they said, "This you can publish; this you cannot." The fact is that a photograph is not always true. I show in my book *Photography and Society* how I learned through my stories that, even if I wrote all the text and captions, the publisher does out of it what he wants. A picture can say different things when the captions are changed. Another example is the choice of pictures. For instance, there is a demonstration. In the beginning of the demonstration everybody marches well, and nothing happens. But, at the end of the demonstration, there are the police clubbing the demonstrators. Now it depends on the newspaper. If the newspaper is for the demonstration, they will show only the pictures where everyone marches well. But if they are against the demonstration, they will show the pictures where demonstrators are clubbed. This is a typical way of using photographs. They are used highly politically, you see. And I wrote this book out of experience that I had with my photographs.

Visual mass media came into being with the first periodical photographs. While the written word is abstract, the photograph is a concrete reflection of the world in which all of us live. The individual, commissioned portrait in the reader's home in a sense gave way to the collective press portrait. Photography became a powerful means of propaganda and the manipulation of opinion. Industry, finance, government, the owners of the press were able to fashion the world in images after their own interests. (p. 103, *Photography and Society*)

One of my most important stories was about Evita Perón. I did not publish these pictures in my last book, but they are very well-known. This was a story which went to every newspaper in the world. Because I went to Argentina and made a story about Evita Perón, who was happy. And she was very beautiful. And I waited months until I could even come near her. Anyway, I photographed her, and she showed me all her clothes, woman to woman, and her shoes and jewelry. Now she was very powerful, could augment the salaries of workers. They bought a jewel or anything which would please Evita. So she had the most incredible gifts. Because she loved to have jewels. Now, the same for clothes and for hats. Hundreds of hats, hundreds of shoes. There was one picture where she was dressed for the evening of the Liberation. This is a big festival in Argentina. And this is a picture *Life* published again as one of the best pictures of the 1950's. Because you see Evita was a girl who just was putting on her decorations. She said, "Madame, you see I have also the Legion of Honor." And just then Perón appeared. "Aha!" he said, "the enemies will say you are a *bataclana* (chorus girl)." She had a beautiful robe [dress] on from Dior, covered with little blue brilliants because this is the color of the country, light blue. And she had her own airplane for her clothes and everything. But even the richest woman, she can only put on one dress at a time. But she loved this and said, "Look what I have on!" He laughed, and then I did my picture, which was very funny and



Gisèle Freund, Evita Perón and General Perón, Buenos Aires, 1950

was published all over.

And then I had to flee because they wanted to arrest me. The Minister of Culture and Information realized that my picture could be dangerous, to show this side of Evita, the vanity of a woman, you know. She wanted to do good to the *descamisados*, the ones who went without shirts. This was a diplomatic incident, when the story came out in *Life*, and *Life* was suppressed for three months in Argentina. And I felt I had to flee. Then he [the Minister of Culture] phoned me one night and said, "Tomorrow morning I want all the negatives." Evita had seen every picture. I always show my pictures. And found it beautiful, because she looked beautiful. She said, "Let the world know what I possess!" But the Minister of Information looked a little bit further and said it could be dangerous to publish this. And he wanted to arrest me. But then two hours before I was supposed to be in his office, I took the first plane and left Argentina, leaving everything behind me except a little suitcase and a typewriter. And I did right, because two hours later they came and wanted to arrest me. An arrest in Argentina means you disappear. But they didn't get hold of my negatives, and it was published in papers all over the world. And later someone wrote an opera about it...and used my pictures. I learned about it later.

JHL: For the show, Evita?

GF: Yes. How she ate, how she was clothed, and everything. And I never got a penny because I lived in Europe, and I didn't know. They took the pictures out of the magazines.

JHL: In your book *Photography and Society* you say, "As the individual became less important to society, his need to affirm himself as an individual became greater...As the relations among men became more dehumanized, the journalist tended to give the individual an artificial importance."

GF: Yes. In addition to current events, they presented stories about ordinary people whose names were always mentioned. *Life* never said, "Here is the Company X which is fighting in such and such a place." They said, "Here is Sam Smith from Tuscon." They personalized the person, made him more human. This is what *Life* introduced, to always give the names of people so that the reader could identify with this man. "Sam Smith or John Brown is like me, or like my son, or like my father." They were very clever; they analyzed all this before they published. This was how Mr. Luce wanted it. He was the proprietor of *Life*. *Life* went to millions of subscribers. But you can lose a lot of money if you have too many subscribers, because the paper costs so much, and then came television... **JHL:** And the mailing costs. **GF:** And the mailing costs, as well as other expenses affected by inflation. Also, they began to lose advertisers to television, which could reach millions of people instantaneously. So this is what happened to *Life* and *Look* and other magazines. And television became more powerful.

It is this false belief in the objectivity of the image that gives the photograph its enormous power and explains its widespread use in advertising. (p. 216, *Photography and Society*)

JHL: You have written that the visual mass media came into being with the first periodical photograph, so in a lot of ways, television is an extension of the idea that began with the picture magazines.

GF: Yes. Absolutely.

JHL: What are your feelings about television now? Is it the successor to the picture magazine?

GF: Television images are not a successor to the picture magazines, even

if millions get informed by TV. The analysis—the difference of impact between photographs and TV images—is a problem about which I am writing for my forthcoming book, which will be—in a certain way—a continuation of *Photography and Society*, based also on my own past experiences. And on what happened to photography during the last fifteen years, due to technology, etc. **JHL:** Given the decline of the picture magazines, what role do you see for the photojournalist?

GF: I believe that photojournalism will always exist, even in shorter form (covering fewer pages in the magazines), as many people want to keep those images which are "only fleeting" on the TV screen. *Paris-Match* in France and *Stern* in Germany are photo-magazines which have millions of subscribers still. They are doing very well, and there are many others as well.

JHL: Could you explain a little about your present activities at the Getty Center?

GF: Four years ago the Getty Center bought six very important collections. And overnight the Getty Center became the most important collector in the Americas. The Getty Center was founded by the millionaire, Mr. Getty. And he founded the museum and the Getty Center which does research only on art. Now this fantastic collection is actually there, which is combined from five very important collections. They bought them up because they have so much money they have to spend it. The foundation is built on the money of the biggest billionaire in America. And he gave everything to this foundation. The museum is included. Now that an enterprise like the Getty Center has such a famous collection, this has given a new impetus to collecting photographs, to make out of photography an art.

Now I am living in Santa Monica as a Getty Scholar. You know you can't

apply; they choose. So I got a phone call in Paris last summer. They said, "Would you like to come to the Getty Center?" I knew about the museum, but I had no idea about the Getty Center. And I said, "Send me a letter." And the letter came saying that I could be at the Center for a university year, which is nine months. I would have an apartment. They would pay me the money I would have made if I had stayed in Paris. I could travel. I could work as I wished and would not be obligated to do anything for the Center.

As I have a quite harassed life because many people come to see me in Paris, I was very tired. So I said, "Why not go to Southern California?" And I went to the other side of the world. There are nine hours between Paris and Los Angeles, and I'd never been there. I'd been in Carmel to see Ansel Adams. Now I have a big apartment and a five-minute walk to my office. The Center has newspapers and magazines from all over the world. They have a library of over one million books. They have researchers. All the other scholars were university professors. This year the studies are dedicated to the relation between art and life, so I fit into this program. I have a university career behind me, but I am not a professor. I never wanted to teach. Every old photographer becomes a teacher. I refuse that. Lecturing is too tiring for me. And I like the life of a reporter-photographer. Our group was completely independent, you see. Each of us had a personality.

Photography has helped man discover the world from different angles. It has condensed space—without it, we would never have seen the surface of the moon. It has democratized man's knowledge, bringing people closer together. But it has also played a dangerous role as an instrument of manipulation used to create needs, to sell goods, and to mold minds. (p. 217, *Photography and Society*)

JHL: It seems you continue to think of yourself as a reporter-photographer though you have been honored as a Getty Scholar and have become very well thought of as a portrait photographer.

GF: I knew how to put up a photograph, but I never thought anyone would be interested in my other pictures. And then in 1968 the curator of the Museum of Modern Art in Paris said, "Gisèle, I would like to present your portraits." I said, "Nobody is interested in portraits. I am a reporter-photographer." But it was an incredible success. Now I am thought of as a portrait photographer. But I have never done a portrait for money. If it was not *Time* or *Life* or some other magazine which wanted a portrait for their cover or for an article. Like Joyce—they wanted a picture of him for their cover, but nobody could reach him. So, with my literary relations, I could, and did the picture. But I was so interested in human beings that I became a reporter-photographer.

FOOTNOTES

1 Gisèle Freund, *Photography and Society* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1980; first French edition 1974; her dissertation *La Photographie en France au 19^{me} siècle*, Etude de Sociologie et d'Esthétique was published in Paris in 1936).

Julie Lee is a contributing editor for SPOT magazine.

BEYOND THE IMAGE: EMPTINESS

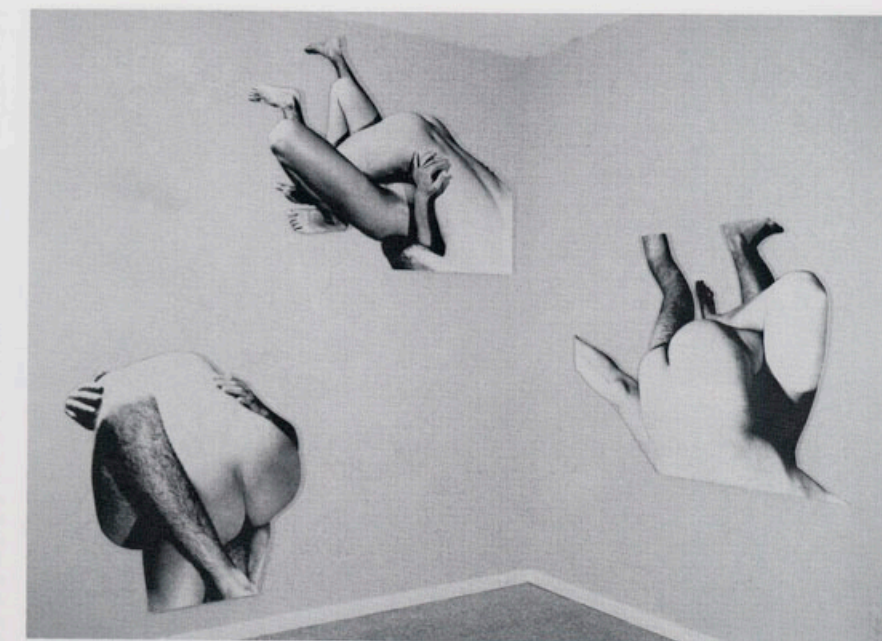
By William Simon

Beyond the Image: Contemporary French Photojournalism, an exhibit curated by Robert Blake, was shown at the Houston Center for Photography from March 4 to April 3, 1988.

The texts attached to *Beyond the Image: Contemporary French Photojournalism*, curated by Robert Blake, are virtually contradictions in terms. The main title, "Beyond the Image" calls into question the sub-title, "Contemporary French Photojournalism". The essence of "photojournalism," as well as its inherent power and deceptiveness, is, as Roland Barthes reminds us, its ability to persuade us that it truly represents what it represents, that its representations refer to realities.

The valorization of going "beyond the image" rests on the dangerous and pervasive illusion that the conceptual equipment useful to the critic or interpreter as semiotician is equally useful to the artist. Perhaps it is, but only to the degree that the artist is equally gifted in the self-conscious creation of signs as he or she is in the creation of images. This specific talent describes few of the photographers present in the exhibit. One useful way to assess the presence or absence of this balancing of the theoretical and the poetic is to consider the degree to which the image or images are dependent upon literary texts: where the literary text bears the larger part of the burdens of the expressive, the presence of a balance of the theoretical and poetic becomes questionable; where it must bear the larger part of the burdens of the explanatory, we can assume its absence.

The work produced in the latter case can be described as "theory driven" art. An unfortunate example of this was the work of Sophie Calle, who experimented with the Sartrean location of the subject in the paradigm of the voyeur at the moment of being apprehended, as it were, in the act of voyeurism. She employed a private detective to follow and photographically document a "day" in her own life, without his knowing that the subject of that surveillance was his own employer. A thoroughly enchanting idea, but an idea doomed to impotence in the attempt to objectify its enchantment; the observer of the voyeur must be an other and not a surrogate for the voyeur. The recording of Calle's day in images that are sufficiently trivial, poorly composed and/or blurred attests to the authenticity of the project, but somehow fails to hold the eye and does even less to engage the imagination. It was, moreover, a day—a trip to the museum, an encounter on the boulevard with an acquaintance, an appointment kept in an outdoor café—infinite more banal in its stereotypicality than one that might have suggested a day actually to be lived. Indeed, the very stereotypicality of the day—suggestive more than anything else of a modernist novel of an upper middle class Parisian woman's posture of perpetual *ennui*—speaks to a greater, and clearly more narcissistic, concern for the staging of the voyeur apprehended than a staging of what the voyeur is seeing. Calle's attempts to have an other validate her existence while controlling the perceptions of that other becomes self-defeating, as Calle only succeeds in objectifying herself by subordinating the desires of the self to the desires for the self. The act of turning to others for validation becomes, as it inevitably must, an act of "bad faith." At any event, the images without the text are a waste of time and precious gallery space, much as a pointless joke prompts more embarrassment than



Serge Gal, from the series, *The Couple*, 1984-6 (installation photo by Debra Rueh)



Sophie Ristelhueber, *Chatila, Beirut*, 1982



Raymond Depardon, *untitled, Beirut*, 1982 (original in color)

laughter; with the text, they illustrate the concept, much like a prefacing theory of the comedic generally erodes the capacity of the exemplifying joke to elicit laughter, for all but the most remarkable of jokes. In this case, neither Calle nor her day are very remarkable, failing even in the capacity to embarrass—they just bore.

At the other end of a continuum of "theory driven" art is the minimalist posture of Serge Gal. Two categories of his minimalist work are represented. First, three small photographs of knotted ropes, etc., suggest a kind of conventional elegance observed in the work of advanced students demonstrating their received instruction in composition.

In the context of the classroom such works, empty of anything but form and relationships of form, make a great deal of sense. In the context of a gallery, they credential neither photographer nor viewer.

The more striking group is a series of black and white studies of a male and female in what are unmistakably the doings of sexual business. As in

Japanese erotic scrolls, male body parts are dark (hairy as dark), the female body parts are light (hairless as light). In the manner of Frank Stella's shaped canvases, in Gal's large cut-outs image and bodies are one, freeing the bodies from all contextual information. More significantly neither heads nor genitals are visible, transforming the initial sexual potential into a geometry that is neither erotic nor chaste, but merely empty. By itself that is no great achievement, but rather an accomplishment that has been repeated in both art and life countless times. The de-corticizing and decontextualizing of the body does not reduce the body to geometry; that it has always been. Only art in life or life in art can create the possibilities of the erotic or the chaste.

In a similar way, Tom Drahos attempts to go "beyond the image" by contributing two very murky, oversized color works that suggest virtually nothing of imagery beyond the image of two very murky, oversized works. However, a comment posted nearby assures the reader of a relationship between these two very murky, oversized works and the photographer's interest in Jainism—an explanation that helps explain the photographer (about whom one has relatively little interest) but does little to explain the photographs (about which one has very little interest).

The remaining photographers—Raymond Depardon and Sophie Ristelhueber—make the exhibit worthwhile, but for very little that can be associated with or credited to the sensibility of curator Robert Blake. Depardon's work is presented in two segments. The first of these, entitled "*Hiver*" ("Winter"), is a series of classic black and white studies of people in places. At this level Depardon is a wonderful photographer who, as we might expect, unobtrusively uses light, texture, and composition to create images that evoke emotion-rich identifications that move the viewer close to the image; identifications that encourage the traditional appropriations associated with art—not what the artist has taken from other art, but what seduces the viewer, however reluctantly, into taking from the art—mostly a sense of seeing beautifully through his or her own eyes.

The pictures evoke many things, but never a sense of the new...no, never a sense of the self-conscious pursuit of the novel. That which appears to take us "beyond the image" serves mostly to distract us from the images: a series of "poetic" writings articulate the voice of the artist, writings that almost without exception are not as poetic as the photographic images they comment upon. Fortunately the literary texts are never strong enough to reduce the photographs to illustration; fortunately, Depardon is a better photographer than he is a poet. The literary texts, typically placed between photographs may have on second thought an unintended function, one that reinforces the image rather than going beyond the image: like traffic barriers in residential neighborhoods, they slow the viewing process though tainting it with the photographer's selection of language.

The second group of Depardon's works are in color and share with those of Sophie Ristelhueber (whose work is in black and white) their locale, Beirut, and their subject, the visible consequences of its population's encirclement in rituals of reciprocal mutilation. It is only in relation to the work of these two photographers that reference to "photojournalism" or photography with narrative makes any sense. While both sets of work include images which seem selected because of their formalist, almost architectural treatment of the products of Beirut's devastation (e.g., a ruined automobile dotted by bullet-holes is seemingly mandated by aesthetic requirements rather than the consequence of

destructive rage), our knowledge of the photos' origins cannot be suppressed, except by a blindingly passionate commitment to an abstract aesthetic. Such a commitment may be less immediately frightening, but is ultimately more terrifying in its indifference than destructive rage. The viewer must know that these are not images from some mythic hell or whose quiet acceptance speaks to human horrors dulled by the passage of time. (Ristelhueber, quoting Lucretius, perhaps in irony, suggests just this possibility.) However, this is not history, but current and repeatable events; and the viewers are also implicated; they too, are audience to the continuing event.

Depardon's color photographs tend unfortunately to prettify rather than aestheticize. They give the impression of a livable horror, a carnival of destruction. That, however, may be a problem of color photography itself. But the choice was his. And Blake's as well. Ristelhueber's black and white studies, almost wholly architectural, create a kind of dignifying solemnity as they convey a sense of historic distance, a sense of finality. They are not unlike pictures of concentration camps and old battlefields. The few humans that we see have the appearance of being uninvolved caretakers. The only signs of vital life are to be found in two studies. One shows a cemetery lush with vegetative growth; the other also shows an abundance of trees and bushes surrounding a ruined villa, whose swimming pool looks like an anticipating open grave.

Undeniably, Beirut's landscape can be described in Yeats' phrase as "a terrible beauty." This is not a new discovery; conventional reportage and theatrical cinema already have made that a visual cliché. One has to question the photographic and curatorial eyes that emphasize the aesthetic alone. Must we not also note as Yeats notes with reference to such a terrible beauty:

*Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.
O when may it suffice?*

One senses in the exhibit, as a whole, an attempt to contain the current period of post-modern pluralism, with its increasing openness to the imagery of the human experience, within the empty calories of the modernist lexicon. No, more importantly, it may reflect a critical point where modernism claims legitimate parentage of post-modernism. And in so doing it would continue the hegemony of an approach to art focused entirely upon that which is referential to art itself, to what earlier was described as "theory driven" art. A theoretical orientation that avoids the patent embarrassments of "art for art's sake" by postulating an aesthetic experience that, in turn rests upon a human psychology, is validated by little more than the theory that requires it.

At this point I invariably become a little nervous. To criticize those who subscribe to the existential reality of an autotelic or self-referencing aesthetic, particularly when others I respect report having experienced it, tends to leave this critic defensively wondering whether the fault is his. Wondering whether this sense of being fed an empty calorie reflects little more than his own incorruptible coarseness or insensitivity, a kind of incurable Archie Bunkerism unable to appreciate either the sublime or the specified routes for reaching it. On the other hand, there is the possibility that the fault may lie elsewhere; perhaps in the capacity of the others for self-deception. I do know that these are not mutually exclusive, nor do they exhaust the possibilities of explanation.

William Simon is Professor of Sociology at the University of Houston.

SAN CLEMENTE, OPEN HOUSE?

By Anne-Lise and
Frédéric Worms

Raymond Depardon's film *San Clemente* was shown at the Rice Media Center on March 28, 1988; the screening was sponsored by HCP.

Right after World War II, among the ruins of Italy, Rossellini directed *Rome Open City*. From the official status awarded by the Allies, to a state of mind, with the devastated streets in between, the word "open" ironically bears a variety of meanings. However, all these meanings seem to share a common metaphor. Literally, only a door, a house, or anything physically closable can be "open." Interestingly enough, the so-called "Italian neo-realism" of which Rossellini is a master and *Rome Open City* a masterpiece starts with a metaphor, a very complex metaphor.

A door. Facing a closed door, the back of a woman, carrying a purse in one arm, standing. The first image of *San Clemente*, Raymond Depardon's movie presented at the Rice Media Center in conjunction with FotoFest 1988 and in itself, in its own right, the mouthpiece of an artistic movement called "French photojournalism" remains on the screen for a long while. It is almost, one fears, or hopes, a photograph.

Movement will come later. But the length of time during which the woman goes on knocking harder, for no one opens the door, makes us feel that there might be some kind of resistance here, though we are not sure from where or whom it comes.

The door opens. The openness is here literal, physical. The more so since the camera follows the woman, since it does not have only to view and film but also, apparently on the shoulder of the cameraman, to adapt to the movements, to the unpredictable gestures it is confronted with, instead of leading or directing them. Photojournalism would thus be a step further towards realism than Rossellini's neo-realism. But should it merely reproduce the facts, without making any statement about them? Is it, as is often objected to photography, indifferent to what it shows?

The woman enters the building, and the resistance becomes more evident. A doctor in a white uniform first wants to throw the cameraman and the sound-woman (Sophie Ristelhueber) out of the place which, we thus learn, is a hospital. The woman herself tries to push them away while they enter the small dormitory where her bed is—her privacy. Although most of the people during the film will not have the same attitude towards the couple, camera and microphone, man and woman, we cannot help remembering these images and our first impression, and thinking of ourselves as intruders.

The apparently neutral entrance thus has a reverse side to it. The intrusion of the movie-makers into the building, along with the intrusion of movement and sound into the image, indicate that behind the doors, behind the name *San Clemente*, lies a very special kind of resistance, a mixture of violent personal feelings and social prohibitions.

It could be, it should be, unbearable. Not only the interior, the internal life of such and such a patient, not only the tension of the man who does not realize that his pants fall, while his arms are imitating the wings of a bird. Not only the obsessions of the one who endlessly wanders back and forth in the kitchen with his radio on. What could be unbearable too are the relations between these people, their common life there, their very being together. One wonders: would we stand it? Would we tolerate such behaviors without trying to stop them, to arrest

them? What would the limit be?

The inside life in *San Clemente* is a social life, a bare, a naked social life. A social life made of bodies, of faces, backs and legs, of rags and pieces, odds and ends, and also of passion, desire, or fear. There is no neutral, polite, disciplined behavior. Even affection and kindness can be violent as a shock. Every gesture means to attack, or to protect.

But an even more important aspect of this social life is its multi-dimensionality, its being divided between dozens of little scenes, mini-events, micro-stories, which create the link between the people, their bodies and tortured words, their perceptions and expressions. The role of the camera is, endlessly, to trace and track these gestures. In each of them there is an appeal, a claim to the other, to the others. Raymond Depardon himself has to be patient in trying to give a meaning to those broken but living relationships and to convey this meaning as it is: broken but alive, human.

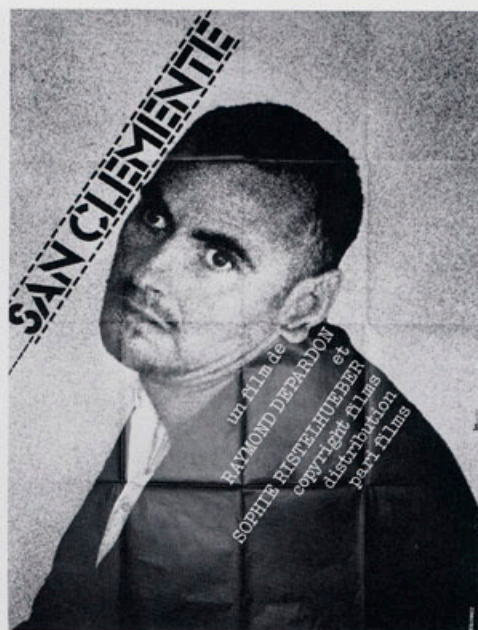
There are common constraints with which everyone copes. Above all there is the common place. The place shapes the relationships without causing them. It is like a public space, a street, a city, in that it provides both places to meet and places to hide, corridors and common gardens, TV room and kitchen. We are never shown the individual rooms, the "cells" of this former prison. We are almost never in front of a single patient. Are they ever alone in *San Clemente*? Physically then, the camera and the microphone are part of this game which does not have any general rules. Moreover, they are drowned in it, taken in by it, as when a patient tries to eat the microphone or another to wipe the camera with her broom.

There is no general idea of *San Clemente*, of what an asylum is, in this movie, in part because of these pieces of social life, of everyday life, which make it bearable. There is no single event being reported here, no war, riot, or strike which would call for media coverage. Myriads of micro-events, of gestures surrounding objects, of passions running through the corridors and hurting themselves against the chairs and the tables.

But even if there is no general idea in *San Clemente*, at least one clearly exposed, there are some clear choices to be pointed out. First, why did Depardon choose to film an asylum? In movies such as this one, *Faits Divers* (Local News) where he spends a few nights filming in a police station of a busy district of Paris, or in his most recent one *Urgences* (Emergencies), where what happens 24 hours a day in the emergency rooms of a hospital is being "reported," he elects places where "abnormal" behavior and situations are supposed to occur. More precisely, the cameraman always stands at the limit, the border, doors, entrances, public halls, where things come and go.

In the case of *San Clemente*, the movie elaborates on the "anti-psychiatric" movement in all its varied forms, from psychiatry to epistemology (with Foucault) via philosophy: as medical theories and institutions which have historically evolved are in fact responsible for what is thought of as a "natural" exclusion, so the very buildings, walls, clothes, shape our perception of these "deviant" behaviors. The purpose of the movie, like the purpose of some philosophical theories, would thus be to let another discourse and another perception surge from behind the tight conventional structures of the asylum, or rather, to see how conflicting views co-exist and must be understood to operate on the same level. In quite a complex way, it would share the motto "Set them free, let them talk."

After having "forced" the door of the *San Clemente* hospital, Raymond Depardon lets the patients talk freely, without asking any question, but



Raymond Depardon, poster for *San Clemente*

without getting out of their sight and thought (as a psychoanalyst would do, for example), without disappearing entirely. They know that they are listened to, observed in a very special way. He also lets the patients' relatives talk, but not the doctors or the nurses. The doctors appearing at the beginning do not speak, they yell that there is "nothing to see." The ones we see later either talk with the patients or discuss some policy matter with the relatives. After all, it is "open house" today in *San Clemente*.

Such choices made by Depardon, which are part of a major aspect of photojournalism (a lot more should be said about this in another context), indicate that the movie stands between documentary and fiction, between objective realism and formal aestheticism! Although it seems to have photography's spontaneity and immediate relevance, it lets the gestures and speeches entice the viewer into tormented imaginary landscapes, implicit fictions (personal myths, one would say), mixing both in a risky kind of journalism, for a special sort of "reporters."

However, even though it provides one of the best examples of photojournalism, and one of the best arguments for anti-psychiatry, *San Clemente* goes behind this, beyond any kind of systematic description, thesis, or image. Within a singular place, a little Italian island off the Venice lagoon, at the time of the Carnival ("the Mad Day"), many particular (rather than peculiar) events happen, a lot of stories can be told, many movies could be made. But there is no total sum. The place and the camera are the only links between them. There is no single lesson from this movie, but many effects to withstand, let alone understand.

One of them is the effect the movie has on the spectator. The whole film, starting with the first image, deals with the relations between interior and exterior. For example, the debate between one of the patients, his mother, and a doctor—a fascinating three-person conversation—is about whether he should go out, with or without his mother, to "pay a visit" to the grave of his father. In another sequence, we see some of the patients out in Venice, costumed, carrying on the little party they have started (a small Carnival?) in the asylum. They look funny to some tourists who take snapshots of their faces and costumes. We see how society deals with the persons it has excluded when they happen to mix again. People in the streets welcome them and speak with them, without understanding them. And as spectators, we feel that we are like those people in the streets, watching and listening to the

"mad" men and women, who without any doubt here speak freely, but are nonetheless prisoners of language, like the man who is always repeating the same sentence. And we never identify with them. We stay outside, though we entered inside. The only persons we can identify with are the patients' relatives, the cameraman and also the microphone-woman. We have agreed to follow them and thus become the same "character." But could we not also be "voyeurs" of a sort? Indeed, we do not and cannot participate, in any way, in what is going on here, even if nothing is really going on.

There arises again the same impression that we had at the beginning of the movie, feeling the resistance of the place and the people, thinking of ourselves as intruders. And what if the doctors were right, what if there was indeed "nothing to see"? What if what happened at the Rice Media Center, showing this movie in front of five viewers in a post-FotoFest Houston, was appropriate?

The purpose of these short and tentative remarks has been to indicate how important it is, in any case, to see this movie and to speak about it.

Just as there are two sides to every movement in it (entrance/intrusion, patients/characters, and so forth), and two members of the team (camera/microphone, man/woman), there may be at least two interpretations of the film. One would state the aesthetic novelty of Depardon's work in the current renewal of photojournalism. Another would insist on the ethical issues involved in the movie, on the violence possibly done to the patients themselves, which may be another effect of the film, and on the very issue of the nature of mental illness and human consciousness.

These two interpretations are not necessarily compatible. They appear alternately even in this brief review. (There lay also the interest, and the risk, of our writing it together.)

FOOTNOTES

1 Formal aestheticism, to the contrary, is apparent in several of the images included in HCP's exhibit, *Beyond the Image*.

Anne-Lise Worms is a French literature and classics professor; she is currently completing her Ph.D. on "Drama and Philosophy in Late Antiquity." She has written and translated for French magazines and radio. Frédéric Worms is a philosophy professor. He currently serves in the French Cultural Services of the French Embassy in Houston. Both of them are living in Houston until the end of the year.



Gary Winogrand, *El Morocco*, "The Eisenhower Years," 1955 (lent by Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco and the estate of Gary Winogrand; included in the book *Winogrand: Figments from the Real World and in the exhibit of the same title curated by John Szarkowski for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1988*)

'THIS IS NO DREAM THIS IS REALLY HAPPENING': RECLAIMING REALISM

By Doug Ischar

Documentary photography is hardly a hot topic these days. Emblematic of this condition are the critical non-chalance and theoretical backwardness of most contemporary "documentarians." This is reflected in a semantic confusion surrounding the word "documentary" itself. Having once denoted a polemical—mostly reformist—realism, the term "documentary" has come to preside over a rag-bag of mannerist sub-genres whose relationship to Progressive Era and New Deal documentary is at best superficial and schematic.

The main purpose of this (two-part) article is to introduce and discuss some recent photographic realist work which departs in various ways from current conditions. But to understand the departures taken by such artists as Judith Crawley, Angela Kelly, and Sunil Gupta—in routes which are often conceptual and procedural rather than formal—it's necessary to review the documentary status quo they have rejected, as well as a bit of its history!

To begin with, an antiquarian "documentary style" photography, superficially based on Progressive Era and New Deal documentary, continues its protracted death in the camera clubs and conservative university art photography programs of this country.² Its practitioners still spell photography with a monolithic and capital "P" and their pleasures (one imagines) are similar to those of car buffs who build "antique" cars from mail order kits in their garages on weekends. In place of the reformist purposes of a Lewis Hine or a Dorothea Lange, or the syntactical rigor of a Walker Evans, one finds pictures in what has been received as their collective "style." A "look" that was once used to denote material lack and economic exclusion in hopes of effecting change has here become an emulsion-deep patina connoting a dematerialized and fictive Americana.³

But it would be inaccurate and unfair to blame hobbyists and university photography students for this decline, or for their unwitting reception of an ersatz "tradition." They are, rather, the consumers—and ultimately victims—of formalist curatorial agendas and histories of photography, which, in symbiotic collusion with the vintage print trade, have served up the reformist documentary of the past

as the neatly co-opted antique commodity of the present. Lange's "Migrant Mother," now politely amnesic, becomes just one more decorative prop in a fantasy American History deceitfully gutted of both oppression and resistance.

There are, to be sure, a few pictorially skilled, socially "conscious" humanists still at work within documentary. Milton Rogovin and Jerome Liebling come to mind. And while one may admire their earnestness and resilience, their lack of a materialist view of their own production (and its reception) and of a critical approach to representation assures that their work will continue to universalize (i.e. homogenize and reduce).

Mention of the role of the formalist critic in the perversion of documentary brings us, inevitably, to John Szarkowski and yet another sub-genre of documentary. Szarkowski's presentation of the work of Diane Arbus, Gary Winogrand, and Lee Friedlander in his 1967 Museum of Modern Art exhibition entitled *New Documents* was a tactically deft legerdemain, which effectively annexed to Szarkowski's omnivorous formalist program a genre nearly extinguished by Left disillusion and by the House Un-American Activities Committee's harassment of its former—particularly Photo League—practitioners. Suddenly, work which clearly derived from muckraking newspaper and magazine photography (as in the case of Arbus) or from the 35mm formalism of Cartier-Bresson and the *noir*-ish irony of Robert Frank (as in the cases of Winogrand and Friedlander) was proposed as the successor to earlier reformist documentary. In Szarkowski's own words, "(These photographers') aim has not been to reform life, but to know it. Their work betrays a sympathy—almost affection—for the imperfections and frailties of society."⁴ He took pains to distinguish their work from that of earlier documentary photographers who "made their pictures in the service of a social cause"⁵ and complimented Arbus', Winogrand's and Friedlander's ability to "look at (the commonplace) with a minimum of theorizing." Thus in the midst of a period rife with social resistance and committed activism, the documentary genre was annexed to formalism, a bit the way a depressed working class voting district might be reapportioned by conservatives. The romance of

slumming supplanted commitment to change.⁶

It seems hard to believe that "all the people" could have been convinced by this cynical curatorial maneuver, but most evidently were, with the result that one and all social margins became fair game for the authorial formalist disguised as "documentarian." The inheritors of Weegee and Kertesz became instead the inheritors of Hine and Lange, with their ethical failings converted by Szarkowskian alchemy into myth-worthy virtues. They had the courage to cruise the (purportedly) dangerous margins, the stomach to confront the ordinary (no small feat for the petit-bourgeois bohemian), and the jaded savvy to bank it all on the reified ambiguity of the formalist print.

While this is not the place to dig deeper into the well-tended Arbus and Winogrand myths, it's worth noting that the progeny of Szarkowski's Frankenstein's monster, the "New Documentarian," with its designer's brain and soldier of fortune's libido, still thrive within art photography. Although examples of this type of globe-trotting, humanist-adventurer, star photographer abound, it would be hard to imagine a more apt illustration than Mary Ellen Mark. For those who are familiar with Mark's work, in particular her books *Ward 81* and *Falkland Road*, which represent the outer frontiers of the superficially and spectacularly surveyed exotic, the following tribute, which accompanies her receipt of the Friends of Photography's 1987 "Photographer of the Year" Award, should provide a feast of irony.⁷

Elected by her peers in recognition of her continuing contribution to photography, this award for the Photographer of the Year for 1987 is presented to Mary Ellen Mark. Out of a deep sense of caring and with an acute ability to depict the poignant essence of human life in whatever culture, she has created a major body of photographic imagery that reveals many of the social conditions of our time. Through pictures directly seen, her unequivocal form of documentary journalism has touched us all. The very force of her quiet passion eradicates our ignorance and our indifference. (emphasis mine).⁸

For artists and critics who have for years confronted the problems of photographic representation, sexism, exploitation, objectification, imperialism, or just plain ineffectuality,

the above quote must seem an astonishing anachronism. But it clearly isn't. It is, quite literally, the essentialist status quo. Perhaps for photo aficionados whose comfortable lives and critical lassitude permit them the fantasy of human "essences" which unimplicatingly unite them with the homeless, dying beggars, the Indian prostitutes of Falkland Road and the mentally ill women of maximum security Ward 81, "contributions to photography" are sufficient. But a contribution to photography in the absence of a contribution to critical understanding and/or change is—can only be—a contribution to obfuscation and numbing spectacle. Thus defined, "documentary journalism" has more to do with Geraldo Rivera than with Lewis Hine.

To move from the simplistic humanism of the Friends of Photography to the critical writings of Martha Rosler and Allan Sekula requires a grinding shift of gears—but a welcome one. In 1975 and 1976, respectively, Rosler and Sekula wrote seminal essays on documentary photography. It is easy to imagine how the—actually quite different—positions taken by Rosler and Sekula in these two essays could have been elided at the time of their initial reception. The writers were (are) unmistakably politically aligned, and both provided incisive deconstructions of art photographic formalism and its late capitalist context. In addition, those readers who welcomed Sekula's and Rosler's incursions into the then almost non-existent areas of photographic theory and criticism were no doubt too grateful to quibble or differentiate. Their unison challenge to the status quo was what mattered. But at the distance of a decade or so and from within the context of a considerably broadened Left-photographic activity, it seems time to re-examine these essays, with an eye to their salient differences and to the directions they suggest for the future development of documentary.

Martha Rosler's essay, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts" which appeared as a pendant to her photo-text work *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems*⁹, begins with a critical look at documentary's past, in particular at its identification with late nineteenth and twentieth century liberal reform movements. She rightly notes that these movements were status quo-serving and meliorative rather than revolutionary. In the process of this look backward, documentary is labeled (indelibly, it seems) as a "cultural expression" of a now-routed Liberalism. Her concentration on the muckraking, *cum*-reformist practice of Jacob Riis, to the almost complete neglect of the work of Lewis Hine—which is demonstrably different as regards motivation, involvement, and effect—is rhetorically expedient but critically problematic.¹⁰ Here, as elsewhere in her writings on realist uses of photography, she seems unwilling to concede the possibility of an effectively oppositional documentary freed of both its liberal past and subsequent formalist co-optation. I won't argue that documentary wasn't in particularly dire straits at the time this essay was written, but Rosler's concentration on the most egregious examples of the late-70's documentary's popular-journalistic reception rather than on the work itself seems, once again, a rhetorical sleight of hand. While I do not wish, for example, to argue for W. Eugene and Aileen Mioko Smith's *Minimata* as a model for documentary involvement, it deserves more thorough treatment than it receives here—dismissed on account of platitudes in the dopey hagiographic editorial which accompanied its partial publication in *Camera 35*.

While "In, Around, and Afterthoughts..." in many ways remains good medicine for realist

photographers, in others it seems unduly proscriptive. Rosler's remarking of an entrenched formalist paradigm "in which a documentary image has two moments," the first instrumental and the second "aesthetic-historical...in which the viewer's argumentativeness cedes to the organismic pleasure afforded by the aesthetic "rightness" of the image," while an accurate assessment of the status quo, has a resigned, almost fatalistic ring. Can we not retrieve—in the classroom if nowhere else—the documentary of the past as both historical evidence and practical precedent? But most pessimistic of all is Rosler's refusal to acknowledge the potential for oppositional self-representational work within minority and subcultural communities. Her final espousal of quotation leaves many marginally positioned artists, for whom even mis-representations are in short supply, with few options.

In the end, it is hard not to see Rosler's critique as one constructed and aimed from outside any optimistic involvement in documentary itself—and her subsequent avoidance of the genre supports this. Her position *vis-à-vis* documentary is in many ways an admirably uncompromising one—but one only tenable at a resigned distance from its ongoing—and admittedly difficult—reinvention.¹²

Allan Sekula's 1976/78 essay, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)" begins with a critique of the "collapse" of modernism (and art photographic formalism).¹³ Nothing is spared, even the beginnings of a pop-derived postmodernism are deconstructed and dismissed in a way that now seems almost prescient. Not confining his critique to cultural manifestations within the superstructure, Sekula traces these symptomatic phenomena back to their underpinnings in the "materially dictated inequalities of advanced capitalism." As a result, his call for "an authentic socialism" as the only practical solution to the "crisis of contemporary art" can be seen not as a matter of political "partisanship" but rather as the only consequent conclusion to his thoroughly materialist analysis.

Instead of constructing a critical indictment of historical liberal documentary as does Rosler, Sekula presents hopeful examples of contemporary documentary practices: specifically, those of Rosler, Fred Lonidier, Philip A. Steinmetz, Jon Jost, Brian Connell, Chauncey Hare, and himself. Although he singles out Rosler's *The Bowery in two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* as the work that "comes closest to having an unrelentingly metacritical relation to the documentary genre," this assessment seems partially at odds with Rosler's own reading. His observation that "The Bowery..."s referent is not the Bowery per se but "The Bowery" as a socially mediated, ideological construction" suggests a more referential (though not literally referential) reading than Rosler's own, which treats "The Bowery" as a "dual" set of quotations.¹⁴ Still, I would personally propose a yet more referential reading. On such a view, *The Bowery* could be read—and I am less concerned with its own reading than with it as a potential practical model—as literally referential to the physical Bowery itself (my reading), as referential to "The Bowery" as ideological construct (Sekula's reading) and as deconstructive quotation framing of the documentary genre (Rosler's own reading). This more directly referential reading of *The Bowery*... is not proposed as an alternative to Rosler's and Sekula's but as an addition. I am not arguing for a retreat into an essentialist realism (!) but for a cautious replacing of the directly representational function of the photograph within the context of a multi-layered critical realism.¹⁴ Thus direct references to the "real," along with critical



All photographs from *Giving Birth is Just the Beginning: Women Speak About Mothering*, by Judith Lerner Crawley

references to its "socially mediated ideological construction" and to the media of that construction, might serve as mutually qualifying elements in a materialist critical realism. Or documentary, if you will.

While it may be tempting to read Sekula's wide-ranging endorsement of contemporary "documentary" practices as an ecumenical expedience, it is in fact a radical and hopeful move. In Sekula's own words, *A truly critical social documentary will frame the crime, the trial, and the system of justice and its official myths. Artists working toward this end may or may not produce images that are theatrical and overtly contrived, they may or may not present texts that read like fiction. Social truth is something other than a matter of convincing style.*

Sekula's rejection of the "straight" photograph as documentary's indispensable common denominator—which goes beyond his rejection of the "essential realism" of photographic evidence—is one rich in potential for the further development of documentary realism. This rejection is not merely a matter of recategorization, but rather a breaking down of the boundaries between the historically antagonistic genres of realism and montage—a dissolution of "practical" boundaries. Besides its unfortunate identification with liberal idealism, historical documentary's greatest failing has been its manifold co-optability. The photographic image of suffering or exclusion has always been easily co-optable as spectacle. It lacked a materialist anchor (or anchors) to confine it to an informative function aimed at collective engagement rather than privatized catharsis. Might not the disruptions of quotation (both photographic and textual) provide such anchoring, and prevent a superficially naturalist reading as well as escapist catharsis?

Documentary photographs have also proven easy prey to situational co-optation—both immediate and historical. The formalist co-optation discussed above is merely the most obvious example of what has always been a daunting problem. Cut loose from its immediate instrumentality, the single photographic image inevitably succumbed to Roland Barthes' "possessive chain of free-floating signifieds."¹⁵ But what of a documentary which structurally and politically refused this eventuality, not from a formalist obsession with "formal integrity," but rather in the

service of a fixed instrumental readability? This might be achieved by an inter-frame (as opposed to intra-frame) montage—derived as much from film as from still photographic montage—which refused image-by-image fragmentation, in both the work's reception and in its physical perpetuity.

This latter strategy is successfully employed by Sekula himself in his latest photo-text work, *Geography Lesson: Canadian Notes*, 1987, which deploys black and white and color photographs in grids of varying sizes to create a complexly referential syntax. This photographic syntax is further delimited by the accompanying essay.

These arguments in favor of a critical—yet truly referential—documentary realism are not merely academic, but rather a response to perceived necessities. These range from the need for a photographic anchoring (a reverse anchoring, as it were) of the ambitiously discursive critique of late multi-national capitalism provided by Sekula in *Geography Lesson*... to Judith Lerner Crawley's radically remedial representations of mothering.

To approach Canadian artist Judith Crawley's *Giving Birth is Just the Beginning: Women Speak About Mothering* in the context of a polemic on documentary runs the familiar risk of formalizing the representational—in this case a formalization by genre rather than by individual image.¹⁶ The subject of mothering and Crawley's radical approach to it (and to its representation) are clearly what matter most here. The formalizing risk is heightened by the fact that the writer in this instance is a male (non-mother). But bearing in mind these pitfalls and their weight as historical precedent, I believe there's much to be gained by approaching this work as a model for a renewed critical documentary. I'd like to start out by looking at the various ways in which Crawley's praxis breaks with acritical representational practices of the past (and present), as well as with author-centered models of representational art making.

To begin with, Judith Crawley works close to home. The objects of her representations are her friends—women and mothers like herself—and their children and (occasionally) husbands. They are also her peers as regards class and age. They are her cultural and geographical neighbors; she shares their material and political

context. Although one can imagine Crawley's relationships with these women having developed and deepened in the process of producing this work, they clearly preceded and determined it. Here, representation follows connection. The camera did not serve as a superficially humanizing device masking privileged detachment and difference. While I don't wish to suggest that friendship and shared cultural conditions are the only viable basis for representational work, I will contend that they are admirably uncompromising ones, a fact that is heightened by recalling how rarely they prevail within documentary. When did you last encounter a realist photographic work which in no way could be considered colonizing, objectifying, or sexist, and yet is frank about the problems and contradictions of its subject matter?

Crawley's unimpeachable representational model—in which the camera never points downward as regards class or gender—is essential to the success of *Giving Birth is...* It allows for a radical re-imagining of mothering which is both celebratory (but naively and acritically we all celebrate motherhood), and confrontationally critical. The pleasures that are palpable here, the (intermittent) pleasures of mothering itself, Crawley's obvious pleasure in photographing, and the collective pleasure of the interviews, don't for a moment deflect from these women's cumulative resolve that mothering is widely undervalued and almost always underpaid. The dissent in *Giving Birth is...*, the anger, the boredom, the personal and political resentment and resistance of these women, is mostly to be found in the bilingual (English/French) interview text which accompanies Crawley's photographs throughout the book. Although the photographs sometimes suggest inequities (a male—father? sleeps in while the mother tends two young children) and drudgery, "trouble" is never melodramatized as photographic spectacle. Instead, the photographs show a wide variety of routine aspects of mothering. But the "routine" here is not the stereotypical one of sentimentalized—and circumscribed—maternity. It is rather a courageously broadened and problematized one which contains its own tensions between unpaid work in the home (cleaning, child care, partnering) and paid professional work, of predictable pleasures (children's birthday parties) and political engage-

ment (in SPE Women's Caucus meetings and in support of picketing strikers).

One thing that has become clear from the recent proliferation of photo-text work is that although written language is less easily co-optable than photographic imagery, it is equally open to devious manipulation by the artist. Crawley acquired her

text in a familiar way. Photographs were shown to the people in them whose responses were then taped, edited, and printed along with the photographs. This *sounds* straightforward and empowering of the object of the photographs, but in fact it seldom is. A good example of the misuse of this model is Jim Goldberg's *The Rich and Poor of San Francisco*, in which text derived from interviews with his economically elevated or excluded sitters was then handwritten by them at the base of the photographs. As critic Jan Grover has noted, the autobiographical connotations of handwriting here serve to "legitimize" what actually is a text heavily edited for pithy irony and pathetic absurdity.

While Crawley avoids implications of autobiography, she does foreground the collective and interactive aspects of *Giving Birth is...* in the most straightforward of ways: she shows them photographically and describes them. Unlike Goldberg, who only "admits" to his manipulative procedure in an afterword to *The Rich and Poor of San Francisco*, Crawley exposes her interactive model at the beginning of her book. A photograph of a woman seated on the floor surrounded by photographs and a tape recorder, followed by a written description of the interview process, do the job. She says, "Everyone participated with enthusiasm," and one believes her.

Besides Crawley's multiple connections to the women of *Giving Birth is...*, time also works in her favor—or perhaps she works in its. This too is stated clearly and elegantly at the beginning of *Giving Birth is...* Here, two juxtaposed photographs of her own children, taken a decade or so apart, serve as a time frame both for the actual work of the book and for Crawley's long, patient, and unflinching advocacy of its participants and their roles as mothers.

FOOTNOTES

1 The historical discussions of this article will be confined to documentary activity in the United States. The scope of this article does not permit an inquiry into Canadian, Indian, or British documentary, as is clearly appropriate. Also, Crawley's and Kelly's work should be further examined in the context of feminist photographic activity, Gupta's in the context of gay self-representation.

2 This "documentary style" derives as much from the early work of Paul Strand and (even) Ansel Adams as from Hine, Evans, and Lange. Its naive political detachment can be partially traced to Evans' own carefully maintained distance from the reformist positions of other (FSA) photographers and from the FSA's New Deal agenda itself.

3 Historians have recently begun to distinguish between the individual practices and politics of the various Progressive Era and New Deal reformist photographers. These historical revisions are of great importance to contemporary practitioners, as they allow for a materially discriminating reconsideration of historical documentary practices—as opposed to their formalized historical reception *en masse*. In particular see Sally Stein, "Making Connection with the Camera: Photography and Social Mobility in the Career of Jacob Riis," *Afterimage*, May 1983, and Maren Stange, "The Management of Vision: Rexford Tugwell and Roy Stryker in the 1920's," *Afterimage*, March 1988.

4 John Szarkowski, introduction to *New Documents*, February 28-May 7, 1967.

5 Szarkowski.

6 Friedlander is to some extent the exception here. His work is seldom exploitative, as Arbus' almost always is, and seldom degradingly sexist, as is the Winogrand of *Women are Beautiful*. Besides which, he is the formalist *par excellence*. If only there were a materialist critique behind the photographs of *Factory Valleys*!



Judith Crawley

7 I don't wish to imply that photojournalists are necessarily doomed to the superficiality of *Falkland Road*, but exceptions are hardly the rule. For instance in the work of Susan Meiselas, in *Nicaragua* as photographer and in *El Salvador* as editor and contributor, photographs originally generated for the mass print media are sufficiently anchored and recontextualized so as to overcome and oppose their original ideological function as "news."

8 "Review," *Friends of Photography*, San Francisco, April 1988, p. 4.

9 Martha Rosler, *Three Works* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, 1981).

10 Stein.

11 Rosler's review of Susan Meiselas' *Nicaragua* is a case in point. While there are—as Rosler notes—"design problems" with the book, principally the separation of photos and text, they are largely the result of Meiselas' determination to produce an affordable international edition.

12 Although Rosler has not returned to still photographic "documentary" since *The Bowerly...*, she has produced a remarkable body of montage-based video work.

13 Allan Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, 1984), p. 53.

14 The "layers" in this case are not the "layers of meaning" familiar from art photographic formalism, a euphemism for anchorless ambiguity.

15 Roland Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image," in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux).

16 Judith Lerner Crawley, *Giving Birth is Just the Beginning: Women Speak About Mothering* (Montreal: Book Project, 1987). After being rejected by a variety of publishers, *Giving Birth is...* was finally self-published by Crawley with the aid of Canadian feminists and members of the Society for Photographic Education's Women's Caucus.

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We encouraged our son to express some of the so-called female qualities, his emotions, his affection, gentleness, etc. The very first day of school, he was 6 years old, he met a friend and when he hugged and kissed him, he was beaten up. He began to feel that only at home could he express his feelings, cry, be affectionate and gentle.

Mara's treatment was different. She was frozen out, ignored if her peer group didn't approve of her behaviour. I recall her going to school in a dress and doing a somersault and being totally ostracized because she was showing her underwear.

So she can't climb a tree or do a somersault, and he can't be gentle and affectionate; they are both losing valuable characteristics.

Alanna

Nous avons encourager notre fils à exprimer ses qualités soi-disant "femelles", ses émotions, son affection, sa gentillesse. Au premier jour de l'école, il avait 6 ans, il rencontre un ami qu'il embrasse et sert dans ses bras. On l'a battu. Il a commencé à croire qu'on exprimait ses sentiments, qu'on pouvait pleurer, être affectueux, gentil seulement à la maison.

Pour Mara c'était différent. Elle était figée si ses copains n'approuvaient pas son comportement. Je me rappelle, une fois, elle est allée à l'école en robe, a fait une pirouette et a été bannie pour avoir montré ses petites culottes.

Alors elle n'a pas le droit de grimper dans les arbres, de faire des pirouettes, et lui n'a pas le droit d'être gentil et affectueux. Les deux y perdent.

Alanna

Judith Crawley

Because Judith Crawley's book is self-published and not available through standard distributors, we list the relevant publication information here: Book Project, Post Office NDG, Box 275, Montreal, Quebec, H4A 3P6.

DOCUMENTARY WORKSHOP WITH JEROME LIEBLING

By Martin McGovern

We're watching cowboy slides. Two cowboys and a steer fill a wooden pen. The steer's perturbed, that's for sure, wild-eyed, its head twisted by the men like a crowbar on a reluctant lug nut. Jerome Liebling suggests that within this one slide a workshop participant has three photographs with as much power, or more. Certainly the cow's head and the men's hands. But what about this man's back, bent and straining, and the shadow cutting across? What about the torso of a cowpoke outside the pen, his bulbous belly at odds with a straight wooden post? Does he know the post is there? Is he trying to overwhelm it? Become it? "Tough," Liebling says over the slide projector's whirr. Tough questions.

In "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary," Allan Sekula emphasizes the need to expose the myth of documentary.¹ As "essential realism," this myth proclaims the "unequivocal character of the camera's evidence." It is a positivist myth, holding the idea that photography "reproduces the visible world: the camera is an engine of fact" (p. 57). Yet even a bank camera, an intended engine of fact if ever there were one, fails to live up to its positivism. Recalling Patty Hearst, Sekula asks,

What is it that a photograph points to? A young white woman holds a submachine gun. The gun is handled confidently, aggressively. The gun is almost dropped out of fear. A fugitive heiress. A kidnap victim. An urban guerilla. A willing participant. The outcome [of the court's proceedings], based on the "true" reading of the evidence is a function less of "objectivity" than of political maneuvering (p. 57).

What are the cowboy photographs pointing to? A romanticization of the West? The white man's appropriation of the range? Some of the workshop participants were more aware than others of the problems posed by the "myth of documentary." A black Vietnam veteran tires of trying to capture the vet experience by photographing others and turns the camera on himself, portraying the strain of a double alienation, being black in this society and being the veteran of a war with which this society has yet to come to terms. Does the face as photographed carry the reason he enlisted, to support his mother and siblings? Can it alone carry that information? Tough questions. A woman's photographs of a blind couple dancing seem to point knowingly beyond "fact." Blind, the couple appears less solipsistic than many a sighted dancer. Their own Tiresian waltz. They're in a slightly awkward but traditional dancing pose; the man, larger, leads. Photograph inverts and reifies aphorism: the blind really does lead the blind. Tenderly.

Two participants described projects they were involved in but not in control of, as politics made important selective decisions for them. A young man from Mexico City shot a rescue scene during the recent earthquake; what he didn't know at the time was that the local authorities had fabricated the story of a baby being beneath the rubble so they could focus media attention on an area they could control. Thus, the document of the fact, of the rescue, was really a document of successful albeit temporary political control. A woman had previously photographed a Denver slum for her church so it could raise money for the slum's inhabitants, and she had been requested to do a similar project with

AIDS victims. (One recalls the Farm Security Administration hiring Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange to "document" victims of the dust bowl so they could be helped.) The board requesting the AIDS project also asked that the photographer not "frighten" the conservative audience who would see the project. Consequently, the photographs were unbelievably innocent, "cleaned up." None of the males touched. There were no blotches, no sickbeds. One photograph had been cropped so that a young man's leather hotpants were no longer visible. Again, if there were any facts documented, they had, as Sekula put it, less to do with objectivity than with "political maneuvering."

No one, of course, was more cognizant than Liebling himself of the myth or fiction of documentary, yet his workshop was in essence a meditation on the thing itself. While noting that events "recorded" by the photographer are moderated by who the photographer is and by the socio-political constructs of his or her own world, Liebling stressed the integrity of the object, person, or scene. In the introduction to Aperture's *Jerome Liebling Photographs*,² Alan Trachtenberg writes that for Liebling "pictorial power arises from the desire to be with the world not merely to record but to register the fact of one's own presence, to project oneself in the act of capturing the scenes." If anything, Liebling's desire to "be with the world" seemed in the workshop to arise from the realization that only by doing so could one allow the object to speak for itself.

This issue made itself apparent on the third day of the workshop when Liebling's group joined Duane Michals's workshop for about forty-five minutes. The photograph of the father, insists the expressionistic and expressive Michals, does not show the photographer-son's feelings toward the father. The photograph of a New York bar leaves many things out—the photographer's thirst, his inability to slake that thirst with one beer, and his growing need to pee. The object as photographed cannot narrate what's left out; thus, the artist must use prose to add that narration. For Liebling the object, if its thingness is captured by the camera, is more than capable of bearing the weight of narration. Let it and the object will tell its own story. That implies the story of what's left out. The interaction of the two photographers bespoke their relationship to their work, Liebling posing questions—eliciting story from the other—and Michals replying with anecdote, narration, autobiography, digressions and sarcasm ("Minor White's main problem was that his parents hadn't named him Major"). Their work, of course, bears out the differences even more. It's telling to compare Michals's "The voyage of the spirit after death" with Liebling's photographs of cadavers. Michals's sequence of photographs and narrative hypothesizes life after death—the young man hovering nude over mourning friends—and a journey toward reincarnation—a flash of light, a newly born baby; Liebling's photographs of cadavers focus on individual character as it resides in the human face, the continuity of that character no matter how the body is manipulated after death.

On the workshop's second day, Liebling showed slides of his own work. He spoke of respect for the object and his desire to catch that object, or some detail about it, at a moment of contextual or formal conflict: the photograph of Kennedy at a podium, his head slightly to the side of a banner-photograph of his head; the young worker at the slaughterhouse, lying back on a pile of clothes, arm floating over his head, midriff as bare as a calendar girl's; the neck and chest of an old woman in a house dress, one antenna of her butterfly brooch slightly pushing at her skin; a woman's cadaver, trunk and head face up, her lower torso detached, turned over. Sekula applauds recent documentary photographers for



By workshop participant Carol Vuchetich

transcending the notion of the photograph as high art, for using narration, slides and video, and for giving shows in union halls to better engage an audience. Liebling recalled receiving in the mail a catalogue of the cadaver photographs; someone had shot a bullet into it. His photographs confront, engage, the audience without fail.

No ideas but in things, wrote William Carlos Williams. One remembers his relationships to the painters of his day, especially Stieglitz, and Williams' familiarity with articles in *Camera Work* emphasizing that the tendency toward abstraction in the new painting was not intended as a denial of matter but an affirmation of its importance. Williams' name came up often (no doubt for my benefit as a photography interloper), along with his respect for the thing itself. I kept hearing (seeing) Williams' poem

"Nantucket":

*Flowers through the window
Lavendar and yellow*

*Changed by white curtains—
Smell of cleanliness*

*Sunshine of late afternoon—
On the glass tray*

*A glass pitcher, the tumbler
turned down, by which*

*a key is lying—And the
immaculate white bed*

Is this Nantucket? Is it Williams of the plums "so sweet" but "so cold"? What if we just look at the pitcher, not the key? Why are we looking through the window? What changes? "Tough questions," I hear Liebling say. "Tough."

FOOTNOTES

1 Allan Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary," in *Photography Against the Grain* (Halifax: Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984).

2 Alan Trachtenberg, *Jerome Liebling Photographs* (New York: Aperture, 1982).

Martin McGovern's poetry and essays have appeared in *Poetry*, *The New Republic*, and *The Antioch*, Chicago, Kenyon, and *Sewanee Reviews*. He teaches for the Honors Program at the University of Houston and is a lecturer for the University of Houston Creative Writing Program.



Jerome Liebling, Sarah, Miami Beach Florida, 1977

LOST
IN THE CROWD

By Bill Frazier

One of the first people to use photography in the public forum for social criticism was Jacob Riis, a Danish immigrant to America. Just before the turn of the century he made stark, flashlit images of the squalid slums in New York's lower east side to support the information he gathered as a police reporter. A generation later, in the early decades of the 1900's, another American, Lewis Hine, used photographs of child laborers to support petitions for legislation to protect children from exploitation in sweat shops. Riis and Hine were involved in a type of photographic practice that was directed, subjective, and intensely political; and it is they, among others, who are responsible for the development of the genre of social documentary photography in the twentieth century.

The liberal political and social climate that flourished briefly in Germany during the 1920's saw the development of another forum for socially concerned photography—the illustrated magazine. But as soon as modern photojournalistic practice began, photographers, editors, and government agencies realized that the interpretation and reception of a photograph depended upon its relationship to some text. The same image could have substantially different meanings in relation to different captions or cropping. Gisèle Freund observes, "...The owners of the press were able to fashion the world in images after their own interests."¹ The generally held notion of photographic "truth" failed to acknowledge that images could be manipulated for editorial ends.

A significant contribution to social documentary practice in the United States was made during the troubled decade of the 1930's, when the general promise of a good life in America seemed in doubt. The social crisis brought on by the failure of the financial system and by severe droughts in the farm belt prompted the creation of a number of government agencies. These, it was hoped, would help remedy the problems. Among these agencies was the Farm Security Administration. The FSA under Roy Stryker's direction set about to document the need for government assistance for people displaced by drought. While it was up to Stryker to see that the photographers working in the field operated in conformity with the sociological ends set by the project, these photographers had, as it developed, very different approaches to their work. Anne Tucker has explained that Stryker placed a higher priority on the political agenda at hand than on purely aesthetic concerns.² Despite his guidance, photographers such as Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange produced markedly different kinds of work. Evans worked for museum exhibitions and fine art books, while Lange was more committed to the political content of her images than to the formal integrity of the work. Tucker notes the significance of the fact that Lange chose to work with a sociologist as collaborator, whereas Evans worked with writer James Agee. (p. 54)

In a complex process which has occurred since the decades of Stryker's project, so-called "documentary" photography has succumbed to the gradual and deliberate commodification which has affected other forms of artistic production in this country. This process has transpired with the willing participation of image makers, buyers, and sellers; in its course, various important differences among the early practitioners, as well as among their more recent self-

designated successors, have been suppressed.³ When photographs which were originally made as part of some story, or to have an interrelationship to other images and text, are shown within a commercial or historical exhibition, a curious thing takes place. These images, once political, now join their modernist cousins; they are rendered neutral and completely powerless. Their new context makes them only another example of the formal possibilities open in current photographic practice.

Since both photographic modernism and the documentary tradition arose during the same general time period, there has been a tendency to link the two as having begun from the same impulse.⁴ Similarly, there is a temptation to equate the documentarian's efforts with those of the artist. Modernist practice ascribes a curious, mystical autonomy to both the art object and that object's maker. Such an assignment voids the polemical position which documentary practice portends. Allan Sekula has written that the meaning of an artwork is *contingent* instead of *immanent*.⁵ We must rely on the work's context in order to assign it a meaning and a social value. But this re-investing of the object's meaning is regarded as heresy by modernists who are, in Sekula's words, "shielded by a bogus ideology of neutrality" (p. 54.) This neutrality makes a variety of artistic practices vulnerable to co-optation into the service of the capitalist agenda. Art's neutrality is its undoing.

Two shows which presented documentary images during FotoFest underscore the crisis in photographic and curatorial practice as it relates to documentary photography today. From February 26 to March 25, a small show at Innova, a design showroom center, presented the work of five contemporary humanist photographers. These images, some of which were quite compelling, were hung in a single neat row on the white wall; there was no wall text and no statements from any of the participating artists. The photographs documented some very urgent issues—battered women, Guatemala as it hovers on the brink of civil war, tensions in the modern world's threat to traditional Indian ways of life in Peru, the beauty industry's victimization of women, and child poverty in America. But all of the images were printed the same size and shape, homogenized; all their subjects were assimilated as worthy "causes." The title of the exhibit is telling: *Visions: Five Monographs*. What this title means in practical terms is that the subjects of these photo essays matter little; what matters is the primacy of the individual artist's work, his or her "vision." Issues are not even alluded to in the title of the show. This presentation diluted the impact of the work, and ultimately neutralized any possible power which each set of work might have carried in other, better contexts.⁶

In another exhibit, *Ceremonies*, at the Susannah Sheffield Gallery, from March 4-March 26, Fred Baldwin and Wendy Watriss presented a group of photographs of "those who do not belong to the dominant class of culture."⁷ In their statement, Watriss wrote of these groups representing "cultural frontiers." The particular images in the show depicted apparently middle class blacks, and had been taken at ceremonies—mostly weddings. Watriss continued, "Although the goals of our collaborative Texas work are not social advocacy or change, ...our search is at heart a political one. Who are we? What are we as a country?" Watriss and Baldwin, as members of the dominant racial group in our culture, attended these events as insiders who come to observe outsiders—outsiders who seem acutely aware that strangers are present at their family celebrations. (Sometimes they appear to mug before, or stare uneasily at, the camera.) Watriss and Baldwin's version of how "the other half lives"



Frederick Baldwin/Wendy Watriss, *Black Wedding—East Texas* (Courtesy Woodfin Camp Associates, New York)



Dr. Erich Salomon, Princess Juliana and Prince Bernard attend a meeting of the State Council, 1937 (from *Roots and Turns at the Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston*)



Press Sheet for *Visions: Five Monographs* at Innova (top left Donna Ferrato; bottom left Stephen Shames; right J. Ross Baughman)

VISIONS:
FIVE MONOGRAPHS

J. ROSS BAUGHMAN
DONNA FERRATO
VERA LENTZ
STEPHEN SHAMES
JEAN-MARIE SIMON



lacks any sense of urgency and has no political energy. The social and economic status which their subjects appear to have dilutes any urgent message about racism, black unemployment, poverty, or disadvantage. The predominantly white middle class audience who go to galleries* might see these images and think that all is well, which is not true. Our inspection is safe, sterile, and remote. We need not acknowledge ourselves as the dominant class which has built social, educational and economic barriers to ensure that non-whites remain outsiders. Watriss and Baldwin have made a document that, at least as it was represented in FotoFest, says more about whites than it does about blacks.

In several large group exhibits at FotoFest, documentary photography did not fare well either. Two large survey exhibits, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and at the Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston, included documentary photographs within the larger context of other twentieth century photographic practices. The MFA exhibit, *Evocative Presence: 20th Century Photography in the Permanent Collection* (February 26-May 1) included American documentary photography. Although it was, appropriately, separated from the other work, the show's format still allowed works by Lange, Hine, and others to be seen as equivalent to the art practices of Avedon, Witkin and others whose work hung nearby. A wall panel explained that much of this material appeared originally in publication form, where it was related to other images or texts. Copies of some of those publications would have been helpful, to underscore the controlled reception intended by the makers of these images.

At the Blaffer Gallery, a Dutch exhibit, *Roots and Turns*, (February 27-March 31) made a similar survey of work from the Netherlands. It too subverted documentary photography's original intentions by showing documentary photos—for example many from the "Hunger Winter" in Amsterdam during WWII—alongside other quite different works. The exhibit spelled out a neat history of episodes leading from turn-of-the-century pictorialism up to 1980's postmodernism.

These two exhibits, and many of the others which I saw (For example, also at the Blaffer, Jerome Liebling's paired images shown without texts made for an essentially modernist presentation emphasizing artistic autonomy), are indicative of a pressing problem—How can documentary photography be shown in the rarefied atmosphere of the museum or gallery without being assimilated to the art practices of modernism? Fortunately, there were several FotoFest exhibitions that came closer to realizing documentary's need to be contextualized. An exhibit of photographs by Rudy Burckhardt at Diverse Works (February 27-March 31) included groups of images arranged around a small panel with a poem by Burckhardt's friend Edwin Denby. Shown in the gallery, these photographs looked small, inartistic, and unmodern. Burckhardt, who made no pretensions to revealing the "truth" of objects he observed, sacrificed the autonomy of the individual image for the whole. The resulting groups were coherent, entirely dependent upon the relationships to one another. The pictures which seemed individually rather unremarkable, merged to make a subtle and sensitive statement about urban life in New York during the 1940's.

At another location, American General, an exhibition entitled *Portraits and Dreams*, (February 26-March 25, co-sponsored by the Children's Museum and American General), presented work by children from Kentucky, Colombia, Labrador, and New Brunswick. These children, aged 6-16, were instructed in the basics of photography by Wendy

Ewald; they created documents of their own lives. Mom and Dad, sister and brother, dogs and chickens, all got interwoven in essays conveying the texture of these young lives. On panels, the text of narratives written by the children supplemented the pictures. They spoke about their feelings in relation to themselves, their environments, and sometimes, their cameras. These pictures came from the other side of life—economically and chronologically—yet they presented themselves without apology or embarrassment. In their honesty and pre-theoretical innocence, these children documented the richness of their own lives.

If documentary photography is shown in an art setting, or for that matter published in a journal or magazine with a narrow and elite audience, problems arise. In the gallery, the documents are too easily neutralized by their setting and viewed as pictures rather than as attempts to grapple with issues. Despite the fact that FotoFest organizers ventured out beyond the gallery setting into the city's corporate spaces, their audiences remained essentially the same—white, educated, and middle class. Publications (such as this one) offer a forum for discussion of documentary photography, but their readers are also, by and large, drawn from the same dominant class. In either venue, that of the art museum or that of the art-critical journal, there is a rarefied audience. Is this merely another form of cultural elitism? If so, then the status of effective documentary photography is precarious indeed.

FOOTNOTES

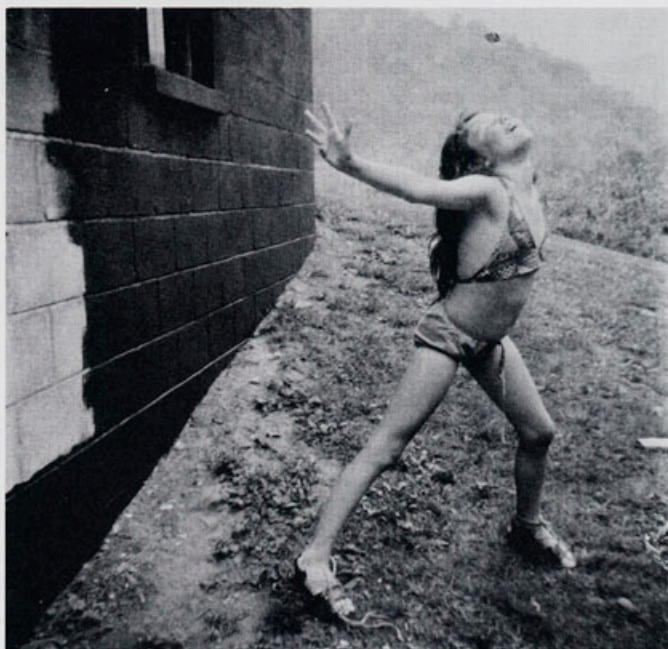
- 1 Gisèle Freund, *Photography and Society* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982), p. 103.
 - 2 Anne Wilkes Tucker, "Photographic Facts and Thirties America," *Observations: Essays on Documentary Photography* (Carmel, CA: Friends of Photography, 1980), p. 43.
 - 3 Several recent studies have been devoted to the complexity of Stryker's management of the FSA photography program, to differences in approach among the photographers involved, and to their relationships with earlier documentarians such as Riis and Hine. See, for example, Maren Stange, "The Management of Vision: Rexford Tugwell and Roy Stryker in the 1920's," *Afterimage* 15, March 1988, pp. 6-10; Pete Daniel, Merry A. Foresta, Maren Stange, and Sally Stein, *Official Images: New Deal Photography* (Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987); and Andrea Fisher, *Let us now Praise Famous Women: Women Photographers for the U.S. Government 1935-1944* (London and New York: Pandora, 1987).
 - 4 Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Reconstructing Documentary: Connie Hatch's Representational Resistance," *Camera Obscura* v. 13-14, Spring/Summer 1985, p. 117.
 - 5 Allan Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary," from *Photography against the Grain* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), p. 53.
 - 6 Jean-Marie Simon's work, for instance, takes on a new force in conjunction with the text included in her book, *Guatemala: Eternal Spring, Eternal Tyranny* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987).
 - 7 Wendy Watriss, artists' statement on display at the gallery.
 - 8 Statistics on the predominance of whites among the art-going audience were reported in the results of a 1987 poll, *Americans and the Arts V*, conducted by Louis Harris & Associates. Certain claims in the Harris Poll have been challenged by J. Mark Schuster of M.I.T. who has conducted a similar study. See the (untitled) article by Patricia Johnson in "Zest" section, *Houston Chronicle*, Sunday, April 24, 1988.
- Bill Frazier is a Houston artist and photographer.



Rudy Burckhardt, with poem by Edwin Denby (Installation photo courtesy by Diverse Works)



Javier Reyes, Self-Portrait with my Brother, Colombia, 1981 (from Portraits and Dreams at American General)



Denise Dixon, Self-Portrait reaching for the Red Star Sky, Kentucky, 1979 (from Portraits and Dreams at American General)

CONTRA-POSITIONS

By Joan Seeman Robinson

FotoFest's full feast is over. The Museum of Fine Arts' *Evocative Presence: 20th Century Photography in the Permanent Collection* ended May 1, and the Blaffer Gallery's sedately tantalizing *Roots and Turns* has left town, two historical surveys of photography which provided scholarly underpinnings for the eighty or so other solo, group, national, ethnic and theme shows which were also presented.

Two other surveys of photography were shown at loft and warehouse venues—Diverse Works' *Not for the Living Room*, and Lawndale's *Texas: Exploring the Boundaries*. Seen against the classical array of images at the MFA and the Blaffer Gallery, many of these works by young Texas photographers looked querulous and rebellious. As if challenging the definition of the photograph as a straightforward transcription of a verifiable event, their subjects were often artificially staged and the works overtly manipulated. Of course, this dialectic isn't new; there is a long tradition of overtly manipulated photography, but the polarization was instructive and stimulating in the context of so overwhelming a professional enterprise.

The photostrategists of the current generation incorporate multi-disciplinary methods into their work, especially from the arenas of film and the studio arts. Critics such as A.D. Coleman, Andy Grundberg, Pepe Karmel, Max Kozloff and Patricia Leighton have credited much of the expressive, experimental expansion of photography to infusions from other media. Big picture scale, painterly and tinted add-ons, collage and assemblage, and breakaways from the rectangle and the frame, remind us that "Photography is always inextricably bound up with art movements of its time and always expresses the concerns, in its own way, of the cultural forces that characterize a period."¹

Not for the Living Room was a tough-minded show. Curated by Lew Thomas, it was presented on the second floor of Diverse Works, over Rudy Burckhardt's "street photographs" downstairs. Its thesis, I think, was that purist definitions of photography are belied by the evidence of photography itself. Three of the installations, in particular, pegged this point of view to photography's own history: Evelyn Zweig's two camera obscuras, Vernon Fisher's *Lecture on Photography*, and Jim Pomeroy's stereopticon views. The camera obscuras referred not only to the mechanical origins of photography but also to the fluidity of its reflections as mirrors of a moving world.² Fisher's "Lecture on Photography" was a black and white, wall-high, fundamentalist text on the veracity of the photographic image. Anchored at its center was a real, red fire extinguisher. (That's a fact.) Pomeroy's piece was a table of stereopticon views whose harmless old prints had, hovering before them, up-to-date apocalyptic texts of *Soldier-of-Fortune*-type ads. The "contra-dictions" (to quote Pomeroy) between past and present were both obvious and ominous, yet only words were added.

Other works in the exhibition fell within what Coleman calls the "directional mode." "Such images use photography's overt veracity against the viewer, exploiting that initial assumption of credibility by evoking it for events and relationships generated by the photographer's deliberate structuring of what takes place in front of the lens, as well as in the resulting image."³ Geoffrey Brune's and Elizabeth Ward's pieces were nostalgic and retrospective. Brune, like Clarence John Laughlin before him, uses the architecture of

cemeteries to build mausolea montages, then adding collaged human imagery and ritualistic looking memorabilia. His prints are tiered and pinned to the wall, reading sequentially like episodic old memories.

Ward's huge "To the Lighthouse" was based on Virginia Woolf's book, and comprised prints of 306 pages of its text. Washed all over with the clear-day blues of the cyanotype process, it incorporated white images of birds, clouds and leaves, and of the Bolivar Lighthouse near Galveston where Ward's family spent summer vacations. As with Woolf's dense and pictorial narrative, Ward's overlays of shapes and notations represent her own ruminations on memory and the creative process. "To the Lighthouse" was expansive in scope, reticent in impact, and devoid of dramaturgy.

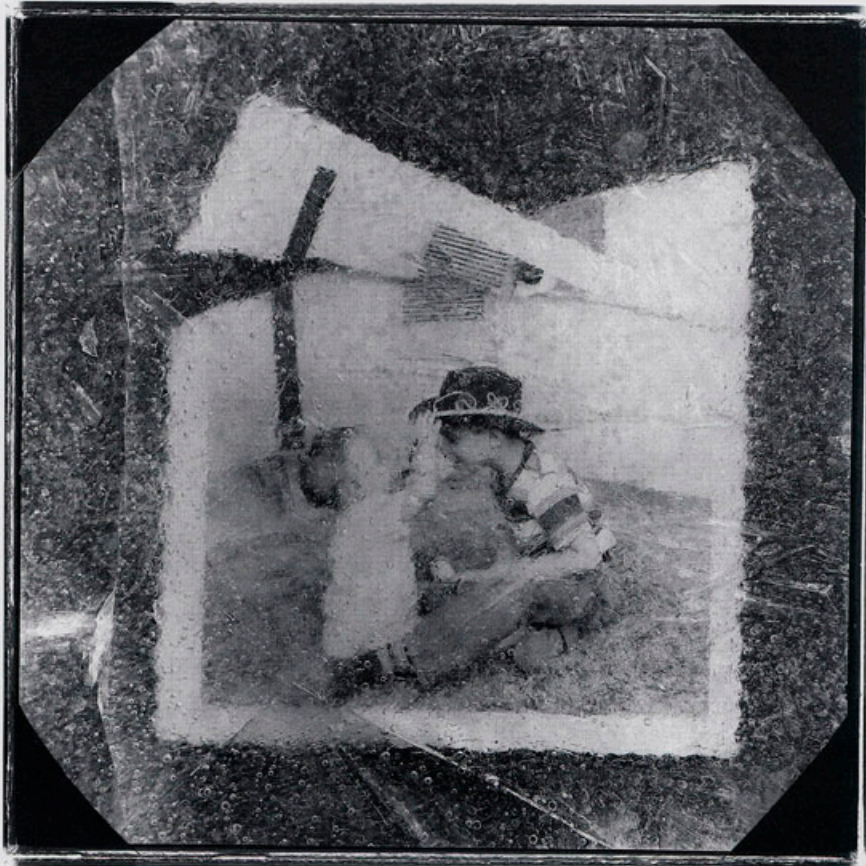
This is an important point, because *Not for the Living Room* was a very theatrical exhibition. A number of works were about gender roles and sexual politics. Leslie Nance's five bedroom closeups depicted self-conscious partners often fixed on the camera lens. A work by Susan Kae Grant was a grid-segmented scene of a crime, a mock rape with meat-market guts encircling a body. Donna Rydland's rows of photographs recorded such artifacts of identity as bras and briefcases, with herself at the center. R. Lynn Foster's contact print strip of men castrating an animal kill depicted a rite of passage with more rapacious overtones.

The subtlest of the series was Dany Goodwin's "La Petite Morte." A six-photo essay which began and ended with a Marquis de Sade quotation on the French revolutionary, Marat, it climaxed at the center with an image of a pencil sharpener and a broken pencil—captioned "Edward Munch, 1863-1904, Jealousy." Well, Marat was wiped out by Charlotte Corday and Munch was overwhelmed by disastrous sexual relationships. All of these works recall Max Kozloff's observations on the "sexiness of terror," and the filmic origin of such fantasies. Adding that we have been taken too well through the "narrative portal," he warned that "we are given the role of voyeurs, keyed by the desire to make good on the script."⁴ But our world is fast and filmic, often really incredible, nightmarish and surreal, and too often events seem unpreventable and incapable of arrest—as happens in single shot still photography. Even Robert Ziebell's "Arrivals and Departures" close-ups of travelers in airline terminals, and bull's-eye rimmed shots of overhead planes, are hung in scatter patterns, apart and spread out, as if we are seeing them in passing in any airport, any place.

Lawndale's *Texas: Exploring the Boundaries* aims at inclusiveness. It opens with Susan Kirchman's "Entries/Exits," tall photo-mannequins—duplicious folks whose backs and fronts don't match. Bill Frazier's familiar "Simulations" of famous places and events are included; they are inversions of the old claim of credibility in photography. Like the nineteenth century Alinari family who documented Italy's architectural monuments, Frazier shoots the main events too, but his key monuments are out of art books, made into toy tableaux of cotton and cardboard. They appeal to the eye—but are not meant to fool it.

In "Yauti in Heaven #1 and #2," Regina Vater takes us to places we'll never see, but which satellite technology has already photographed. Vater's outerspace worlds are double exposures, but no more inauthentic than the NASA photos, which were altered by color enhancement and shadow intensification to increase planetary surface characteristics. Those "official" images, nevertheless, represent real objects to our eyes. But then, so does Ansel Adams' "Moonrise Over Hernandez," a "straight" photograph actually obtained with two exposures.⁵

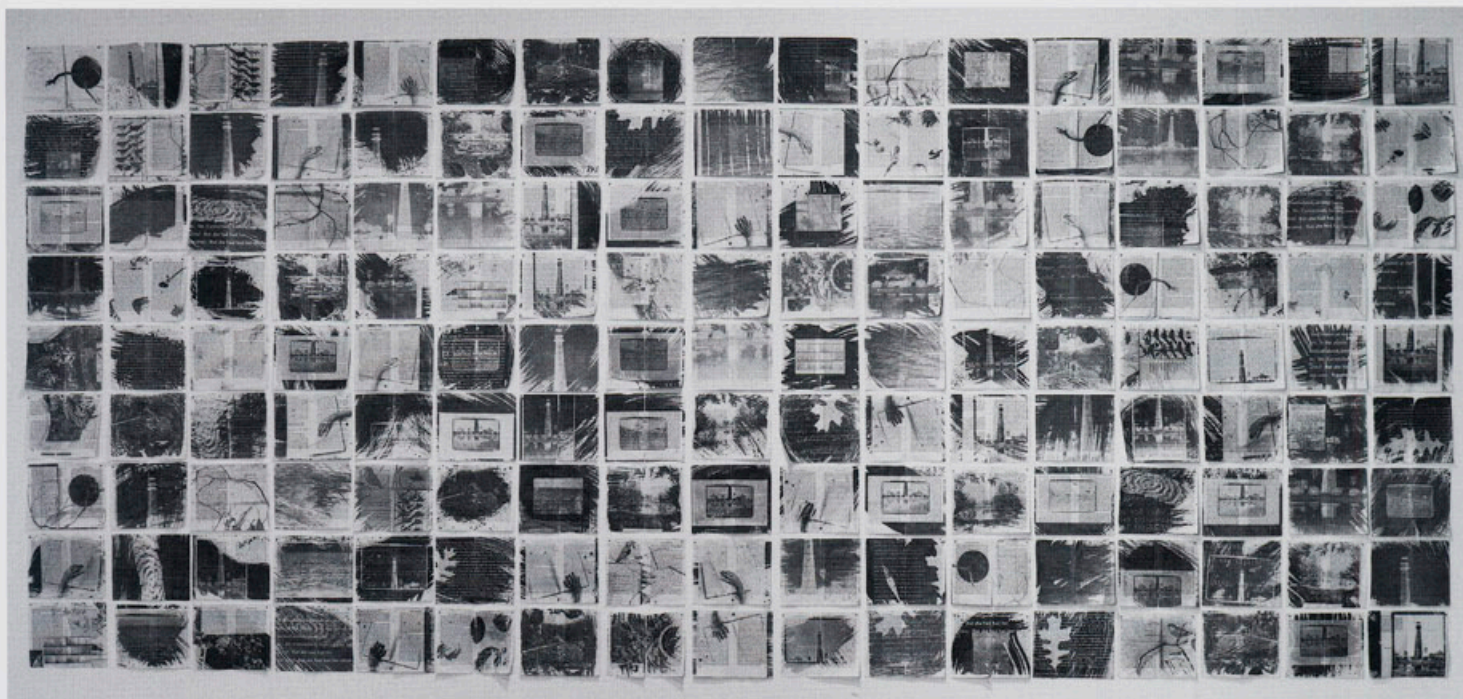
Pictorialism, which strove for fine



Keith Carter, Bill & Me, A Family Album, 1987



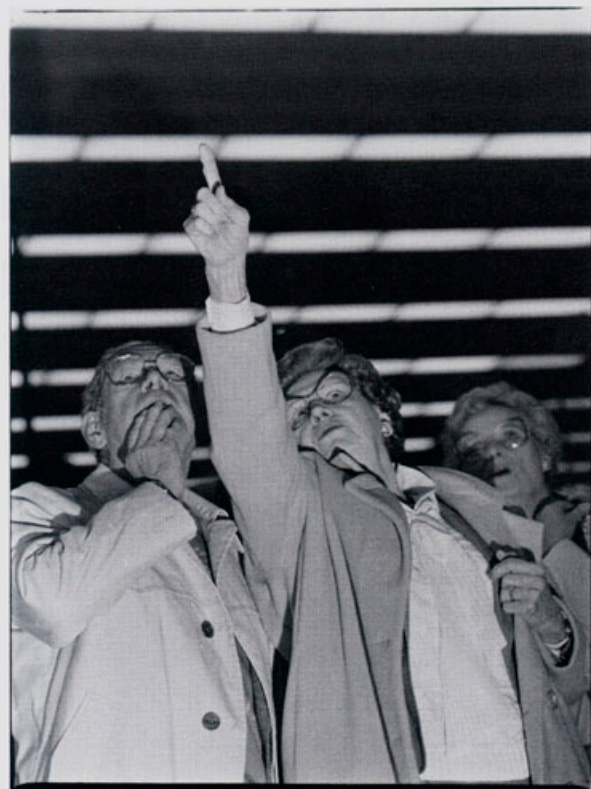
Kathy Vargas, Don't Eat Those Frog's Legs for Lunch/Have Some Nice Fish Instead, #11, 1987 (original hand-colored)



Liz Ward, *To the Lighthouse* 1988, toned cyanotype on book pages (installation photo by Debra Rueb)



Jim Pomeroy, *Acid Reign* 1986, original photo National Park Display (Mt. Rainier), Federal Building, Century of American Progress 1934 (#KV9821632958, Keystone-Mast Collection)



Robert Ziebell, from *Arrivals and Departures* series, 1986-7

arts effects, has its echoes in Keith Carter's "Family Album" series, six images of children enlarged from older photographs. First overlaid with what looks like bubbled glass, obscuring underlying detail, and then printed in an icy gray tonality, they have a twilight chill. These anti-sentimental devices create a further perceptual strain, making them harder to see, as we ourselves strain to recall what is gone.

Suzanne Paul and Trish Reinberg are like street photographer sleuths: both skip the big scan and isolate the details. Reinberg's tiny black and white prints of Italian religious processions are eccentrically focused and close-up, bringing the eye nearer the sacred objects carried by the votaries. Suzy Paul is an expert at the *pars pro toto* principle. In four untitled works she aims down at lower bodies, dressed, shod and lodged on uptilted surfaces which are littered with clues to occupations and life styles—low-rider bumpers, a man dressing a mannequin, a wind blowing a skirt. No further information is needed, but a kinky fetishism almost emerges.

Kent Rush and Neil Maurer are formalists: both explore the dynamic interrelationship of segmented planes and their adjustment to the rectangular format. In "Overpass", Rush aligns photosheets of overpainted piers and streets, creating grid patterned panels of urban surfaces. His swiped strokes look rapidly applied, both fast and vast. Maurer's "Solids," still life studies of cubes, recall Moholy-Nagy's exercises for students at the Chicago Institute of Design. These are perceptual puzzles; the three-dimensional solids collapse under his close cropping, and strong value contrasts spring forward like flat planes interlocking.

Kathy Vargas' series, "Don't Eat Those Frog's Legs for Lunch/Have Some Nice Fish Instead," addresses the terrible beauty of death in life. Her densely textured, delicately colored images of frog legs, dead fish, fabrics, and silverware are reminiscent of Jan Groover's and Olivia Parker's still lifes. Surface and depth are elided, as the mirroring sheen of the fish scales draws attention to the silvered surface of the photographic image itself.

Carol Gerhardt's big multi-media photographs are WASPish and stylish—young women back-lit with paper rolls à la Irving Penn. Like cloistered creatures in clean white environments, they are set off with black panels and threatening objects, cage-like wire screening and a sharp-

pointed plumb bob, suggesting the advent of grayer areas in their lives.

Both exhibitions benefited from their rough-edged environments, which made them seem more irascible and contentious than they really were. The photographic medium is essentially conservative. At the one end its magic lies in its ability to record phenomena and arrest them as nothing else can. But it is a provocative technology, constantly requiring that the photographer and the viewer question reality, and keep open the parameters of experimentation, and keep challenging the limitations of restrictive definitions.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Patricia D. Leighton, "Critical Attitudes toward Overtly Manipulated Photography in the 20th Century," *Art Journal*, Winter 1977-78, p. 133.
- 2 Zweig's camera obscuras were included by *Diverse Works* as partial documentation of her performance there on February 27; they formed an effective addition to the existing installation.
- 3 A.D. Coleman, "The Directorial Mode: Notes toward a definition," *Artforum*, September 1976, p. 56.
- 4 Max Kozloff, "Through the Narrative Portal," *Artforum*, August 1986, p. 92.
- 5 Leighton, n. 1 above, p. 138. "Peter C. Bunnell discussed this in a seminar at Princeton University, fall, 1975, where this essay originated."

Joan Seeman Robinson will be teaching workshops early this summer on "Art and War" and on "The American Landscape," at the Glassell School of Art.

AT THE BORDER OF FOTOFEST

By David Lazar

"How could you go to FotoFest (Can we not call it "Photofest" and avoid the Krazy Kat syndrome?) and not see Kertész, or Margaret Bourke-White, or Arbus?" The question is similar to the one asked of the tourist, the traveller. "How could you go to Paris and not visit Notre Dame, or the Louvre?" Dostoevsky, in his quirky, cranky travel memoir, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, addresses this question: "Had I gone to Rome I still might not have seen the Pope." He was not referring to the Pope Gallery. One cannot see everything, but one can see enough. Enough, for me, in travelling through the different landscapes, cultures, languages of FotoFest, was reaching the point of delightful and disturbing saturation. One could argue that, under any circumstances, memory performs a process of natural selection, that the memorable, a discrete moment, encounter, image, always survives, rises to the surface. But I believe that first impressions are entirely mutable. My relationship with the world demands repeated encounters to make up my mind. When I arrive in a new city I spend a day or two just walking, circling the streets. Not all the streets, clearly. Magically, at first, I encounter the same spots, shops, statues. Aha, we've met before! You're an odd little cul-de-sac, not at all as homely as I first, in my ignorance, believed. And so, with FotoFest, I made no effort to see anything approaching everything, instead allowing myself to be drawn back to the few things I had seen. What remains is impressionistic, far from representative. And I did not see the Pope.

I visited different ages of myself in Manhattan, in the films of Rudy Burckhardt. The program of films was entitled *The City and the Country*, and included Burckhardt's witty, poetic, fetishistic visions of New York from the fifties into the late sixties, my formative years visiting that island from Brooklyn. When I was a single digit, I would romp around the com-



Rudy Burckhardt, Times Square, Dusk, 1948 (courtesy Sheila Rosenstein)

paratively small realm of the Times Square area, visiting the arcades, Ripley's Believe it or Not, the B movies. Burckhardt, too, wanders around the streets, loves the streets the way that Frank O'Hara does, finding the pedestrian surprises of public spaces, amused by more than critical of the fads of fashion and the ticks of passersby. Every now and then, he'll find a theme: now shoes, now the way hair curls behind the ear, now the mosaics in the patterns of strollers. In the fifties work, Times Square, in black and white, is full of benign energy, diffused daylight, curious commodities on sale and in the streets. But that is very much my memory of those same streets. In the sixties, color ushers us into a more erotic world, daylight yields to Dionysian night, the editing more jumpy, the streets no less interesting, and much less benign. This, too, brings me back to my years as a teenager in love with, obsessed by the sexual cornucopia before me: the massage parlors blooming out of their perennial underground, the girls in their summer mini-skirts. In memory and on film, it is a more complicated vi-

sion, the wit becomes grittier, the eye more furtive. Not everything wants to be watched, on display.

Esther Parada's magnificent grid-work photograph "Past Recovery," at the Museum of Fine Arts, has blocked most of the other conceptual work I saw from my mind, the way a most unusual little vista perfectly composed from one's vantage point can superimpose itself on grander, more superficially complicated ones. Parada's work is an essay on the nature of memory and family, using the medium of a family photograph. When we speak of the photographic essay, we usually refer to a sequence of photographs, a series of united points of view that add up to a theme with an implicit or explicit critique. The black and white work of social realists lends itself most obviously to these terms. However, Parada's work is a personal essay in itself, the vision of the family is claustrophobic; ghosts hover around, over the visages of living members, as real as anyone. As the *double entendre* of the title suggests, the work occupies that space between loss and recovery through memory. It is, at the same time, keen-

ly aware of the iconic nature of the family photograph and its history; it carries with it, the way we all do, the image of those somber nineteenth century sepia plates, the faces tight from posing, tight in their attire, which bind us up in the region between the living and the dead.

Which takes me to Josef Breitenbach's picture of Joyce, head down, silver-haired, in a private visit to a wake of words in the white spaces surrounding him. Breitenbach's portraits, of Joyce and Max Ernst, are a contrast, stylistically, to his landscape nudes, which hover near the wasteland, enigmatic landscapes presided over by enigmatic figures who pose a counterpoint with their strange coy disarming charm. In an impossible world, a world resistant to meaning, they become figures of relief. Ernst, looking into the camera, strained but resilient, Joyce looking down, weighted down, are unambiguously muses of Breitenbach's world.

Nan Goldin's *Ballad of Sexual Dependency* alludes in its title to Brecht, of course. This muse is ill-used. Goldin inverts Mrs. Peachum's

psychoanalytic narrative of Macheath's sexual obsession in *Threepenny Opera*. Betrayed, facing the gallows, beginning to understand his own obsession, Mac is still, such is the nature of obsession, unable to escape it.

Then he may rant and rave and curse his ruin.
As soon as night falls he'll be up and doing.

Goldin's work gives us a portrait of the artist as victim, and I found this disturbing and highly objectionable. As victim, the artist exploits her own immersion in the lurid world of the degraded; she documents her powerlessness. Her cast of characters, Cookie and Edwige and Mille and Nat, et al., are vacant, cool, and it is suggested, sexually obsessed. But if Goldin is playing with a Brechtian distance in an effort to shock her audience into recognition, she forgets that in Brecht the playing field of distance works between audience and stage, not stage and artist. Her work, therefore, comes off as closer to the egoism of Bukowski than the egolessness of Brecht. It is shallow, depressing, confessionally stark, disturbing, a memorable artistic failure on the conceptual level. But some of the photographs, less overtly part of her confessions, photographs like the "Heart-shaped bruise" on a woman's leg, bloom into dark little sexual elegies.

Dostoevsky reminds us that the traveller can be as restless as the Wandering Jew, as needy to relate his visions as the Ancient Mariner, and that each new city has its successes and failures, its achievement and underside, its day and night. He gains as much as he loses by his inability to take it all in. Cranky, appreciative, obsessed by the coincidences inherent in excursions, the city, the country, eventually leave him as much as he leaves them. Memory takes over at the border.

David Lazar is a doctoral candidate in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Houston, where he was recently awarded a Criterion Writing Fellowship.

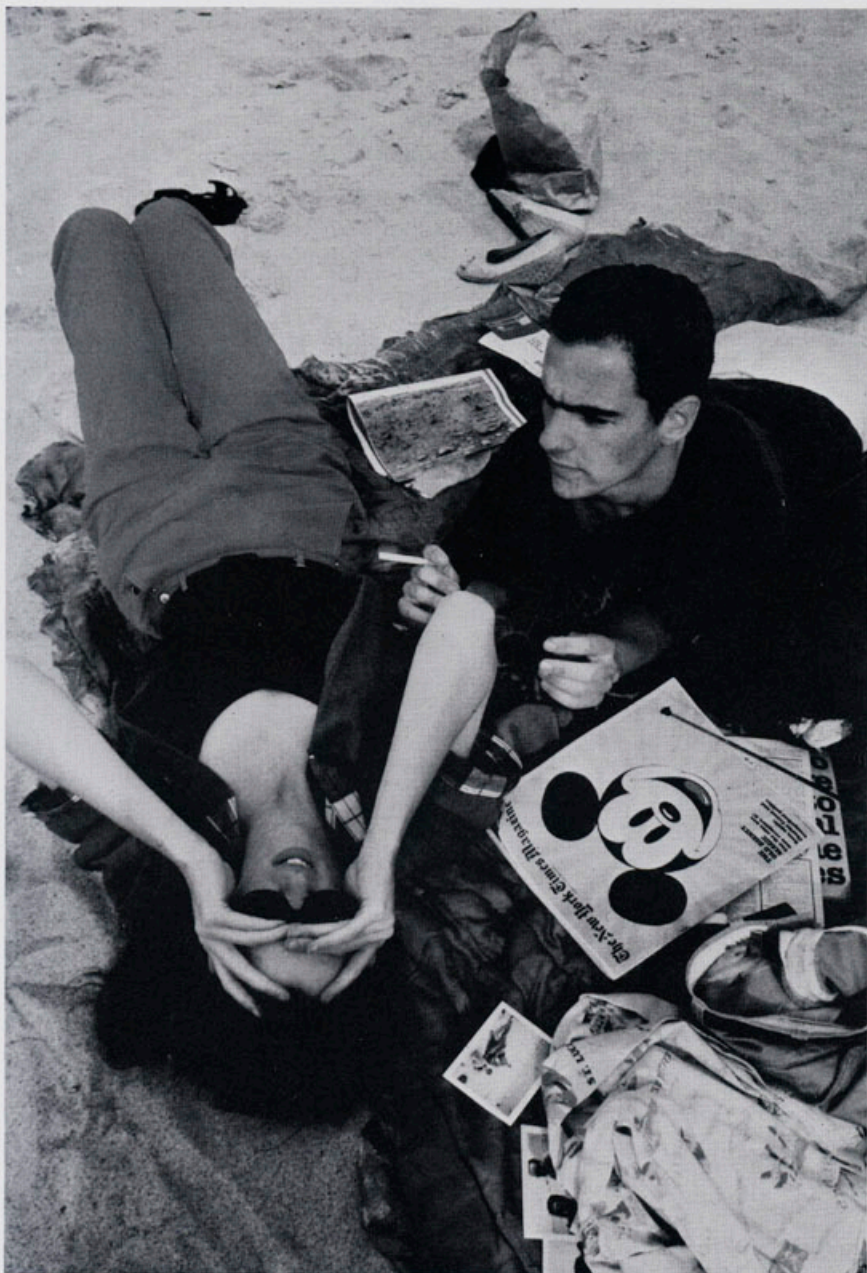
Editor's note: Esther Parada's "Past Recovery" was part of an exhibition, *Evocative Presence: 20th Century Photography in the Permanent Collection*, shown at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, from February 26-May 1. Rudy Burckhardt's films were also shown at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Josef Breitenbach's works were on display at the Parkerson Gallery from March 5-March 31. Nan Goldin: *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* was shown at the Rice University Media Center from March 2-30, 1988.

Esther Parada, Past Recovery (100 hand-toned photographs displayed in ten rows of ten, 96" by 144" overall) (Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Houston)





Nan Goldin, Janet and Richard in Chicago, 1977 (original in color)



Nan Goldin, C.Z. and Max on the Beach, Provincetown, 1971/183 (original in color)

Nan Goldin was in town on March 2 to screen the slide show associated with her exhibit of photographs, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, on display at the Rice Media Center from March 2-March 30, 1988.

ARTISTIC AND OTHER PASSIONS

By T.R. Mackin

The *Ballad of Sexual Dependency* is not to be found in the book¹ or in the circulating portfolio of photographs which hang on formal white walls and partitions. Nan Goldin's *Ballad of Sexual Dependency* is her slide show which she re-edits each time she shows. At Rice Media Center she clicked off the slides herself to the music she had selected. The effect of the show on the audience is evident and intense. Nan Goldin is intense.

The intent of the artist is unspeakable in that it cannot be fully expressed in words. The art is as reckless as the lifestyle it mirrors. Nan Goldin did two shows and stood for questions after each. The woman is vulnerable, open, and in a rough way, eager to please.

The majority of her audience, she feels, reacts to the otherness of the people she chooses to photograph—her friends. Because Goldin is articulate, dressed nicely² and exhibiting other signs of American standard socialization, some of her audience do not realize that she is one of those people she photographs. It obviously bothers Goldin to be misperceived, but she laughs it off.

Goldin's photos (family snaps) enable these viewers to stare blatantly, and without fear of eye contact, into this fascinating, mystifying other world. A barrage of information in a multitude of images flies by (or so it seems on the screen). The bars, the bathrooms, the hotel rooms seem low-rent and in dubious if not dangerous neighborhoods. Goldin's friends look sleazy by other-class standards—clothes, make-up, hair, and gestures. There are Larry Clark-type images of needles in the arm and semi-public³ sex. Goldin's friends display every emotion; one gets the sense that these emotions change just as radically and quickly as the images.

These people are comfortable in these surroundings and with one another. Normal barriers to intimacy are nonexistent. There is a primal reality in this intimacy that is foreign and frightening to many who feel the otherness. But these are no token gestures. These people do not wait for life's meaning and purpose to unfold—they make things happen. Images of babies riding mother's hip are as disconcerting as birthday candles flickering in a dark kitchen, in context of the mass of other images reflecting extremes of behavior, appearance and emotion. Sexual dependency and obsession are by-products of the love "to live at that pitch that is near madness."⁴

Just as Goldin wants to be liked, some of Goldin's audience want her to like them—to accept or validate their opinions of her work. Nan grows more tired under the stress. References to exploitation and self-aggrandizement⁵ cut her, she sets her jaw and mounts the stairs to the projection room. Out of sight, the theater below emptying quietly, Nan screams, "...I hate photographers... fuck them all..." Nan Goldin is a passionate artist.

She is passionate about the subject of abused women⁶ but is not truly addressing the issue with her art. She is using the language inherent in every family snapshot which tells us how these people relate—what is good about them, what is bad—why they are emotionally invested in one another and to what extent. Under Goldin's editing and direction it is possible not to identify, but still to invest in the people and in the story.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Buy it anyway.
- 2 In vintage clothing.
- 3 Making love in front of a woman with a camera shows a lack of discretion if not certain exhibitionism.
- 4 Richard Eberhart, I quote from memory, unable to find the poem.
- 5 Having gone to the slide show after only looking at the pictures in the book, I was primed (mistakenly) to come away with this opinion. I may be tired of the Confessional School of Poetry, but at this point in time, Goldin's work still has that edge of the artist who is inventing, experimenting and taking risks.
- 6 She asks if anyone has read the book *Women Who Kill*. This book is a brief history of women provoked or predisposed to violence and the inequitable way in which our judicial system deals with them as opposed to their male counterparts.

T.R. Mackin is a Houston writer/editor/photographer.



Stanley Moore

THE OPIUM DREAM

By Stanley L. Moore

Now that FotoFest is over, I can finally come up for air. My eyes are scratchy and bloodshot and my brain is reeling. When I try to sleep I see on the rear of my eyelids photographs marching in stately procession across my field of view. I never thought one could overdose on photography, but bitter experience has left me strung-out and shaken.

During the course of FotoFest I managed to see virtually every photo on display. This orgy of pictures began at the Warwick. While waiting to show my portfolio to various reviewers, I stumbled across a fascinating new toy. The Kodak laser disc system held 5845 photos, all neatly accessible via computer in convenient categories. So with the fever upon me, I clicked the keys and actually saw all 5845 pictures, disappointed that there were so few (the disc could have held 54,000). (This little item was one of the highlights of the Warwick, and has a great future.) Having exhausted this source of pictures, I decided to go to shows.

Up, down, over, and across our city I traipsed clutching my handy guidebook, duly checking off each show I visited. In sum, I saw 77 official and un-official shows. Photos: new, old, good, bad, indifferent, B&W, color, manipulated, straight, painted, landscape, portrait, journalism, abstract, pictorial, domestic, and foreign; I looked at them all. On and on, compulsion followed obsession 'til the bright flame of FotoFest flickered out, leaving me a withered, enervated husk. But now I must begin to assess, digest, and integrate all those images, begin to see anew with my own eyes, instead of through the eyes of all those others. My opium dream is over and Xanadu is closed until 1990.

Stanley Moore is a Houston chemist and photographer.

DRESSED TO CELEBRATE

Dressed to Celebrate was an exhibit of evening wear from the 1910's to the 1970's at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, on display from February 23 to May 8, 1988. Also included were fashion photographs by Avedon, Beaton, Dahl-Wolfe, Horst, Hoyningen-Heune, de Meyer, and Steichen.

By Erwin Ferguson

Nelson Goodman once stated that the factor distinguishing man and beast is the former's propensity to manipulate symbols. If our information is correct concerning the world of beast—the natural world—then this indeed seems so. Man even turns to himself as a scene, a palette for symbolic expression.

The art world has come to accept fashion as a true modernist art form. Haute couture merges with high art—fantasy for the flesh. Like the artist who supposedly works toward an absolute perfection, or in the opposite condition, towards a content- or message-oriented form, the fashion designer has "assumed total responsibility for the aesthetic expression of dress." (Exhibition catalogue, p. 21)

The Houston Museum of Fine Arts has chosen to exhibit *Evening Wear in the Twentieth Century*, a collection of dresses from the 1910's to the 1970's, as examples of modernist art—from its highest point in the hierarchy. The evening dress is a creature of nearly pure fantasy, or of ceremony. In a sense, people dress up and let themselves down into a world of fantasy. The evening becomes a carnival—a parody of sober life while the clothing is a parody of everyday clothing.

The show documents the influence of contemporary life on the clothing, and to some extent, in the implications of these designs, the aesthetics of the human figure. The fashion of the twenties sought to represent a modernist simplicity; the body was androgynous. The thirties saw the growth of the twentieth century's greatest fetish, the streamlined human body. The contours of Madame Grès' classical pieces showcase the voluptuous, rounded forms in shimmering movement. With the advent of the forties the



Crossley & Pogue, Pierre Balmain Evening Dress, 1959, from *Dressed to Celebrate* (original in color)

nostalgic look returned—Dior's "New Look"—as Paris attempted to reassert its influence after World War II. The "New Look's" romantic returned to the nineteenth-century crinolines and bustles, indicating society's desire to return to less troubled days. Women who once worked in factories attempted to return to a new elegance. The body was hidden under layers of "pouf" a move repeated in today's fashion

market, following women's advances of the 1970's. The sixties designer, influenced by the art world, generally attempted to create minimal works, whether in attitude or literally as in Courrèges' introduction of the miniskirt. The sixties' look was best expressed in the development of the ultra-thin body; the teenager triumphs as the model for sexuality, as millions of women try to diet themselves into the figure of the woman-child. But by the seventies, the counter-culture's protests were having their effect, as Zandra Rhodes' silk dress and wool evening coat reflect an awareness of the third world with their silk-screened designs.

The eighties are not represented—I suppose that the fashion era of post-modernity had arrived. The cult of the fashion designer is no longer top-down, but is heavily influenced by the trends of the street. Although the fashion designer's name is still important, the autonomy of the designer was compromised by the freewheeling eclecticism of American Youth. The sporting/health industry has spawned a fashion of sixty dollar bicycle pants, one hundred dollar tennis shoes, and four hundred dollar tennis outfits. On the street it's easy to see a bright red ruffled mini-skirt juxtaposed with black bicycle shorts. I concede that it's a strange choice, but it expresses an individual's wish to replace the evening dress with a Gortex outfit by Fila. Moreover, the fashion of the eighties tends to enhance the new bodies, powerhouses of lean muscle.

The show allows the spectator to look over the dresses and inspect them fairly close-up. However, there's some disappointment in the confusing placement of the dresses' identification signs. It takes an effort to keep track of the signs and to match them with the proper dresses. Also, the dresses are presented in low light, which makes their colors muted and dull.

By contrast, the photographs of the catalogue bring these dresses to life—in a sense—as their colors erupt under the photo flash. Pierre Balmain's pink and beige silk taffeta dress looks stiff, the sheen of the material dulling with time. However, helped along with careful cropping, the dress is transformed in the catalogue: the picture depicts a torso with the dress's lines radiating from the bodice. Furthermore, the low back light emanates from behind the dress, giving the viewer the impression that the skirt is billowing and lifting. The total effect of the

photograph is to create an abstract dress, an op art dress, as the mind falls into an imaginary vortex.

Incorporated into the show is a small selection of great fashion photographs by Avedon, Beaton, Dahl-Wolfe, Horst, Hoyningen-Heune, de Meyer, and Steichen. Considering the millions of fashion photographs made from 1910-1979, this selection is a maddening tease. The fashion photograph is central to the methodology of the fashion industry. In the absence of a live model, it is up to the photographic eye to capture the illusion of glamour, or to fulfill the basic necessity of making the clothing look wearable. A case in point is Richard Avedon's large hyperbolic image of Dovima bestowing grace upon two chained elephants (1955). The photograph is a series of juxtapositions common to the fashion ideology. The elegant might of European aristocracy is opposed to the brute weakness of Africa's greatest symbol. While the elephants stretch against the restraints, Dovima is caressed by Dior. The elephants register our presence with their eyes; Dovima ignores the world with a pose which excludes the viewers from the scene. The anticipated response is to desire.

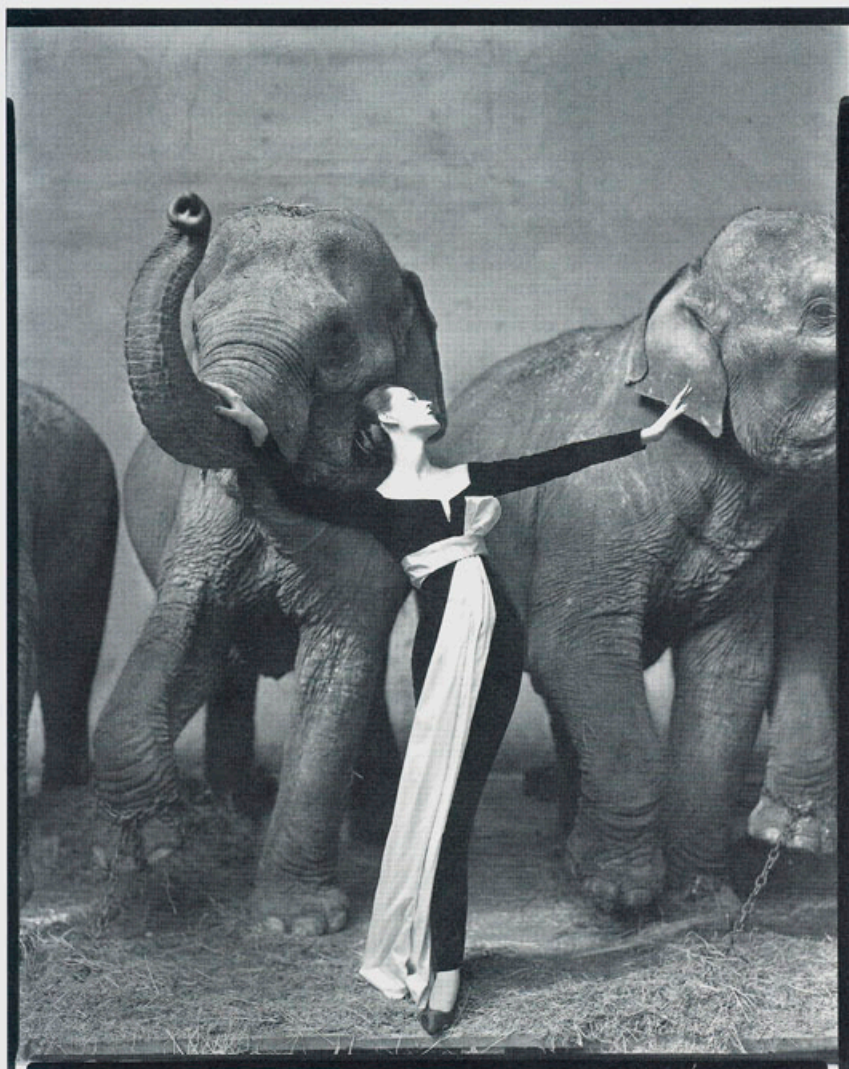
Since the photographs selected do not actually document or even relate closely to the dresses on display, their function seems to lie elsewhere. Perhaps they are used in order to lend the evening gowns a borrowed aura of art-world respectability. This is ironic, because it reflects a prior act of appropriation, in which fashion photos originally done for *Vogue* and other magazines were re-inscribed in an art context. At the same time, their creators, fashion photographers like Avedon and Dahl-Wolfe, were acknowledged as "artists," their work newly valued in the gallery world.

Another use that the catalogue photographs fulfill is easy to overlook, because it seems prosaic in view of photographs' banal overabundance in contemporary life. There's something unnatural about a dress on a dummy, when seen in the flesh, so to speak. But we expect dummies (or mannequins) in photographs. Action and posing actually look the same.

I am standing on an escalator, waiting to get to the top, when I notice a pair of stilletteos going the other way. My eyes follow up her black lycra-enclosed legs, past the large bags displaying tertiary colors, nearly obscured by a flowing floor-length red coat. Her lips are painted vermilion; she wears muted, "natural" make-up; her eyes are hidden behind huge octagonal coke-black futuristic sunglasses. She is ultra-blond, hair offsetting the black Walkman head phones which plug her ears. For a few seconds I think some Helmut Newton ice goddess, or Brigitte Nielsen, has escaped from a fashion magazine. But the escalator is too slow, so she steps away. I too am slow, but I notice the direction; she leads me to a fashion show. Non-coincidentally, it shares many of the same sponsors as *Dressed to Celebrate*.

There's nothing that shows off the problematics of fashion in the museum like a fashion show, where the tall models, the loud rock music, the hot spotlights, and the announcer work diligently to create an atmosphere of glamour. This is spectacle. It reveals fashion for what it truly is—a living, flowing, phantasmagorical form of advertising. What makes the form so powerful is its deceptive simplicity. The women simply ask that we dress like them; everybody wants to be a member of a group. You only have to learn to be a little exclusive.

Fashion in the museum, on the other hand, is in the same predicament as art. It's completely out of context. The clothes become lifeless, and in a certain sense, so does the art. Since fashion has become an art



Richard Avedon, Dovima with elephants, Evening dress by Dior, Cirque d'Hiver, Paris, 1955 (courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; collection of John and Karen Kelsey)

form, in the modernist sense, it is pure deception not to see these works of art in their proper forum—as a blur of movement, as the wearer moves through time and space.

The fashion show is theater, a slight requiem for the desiring spectator. She's moved to highs and lows by the conflagration of movies, rock, sex, and dance. The spectator is at the scene, the center, of fantasy—inside the dream machine which powers capitalism. The mechanical, futuristic, sleek overtones of the name "Fiorucci" are no accident. The spectator figuratively goes for a drive in a high-speed Italian sports car.

The fashion show is organized in acts or scenes. But actually they are regimes. There's Fiorucci's "Retro-Soul," Anne Klein's "High-powered career dressing," Benetton's "Jungle Cotton," and others, leading up to the "exclusive" high fashion of Thierry Mugler and Ungaro. The last two need no theme—the signature, or logo, is exclusive alone. The name is the image.

The models have a special role. Although they are constantly on view, they are invisible. They are walking machines—the special twist walk accents the material which drapes across the body. It wasn't until the end of the show that I realized that there were as many as thirty people involved. I thought there were only four "girls." The effect was destroyed as the lone black model was put through the transformation from slut to corporate woman, from minister's wife to "casual." The model is required to walk at a pose, like Dovima in Avedon's photograph. She walks in a perpetual decline. Always it seems as if she's descending stairs from some mythical high place. On the runway, she commands all of the visible terrain, from edge to edge, from low point to high.

Music fuels the fantasy. Michael Hoban, designing for North Beach Leather, features the most fascist-looking display since WWII or the film, *Night Porter*. The models stride in formation, epaulets flaring, gold military buttons gleaming, their faces painted bland as Cher sings "Bang, bang, I shot him down." A maximalist chorus for a minimalist aesthetic. Men wearing the "Billionaire Boys" look are supported by Barry Manilow singing "The Swinger." The effect is ridiculous. But frankly, Thierry Mugler and Ungaro's Fellini-esque crowd, hidden in smoke as the sound of James Bond's "The Living Daylights" blares, is highly disappointing. The artifice is too high; the event became comic. For the most part, the fashion show is a visual event. So music, especially kitschy pop songs, just seem to cheapen the intended effect.

What purpose, high fashion? It leaves most of mankind out of its ideology. The words written on the wall of the museum highlight the paradox that fashion's source of strength—"...the logo on everything from clothing to food..."—is also the source of its weakness. We can reject the institutional regimes for a fashion of individualism, a non-alienated expression. One can witness a sort of deconstructive urge as the poor graft new meanings onto old signifiers, with necklaces bearing the Mercedes-Benz emblem, or T-shirts with "Gucci" logos magnified to eight inches in height. Both Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein have extensive advertising campaigns which sell the aristocracy of Europe as a master race, excluding all imagery of minorities and the less fortunate. However, if the poor steal their logos, and use their bodies to establish a new identity, the fashion system is subverted. The failure of fashion is its success.

Erwin Ferguson is a senior majoring in art history at the University of Houston.

"HEAVY" AND "LIGHT" DESIRES

By Ed Osowski

Explicit Image II was shown at the Caroline Lee Gallery from February 26th to April 2, 1988.

He made nudes so grandly impersonal as to make a woman uneasy. He said he meant to obliterate the personal element, so his nudes are intended to represent pure form, but ultimately his denial of their humanity, individuality, and eroticism is distasteful. He hid their faces, less, perhaps, from discretion than from his feeling that they were primarily bodies to be made love to, first by the camera, then by the man. Seldom whole, in the aggregate they become interchangeable, as if they were indeed essences, or ideas, but not real women.

—Vicki Goldberg, reviewing *Supreme Instants: The Photography of Edward Weston*, in *American Photographer*

William Hogarth's painting "The Orgy," from his series "The Rake's Progress," painted in 1734 (and engraved one year later to increase its availability) is a most "moral" work. To recount its subject, in a young man, sodden, disheveled, is surrounded by a cluster of attentive, attractive, and acquisitive women. They ply him with liquor, tempt him with their semi-clothed bodies, while relieving his pockets of their contents. The work stands as a warning to the viewer of the perils that flow from excessive living. The work is full, florid, rich in style; its message, however, is strict, contained, rational. And its ancestry goes back at least to Dutch paintings sixty years earlier which function as moral exempla or spiritual allegories of the dangers of a life devoted to the world of the flesh.

These thoughts on Hogarth and his Dutch ancestors were occasioned by *Explicit Image II*, an exhibition of approximately fifty photographs of the female and male nude displayed at Caroline Lee Gallery in March and April. What the exhibition makes clear is that in 1988 a photography exhibition devoted to a historical survey of images of female and male nudes is so caught up in the "politics" of the very meaning of

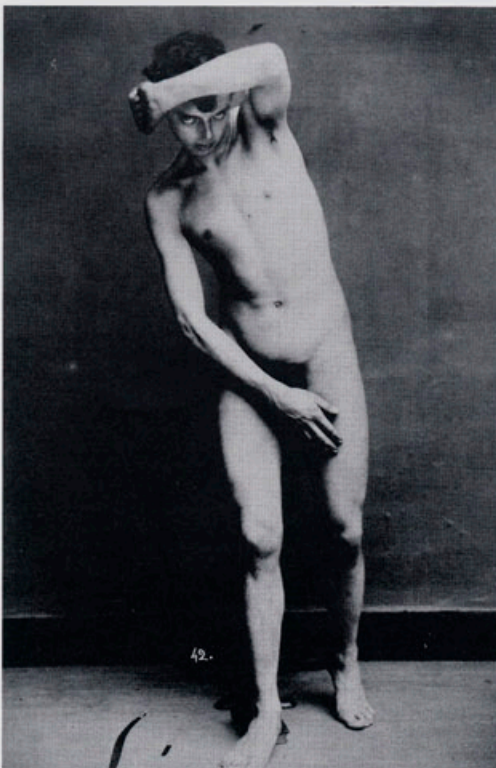
displaying the unclothed body that any other discussions—esthetic, moral, technical—seem beside the point.

Hogarth comes to mind, although a stripped-down, socially-drained Hogarth, with a 1915 French photograph that depicts a couple engaged in sex. The setting is what looks like a rather luxurious library, perhaps in a country estate. The woman faces the viewer while the man's head is turned away. His penis, discernible, is about to enter her. The narrative context, one imagines, involves this couple, married to other people, quickly joining together here. Increasing their excitement is the risk of discovery and the knowledge that their act invades the home and sets its decorum on end.

Such a reading, raising issues of moral propriety and social decorum, avoids the obvious. For the photograph, like the majority of works on display, is not, at its center, moral. Rather, this work is but one of many works in a highly developed, ongoing political scheme. The word "political" is not chosen lightly. The past twenty years have made it impossible to discuss the nude photograph apart from the political agenda it serves. And what that agenda includes can be summarized this way: to perpetuate sexual and racial stereotypes; to deepen the cultural bias and animosity toward women; to maintain the distance that separates men from women; to sustain the belief that women, usually (and men, occasionally) are objects, to be used, bought, traded, sold; and to perpetuate the hold which the (white) patriarchy has on the culture. The cultural animosity extends, of course, to homosexual men, as well, as several pieces on display make obvious.

One supposes that a quick reading of the works on display could support the view that photographs so "improper" actually assault the power-grip of the patriarchy. One could argue that surely works that depict individuals in bondage drag, or images of couples engaged in sex, or works that depict "seemingly" lesbian women or gay men are somewhat anarchic. But a closer analysis shows that these works spring from a highly structured, highly traditional world view, encoded within them.

What informs these works is the view that women are passive objects onto whom the male viewer projects his fantasies of capture and control.



French, attributed to Marconi, ca. 1880 (from *Explicit Image II: Past and Present*, at the Caroline Lee Gallery; photograph from the Vasta Images Collection)



French, ca. 1920 (from *Explicit Image II: Past and Present*, at the Caroline Lee Gallery; photograph from the Vasta Images Collection)

Already invaded by the camera and the photographer, as subjects, the models are further invaded by the belief that they can be used to satisfy the pleasures of the male viewer. How languidly the models pose, propped against soft cushions, lying on heavy drapery in the earlier works, shot with soft focus in the works from the 1920's, waiting to be photographed and waiting for the male viewer to buy the work, to project himself into its narrative, and to consume the woman. In a 1930 French photograph she is a version of *Sleeping Beauty*, naked, staring absently into space, while above her a man (all men?) sucks on her left breast. And in an American work from the next decade the woman lies motionless beneath the man while he, his face a blur, enters her. If the evidence is to be believed, what men want are women who are little more than life-size dolls, impassive, and thus no threat to male supremacy. It is, of course, fear of giving up power, the fear of what it would mean to share control, that lies behind the adolescent search for the impassive goddess. In the first image in the exhibition, dated 1870, a woman sits impassively on a chair. A card, proclaiming "Chambre à Louer" ("Room for Rent"), covers her genitals. But if unconvincing her availability to any man with sufficient funds. She dwells in a world where economics determines her fate.

To suggest that women might be more than willing vessels for men contradicts centuries of cultural indoctrination. Only when she is depicted as an exotic—a foreigner, a demon, a witch—can she be allowed to possess what seems to be power. In a striking number of the works displayed the models don masks or wear the leather vests, boots, and gloves of S and M fantasies. In a 1930 French print by Baerthele the woman poses with a cigarette in one hand, a pistol in the other, her breasts bared, her legs covered by a long skirt, her apparent threat part of her appeal to the man who will disarm and subdue her.

Whether they carry riding crops or guns or simply stand aggressively in their leather costumes, these women are witches who have broken the "normal" limits of female sexual passion and have tried to usurp man's place. The persecution of witches in the Middle Ages was a campaign directed primarily against women who tried to function independently as women, and whose assault on the prevailing male culture necessitated their murders for the patriarchy to continue.

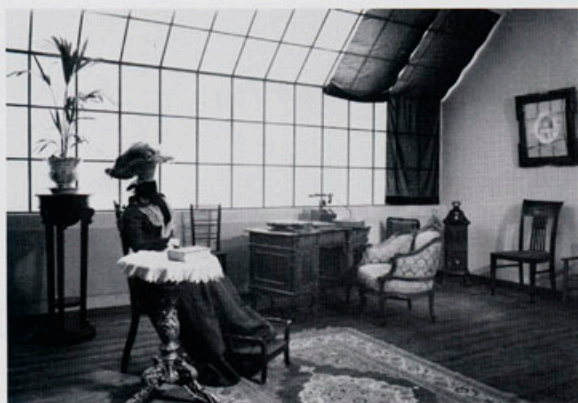
Images of men in the exhibition were few, reflecting what has been, until recently, a cultural proscription against showing the male photographic nude. A photograph from 1880, attributed to Marconi, is a late, but good example of the male nude, in a "classical" pose, intended to aid art students studying human anatomy. And what may be a German photograph from 1920 recalls earlier studies of human locomotion by Muybridge and others. The sole stereopticon in the exhibition,

French, dated 1900, is of a semi-clothed man, his naked buttocks exposed to the viewer, his penis barely visible. What catches the viewer off guard is how well the stereopticon appropriates poses used for female models for, one assumes here, a homoerotic purpose. Two other works are explicitly homoerotic. A 1957 American work is a good example of "beefcake." Two young body builders pose in a natural landscape. They are as passive and available as are all the women models who have preceded them. And in a more interesting work (American, 1960), a man lies, tied, on his stomach. In his bound state he is passive, servile. One remembers that homosexual men often were tied and placed at the feet of the witches who were burned at the stake. Some claim that the colloquial meaning for "faggot" derives from this practice.

Foreign lands have not been the only targets of the colonialist urge to subjugate. Several images in the exhibition remind one that individuals have often been the concentrated focus for racial and nationalistic prejudices. The exotic other, usually a dark-skinned woman, is familiar to anyone who has spent time with old copies of the *National Geographic*. The boundaries of geography vanish when one looks through those old issues. And the fantasy land of white power and control fills the map. An 1890 print by Pluschow and a 1900 photograph attributed to Recknagel draw on the stereotyping of *National Geographic*. And more than half a century later, in a 1960 American photograph, in a work that summarizes 1960's kitsch, the same stereotypes operate. In the later work the model poses as Cleopatra, reclining against a sofa covered in zebra skin, to match the table lamp which lights her, while the rug on which she poses is white fur. The harem has become domesticated but the woman's position as slave has not changed.

Roland Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, distinguishes between the "heavy" desire of pornography and the "light" desire of eroticism. That distinction seems important to maintain in considering *Explicit Image II*, where work seemed, for the most part, without joy or surprise, dull and deliberate, weighed down by the burden of political propaganda whose cause they serve. Yet one is thankful for the opportunity to consider 120 years of nude photography which the exhibition provided. The body is a special subject, as Vicki Goldberg's opening comments reveal. The exhibition at Caroline Lee Gallery, consisting mainly of straightforward photographs (there were no examples of the abstractions of photographers like Weston or the manipulations of the surrealists), shows how the direct image, lacking in subtlety, has been used to strengthen cultural stereotypes and beliefs and how it is often the best text to perpetuate worn-out myths.

Ed Osowski manages the Montrose Branch Library. A frequent contributor to SPOT, he occasionally reviews books for the Houston Post.



From *Images for Everybody: Early Photography in Bremen*, at the Goethe Institute

IMPRESSIONS OF THE BREMEN EXHIBIT

By Wendy Sterba

Images for Everybody: Early Photography in Bremen was exhibited at the Goethe Institute from March 1-March 31, 1988.

For those who yawn at the prospect of Cousin Agatha's great aunt's photos of the "good old days," the Goethe Institute's exhibit, *Images for Everybody: Early Photography in Bremen* still had much to offer. Old portraits have always been a great curiosity to me, whether I was related to the ancestor or not, because I've always felt that a great deal more character was captured in a photo of a subject who had to remain still a long time. It always seemed to me that something akin to one's philosophy of life shone through in the determination it took to stand or sit still for the several seconds to minutes necessary for a daguerreotype to be made. *Images for Everybody* offers an amplitude of this photographic activity, showing polished upper-class Burgers in their "thus-let-me-be-remembered-for-posterity" Sunday go-to-meeting finery.

Yet, what the Goethe Institute's exhibition portrayed even more acutely is the nature of the art of photography in Bremen at this time, and the effects of modernization upon this art. Photo-theorists have noted that the rise of the masses created a concomitant need for mass-producible (and marketable) processes. This exhibition of pieces from Bremen's Focke Museum clearly demonstrated changes in technology. Grouped in a series of types, it moved from the very sharp and brilliant daguerreotypes through *cartes de visite* and on into the early color processes of the turn of the century.

Bremen's first experience with the photographic process occurred in the

1840's, when it, like most small German cities, was visited by travelling photographers. Bremen's first indigenous photographer set up studio in 1843. Soon thereafter competition arrived, but the price was prohibitive, due to the complex and not exactly healthy mercury vapor process of development. At the time a daguerreotype would cost a worker the equivalent of a week's wages. For this reason most of the daguerreotypist's clientele were Bremen's wealthier citizens.

The advent of paper photography in the 1850's changed the image a great deal. Photography was still primarily an indoor sport, due to the necessity of keeping the newly utilized glass-plates moist until development. The dedicated enthusiast invented transportable darkrooms for outdoor photography, but the primary subject remained people in the studio. This next group of images in the exhibition clearly indicated the recent changes in process and price. Printed on paper in the popular *carte de visite* format, they are more durable, less homogeneous portraits. The well-to-do still had their portraits done, of course, but telltale details show the rise of the middle class. Some of the clothing is somewhat wrinkled and, instead of crisply starched lace collars and impeccable cravats, there are a variety of dress-styles and professions present. Nurses and maids are depicted along with the *grandes dames*, and not only do we gaze merely at the owner of the bank, we also glimpse his employees: his children's nanny, the bank clerks, an English instructor. Prevalence reflected lower costs of production. The set of six visiting cards was available for 2.50 Marks, only about a day's toil for the average worker.

The studios became more refined in their presentation. Subjects are visibly more relaxed, often seen full figure in a furnished setting. Posing times had been reduced to seconds, allowing greater standing ease, and requiring less of a need for hat-rack-like head rests and body supports. The backgrounds in this second group not only included interesting and homey furniture, but painted

backdrops and outdoor scenes. North German restraint showed in background choice, however, as ornament was not allowed to breach the bounds of good taste.

Photos for the masses also meant the rise of the entrepreneurial spirit. Paper cards allowed for ample advertising on the back, and these logos and adverts became an art unto themselves (German photo-historians also breathed a heavy sigh of relief, for they finally were able to identify specific photographers and their firms through the comparison of *cartes de visite* designs and recurring furnishings).

To make these facts understandable the Goethe Institute put the visitor into an environment which suggests the spirit of the times. The photos are accompanied by a studio mock-up, complete with well-dressed mannequin and functioning camera box and bellows. The would-be photographer had the opportunity not only to view numerous historic cameras from the Bremen Museum, but also to explore first-hand the mechanism of ground glass focusing on a nineteenth century image.

Of course the progress of technology was not to be halted, and the end of the nineteenth century brought the capability of enlargement and the proliferation of retouching. The exhibition catalogue notes that in the 1880's one studio hired as many as ten retouchers at one time in order to ensure that no wrinkles or blemishes marred the final product. The latest innovations also meant the possibility of dry plate negatives. Bremen's typically north-German architecture and seascapes formed a further category of images in this exhibit. These pictures provide a glimpse of still another facet of nineteenth century life, for they were printed and purchased to be collected and exchanged. Earlier shots understandably showed people only as eerie blurs, but later images capture fishermen and dockworkers performing their daily duties. This adds the final flavor of the north-German port-town as it would like to have itself seen.

The collection of photographs on display built a very comely portrait of the north-German city. Anything considered noteworthy or important might be made the subject of a photograph, and the choices of image and view definitely demonstrated the technological developments in the art and science of photography. It is, however, important to remember that photography is a manufactured image, one which tells as much by what it does not show as what it does. Certainly it would never have occurred to the photographer of the time to capture something ugly on his plates. Aesthetic values have changed along with technology.

Several ideas about change are suggested by this exhibit. The first is curiosity about changes in aesthetic values. This is related to the second idea, that a social transformation is discernible within the groupings of the exhibit. A change in subject and decrease in price document the rise of the bourgeoisie and the growth of capitalism, but we begin to notice that this exhibit is a very selective portrait. It is an image which has considered its appearance beforehand and dressed itself up in its most respectable clothes. This exhibit should be lauded for its success in uniting image and ambiance. It portrayed a lovely atmosphere, beautiful settings and the magnetism of strong determined people with perfect hair and unblemished faces. It also tendered a reminder, suggesting that photography is an art which communicates the ideals and messages of its artist, one which records not facts, but impressions, which proffers polished images and not realities.

Wendy Sterba is a graduate student at Rice University, where she is writing her Ph.D. thesis on the image of the prostitute in contemporary German film.



Planche XXXVII.

ATTITUDES PASSIONNELLES

ÉTAT EXTATIQUE

from *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière*, Ed. Bourneville and Regnard, Paris 1876-1880 (Courtesy Moody Medical Library, Galveston)

THE MIND UNVEILED

By Cynthia Freeland

An exhibition, *Psychiatry and Photography in the Nineteenth Century*, curated by Herman Detering, was on display at the University of Texas Medical Center, Houston, from February 26-March 25, 1988.

Even by FotoFest standards the setting of *Psychiatry and Photography in the Nineteenth Century* was unusual. In order to see nineteenth century psychiatric photographs I drove into the heart of Houston's modern medical complex, right past the imposing Neurosensory Center. Placed in the lobby of the University of Texas Medical Center, this exhibit faced a wall of up-to-the-minute framed photos of recently graduated M.D.'s, their smiling heads neatly arrayed row on row. White-jacketed future M.D.'s hurried past as I lingered and looked. This medical context strikes me as having important implications I will pursue below.

Detering's exhibit centered on a group of rare nineteenth century books and news articles displayed in a half dozen glass cases. It also included a "magic lantern" slide projector, a phrenological skull, and, along two walls, a sequence of roughly 40 photographs reproduced from the texts on display. The exhibit focused on the institution of psychiatry primarily as this institution revealed itself through one form of discourse, the printed page. Photography was not in itself the key organizing principle behind this exhibit; rather, it was shown as a tool adopted for various uses by psychiatrists and other scientists of the mind. This century saw significant changes in the conceptualization of insanity; of special importance was the rise of the asylum as the locus for humanistic/moralizing treatment. Phillipe Pinel gave impetus to this new outlook, by "freeing" the insane in Paris madhouses.

Pinel's 1809 book was among the earliest on exhibit. "Freeing" in his case meant releasing the insane from their physical shackles. As Michel Foucault describes this, in *Madness and Civilization*, it signalled a key development in nineteenth century psychiatry: from *punishment* of the madman as guilty to *treatment* of him as "sick."¹ Thus the whole "modern experience of madness" was territorialized within the domain of medicine (and of psychiatry in particular). As Foucault explains, "If the medical personage could isolate madness, it was not because he knew it, but because he mastered it; and what for positivism would be an image of objectivity was only the other side of this domination." (p. 272) Thus Pinel's book, in launching the tradition of physiognomic analysis which was to become central to psychiatric diagnosis in the early part of this century, also inaugurates the modern "scientific" approach toward the newly isolated phenomenon of "mental illness."

Combining skills and expertise in photography, rare books, and the history of psychiatry, Detering brought to fruition here a vast amount of research and detection. Though the show owed much to the excellent resources of Galveston's Moody Medical Library, Detering also tracked down material from archives in various hospitals and collections in this country and abroad. He also wrote numerous informative texts to supplement the works on display. But, having said that the exhibit was an impressive effort at documenting psychiatric history—and not a "history of photography" display—I must rush to add that it was visually rich and fascinating, even funny at times (a personal favorite showed "electrical condition of the hair" in mania). A certain grim humor was to be found in perusing subtleties of various books, e.g. John Casper Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy, for the Promotion of the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*. "Love" in Lavater's view proved to be restrictive in both its applications and implica-

tions (as Allan Sekula has recently emphasized⁷).

According to Detering's curatorial statement, the primary goal of this exhibit was to illustrate the development of clinical uses of photography within nineteenth century psychiatry. Detering explained that psychiatry initially attempted to borrow "scientific" respectability from photography.⁸ Psychiatry was in a period of great theoretical flux, and an asylum assignment was considered as among the lowest in medical practice.⁴ In an era when photography was fighting to be accepted as a medium of fine art, it was highly esteemed for its supposedly objective documentary power. It was seized upon to supply "evidence" in support of whatever psychiatric theory was currently in vogue.

This exhibit showed four primary stages of the diagnostic use of photography. Works by Elza Farnham (1846) and Henri Dagonet (1876) illustrated theories of phrenology or physiognomy with portraits of various "types." Farnham, who was matron of the women's prison at Sing Sing, published a New York edition of M.B. Sampson's *Rationale of Crime*, using engravings based on Mathew Brady photographs. Noteworthy to the modern viewer are the not-so-subtly racist classifications, along with the indignation displayed at women whose sexuality violated current norms. Thus a woman described as a "half-breed Indian and Negro" is also said to have features indicating that she is "profligate," "abandoned," and "lost to all sense of decency and to every moral tie of humanity." Other women too have heads indicating that they are "depraved," "impulsive," "ardent," and "shameless."

This kind of simplistic reading off of personality traits from "observed" facial or phrenological features gave way, for the most part, in the Victorian period to a new mode of institutional psychiatry. As Elaine Showalter puts it in her 1987 book, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, "The triple cornerstones of Victorian psychiatric theory and practice were moral insanity, moral management, and moral architecture." The psychiatric observer continued to deliver moral judgements, but not quite in the spirit of the physiognomist or phrenologist—rather, with the attitude of humanistic sympathy and the aim of moral reform. A key figure in this new movement was Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond, whose photographs were also shown in Detering's exhibit. Diamond was much more cautious about defining insanity, but still assured about his ability to reach diagnoses by drawing comparisons to presumably "normal" individuals. He seemed to defer for detail in observation to the camera's "unerring accuracy."⁴ Detering emphasized—in part following Showalter—the irony in this position, since Diamond himself set up the very scenes and features he meant us to observe. Thus, for example, a young woman chosen to illustrate "Dementia" was exhibited with long tresses falling down her shoulders and a loose shawl draped over her hair, in a pose corresponding to that famous pre-Raphaelite icon of feminine madness, Ophelia—who, according to Showalter, obsessed the Victorians⁶: "The woman with her hair down indicated an offense against decorum, an improper sensuality" (p. 11).

The next two stages of diagnostic applications stem from two new and quite distinct contexts. Detering included Charles Darwin's 1872 book, *The Expression of the Emotions in Men and Animals*, along with enlarged versions of several of its pages. This was not a medical text, but nevertheless Darwin's theory of the commonalities in expressive signs among man and beast, sane and insane, raised doubts about the pursuit of photographic (or other) "evidence" of a "pure" expression of insanity and

its types. Darwin seems to have regarded facial expressions and images of them alike as natural signs: mind and face, soul and body, were one. He hesitatingly mingled together, as equally "real," photographs of the artificially enacted expressions of a famous King Lear, for instance, with the "natural" expressions of children and others (in one case, of a young woman showing her contempt for a rejected lover's letter). Many of the photographs in Darwin's book were produced by Oscar Rejlander, most famous for his ambitiously moralizing composite image, "Two Ways of Life."

Jean-Martin Charcot's 1877-80 three-volume study, the *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière*, aimed to give a description of hysteria, a mental disorder to which Charcot himself gave new prominence. This "disease" had been theorized since ancient times as a peculiarly female mental derangement somehow caused by the delicate female reproductive system (the name derives from the Greek word *hystera*, for womb). Charcot (an important teacher of Sigmund Freud) did medical rounds as a sort of showman. He hypnotized his (mostly female) patients and then got them to enact various hysterical postures under his direction. In part to defend himself against charges of fraud (Charcot stoutly maintained the objectivity of his vision of this disorder), Charcot set up a photographic laboratory at his hospital. Relying uncritically upon the "evidential" value of photography, Charcot used the representations of patients in various stages of hysterical attacks much as he used the actual hypnotically enacted attacks within his medical amphitheater: in neither case was there any recognition that the patient's powerlessness in relation to her doctor might underlie this public display. Showalter stresses the repressive system of rewards and punishments which affected the camera subject's willingness to pose. She also reports that Charcot had a favorite photographic subject, the teen-aged girl Augustine, who excelled at "experiencing" (and holding) various stages of hysteria before the camera. "During the period when she was repeatedly being photographed," Showalter notes, "she developed a curious hysterical symptom: she began to see everything in black and white" (p. 154). (Eventually Augustine escaped the hospital disguised as a man.)

I have surveyed a range of books illustrating photography's role in psychiatric diagnosis. But there was a second key clinical use of photography: in therapy. These two uses can coincide, of course. Diamond's patients, for example, were encouraged to conform to expected standards of appearance by being photographically displayed; supposedly a concern for neatness and cleanliness paved the way for a return to normalcy. A range of other therapeutic goals are documented here, some almost in passing—for example, in reports on and views of changing asylum architecture. One particular photographic tool, the magic lantern, soon came to play a key part in the moral treatment of insanity. Magic lantern shows were organized for patients of all types and ages as part of a larger movement to inspire and educate them. An innovator in this field was Dr. Thomas Kirkbride, the first physician-in-chief of the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia. He aimed to broaden his patients' experiences by taking them on magic lantern "journeys"—first to nearby cities and sites like Niagara Falls, later even to Europe (Liverpool, a strange tourist site, is mentioned). His hospital had what sounds like a Quaker goal of doing "charitable benefactions...acceptable to God." Photographs of the women's facility indicate a correlative concern with what Showalter calls "moral architecture," revealing the women's wing of the hospital to be a large,



Bloomingdale Asylum, ca. 1880 (courtesy New York Hospital—Cornell Medical Center)

handsomely situated, gabled brick house named "The Villa."

This concern with physical arrangement and zeal for moral education spilled over into more insidious aims—surveillance, control, and moral self-justification—which Detering did not particularly stress—but which his show nevertheless documented. A series of photographs from the Bloomingdale Asylum in New York, for example, presented what appears to be a country-club treatment center for women. Here the patients stroll with children, set out flower beds, play golf, or picnic on the lawn. A few bonneted nurses do lurk about, but these docile patients appear to enjoy themselves as if on vacation at some Adirondacks resort. The accompanying text explained what underlay all this patient docility, for it spoke of moral re-education by coerced labor. Although allegedly no one was compelled to work, inducements such as "lunch" or "trivial privileges" were offered "where evident benefit could accrue to the individual." Photographs documented the results, showing rooms with neatly made beds, embroidered tablecloths, potted ferns, and so on. Since he had found these photographs loose in a hospital file, Detering did not know their original purposes; presumably they served within some form of advertising campaign aimed at potential residents or their families. The Victorian interiors can be read now as evidence of a kind of prissiness and paternalistic control.

A news article from an Austin newspaper brings this exhibit and the issue of insidious control closer to home. Dated July 8, 1871, it details events during the Independence Day celebration at the Austin State Lunatic Asylum. Dignitaries from the town donated entertainment and even "favored the asylum with their presence." Fireworks "very much astonished and pleased the lunatics." The "evening ended with good music in the parlor by the crazy people." For reasons that would be interesting to explore—an effort at post-war solidarity?—solid citizens urged the lunatics to join in a display of patriotism as everyone sang "Hail Columbia."

I left this exhibit wondering about the experiences of people under psychiatric care during this time period, when doctors documented but did not listen; when to be mentally ill was to be either physiognomically predestined or the target for zealous moral reform; when mental illness itself was not clearly distinguished from crime, depravity, imbecility, or idiocy? (Not that these lines are now clearly drawn.) At best, attitudes were humanistic, a combination of pity and sympathy, with an emphasis on Christian commonalities and the improving potentials of good, hard labor.

Rich and informative as this exhibit was, there are perhaps other directions it could have taken. It might be interesting to compare related works

in which Brady and Rejlander depicted norms of sanity, celebrity and morality, or perhaps even other kinds of freakishness, as in Brady's *cartes de visites* of Barnum's circus troupe.⁸ Detering, quoting Showalter, mentions differential treatments accorded to female patients, but his exhibit placed little emphasis on issues of race and class. Some clues are present, but these differences mattered a great deal during the mid- to late nineteenth century. How were psychiatric treatments meted out to the poor in this country or in this state, for instance? Where were the mad black patients? None show up here after Farnham's 1846 engravings; yet census figures from the time record an unbelievable discrepancy in racial rates of madness (a fact put to clever misuse in arguments of the anti-abolitionists).⁹ Were mental hospitals racially segregated; were there black psychiatrists?

In the midst of FotoFest '88 this exhibition of nineteenth century psychiatric portraits made for frustrating viewing. That is, at a time when many of us were plotting out afternoons so as to blitz 10 or 12 galleries, this show merited an afternoon all to itself. It asked us to halt our consumerist approach to the cornucopia of images on the walls of the city, so as to slow down, read, and think—about photography in books and newspapers, in science and medicine. Some might argue that an exhibition in this context—in the heart of our ultra-modern medical complex—is inherently conservative; that assumptions are being made about the value of psychiatry as a discipline; that these documents are mere curiosities which serve to validate a smug modernist view of orderly scientific advance. My reaction was different. To be sure, Detering did not take on the contemporary psychiatric establishment—he spoke of the "perplexing mysteries of mental illness," phraseology itself stemming from the psychiatric understanding of insanity as *disease*. Yet it struck me that the books and articles on display actually revealed a kind of failure of progress, a lack of any true history. Instead, there were movements and trends, enthusiasms, ideologies, false starts and stops, humanisms, behaviorisms, reductionisms, "scientisms..." on and on. I do not know whether any of those white-jacketed future M.D.'s I saw bustling about were psychiatric interns, or whether they stopped to look at the exhibit; nor do I feel sure that they would have viewed it as I did. In an era when the psychiatric photograph has given way to new forms of representation—the MRI, the EEG, the CATscan, and the videotape—and when moral reform has been replaced by psychotropic control, insanity remains territorialized within the medical domain.

Perhaps an awareness of psychiatric history, such as it is, made vivid through the medium of the illustrated book page will give pause to a few of

those future heirs to this problematic tradition.

FOOTNOTES

1 Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Random House 1965; Vintage Books 1973), translated from the French by Richard Howard.

2 Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39, Winter 1986, pp. 3-64. Among other things, Sekula traces the influence of Lavater's new science, physiognomy, within a proliferating system of surveillance and control over appearances and behavior.

3 This point was made in a brochure, "Psychiatry and Photography in the Nineteenth Century," which accompanied the exhibit (republished version of an article originally published in the newsletter of the Houston Psychiatric Association, *Upstream*, January/February 1988).

4 Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (New York, Penguin, 1987), p. 45.

5 See Herman Detering, "Psychiatry and Photography in the Nineteenth Century," *Diamond* spoke before the Royal Society in England in 1856.

6 See Showalter, pp. 10-17 and 90-92; characteristically, Ophelia was shown with disarrayed hair bedecked with garlands of flowers (rather than with the expected water/drowning imagery).

7 According to Showalter, some few but extraordinary novels from this period (in England) do record something of the "insider's" position; see Showalter Chapter 5, "Nervous Women: Sex Roles and Sick Roles."

8 See Sekula on Brady: "It is striking that the pictorial labor behind Farnham's criminal sample was that of Brady, who devoted virtually his entire ante-bellum career to the construction of a massive honorific archive of photographs of 'illustrations,' celebrated, and would-be celebrated American figures," p. 14. 9 Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), chapter 5, "On the Nexus of Blackness and Madness." According to what Gilman terms the "faulty" statistics of the 1840 national census, "free blacks had an incidence of mental illness eleven times greater than slaves and six times higher than the white population (p. 137)." Gilman also reports that, in part under the influence of eugenics, American social workers continued to find and "explain" such racial discrepancies in rates of mental illness at least up until the turn of the century (p. 140).

Cynthia Freeland is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Houston. She wrote on *Lenny Shavelson's portraits of 'ex-mental patients'* in *SPOT*, Spring 1988.



Jean Mohr, Peasant Women in Irbid, 1950. From *After the Last Sky*.

CONFISCATING MEANING

By Paul Hester

After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives

By Edward W. Said, with photographs by Jean Mohr
Pantheon Books, New York, 1986
Paperback, 174 pages, 120 photographs \$14.95

Stateless, dispossessed, de-centered, we are frequently unable either to speak the "truth" of our experience or to make it heard. We do not usually control the images that represent us; we have been distorted by pressures and powers that have been too much for us. (Said, Preface, p. 6)

What has happened to the people who lived on the land that was given to the Jews in 1948? Is it adequate just to dismiss them as "terrorists" or "refugees"? What forces shape the representation of Palestinians in the United States media? What are the effects of this process of marginalization upon these people, upon our perceptions of them, and upon United States policies toward Israel and the Arab countries?

Where should we go after the last frontiers, where should the birds fly after the last sky? —Mahmoud Darwish



Jean Mohr, Gaza 1979. Refugee Camp. A boy of unknown age. From *After the Last Sky*.

After the Last Sky is a collaboration between a Palestinian writer and a Swiss photographer. It began in 1983 with a United Nations International Conference on the Question of Palestine. Jean Mohr's photographs were hung in the entrance hall to the conference; no text beyond the name of the country or place was allowed by the officials. No explanations. In response to this official silence, Mohr and Said decided to work together to produce this book. Said, an English professor at Columbia University, functions as an eloquent spokesman. Himself an exile—though one we would hardly think to call a "refugee"—Said narrates his personal experiences and those of friends and family, as part of an effort to tell a larger story with more general implications. He insists that while no Palestinian can pretend to speak for all, "...there is no doubt that we do in fact form a community (p. 5)."

It is not really a book of photographs. The photographs function as points of departure enabling Said to remember, interpret, instruct, and remind. The book is constructed as a series of meditations, each photograph serving as a jumping off point or an exclamation mark. It is fragmentary and dispersed; it is "a personal rendering of the Palestinians as a dispersed national community (p. 6)."

The difference between the new generation of Palestinians and that of 1948 is striking. Our parents bore on their faces the marks of disaster uncomprehended. Suddenly their past had been interrupted, their society obliterated, their existence radically impoverished. Refugees, all of them. Our children know no such past...Everything around them seems expendable, impermanent, unstable...

Photographers accustomed to looking at photographs accompanied by tidy paragraphs extolling the marvels of technique or the erudite ramblings of arcane critics will find these personal reflections interwoven with unsettling historical references to be a shock. This is not an intellectual construct of some "alienated other," but a deeply felt conviction spoken from the position of ultimate outsider. The passion behind this text is all the more vivid given our awareness that in many ways Said would seem to be an insider—distinguished literary critic, tenured professor at an Ivy League University, official delegate to a U.N. Conference.

I am struck by the intensity of Said's words and the strength of his argument. It is a compelling story, made more immediate by recent news of the assassination of a PLO leader at his home in Tunisia, of conflicts over who shot an Israeli girl on the West Bank, of a devastating car bomb in Lebanon. Said's writing is underscored by the current headlines, and is grounded in a profound understanding of how

photographs have meaning. It is a startling pleasure to follow his reading of individual images. For example, on one of Mohr's photographs from the 50's of a single file of peasant women:

...In themselves these photographs are silent; they seem saturated with a kind of inert being that outweighs anything they express; consequently they invite the embroidery of explanatory words. What's more, in our heads legends arise unbidden which further obscure the photographs ... "Shepherds in the field," says one such tag, and you could add, "tending their flocks, much as the Bible says they did." Or, the two photographs of women evoke phrases like "the timeles East," and "the miserable lot of women in Islam." Or, finally, you could remember something about the importance to "such people" of UNRWA, or the PLO—the one an agency for supplementing the impoverished life of anonymous Palestinians with the political gift of refugee status, the other a political organization giving identity and direction to "the Palestinian people." But these accumulated interpretations add up to a frighteningly direct correlative of what the photographs depict: alienated labor, as Marx called it, work done by people who have little control of either the product of their labor or their own laboring capacity. After such a recognition, whatever bit of exotic romance that might attach to these photographs is promptly blown away. (pp. 92-3)

It takes a remarkable effort—one perhaps only begun here—to compress forty years of memories into each photograph so that we might begin to see in a new way, in opposition to what we have been officially told to see. This book is a reclaiming of the Other's right to his/her own history. It is an outline both of the need to remember and of the form for the memories. It is a direct challenge to "official memories":

A second incontrovertible fact is that the alliance between Zionism and the United States ultimately caused our dispossession, and prolongs it to this day...And it has always struck me as true that the affinity between Zionist and American campaigns to devastate native inhabitants of a land decreed to be empty...was profound and compelling...It is as if Palestine had been a nondescript locale in the process of being evacuated by faceless natives, until Americans thought better of it and filled it with deserving Zionists. (p. 133)

Although Said denies that his book constitutes a "political essay," (p. 6), his book has an agenda, and it uses photographs effectively in support of that agenda. Yet it displays and foregrounds a concern with precisely this process, in Said's emphasis on the ambiguity of the photographic "document" and on the subjectivity of his own readings, grounded as they are within his experiences. This is a book from one particular Other's point of view. It is a collection of unofficial images of people who have been denied their very existence. (To the Israelis, whose incomparable military and political power dominates us, we are at the periphery, the image that will not go away. Every assertion of our nonexistence, every attempt to spirit us away, every new effort to prove that we were never really there, simply raises the question of why so much denial of, and such energy expended on, what was not there.) I am struck by the number of words that are required to extract these images from the territory of nonexistence and to give them some weight in order to hold their own against such force.

Paul Hester makes his living as a commercial photographer in Houston.

LETTERS

(continued from page 3)

or an honorable mention. The year before, nine awards went out—to men. The year before that, eight—all to men. And the year before that, five men and one woman received awards. Policy is currently being re-evaluated at all levels of decision making, NEA included. Across the board—in galleries, in the workplace, no matter the venue or circumstance: the excuses aren't good enough. The change stands. One wonders when the challenge will be met beyond tokenism and excuses.

April Rapier

Reply by Richard Misrach

April 29, 1988

Dear Ms. Rapier,

In response to Ms. Appelhof's reply to your recent editorial, I would like to say that it was not until after I dropped out of the project that Mr. Parks was added. And, of course, a woman was never added, which is simply indefensible. (According to figures from the NEA, the field of fine art photographers is divided into a ratio of approximately 40% women to 60% men.)

I would appreciate it if my letter of withdrawal from the Birmingham project would be reproduced unedited, and in full. It clearly and properly represents my position.

Thank you.

Sincerely, Richard Misrach

Misrach's Original Letter of Resignation from the Birmingham Project

October 16, 1988

Dear Ms. Nunnally, *Birmingham News*,

This letter is a follow-up to our phone conversations and correspondence concerning the Birmingham News Centennial Photography Commission, and the clear inequity of the all white male composition of that commission. After lengthy discussions over the last several weeks with you and curators of the Birmingham Museum, and given the concern expressed by everyone, I had assumed that the lack of representation of both women and non-caucasian participants would be corrected. I am therefore saddened and stunned to learn of your recent decision to forego any change in the commission's makeup.

You did mention concerns of budget, time limitations as well as your own overextended personal schedule. As I told you, a representative of a major corporation expressed interest in supporting the project. I also contacted a couple of photographers to find out if they could meet the project's timetable. They could. A little follow up may have quickly rectified the problem at hand. However, you chose not to do so.

You've argued that you've looked at work by women and non-caucasians in your initial search, and in fact were ready to offer the commission to Linda Connor, who was unable to accept. Another woman briefly considered was Mary Ellen Mark whose work was deemed "too political." However, Bruce Davidson and Robert Frank, known for their socio-political work, were selected. Finally, Olivia Parker was rejected because the style of her work was inappropriate to the documentary nature of the project. But is Duane Michals' "style" any better suited? It appears that different criteria were applied to men and women. Moreover, given the scope

and breadth of this project, if the women and non-caucasians originally considered did not fulfill the requirements for whatever reason, wouldn't an extended search have been warranted? What about the brilliant work of Tina Barney, Marilyn Bridges, Judy Dater, Roy DeCarava, Nan Goldin, Connie Hatch, Julio Mitchell, Ruth Morgan, Barbara Norfleet, Meridel Rubinstein, Sebastiao Salgado, JoAnne Walters and Willie Williams, to name a few? Any of these photographers could have made significant contributions to an enterprise such as this.

I am sympathetic to the tremendous demands the organization of such a project entails. I know that you have already had far more work and complications than you had ever anticipated. But this project is of national significance. It will serve as a model for future commissions. And it will stand to represent not only the photographers, the Birmingham Museum and the *Birmingham News*, but the city of Birmingham itself. Despite everyone's good intentions, this project reflects institutional inequity of the most serious nature. Birmingham, trying to shed its stigma of being "the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States," (Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from the Birmingham Jail, 1963), now may come to be stigmatized for its support of inequities based on sex as well as race.

This is the most financially generous commission (\$10,000) I have ever been offered, and I feel honored to have been included in the company of such great photographers. Most importantly I find the project to be meaningful and challenging. It is thus with sadness and great regret that I must refuse this commission. In good conscience I simply cannot support the project's intrinsic racial and sexual bias. I still hope that the monies thus saved will be applied towards the addition of at least one woman and one non-caucasian to the project. There is still time to rectify this grave inequity that would ultimately overshadow the great hopes of the project. The photographers, the museum, the newspaper, and the city of Birmingham will be better served by a commission that represents America's minorities. I urge you, one last time, to please consider the significance, scope and goals of this commission.

Sincerely, Richard Misrach

cc: Ruth Appelhof (Curator of Painting, Sculpture, and Graphic Arts)
William Christenberry (Commissioned Photographer)
Bruce Davidson (Commissioned Photographer)
Robert Frank (Commissioned Photographer)
Margeurite Gray (Project Coordinator—Birmingham Museum)
Duane Michals (Commissioned Photographer)
William Spencer (Chairman of Museum Board)
Phillip Trager (Commissioned Photographer)

ON MAPPLETHORPE

April 24, 1988

Dear Folks,

I was recently in Houston for the Houston FotoFest, and want to commend you on a brilliant, thorough, honest *SPOT* journal and review of photography. It's first-rate, and I just respect the integrity and insight you bring to the trade, and to the art.

Enclosed is a check in the amount of \$12.00 to begin my yearly subscription. I can tell you the Spring '88 edition was so refreshing, especially to read the review of Mapplethorpe's work. I've always felt that way about his opportunism and exploitation of black people, but it's not a widespread opinion here in the

Northeast, where he is treated a bit with white kid gloves like some kind of patron saint of avant-garde photography with black nudes. I can tell you that in meeting Earle Huddall, and seeing his work and Morris Richardson's work at the Black Heritage Gallery during FotoFest, that we have a long way to go to support black photographers and their portrayal of black people humanely, and to create a market for this excellent but unheralded work. Racism works like that—to keep the black artists, with their black subject matter, invisible, while making rich the likes of a white Mapplethorpe who exploits his racism and gets supported by the white financial empires of institutions, museums, and individuals.

Thanks again for your good work. I look forward to *SPOT*.

Sincerely,
Charles J. Kreiner
Haddam, Connecticut

ON SEKULA ON HEINECKEN

April 18, 1988

To the Editor:

In a letter to *SPOT* (Spring, 1988), Allan Sekula places a heavy guilt load on Robert Heinecken, in effect charging the artist with implicit racism, sexism, and a sympathy with the concerns of the right. Very serious accusations. Even worse, Heinecken stands accused of not having read a Sekula article (on some 19th century pseudoscientists) whose systems are claimed—entirely without evidence—to have poisoned his art long distance.

So now, artists are required to study the writing of an historian in order for them to pass muster for doctrinal purity! Sekula has gotten it all backward: critics and historians are obliged to study the work of artists in order to refresh themselves with what is meant by ideological impurity. Heinecken's *A Case Study in Finding an Appropriate TV Newswoman* is literally obscurantist, since it mechanically superimposes and therefore scrambles the faces of familiar television performers. It's a kind of visual neologism, introducing an unpleasant drift into the bland stereotypes of media control. In a completely blinded way, Sekula insists that this synthesis works only to the disadvantage of women and racial minorities, as if the depictions of the white men were not also sifted into Heinecken's mix. Sekula ignores the fact that it's the transmission that is denatured in the ensuing mess, and not human beings.

And then, by a strange turn, Sekula defends the TV media against Heinecken, whom he nevertheless accuses of affirming "normative constraints"—of all things! Again, Sekula has gotten things in reverse: It is not Heinecken who is cynical, it's the media managers. Heinecken's work is cheeky. But virtue hounds and thought police don't take kindly to that attitude. They can disparage the abominable American government, but they actually get more fun from declaring their moral superiority to artists.

An example? Sekula admits that one shouldn't blame an artist for the allegedly racist admission policies of the institution where he teaches, but he certainly doesn't withdraw this underhanded charge. Such behavior doesn't represent fair comment or useful criticism; it exemplifies a mind that goes out of its way to satisfy a need to punish an inappropriate victim.

Max Kozloff
Los Angeles

NEWS

HCP GETS NEW DIRECTOR

The new Executive Director of the Houston Center for Photography is Jean Caslin, a long-time arts administrator, curator, teacher, writer, and editor. Ms. Caslin has been for the last 8-1/2 years the Assistant Director of Boston's highly successful Photographic Resource Center.



Jean Caslin (photo by Muffy McLanahan)

While working at the PRC, Ms. Caslin also served as editor of the *Polaroid Newsletter for Photographic Education* as well as co-editor of the PRC's journal, *Views*. As part of her duties at the PRC, she was the Grants Administrator for the Artists' Support Programs. For three years, she administered the Reva and David Logan Grants in Support of New Writing on Photography, a prestigious national grant program that awards \$10,000 annually. She currently administers the Leopold Godowsky, Jr. Color Photography Awards, an international program supported by the PRC's endowment, which will award \$5,000 this fall.

"We are extremely fortunate to have brought Jean Caslin to the Houston Center for Photography," says Dave Crossley, president of the HCP. "Her broad range of experience and her freshness and energy are exactly right for the HCP now. We have established the Center as an important part of the photographic community and we expect Jean to guide us to continued growth in all the areas we enumerated when the Center was born seven years ago. We look forward to widely increased services for photographers, more teaching for our audience, and a much increased role as an international photographic center in keeping with Houston's position as the home of FotoFest. We expect FotoFest to

change the nature of American photography, and we plan to be a central part of the new international view. Between Anne Tucker at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and Fred Baldwin at FotoFest, Houston is going to be the most exciting photographic city on earth and we're very proud to add Jean Caslin's name to that excitement."

Ms. Caslin will begin her official duties at the HCP in September, and is currently serving in a consulting role.

BOOKS RECEIVED

The following are a few of the new books recently received and now available for loan to HCP members from our library:

Petr Boev, *Art Photography in Bulgaria* (text in Bulgarian; Sophia, 1983).

William Clift, *Certain Places: Photographs by William Clift* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: William Clift Editions, 1987).

Carolyn Coman and Judy Dater, *Body & Soul: Ten American Women* (Boston: Hill & Company, 1988).

Roger Fenton, with an Essay by Richard Pare (Aperture Masters of Photography, Volume Four; New York: Aperture Foundation, 1981 and 1987).

Neil Folberg, *In a Desert Land: Photographs of Israel, Egypt and Jordan by Neil Folberg* (New York: Cross River Press, Ltd., 1987).

Peter Mathiessen, *Men's Lives: The Surfer and Baymen of the South Fork* (New York: The Rock Foundation, 1986; 2-volume cloth-bound limited edition).

Tony Navarra, *Jim Gary: His Life and Art* (HFN, 1987).

Cervin Robinson and Joel Herschman, *Architecture Transformed: A History of the Photography of Buildings from 1839 to the Present* (New York, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The Architectural League of New York and the MIT Press, 1987).

Alfred Seiland, *East Coast—West Coast* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1986).

CALENDAR

EXHIBITIONS

JUNE

Houston Center for Photography through June 26, *The Street: Photographs by Bruce Gilden*, Wednesday-Friday 11-5, Saturday-Sunday 12-5, 1441 W. Alabama, Houston; 529-4755.

Transco West Gallery June 2-30, *Bayou City*, platinum palladium prints of Houston by E.F. Kitchen, Monday-Friday 8-5, Saturday, 9-1, 2800 Post Oak Blvd.; 439-4400.

JULY

Houston Center for Photography July 1 through July 31, *San Francisco Eagle: Gay Bar in Time of Transition*, photographs by Doug Ischar; also, *1987 HCP Fellowship Winners' Exhibition*, photographs by Jill Goodman, Elizabeth M. Grant, and Carol Vuchetich, Wednesday-Friday 11-5, Saturday-Sunday 12-5, 1441 W. Alabama; 529-4755.

AUGUST

None scheduled.

EXHIBITIONS ELSEWHERE IN TEXAS

JUNE

Austin: Laguna Gloria Art Museum through June 26, *New American Talent*, 3809 W. 35th St., Tuesday through Saturday 10-5, Sunday 1-5. (512)458-8191.

Dallas/Ft. Worth: Afterimage June 25 through September 3, dye transfer landscapes by John Wawrzonek, 2800 Routh St., Suite 250, Dallas, Monday-Saturday 10-5:30. (214)871-9140.

JULY

Dallas/Ft. Worth: Amon Carter Museum July 22, 1988 through February 5, 1989, *Photographs from the Permanent Collection*, 3501 Camp Bowie Blvd., Fort Worth, Tuesday-Saturday 10-5, Sunday 1-5. (817)738-1933.

Afterimage through September 3, dye transfer landscapes by John Wawrzonek, 2800 Routh St., Suite 250, Dallas, Monday-Saturday 10-5:30. (214)871-9140.

AUGUST

Dallas/Ft. Worth: Amon Carter Museum July 22, 1988 through February 5, 1989, *Photographs from the Permanent Collection*, 3501 Camp Bowie Blvd., Fort Worth, Tuesday-Saturday 10-5, Sunday 1-5. (817)738-1933.

Afterimage through September 3, dye transfer landscapes by John Wawrzonek, 2800 Routh St., Suite 250, Dallas, Monday-Saturday 10-5:30. (214)871-9140.

WORKSHOPS

Movieshop: Film Production Workshop, Tuesdays and Thursdays from June 7 through June 30, 7-10pm; rehearsals and location shooting July 5-24. Tuition: \$400. Southwest Alternate Media Project, 1519 W. Main, Houston, 522-8592. **Movieshop: Production Management/Assistant Directing Workshop**, June 14 through June 30; production management will then begin on a Movieshop production and run through location shooting to July 24. Tuition: \$400. Southwest Alternate Media Project, 1519 W. Main, Houston, 522-8592. **The Cibachrome Fine Print**, June 5, 1988, Southwest Photographic Workshops, Houston. Tuition: \$95 (includes lunch). For further information, contact Jay Forrest, 496-2905.

CLUBS

ASMP (American Society of Magazine Photographers) meets the second Monday of each month at the Graphic Arts Conference Center, 1324 Clay. Social Hour starts at 6:30pm; meeting is at 7:30pm. For information, contact Larry Gatz at 666-5203.

Brazoria County Camera Club meets at 7:30pm on the first Tuesday of each month at the Arlington Bank of Commerce. Contact Don Benton, (409)265-4569.

The Houston Camera Club meets at 7:30pm on the second and third Tuesdays of each month at the Baylor College of Medicine, DeBakey Bldg., Room M-112. Contact Glenn Stevens, 520-5013.

The Houston Photochrome Club meets at 7:30pm on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at St. Michael's Church, 1801 Sage. Contact Joe Sandler at 774-1035.

CLARIFICATION: In *SPOT*, Spring 1988, Jenny Lenore Rosenbaum's article, "Waveforms: Avant-Garde Video from Japan" described a two-part program of Japanese videos recently shown in San Francisco as *Waveforms, Parts I and II*. The article was illustrated by two photographs from *New Video: Japan*, curated by Barbara London of New York's Museum of Modern Art, which was shown as Part I of *Waveforms*. This program will not be screened at HCP. Most of Rosenbaum's article focused on Part II of *Waveforms*. This program of videos, entitled *Waveforms: VideoJapan* and curated by Beau Takahara and Carol Loeffler, will be screened at HCP on June 6 and June 13, 1988. *SPOT* regrets any confusion or misrepresentation inadvertently caused by its use of illustrations.

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Geoff Winningham *First Ward and Downtown Houston*, 1986 Type C Color Print, 16" x 20"

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1441 West Alabama

Houston, Texas 77006

713-529-4755

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Wendy Watriss *The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, 1982 Silver Gelatin Print, 11" x 14"