LANDSCAPE AT RISK

Landscape vs. Environment: or, thirteen ways of coping with Nature
by Ed Hill & Suzanne Bloom

4 Years Against an Urban Environment by Kirk Condyles

On John Pfahl's Poisonous Beauty by Hans Staartjes

Sharon Stewart's Toxic Tour of Texas — Profile by Julie Lee

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Sheila McCutchen, Felted shelter directions near Guelph, Utah, 1984

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The Man in the Street

November 7, 1989

The Fall 1989 issue of SPOT carried a review by Wendy Stetha of my book, The Man in the Street, recently published by P.J. Durkin. I wish to thank Ms. Stetha for so many of the positive comments she expressed toward my image making and my skills.

I do feel that both readers and reviewers should understand that in the reality of today's publishing world (maybe this is how at always was) the photographer/author has little to do with how the book is laid out, where it is printed, etc., etc. Yes, the editor usually does talk to you and make you feel that you are included in the design process, and you do get to see some steps along the way, BUT the final decision is on the hands of the publisher, and they are concerned with questions of money, production costs, pigeon- pigeon- pigeoning a reviewer's interest (so they will buy one of the 10,000 books they are paying you for), along with design standards. To me it was crucial to have done wonderfully strong, coounter and clean prints to find in all final prints. They then get laid out by the art department and then sent on to Spain--where someone else is in charge of what happens next. I don't think the art director from New York even gets to go there and watch the presses. I did volunteer to go to Spain to "help" and they said, "The last thing any- anyone wants is the photographer driving everyone crazy." So, ultimately it is out of your control. Since I am a rather compulsive person about my work, this was hard for me. But in the real world we cannot have total control and have exposure too! And to agree with Ms. Stetha, I have ALWAYS hated double-page spreads of photographs, they look like front mechanical on the art director's table, but not in a book with a spine.

For now, I hope that the book I am currently working on, "Doubleblad," called Arinta and their Gardens, will be more harmonious union between my vision and the publisher?

Sincerely,
Ann Chezmatz
Rocksole Centre, N.Y.

Seasons of Light
September 19, 1989

Dear Editor:

I am gratified to see that my review of Peter Bowles' Seasons of Light has sparked so much fiery commentary. As a critic, I have only one point of view, one spotlight, so to speak, with which to attempt to illuminate an entire manuscript. And as a book reviewer, I am responsible for considering the work as a whole, including what some might consider unnecessary appendages. Of course if I hadn't found Bowles' work beautiful, as I said in the review, I wouldn't have bothered writing about it. And if I hadn't thought him a good enough artist and writer to take the heat, I wouldn't have evaluated the work by considering it in relation to the superfluous. But as a responsible critic and reviewer, I believe that my writing is being tak- en as a platform for further enlightenment rather than as received wisdom.

Elizabeth McBride
Houston
RUDY BURKHARDT  PHOTOGRAPHS

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LANDSCAPE VS ENVIRONMENT;
or, thirteen ways of coping with Nature

By Ed Hil and Suzanne Bloom

1. A group of distinguished Greek philosophers has announced the discovery of the fifth element, Porousia, or "Trush," which will be added to the traditional four elements of Nature: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. In his press statement the sage's disciple, Epaphrodisus, said, "What led us to the discovery were the many cubic blocks of an ancient plaque made of several major materials, and the chipped corners of a TV console found recently in the woods outside of Athens." He also added that it was the result of exhaustive research attempting the possibility that this new element might be the First Principle of our post-industrial age.

2. The environment is now a hot topic. It probably has never before received more media attention-especially since the Exxon debacle in Alaska. Over the past three months, for example, several major magazines have published cover stories on pollution ("Dirty Air," U.S. News of World Report, June 12, 1989; "Cleaning Up Our Mess," Newsweek, July 24, 1989), on rain forests ("Teaching the Amazon," Time, September 18, 1989), on the destruction of species ("The Ivory Trade," Time, October 16, 1989), and on the whole environment ("Managing Planet Earth," Scientific American, September, 1989). The electronic media have been very much in the picture as well. Perhaps the most remarkable new item on network schedules is ABC's "American Agenda," which has allocated four minutes and thirty seconds for socially and environmentally relevant issues Monday through Thursday evenings on Nightly News with Peter Jennings. Even affiliate stations have begun to produce their own "special reports" that deal with problems specific to their regions, such as serious ozone pollution along the petrochemical Gulf Coast.

3. All of this attention focused on the environment. It is warranted or might be merely alarmism journalism. For us the latter is a more serious question. More to the point, "Has it come too late?" The natural environment exists under evidence of severe stress, or, to phrase it differently: the health of the entire planet appears to be in absolute danger. To add to what we can see for ourselves, various watchdog organizations inform and warn us daily about deteriorating conditions in the atmosphere, water, and forests. Virtually every habitant on earth is threatened to some degree. The threat is of many kinds, but the relevant fact is that we humans are the principal agents of influence and effect on the natural world. We are simultaneously world-builders and extinguishing angels.

4. So far the visual arts have found only limited and largely problematic means of expressing ecological concern. Yes, problematic—the environment is too complex. Fine, because the materials we use as artists are so often damaging if not to the earth as at some stage in their manufacture or as they are used in the production of artworks and second, because our artistic statements tend to operate in the realm of aesthetic ambiguity where mixed messages are generated, i.e., what is received by a viewer may not at all reflect our intentions. These two problematic conditions are generally true but were especially poignant when the artwork is attempting to address environmental issues.

The question of hazardous materials (to both worker and environment) has not been ignored in the past two decades, but needs to be treated more extensively—given the wide range of materials used—and researched in greater depth so as to trace more fully the actual chain of environmental effects. Photography certainly must bear its share of responsibility for contaminating the biosphere. The great yellow giant, Kodak, has been charged with pollution through seepage and release of methanol chloride into the soil and air of the environment surrounding its manufacturing facility in the densely populated area of Rochester. Over the course of history the gods have committed their own acts of pollution, so why should we expect better from corporate titans? Besides, we can't rage against large-scale polluters without examining our own failed methods of practices or our cash support for these fouling industries.

5. There is a problem in solving environmental awareness with the genre of landscape; at the heart of this difficulty we find what might be termed the "aesthetic fallacy." Because of his commitment to conservation, Ansel Adams is paradigmatic in this regard: his career work—informied by a 19th century artistic tradition and modulated by a conservative modernism—promotes the simple but noble idea that the grandeur and beauty of the landscape can be conveyed by a grand and beautiful photograph, that the value of nature can be conveyed through the rich, controlled display of tonal values in black and white photographs. The silent effect of this ideology, however, is that Adams's mastery of the landscape photograph transmutes into man's mastery (domination) over the natural world. That the aesthetic perfection of a photograph (i.e., of the artist's vision) can intrude in our deeper reverence for its object (nature) is a notion hard to master. Yet photographers in the last twenty years not only have tired of Adams's aesthetic, they have come to believe that it just plain isn't an effective strategy with which to raise environmental awareness. Images of perfect and beautiful landscapes too easily become our preferred version of the world, fostering an illusion of well-being. In fact, they become aesthetic signs that seduce our vision, sublimating for and binding us to the divided truth: nature is in a state of biological, chemical, and ecosystemic disrepair.

Only one photographer in HCP's major fall exhibition, The Landscape at Risk (curated by Jeff Carlson and Elizabeth Caud, supported by funding from the Weyerhaeuser Company) took up this mid-naturalist approach. In Mary Peck's panoramic scenes of the Everglades all the advantages accrue to the photo-as-object and not to the photo-as-intentional message. The alternative strategy (which the majority of photographers in the exhibition followed) is to document the wounds and scars, the visible signs of damaged and disregarded nature. To put forward the venue of the pristine landscape would appear to be the logical choice, to present, contra-Adams, visual evidence that the "naturalized" landscape is in jeopardy. The aesthetic fallacy, however, is terribly resilient. It conceals itself in the same complex bed where lies the false belief that photographs speak for themselves, only in this case it is the aesthetically pleasing or

Dotted Highlands, Oil spill on rocks, Alaska, 1989 (original in color)
The word "landscape" speaks to culture not. Or, when it does, it speaks to nature about form (topography). Basically it refers to a classic genre or motif of art which invariably carries considerable aesthetic baggage.

"Environment" is a word with an entirely different life. To begin with it is deeply invested in the transitive verb, en, en, en (in) = within (circle) = to encircle, turn around, or surround. The environment is our living envelope. It "concerns" the conditions and forces that influence, indeed, ultimately determine the form and survival of the biosphere. "Landscape" is about the construction and control of pictorial space, about domesticating nature and giving it form planning to the eye, and mind, whereas, "environment" is about the horizon, the fixed point of view and the delineation of rational space.

In light of this, the title Landscape at Risk reveals a second meaning — the risk or threat of displacement. But our current concern itself represents to the autonomous domain of art. Landscape and environment, two expressions so often used interchangeably, at bottom, stand for conflicting interests. This fact seems to have gone grossly unnoticed by Alphonse de Lima Greene, curator of The New American Landscape shown during the same time period at the Glascott School of Art.

Drawn from the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, this exhibition was American, but they were decidedly not conceptually new. (The "new" American landscape is one long line of activism — contaminated, deforested, and exploited.) The concept of this thematic exhibition by all appearances is a departure from the aging metaphysics of modernism which uses Nature to "mediate" the creative activity of art, transfiguring it to the artist all of Nature's power and authority. It is also an art representative, alludes to, or derives from natural forms does not and in itself signify an ecological consciousness bourn on the wings of those forms. For that to be the case, the configuration of signs people make in some manner transgress, invert, or disrupt the conventional pictorial language of "landscape," and in a way that devalues the merely formal. The one work included in The New American Landscape that was visually and ecologically environmentalist was Neil Jenney's "Threat & Sanctuary.

The principal elements of the painting are a determined body of water, a small empty lifeboat, and the terrors of an oceanic journey. Jenney manipulates meaning through a double reading of title and picture which hinges on what we designate as threat and what we signify. From a man-centered view we identify the lifeboat as a place of relative safety from the dangers lurking in the deep, dark waters of the sea. On the other hand, Nature is the sanctity being threatened by the intentionally controlled technology represented by the inflatable lifeboat as technological artifact (ad infinitum oil off?). We recognize for the present threats to the (usual) sanctuary, Nature; and, in it, it is too late and rescue her from destruction — if that possibility is yet open to us. Greene grasped the fact that irony is at work here but she missed the inverted message. Her wall text described the painting as "an abdulactic melodrama." Indeed... that all to Greene's credit.

The fire in the water, the air in the earth.

The water in the air, and the earth in the sea.

(—Antoni Tàrrega)

The Trash.

The current, then, is a tactic of the environmental, and irony is one device of intervention for the artist. Text is another. In The Landscape at Risk two photographers combined text instrumentally with their images. Defile Hennecy's color photographs are thematically contiguous images that occur abruptly where the thin, incidental lines of various individual lives intersected the broad black path of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. The texts are not supplemented to the photographs, but, instead, voices that amplify a close encounter with a great American tragedy. In the most restrained manner Hennecy encourages us to consider the deadly outcome of permitting petro-corporations to colonize the wilderness and turn waterways into traffic lanes of exploitation.

Deborah Feig's eco-archaeological project, "How the West was Won: Caution — Do Not Dig," used the implements of history (textual and visual documentation) to exhumed the irrefutable truth from a nagging, overgrown thicket outside Chicago. The West has won (over Nature) through an aggressive assault on Nature's secrets. Feig's choice of site, the abandoned location of the first nuclear reactor, is both emblematic and symptomatic of a crucial moment in this long standing Western policy of might over the rights of Nature.

The most familiar coupling of text and image occurs, of course, in advertising. We are all well aware of the invocation of Nature as a veritable tradition that has proven to work for advertisers: the landscape as natural setting for product. But now there is a new end of major corporations or corporate groups that are buying up public landscape in "environment" in an effort to convey the values that overprint and print electronic media of their ecological consciousness — at, at the very least, their abiding concern for all God's creatures. It is not an acquired taste; one need only see these ads with extreme cynicism.

The recent issue of Scientific American (referred to below, section 2) provided an ideal occasion to examine the public of their corporation's right-mindedness on environmental issues. One odd occasion because the magazine created a tone somewhat unresponsive to its advertising by tiding this special issue, "Managing Planet Earth." Every plant manager on earth can feel at home with that phrase. One example will do. The American Forest Council, an association of fifteen "forest products companies," asked rhetorically in their two-page spread: "Are America's Forests Out of the Woods?" The photograph above the text provided the answer without needing to bother with the other fourteen lines of small type. Not even does the cloud forest they look healthy and unscarred, it appears to be rich in species and completely unlike the hybrid monoculture forests that are managed by these producers of lumber and paper products. Everything is under control. There will be no disruption in the production and distribution of these essential materials. And Mother Nature is doing just fine, thank you.

Skeet McAulney's contribution to Landscape at Risk provided a more complex and troubling vision of the inevitable co-mingling of man-Nature Construct. The works exhibited were selections from his extensive photo-photographic book project, Sign Language: Contemporary Southwest Native America (Aperture, 1986). In the immense spaces of Navahoid, bitter, ironic signs of modernity have cropped up — a gas pipeline pumping, playing field scores board, and posted directions to a fallout shelter stand out of killer near the shadow of the red "Hole in the Ground" (Tenebrosa Painted Rock). That while Whines may think American techo-culture now squats where earthmen began to use it, Navajo medicine-people Mike Mitchell sees no contradiction. His "innocent" interpretive responses to some of McAulney's photographs serve as a strong reminder that photography is strictly constructed by the photographer and re-contextualized by the viewer. In order to resolve the conflict between Navajo economic progress (western style) and ceremonial tradition, Mitchell notes a contiguous sacred link between Mother Earth, which "was made in harmony with living things," and Earthly "Five Ignored People" who must somehow be able to make a living." Whatever "liveliness" comes from earth's surface, and whatever is taken from inside her body was put there by the Holy People for the Navajos use. Present tribal consumption of her bounty, from agriculture to coal, natural gas, and uranium, even if ultimately destructive, further affirms human's respectful, living relationship with Mother Earth. Appropriately the sacred paths between nature and spiritual man can still be reduced to that of supply log line from focussing source to psychic need.

STIND

She is made in "His" image... The metaphoric archetype exists Nature has been and is considered, virtually univer-

sally, to be female, to have feminine properties, to be the Eternal Mother. The planet Earth, Gaia, is Mother Earth, the primal Goddess (who gave immediate birth to Heaven, Australia, the Circle of Delphi) and the Oldest of Divinities. But what are the implications and consequences of reduc- tionist personification of nature as female and mother? Pre-institutional societies viewed earth as a living mother, originary matter (water), which, as Carl Jung points out, was able to encom-

pass symbolically the "profound emotional meaning of Mother Earth" and to carry con-

siderable psychical significance for humankind's collective identity with natural phenomena. Such a force, the Great Mother, who served to maintain the human connection with nature, stands in contrast to the modern view of earth as simply material resource. In the one case the earth is seen in fertile and life giving, generation creating; in the other, as a passive instrument of production brought to fruition by and for man. Both cases are supported by an envisioning of the feminine nature of Nature as evident in certain characteristics, i.e. fertility and passivity.
Reverent views of Nature ("She is our living mother.") were and continue to be healthier attitudes toward Earth than those that would deny an intimate relation between man and Nature and allow for excessive exploitation and despoliation (rape) of the biosphere. In those American Indian societies of the 19th century that retained the idea of the Earth Goddess there was clear distress at the way Caucasians were treating their land.

They kill the trees, they trample the trees unjustly, and the trees cry. They tear out the entrails of the earth, they hunt the earth, and the earth cries. They poison the water of our clear rivers, the fish die, and the fish and rivers cry, the earth cries, the herbs of the meadows cry—indeed, the whole make all of nature cry.

Regardless of the degree of reverence or reverence of a society's position toward nature, if the guiding ethos is dependent upon an essentializing view that sets up a hierarchical relation between man and Nature it is basically problematic. If Earth is Mother Earth, then we are her children who are dependent on her for nourishment and sustenance. But there is also a psychosocial term a good deal of ambivalence in the relation between child and parent: man (i.e., specifically, the masculine gender) tends to deny his origin, the ties that bind him to the mother. In this relational web of son and mother, his assertion of autonomy manifests itself as mastery over her; thus Nature is reduced to a sign of dependency overcome or conquered, or at least controlled.

Another, quite different view of the earth as an organism that retains strong psychic connection to humankind but is completely nonhierarchical was introduced in 1974 by ecologist James Lovelock:

The Gaia hypothesis sees the evolution of the species of living organisms as closely coupled with the evolution of their physical and chemical environment that together they constitute a single and indissoluble evolutionary process.

There is no terra-a-like Garden of Eden represented here, no innocent beings, no children or mother, but rather the ongoing cybernetic processes of a living ecosystem. One fundamental observation within the Gaia Hypothesis is that when the system is at its optimum state of health we find there is also the greatest diversity of organisms. This diversity, an essential condition for the maintenance of Gaia's health, has been encountering the surging force of human economic progress and development—and diversity is in steep decline. Implicit in Lovelock's hypothesis is the radical recognition that human beings are merely one species in a nonhierarchical whole. Global acceptance of this fact is likely to be the first barrier to the survival of the planet.

13.

Let us find ourselves more strongly about the fate of the environment, keep in mind the attitude voiced by the character "TOOB" in D. R. Griffith's comic strip, ZIPPY: "A good car chase is worth a thousand episodes of Nature..."

Footnotes

Ed Hilt and Suzanne Bloom are, respectively, Professor and Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Houston. They work together as the artist MANUAL, and frequent lry articles and reviews for SPCQ, Artforum, and other journals.
FOUR YEARS AGAINST AN

By Kirk Cundyles

I have lived most of my life near the sea. Except for a short period in the Rocky Mountains, I have lived on one coast or the other, and also on islands of the Pacific and the Caribbean. Though I have always felt close to the natural world, I have no desire to be a nature photographer. My interest is in people. My photographic work has reflected this and has always involved social issues. I have struggled in particular with ideas about how to become involved with environmental problems.

In the summer of 1988, the major media focused attention on the medical waste appearing on the beaches in New York and New Jersey. I decided to have a look. Like a lot of New Yorkers, I rely on public transportation. One of the easiest beaches to get to is South Beach on Staten Island. That August, South Beach, like most other beaches in the area, was closed due to medical waste. The beach was so trashed that it seemed to me that it might be difficult to find any particular type of trash distinct from any other. I learned from lifeguards that the fair weather count was too high for safe bathing. On the tideline were a number of dead rats, and dead birds were all over the shore. I approached a seagull squatting in the rubble. The bird made no effort to fly, but sat dull-eyed staring at me. The beach was so trashed beyond anything I had imagined. The dying seabirds on the seashore was a bellwether revelation. This is the sea, I thought.

On the following Sunday (August 7, 1988), The New York Times ran an article on the state of our beaches. They used one of the photos I had made at South Beach, an overall shot of the beach with a fat dead rat in the foreground. The picture was over a quarter page and had an inset of wrack found on the beach.

I have returned to South Beach many times and in all seasons. It is always the same—dumping ground. This past summer the beach had new caution signs hanging from the lifeguard stands. The signs warned, in both Spanish and English, that the water was polluted, this time due to infectious fecal waste. Despite the signs, people played on the beach and swam in the ocean. The lifeguard I spoke to said he had been told not to interfere with the swimmers.

I walked the tideline collecting wrack. Stopping to talk with a family that had been bathing, I showed them the wrack I had collected. They responded by saying they believed the needle had been left behind by drug users. The major media were not there; it was a season for turning a blind eye. The New York Times ran a follow-up article about the beach problems almost one year to date after the original piece. Happily, they used a photo of mine. Unhappily, they cropped the photo severely, showing only the warning signs. It was placed on a back page in the lower corner of the fold. The picture size was two by four inches. The beach is no longer very important news at the Times.

I was happy to see my photos used in The New York Times (though it is unfortunate that this does not recycle its papers). Because of the original "art project" made on that first trip to South Beach, I have been contacted by several more concerned publishers. Discover Magazine contacted me and ran a color photo I had made later at South Beach. The "art shot" was seen by an environmental architect at the University of California, Michael Southworth, who phoned me to let me know of a book he was editing called Wasting Away, to be published in 1990 by the Sierra Club.

Southworth has selected several of my photos, most involving the garbage problem, for his book.

I have done as much as possible to trace medical waste from its origin and through the sanitation system. In the middle of August, 1988, my wife and I had a daughter. I took advantage of my access to the hospital during my wife's early labor to photograph the ways in which waste was handled in the hospital. After photographing throughout the hospital, I returned to my wife's side. In a short time security guards showed up asking questions. I gave them my press card and they went away.

My journey on the "trash path" took me to the Fresh Kills Landfill, also on Staten Island. Fresh Kills is the largest landfill in the world. It is also the highest point on the east coast outside of Maine—a mountain of garbage in a low-lying wetland that was preserved for recreational use at the turn of the century. I stood in the stench knee-deep in trash, photographing. Tractors dump thousands of fully packed black garbage bags. Tractors push through and grade the heaps of waste. Snagglies by the thousands squawk and clamor about it smells. In the most perverse way, the garbage took on a life of its own—a kind of death of its own, a cancer. I saw it the following day.

The photos I made during this period have been used in several publications, most notably by various environmental groups. The contact with these various groups has provided me with some access to places I might have had some difficulty getting to or just into otherwise. Also, I got ideas for projects, having learned the groups' photographic needs. A lot of the groups I have worked with are working together. Naturally, it is encouraging to see the photos used (and I appreciate the editors' help).

Several years ago I tried contacting Greenpeace, asking if I could stop by their offices in Washington, D.C., to show my portfolio. I was told that it would be all right to do so, but that there was no pay and they didn't need any photographers. It was three years later before I made a connection with Greenpeace. I was watching the local evening news when it switched to a live broadcast showing Greenpeace activists jumping from the Triborough Bridge on the East River. Since I live near the Bridge, I ran to the scene. They were protecting the dumping of sewage in the ocean, and were arrested on a sewage barge as it made its way down the river.
Later on, I made further efforts to contact Greenpeace and eventually was put on a press list. I went out on one invitation they made to the press for a photo-op in the harbor. The organization provided a cabin cruiser for the press, but it was my chance to photograph from a Zodiac, one of the small rubber power boats Greenpeace uses. I like being more mobile and closer to the water (though it's a problem keeping camera dry). On this particular outing, protecting nuclear ships in the New York Harbor, I met Jay Townsend, who heads photography for Greenpeace. He has hired me twice since then. I like working for Greenpeace simply because I enjoy the water under all sorts of conditions and it is always challenging. The people are very nice, too. I have never seen any uses of the photographs I did for Greenpeace, though I understand that many for offices and postcards have been made from the assignments.

There is little room for subjectivity in environmental photojournalism. However, I see the reality connected with the sea tangling and the universal appeal provides for different people’s various needs. The different ethnic and economic groups of the New York area demonstrate this very clearly. In Coney Island you will find people from India, Pakistan, Southeast Asia and Latin America who fish, swim, and sunbathe. They swim only a little, and often do so in their clothes or underclothes. Further out on Long Island you will find young men in wet suits who surf in almost any kind of weather, including nor’easterly conditions.

More recently I have begun to explore the lower Hudson River and the New Jersey wetlands. I have walked beside streams there that are obviously enough to make me itch. People do fishing and crabbing there they cook and eat their catch at the very site where the stream enters the river. I have had mothers ask me if I thought it was safe for their children to eat the fish from such a place, and let them know that the area is heavily contaminated with chromium.

The more I do, the more I understand and see what to do. I want to go to the Everglades and the rainforest. I want to photograph the people of Love Canal and their children. I want to see the kids of rural New Yorkers against the machine that has selected their homes as nuclear waste sites. My thoughts for the future are not terribly positive. Government acts slowly and seems unable to think accurately. Businessmen do not take responsibility. The belief that we are separate from nature and that it is something to be controlled has brought us a hole in the ozone. Is it too late? Other sorrows await us.

I have walked for miles in abandoned industrial areas. I've been picked up for trespassing several times, attacked by people, dogs, and mosquitoes. I have heard noises from the floor, while racing by in a Greenpeace vessel. It is rough on the camera; the dust in some places and the saltwater in others is destructive. But like it or not, usually I don’t appreciate the vast open spaces after being in the city. It is rare that I would want to swim in the places I want to photograph. I would rather be able to take a swim and know that my daughter’s world is safe.

I am pleased that my photographs are used and seen. My work in the environmental area has been largely to identify problems and bring attention to solutions. I have a sense of making a contribution, for example, working with the Environmental Defense Fund I can provide for posters, slide shows, and their annual report. I have, however, to express my doubts about any overall positive effects generated through my work.

W. Eugene Smith described the click of his shutter as a canon firing against injustice. More often I feel as though the shutter opening and closing is like the sound of a toy gun. I become cynical at times, enough to hang it all up. We are the sense of the earth we are born out of. We participated in the landscape as hunter-gatherers and then as farmers. Now it is only through recreation that most of us are able to participate in the landscape.

I was taken as a child to a showing of Winslow Homer seascapes. When I returned home that day, I began to paint. Using only my tetor model airplane paints, I tried to imitate Homer’s work, painting on shirt cardboard. Eventually I went down to the sea and painted oils on large canvases. I believed I was an artist. I sold most of my paintings, both seascapes and landscapes.

I became fascinated by Peter Beaglach. His landscapes are not only individual in their style, but also uncomplicated. He conveys mood, and he reports objectively. Few works could be more melancholy than "The Bankers." It was done about 1888 and was one of his last. In Beaglach's last years landscapes became secondary to how they were participated in. Man and his experience became his exclusive subject.

I have been a photographer for only a short time. As I progress, I constantly seek to simplify my images. My mentor, Mel Rosenthal, has influenced me in this way. His ability to demystify photography has helped me to find my own way and style and provided me with professional standards.

Becoming environmentally active, I have had to let go of any pretensions of art. Just as the man in Southeast Asia was shown, so must the battle for the environment. If I am known only as a photographer of ruins and trash, so be it.

My work is only beginning. I am no Peter Beaglach, dressing with a camera. I want to achieve a sense of space and distance. In rendering the environment, you begin to see how everything is transitory. In photographing I wish to excercise.

Kirk Candyles is a freelance photographer living in New York with his wife and daughter.
Sharon Stewart's Toxic Tour of Texas

1. Lailie Szpunar, member of Panco Maria Concerned Citizens, and her daughter, Katta. Lailie's family of ten does not drink, but does bathe and wash in, their well water, determined radioactive by the Texas Department of Health. Recent tests indicate the levels of radioactivity continue to rise.

2. 100-acre unlined mill tailings pond operated by Chevron in Panco Maria, Karnes County, Texas. An estimated six million tons of radioactive waste is dumped here, although the site has been operating without a license since 1980.

3. Remains of a radioactive pipeline the Department of Energy used to carry radioactive waste on private ranchland in Karnes County. 20.8 acres of contaminated area contaminated from the federal government's uranium mill tailings pond that once operated in the area.

4. The Sink Hole Inn, a Texas honky tonk, commemorates the historic collapse that occurred in the middle of the highway on Saturday night in 1986. Three pickup trucks disappeared into the geological fault, though the drivers were able to swim to safety. Such instabilities were commonplace in the Buda Salt Dome area, prompting residents to object to the establishment of brackish water injection wells in the Dome.

5. This flood control ditch installed by the Army Corps of Engineers in Texas City was built to filter toxic effluents released by area petrochemical refineries. The Texas Water Commission considers this a "state of the art" system for filtering waste before it is discharged into Galveston Bay.

All photographs by Sharon Stewart, from The Toxic Tour of Texas, 1989.
By Julie Lee

On September 30th, 1989, Houston photographer Sharon Stewart spoke at a symposium organized by the Houston Center for Photography and presented at the Glassell School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The symposium was designed to commemorate the HCP exhibition, The Landscape at Risk. Stewart's presentation on her recent work, the Toxic Tour of Texas was enlightening to the audience, most of whom live and work in the greater Houston area. The Toxic Tour of Texas is a self-initiated and self-financed collaboration between photographer Sharon Stewart and sociologist Lillian Feagin. Begins in February 1989, it focuses on the efforts of individuals to prevent or rectify the communities' hazardous waste disposal sites, injection wells, or incinerators.

"We were uncomfortable with seeing and hearing Sharon's presentation. We had difficulty comprehending the nature and scope of the problem. Denial, after all, is a way of life. We often don't think about the problems we can't see or illnesses we can't cure or dangers we can't see. In a state where "first" is equated with "best," we didn't want to believe that Texas ranks "first" among the states in our nation in the production of chemical waste. But it made good sense when we were reminded that we have the highest concentration of oil refineries and chemical plants in the nation. Nor did we want to know that Texas "leads the nation" in the number of hazardous waste disposal sites. As a society, we certainly didn't want to know that 17 to 27 percent of those sites leak, threatening our groundwater.

However, there are people who are addressing these issues in their own communities. One approach is trying to improve the health and well-being of their families are directly affected. This is often a difficult situation because the economic welfare of a community may be sustained by the industry that is responsible for generating waste, air, water, and soil contamination. The strength of Stewart's project is that it reaffirms the power of the individual to make a difference. Says Stewart, "Through this study, we present the situation and offer solutions which may empower the viewers to take personal action to effect changes in their own lifestyles and in their own communities."

Stewart is a very positive, energetic person, and she clearly feels that she is contributing, in her own small way, something toward the solutions of these problems. As a result, the project has a clear sense of optimism for the future, based on the premise of working together—rather than against each other—to find solutions. She notes that industry is acknowledging its responsibility toward finding solutions to environmental contaminations.

Stewart's own story is fascinating. She learned firsthand early in her career (1971) that the indoor environment can be dangerous. She contracted strep throat after working with Ciba-Geigy for long hours. Later, she learned she had problems with her kidneys and liver. She began to research the literature concerning the potential hazards of indoor chemicals and to tell other photographers how to protect themselves.

As she continued to work with Ciba-Geigy and other chemicals, she improved the ventilation in her darkroom, and wore gloves and protective clothing. She also taught a course for HCP called "Risky Living in the Darkroom" in 1987, and Anne Fisher and Mark McFarlane interviewed her for their article "Danger in the Darkroom" in the June, 1989 issue of Photon.

A self-taught photographer, Stewart had no college and graduate school preparation for a career in business. She says, "Business was the first thing I'd ever quit, and I just did it because I loved to do it. Eventually, I found my work as a photographer. I began to research and write articles about occupational health hazards of photography. In 1983, she joined Houston's Mini Camera Club and began to take classes and workshops. She attended the 4H-Club and "didn't have a cow." She was interested in photography and decided to become a photographer. She moved from Austin to Houston because the city was attracting its active and compelling visual art scene. Stewart arrived in Houston just in time for the founding of the Houston Center for Photography in 1981. She served as Vice-President of HCP in its formative years and has remained active in various capacities, except for the time she traveled abroad. After leaving Houston, commercial photographer Joe Barban mentioned in his talk at HCP that his stock files needed attention, she began working part-time for him. Before long she was his assistant, and worked with him for several years before returning to her own. Stewart works hard and ships goods with relative ease. She may work several days a week on assignment and spend the rest of the time on her personal work. She has a natural sense of formal composition and a passion for beauty as it is created momentarily between form and light. Between 1979-84, Stewart worked on the High Light series, a portfolio of color photographs of the urban landscape. She photographed old and decayed structures, "splicing" nature and artificial light. In shooting this series, she focused on the subtle symbolism – the pyramids, the columns, the spaces – that endures even in the urban environment.

In the Beam of Ezra, begun in 1983, she continued her interest in light and spirituality. Stewart initiated a collaborative project with both male and female friends, photographing them nude, in total darkness, with only a single strobe for illumination. The darkness freed them to express themselves without inhibition, in their own poses and the moment of the exposure. These intimate, small scale, black-and-white photographs are landscapes of the body, exploring the idea of spiritual sensuality.

In her landscape series, The Magic Valley, Stewart returned to her childhood home and portrayed the expansive beauty, abundance and calm that is pervasive in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. By using black-and-white infrared film, Stewart added a special quality to underscore a surrealistic sense of time and place.

Stewart combined these themes in her landscapes of sanctuaries and temples in Times of Shadow, ancient Greece that she began in 1985. Her strong tie to spirituality is nurtured by her cool-toned, delicate renderings of classical sites. What intrigued Stewart in this series was exploring the beauty and balance of classical Greece in the face of the contemporary chaos of industrial debris, weeds, and restoring fences. The series was an elegant portrayal of a time seemingly lost. Stewart's continued exploration of layers of meaning is again seen in her series the Toxic Tour of Texas. Although her new role as an activist photographer seems markedly different from her previous work, it was a natural evolution out of her previous experience, and an accurate reflection of her belief system. "When I was traveling and doing a lot of personal insight," Stewart said, "there was something that was calling out to me to do more than just make beautiful images. I thought: what can I give back? what can I contribute? I realized that the gift of vision is exactly that – it’s how I can make a contribution. It comes back to the notion of personal responsibility – the balance of nature is precious and we have a tremendous responsibility to assure its continuation.

In this regard, Stewart maintains, "we can alter our personal habits within the home and workplace by choosing to use recyclable containers, boycotting products of companies that are blatantly adding to environmental contamination, recycling glass, paper and plastics. People can also actively participate in the political process and help select leaders who will be responsive to these issues."

Stewart maintains that there is a strong grassroots movement forming in this country bringing together activists from the civil rights, peace, women's, and original environmental movements. These citizens are learning how to collectively organize and influence decisions made by government and industry. She sees this as a positive trend for the 1990s as society moves away from its preoccupation with the individual.

Julie Lee is a frequent contributor to SPOT.

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POISONOUS BEAUTY

By Hans Staartjes

A recent article in U.S. News and World Report described the reaction of a typical visitor to Niagara Falls a hundred years ago: Nineteenth-century tourists visited places with a more convincing religious sense than those of today. They felt inadequate before the grandeur of Niagara Falls or Yosemite, and then after an emotional struggle, they experienced the object's beauty and felt elated. The pattern was close to the common experience characterized of nineteenth-century evangelical religion.

The question I asked myself after reading John Pfahl's new book, Arcadia Revisited, was whether it was an attempt to revive this feeling.

The intention of this book is to "revitalize community pride and national interest" in the Niagara River by reexamining theetchings of Amos W. Sangster.1 Sangster was the only nineteenth-century artist who "under took the enormous task of documenting the entire course of the river," according to Sandra H. Olsen, Director of the Buckaglia-Castlens Art Gallery of Niagara University, which organized the publication of this book.2 Several of Sangster's beautiful black or color etchings are reproduced in this book, all of which were shown in an exhibition at Niagara University celebrating the centenary of their 1886 publication.

Pfahl was commissioned to retouch Sang ster's etchings and to find out, photographically this time, "exactly what it was that he and other nineteenth-century artists were experiencing." In this there is no doubt that Pfahl succeeded. Several of Sangster's etchings are shown adjacent to Pfahl's photographs, inviting us to compare them. One may see how Pfahl managed to find the exact location where Sangster was standing hundreds of years ago and to take a photograph that has little to tell apart from the nineteenth-century illustrations. This is especially true when we compare Figure 7, Sangster's "Two Miles Below the Falls, American Side," and Pfahl's photograph plate 5 with same title. Or, place a finger on the small human shape in Figure 9, Sangster's "Entrance to Cave of the Winds, Niagara Falls, American side," and you will have an almost exact copy of plate 6, Pfahl's photograph "Horseshoe Falls From Below.

One particularly striking color photograph by Frederick E. Church, also reproduced in this book (Figure 4), is most representative of the idyllic, nineteenth-century image of the Falls. It shows huge cascading mists, a "glorious rainbow," and beautifully clear bright green water. This painting is probably the most obvious example of the feeling that Pfahl was commissioned to recreate. In fact, most of Pfahl's photographs in this book succeed in impressing us with nature's beauty in just the way Church's painting is meant to.

Beautiful color landscapes are not new to Pfahl, as his previous works show: Altered Landscapes (published in 1981 by The Friends of Photography, a Picture Windows (published in 1987 by Little, Brown and Company) and Power Plants (published in 1994, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art). However, the photographs in this book are much more important because they document the aesthetic tradition of landscape art, and also aim at overthrowing the idea of landscape photography's sole function of eliciting the illusion of "being there." Pfahl says about this work, "It had to be more than simply a new illusion—the illusion has never been the main point." Elements such as further advance around trees in Altered Landscapes ("Shanting Forest," Lewiston, New York 1979), beguils on the sand in the foreground against old trees on a convoluted pile in the background ("Board Pile," South Dakota, New York, 1976), or a photograph entitled "Moonrise over Pio Pan," Capitol Reef, National Park, Utah 1977, are a clear indication that Pfahl is trying to debunk the myth of the traditional landscape photograph. Pfahl's landscapes in Altered Landscapes are manipulated in a way impossible to any medium other than photography. It only offers this optical illusion, for example lines that appear drawn on the photographic print are in fact drawn on the subject in take perspective. This is a conscious art that, according to Peter C. Burrell, "fully recognizes our need to see a picture and not recreate an experience. The picture is the experience."

Pfahl, though, less obviously manipulative of the natural environment than Altered Landscapes, is still a series that aims to evoke more than the illusion of "being there." The power plants and dam photo grapher on a dramatically beautiful, golden, glowing sunset for instance, be a more sinister meaning of human domination of the environment and the efforts and attempts at enslaving nature's energy. Picture Windows is also a political work, where the nature of photography as a framing and selecting device is under discussion, with photographs of urban and rural settings seen through windows in mostly dark interiors. In the rest of the post works I found it difficult to place Arcadia Revisited, because I think that an artist producing works such as the above couldn't help but introduce his environmentalist and philosophical attitudes in this work. However, I could see little evidence of this. Clearly the intention of this book was not to horrified us. Pfahl himself admits in his artist's statement, "There is an almost ineradicable irony to the act of recording an achingly romantic vista of shadowed forest and lustrous water while suffering the trunk of industrial sewage dripping nearby." (Page 54)

Certain places like plate 22, "Electric Plant from Beaver Island," with its overall yellow tones and a puff of white smoke in the distance, plate 23 "Navy Island and Chemical Plant," with a chain of smoke rising through a dark river and little green mercury vapor lights highlighting the plant in the foreground, and plate 25, "Willows and Spring Ice," with its cool winter tones and small soft deflation of white snow stacks, have the Pfahl signature of what I would describe as "poisonous beauty." They reveal the terrible way in which non-nature industry can be beautiful in the late afternoon light. But other photographs in Arcadia Revisited, such as plate 40, "Path to the Whirl-pool," are more reminiscent of Eliot Porter.

In reference to Pfahl's previous work, then, Arcadia Revisited seems slightly out of character. Pfahl admits there will be in the book "these disturbing thoughts" revealed through some of those photos, but feels that these "disturbing issues of pollution are peripheral to the thrust of this body of work and can best be confronted in other works." One is left with a sense of incredulity, in view of Pfahl's earlier more critical work, I would not want to do more than merely copy the nineteenth-century "picturesque" view of the Niagara River and the Falls, leaving a critical view to "other venues." As it stands, the photographs in Arcadia Revisited will probably attract people to Buffalo and the Falls, making them want to visit in Lake Erie or perhaps even swim in the river.

Most eerie to me was the thought that remained after reading this book in one of Pfahl's own remarks that:

...the joy of seeing a thirty-metre salmon leaping clear out of the moving pool if Cripps's Eddy fall, effortlessly tumbling by the landmark that its flesh is covered with Eventy chlorinated biphenyls (p. 54).

In the Foreword to the Arcadia Revisited we are told that Sangster was capable of:

...the aesthetic of the sublime ... the magnitude, grandeur, and awesome power of the rapids and falls so that the viewers might share the incomparable experience of confronting God in nature (p.12).

Although the Niagara River and Falls still possess the awe-inspiring beauty of the nineteenth century, and some of the tourist and industrial excesses are long gone, the river still remains a smelly river. But you can't smell it in this book.

Footnotes:


Hans Staartjes is a freelance photographer of Dutch nationality residing in Houston.
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EXHIBITIONS

By Margo Reece


The possibility of damnation is so immense a relief in a world of electoral reform, philistinism, sex reform and dress reform, that damnation itself is an immediate form of salvation. —T. S. Eliot, 'Baudelaire,' 1929 (as reference to Baudelaire's appeal to America's 'tamed, debunked' of the 1850s).

Man Ray's career was a balancing act—he was an ambidextrous tightrope-walker (a figure-reference featured in his essay, early works) navigating on a precipice of contradictions. He was an artist who never really had a proper dealer or gallery to represent him and who supported himself as a commercial photographer (two careers considered usually incompatible). In an impressive sleight of hand, he led himself to portrait and fashion photography that serviced the well-known and wealthy, while the other hand held the hand that fed him with images that were crit- ical of and partakes of these ventures. An exam- ple of this strategy is that his photographic portrait of Mina Loy (1920) framed in a traditional format and sporting a large thermometer as an earring. He was a somewhat dandified lover who recalled in his role and yet turned to his advantage enhancing his celebrity; by making himself aligning with anyone too close, he was accessible to everyone. "He moved unrecognized among nationalities, social class- es, an arena, and rival schools never quite belonging." 2

An American by birth (1890), Man Ray was European in association. With the help of his first wife, Aldon Laccous, a Belgian writer and intellectual, and colleagues such as Marcel Duchamp, he learned French and acquired a background in art history, photo- graphy and vanguard French literature. Works by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Lautreamont, Mallarmé, Apollinaire, and others were important literary precedents to Dada and Surrealism and laid the foundations for his thinking. Eventually he was to relocate to Paris in a general wave of exportation from America. Political, but not parochial (other than that affiliation with Dada and Surrealism), the only real endorphins he ever made— with the signatory in a salute to his mentor, Man Ray (in reference to the 1919 showing of his "Sel Portrait", 1916) oil on canvas with attached objects, bells and push button. 3 His attempts to extend the message of Dada in the U.S. had been in vain. In the summer of 1921 when he left "New York sailing for the continent, the "possi- bility of damnation" was no longer a relief. He departed on a sour note: "Dada cannot live in New York" he wrote in a letter to Tristan Tzara, and in quest of acceptance, recognition and salvation elsewhere.

Man Ray's early work, the period 1919-1931, is full of restless movement, questioning the traditional notions of art and seeking alterations to accepted practices. It reads like a condensed, yet authenticating, assimilation of western art up through Duchamp. Man Ray's early concern with photography's inherent two-dimensionality was influ- enced by his exposure to European avant-garde artists such as Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, Picabia, and Duchamp, whose work he had seen at Alfred Stieglitz's gallery 291 and at the 1913 Armory Show. For the most part the paintings from this early period deal with the process of seeing as mobile and changing (from no fixed point of view), with the elimination of nearly all clues to illusion

Because he was dedicated to the creative idea rather than any particular style or medi- um, the variety of Man Ray's work is complex and rests easy categorization. The medium was to change constantly. He was variously a painter, a maker of objects, a photographer, and a filmmaker, or he might seek in two mediums simultaneously. From 1917 on objects and photographs feature promi- nently in his work, though there is a constant collapsing of the various mediums into one another; his paintings become objects, his objects become photographs, his photographs become objects. Man Ray's choice of the object as a vehicle for its revolutionary but not without its ironies; as early as 1917 there was Duchamp's gesture of the readymade, and Boccioni in the futurist manifesto had urged artists not to confine themselves to "noble" materials of art, but to use all materials. Likewise Cubist collage methods included an elevation of the trivial as expressed by Apollinaire. Man Ray's use of objects also corresponds with the introduction of "extra-artistic" materials into art as championed by the Dadaists, especially the use of cut-offs, refuse, and trash, and with the choice of objects that tend to do what preferred material individuated (the objects themselves) over metaphorical constructions (the objects). Duchamps's readymade, reproduced, printed and photographic materials that emerged in the early 20th century became the material for a new art. Both Duchamp and the Dadaists were seeking ways of subverting the hierarchies that defined the means by which art objects acquire financial, social and spiritual values. By utilizing already existing forms (that defined the culture and environment) and mechanical means (photog-raphy) the readymade's creation was achieved through a minimum of effort—a reversal of the bourgeois preference for labor-intensive, time-consuming, traditional (i.e. point on canvas). Unwilling to let his go completely of his kind of whole绢, Man Ray's utilization of existing forms was less radical than Duchamp's "ready-made", in which an anarcho-ist, fabricated by machine, available everywhere, and chosen on the basis of visual indifference was appropriated, ridiculed and discarded out of context. Man Ray's treatment of the object was more about transforming the original meaning and repurposing each play with materials. Revelation took precedence over specified aims. He often manipu- lated the object in a way that confounds objects or through the use of photography, his indifference and more to do with the particu- lar aroused by said object, as did his tilting of objects. Invention "The Bachelors and Green Dose" (1920), Man Ray pays trysting homage to the French author, whose pseudonym was Comte de Lautreamont and teases the viewer as well. His photographs are an invention: "It's not a photograph," he off-handedly noted "It's not a photograph". Duchamp's "The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even" is a counterpoint to this, a photograph, forever out of our reach. The act of concealment suggests a hidden meaning and the title reinforces this. The act functions as a trigger to the spectator's desire to see, to know—a desire continually frustrated—a desire that can only manifest itself in interpretation. What is crucial here is that Man Ray invites interpretation, involvement, and identity, to the meaning. Nothing is fixed. Tilting is not an act of closure but tempts the viewer to a clearing or clearing. It was important to Man Ray that the objects be "reducible to a fire" and "go for what we are, with further assis- tances supplied by the evocative titles." 4 In another example, angled strips of wood and a C-clamp make up one piece that doesn't seem particularly significant until one reads the title, "New York" (1917), at which point the piece is transformed into a playful com- ment on the jerry dynamic of the modernist skyscraper so glorified by the financiers during this period.

Indeed no subject seems exempt from Man Ray's playful wit, sometimes almost juvenile sarcasm. The subject of Man Ray's art seems particularly vulnerable to his assaults of mockery etched with envy. As early as 1915 he had dedicated the "Cheeky," counter-draw- ing of the populating insects to a typographically poetic "PhD:" 5. One photograph of an object served his ideas better.

Man Ray, Portrait of Lee Miller, c. 1930

BLIND VISIONARY

Man Ray, Men, 1919

HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY
than the object itself, as in his photograph of a common eggbeater, "Man" (1918). The controlled lighting and use of shadows do not render the anthropomorphized reading suggested by the title possible, but the image can be viewed as a trope at the photographic paroxysm, in particular Paul Strand's elegant close-up of machine parts. Likewise "Cadence" (1921), the infamous flat iron spiked with nails, besides embodying its purpose towards New York men, pays one of the citadels of posterazzi and peer photography the Flamingo building in New York City. "Le Violon d'Ingres" (1924) Man Ray's famous photograph depicting a back view of his mistress Kiki's torso in a perfect hourglass shape, sets off a histrionically series of associations combining mystery, humor, and the erotic in a multiple visual-enriched pun that turns visual with the female torso, with the French expression for heroine, a famous composer by Ingres". (Kiki's pose is similar to that of Ingres' Baigneuse de Valpinçon). Man Ray was exploring the possibility of opening up, through the parameter character of the male (the interplay of linguistic and phonetic elements), the referential possibilities of a piece. Ingres was known for playing the violin as well as painting, but the extreme erotic refinement of his paintings suggests that his real patron was, instead, have been women. The expression "violon d'Ingres" is now used to refer to "a heroine exercised with passion". By the addition of real bodies (a graphic element) to the female form Man Ray's depiction can also be viewed as an inverted pun on Picasso's and Braque's recurrent themes of the violin or guitar. The comparison of the female form with a violin points to the classic traditions of the nude as a form on which many great (male) artists have played.

Early on Man Ray set for himself a goal of doing what he was not supposed to do. His overarching penchant for flaunting societal morés can be understood as a kind of twentieth century version of nineteenth century romantic outlandry-romantic, that is, in its aspirations away from the bourgeois society it fueled. Bolstered by a disdain for the law-abiding citizen, the romantic's contempt for society manifested itself in a need to combat and destroy mediocrity. The law-abiding citizen was seen as moral in a small, dull way, so the thing to do was to flow his morality with anarchy, on a grand scale. Wallowing in irresponsible pleasure-seekers was a form of rebellion, a deliberate onslaught on the propriety of the bourgeoisie. All excesses and excesses were justified in the search for sensation, beauty and freedom (both personal and artistic). By choosing debouchery the artist at least partially asserted his freedom.

"Rebuking cultural limitations was essential not only to the free and creative behavior of individuals but to the very possibility of human individualization." Man Ray pro claimed that throughout his life he had only one goal: the pursuit of freedom and pleasure (this way of seeing off the banal). The nude had been a respected tradition. Although it is not apparent that Man Ray would treat it with reverence, in conjunction with a more acerbic sense of language, his ice, high, reached new heights, a kind of gay blueheals, in "La Prise" ("The Prayer"), 1910, this time with Salan overtones (Sade was one of Man Ray's heroes). The depiction of nude female bantocks with hands clothed behind implies, a kind of perverse reverence for sodomy (flaunting sexual norms) while simul taneously playing the tenants of Western civilization "governed by taste and a feeling for form". Man Ray's photo borders on the careless by virtue of the somewhat cold pose and heightened boldike studio lighting, designed to offend. A second level is delivered by the title which hammers home somewhat diabolically its anticonclusions. A similar theme is explored in Man Ray's "Monument a D.A.F. de Sade" (1931) in which the rigidly ruled notion of an inverted cross is shockingly juxtaposed against the soft folds of a woman's buttocks.

Man Ray shared with the Dadaists and Surrealists a concern for liberating objects from their stereotyped place or obsolence in culture, a concern that unfortunately did not translate over into other depictions of women. While many of Man Ray's images are fiercely critical of societal norms, restrictions, or taboos, they often depend, at least representationally, on the subjection of women to accomplish their goal. This dependency on the subjugation of the other (the female) to revise boundaries exposes the ideological limits of surrealism and renders their concepts of freedom and pleasure problematic. It seems that while they were liberating objects they were objectifying women. In their zeal to expose the hypocrisy of mid twelfth century moralities, "freedom" all too often simply translated into a willful transgression of sexual codes (permissiveness) and male desire (men doing what they want).

The idea of unrestricted access to an absolutely available female population to which one could do anything, has grips on the male imagination, especially in the Left, and has been translated into the ekphrastic demand for "fre sex, free women." For women "freedom" means only that they are free to be used. The confusion of lettuce ideology with sexual transgression partly accounts for Man Ray's troubling obsession with Sade. Sade was (and still is) mythologized by the left as an avatar of freedom, unjustly惩罚 (#f) by a repressive society for daring to express radical sexual values. Sade, a member of the aristocracy, for a time, an officer in the military, seems the very antithesis of leftist sentiments. However convinced their thinking, for Man Ray and the Surrealists he became "the great ideal of freedom." Sade represented complete and absolute liberty. "Sade showed what you could do if you had power." (Man Ray in a letter to Author Miller). What Sade showed was that you could better, rape, torture, and murder women (particularly women of a lesser class) if you had power and could get away with it.

 Needless to say, with such contradictions inherent in Man Ray's thinking, in his work the female form (unlike his objects) did not transmute into a "fresex, expressive entry." The transposition of the female form into a violin is just one example of a disturbing recurring theme in Man Ray's work, that is the subjugation of women to man's pleasure that manifests itself in pitifully offensive objectifications of women. "The Prayer," shocking them for its use, is now appealing for its politics. The ambiguity is discomforting is it a landscape of pleasure or a human sacrifice? The pleading hands and venerated submissive posture indicate the latter. The autoanalytically disturbing form is reminiscent of disembowelment. Images suggestive of female disembowelment are common in Man Ray's oeuvre. "Venus restaurée," 1936, depicts a plaster cast of a woman's torso without head or limbs bound with ropes. "Hommage a D. A. F. de Sade," ca. 1929, shows a blindfolded several female head trapped in a bell jar. The same subject is dealt with again in a later work, "Alice et Vaqueur," 1939, (all on canvas), named after Sade's novel of the systematic rape of everything except male pleasure which critic Roger Shattuck politely refers to, in his essay "Cadaver and Perversion in No Man's Land" (see the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition), as a "trait de décapitation moral." There are other images with cannibalistic, Salan overtones where a peacock mimics the female body "horrific and edible." An apple with a screw in place of a stem seems male fantasies of sexual
violation by suggesting the painful introduction of foreign objects into the female body. In the catalog only Sandra Phillips, in her essay "Themes and Variations: Man Ray's Photography in the Twenties and Thirties," seems uncomfortable with Man Ray's obsession with Sadism and with the question- able nature of Man Ray's depictions of women. Phillips points out the obvious discrepancy in Man Ray's portrait of the nude women as portrayed both physically and mentally, as if full of "the light entered spirit of newly found concord," while women are objectified as "erotic creatures," (jeweled, bedecked) or anima-like, needing to be restrained by ropes or painted collars (see "Le Miller Wearing Collar with Seabrook," 1928-29, and "UnICTURED," ca. 1928-29). It is in distressing to read in Phillips's essay that Man Ray "helped explore William Seabrook's fashion a necklace that would be deliberately painted to Seabrook's wife and 'more than once proudly commented on violently abusing women.' The flip side of the 'erotic creature' is the woman as dummy, mechanical toy, manipulatable as in 'D unthinkable,' 1921, empty headed as in 'Unighted,' 1923, a rapooh in which a paper doll forms a void with a floating fire-cracker (denoting a woman's head) or dangerous, devouring, trap-like, as in 'Unighted,' ca. 1929, a photograph in which a spider web, cutting her menacing, fits out from a woman's public hair. The woman is treated as a thing, primarily a sexual body, an ambivalent object of desire/dead/en, or as an abstraction, fragmented and disembodied with no identity beyond that of the recognizable female anatomical parts. Man Ray's depictions of women run the gamut from classical ideal to modernist abstraction to ultimate magazine—always the general, never the particular. True to the tradition of European art, in Man Ray's photography men act, women appear. In recent criticism there has been an attempt by Rosalind Krauss, in connection with her project 'L'amour fou' (an exhibition of Surrealist photography), to account for the sheer number of foiled images of female nudes in Surrealist photography (Man Ray's work included) and to refute "the frequent characterizations of surrealism as antifeminist" by connecting these images to contemporary theory and practice as a critique of representation, and by ascribing to them an acute perception in their representation of women, "since its manipulations of the woman are so over as to suggest she is more social construct than natural essence." Hal Foster, in his article 'Amour fou,' a critique of Krauss' project, questions whether the 'new' fate of woman as a social construct is any more self determined than her 'old' destiny as a biological essence. 'Quite possibly women are subjected to control far more as 'artifical' than they ever were as 'natural'; certainly today they are manipulated primarily via an induced fetishism of signs of femininity.' While one can appreciate, historically speaking, the nuances of meaning that the comparison of the female form with a violent points to, in drawing attention to the way in which women have been represented over time, pointing up something is not in and of itself a critique of that usage or representation (does not necessarily subvert). While it is possible to read into surrealism images precursors of postmodern concerns (such as the blunting of aesthetic boundaries, etc.) and to credit them with a critical awareness of certain representational conventions, 'over manipulations' aside, it is a common women, such assertions remain doubtful. The quotation of Ingres and the addition of sound holes to Kiho's nose was aesthetically radical in that it called into question with radical new means (i.e., photography and all that that it implied in terms of reproduction processes and its ramifications for painting) a cherished practice, the painted nude, but it was not革命izing, at least not for women. The act was more about disrupting the politics of painting (the hierarchy of media) than sexual politics. Man Ray's quotation of Ingres and his graphic intervention is curious, a usurping of the masterpieces privileges through the pain (appropriating tradition, not to much undermining its prestige by laying claim to the new bad boy 'photographer,' on the block, mocking his antiquated predecessors,) painted, demands his epithet place alongside them). Man Ray's novel is strictly antifaetical and falls nearly within accepted modernist canons of avant-garde male dominated art (not to mention male dominated culture). As it concerns the female he does not set out to disrupt convention; he brings it back in. After inveterate questioning, 'Le Violon d'Ingres' affirms the status quo, reinforcing our culturally conditioned expectations of the image as an object of the masculine gaze, painting her into the male, again sounds (pam) in her place as a thing of pleasure. Krauss' attempt to accord privileged status to surrealistic photography through a recontextual reading based on present insights and to redeem it from feminist inquiry seems premature. Conversations were a prime target of the Dada/Surrealists, deposed because they allowed no questions to be asked. In the interest of deconstruction (exposing hidden agenda) and a return of the repressed only a cacophony of voices will tell whether surrealistic practices, in terms of treatment of the feminine and its relation to representation and power, represent insight, vested interests or innocence—a blind spot.

Footnotes
5. cat. p. 72.
6. cat. p. 337.
7. cat. p. 66.
8. cat. p. 104.
11. cat. p. 75.
12. cat. p. 29.
15. cat. p. 122.
16. cat. p. 188.
20. Martin, Interview with Man Ray, p. 56.
21. cat. p. 120.
27. cat. p. 126.
29. cat. p. 327.
30. cat. p. 137.
32. cat. p. 213.
34. Foster, p. 122.
35. Foster, p. 126.

Mona Flowers, author of photography and primitivism, at the Art Institute of Houston.
1930–SOMETHING

By Louis Dobay

Czeck Modernism 1902–1945, a multi-media exhibition, was organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and exhibited there from October 8, 1989 – January 7, 1990. The exhibition will travel to New York, Alton, Cleveland, and Berkley, through the Fall of 1990. A catalog documenting the exhibition was in preparation at SPOT press time.

[Editor’s Note: Due to typographical limitations, Czech names appear without their proper accent marks.]

If it is now true that modernism is dead, then looking back to the early days of this century, perhaps it is the childhood of modernism we see in the MFA’s exhibit Czech Modernism 1902–1945. The art of the modern avant-garde in Prague 1902–1945 is naive, tentative, and somehow fatter than one might expect it to be. It is also familiar, like snapshots from the youth of modernity—here modernity playing with impressionism, there modernity inventing photography, and there, that modernity with jingles—Surrealism. But behind the consistently pure images of superficial cultural and artistic continuity and stability lies a Freudian maze of repressed events. In this exhibit Czech modernism is represented as Prusack, epochal upon a table, and we are dilettantes and nitwits who view peacefully, asking only, “Is that all there?”

If this exhibit attempts to establish a broad and sometimes leveling view of Czech art of the period 1902–1945, it does so at the expense of the less tidy elements of that time. The purpose seems to be to create an identity for Czech artists of the period 1902–1945 in the minds of a western audience which has little or no general knowledge about this region. We are presented, unfortunately, with a neat, succinct clear-up view that perhaps was unavoidable, but that nonetheless takes politically sensitive, not to mention historically monumental elements out of the frame. Whether this was the fault of the curators, or whether it was some inherent limitation placed on them by a now vanished Czech governmental regime, it is nonetheless for us interesting to view Czech art of this period from a strict and narrowly defined historical vs. political one.

When the historical story of the region during that period is of far more cultural, artistic and human consequence.

There is obviously some consciousness of this narrowing in Czech art as evident in the opening line of the introduction by Jiří Komifik, the Director of the National Gallery in Prague. “The present exhibition does not claim to present Czech art of the twentieth century in its historical entirety.” This is not a statement in the way we are about to review salons you.”

Instead, the selection of works concentrates on the most critical trends and leading personalities that determined the course of creative evolution from 1900 to the mid-1940s, that decide stage of modern art in the context of European development.

Most significant, it seems, is what he doesn’t say, what we don’t get to see. As we are told that since there are no direct references to WWII, the creation of the Czechoslovak republic, the rise of National Socialism and the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Hitler, WWII or communism, all of which exist in “this decisive stage of modern art in the context of European development,” that these artists had nothing to say about any of it. It is a particularly puerile distinction between “art” and “history” being offered by this exhibit; that artists could be so divorced from their time that while a thousand year dynasty crumbled in central Europe in 1938, and thus liberates the Czechs and the Slovaks from imperial suppression, that Prague artists were content to hide behind Surrealism on the one hand, and that even photographers were content to study their models nude in their dark but picturesque studios and not even go outside on the other. Most we ask, after viewing the exhibit, if it was possible that while the nation of Czechoslovakia was created, invalided and ended, and recreated virtually alike within the time frame of this exhibit, that the artists of Prague didn’t notice.

In the catalog, Antonín Dufek, in “Imaginary Photography,” discusses the photographer Jaromír Funka: “A number of important photographers in Czechoslovakia devoted themselves to the discovery of the fantastic in everyday reality” and Jindrich Svestka, whose “[j]ust as interesting photographs are those images of the urban environment dominated by cultural products... [Branislav Černý also] began to document graffiti in the early 1930s.” Graffiti is not shown in the exhibit. Try as he might to move codified or subtle references to realities of the time, such as graffiti, presenting political interest, Dufek is ultimately unable to discuss the political nature of this period with any directness or substance, especially for those who do not already know what took place.

Dufek continues, “The photographs of this prominent Surrealist [Svestka] can also be seen as fantastic documents of a civilization now extinct, similar to the photographs of Walker Evans.” Exactly what was destroyed in the period of this exhibit, and why, we are shown little of. Dufek continues, “Furthermore, from the viewpoint of post-World War II art, Svestka can be considered...”

Jaromír Funka, Staircases of Old Prague, 1936, Prague (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston)

It is lamentable that these images are left out of this exhibit. While a total of six the thematically important works of Reichmann are mentioned in the catalog, as “for example, ‘The Mosers’ [1931], ‘1931,’ one of the images convey anguish and absurdity in a uniquely enterprising way,” only two photographs, “In the Studio of Alfred Lóoro” and “Abandoned One” are exhibited. One of these is a shot of the interior of a studio, the other, a surreal, indirect, ambiguous image of vines growing up the legs of a marianne torso. If the photographs of the war taken by these photographers exist, then why aren’t they in this exhibit?

Strictly within the realm of what art is offered us, some defining characteristics emerge here. A scene be an interesting lack of the kind of Abstractionism that modern art developed in New York after WWII. Though Cubism is formally presented as a full-fledged style of painting being practiced by the Czechs, there is ample evidence of a more lyrical, heartfelt counter-current within modern art of Prague, that of the mythical, cosmic, optical, and symbolic realism of František Kupka’s “The First Step,” and in Vetřel’s “Powder of the World.” Kupka and Freising fit most characteristically of Prague modernists in that they capture the bitter-sweet faith and the naively romantic
qualities that form the basis of a contemplative modernism. What shows through the haze of academic pleasantries in the first half of the exhibit is an intense underlying idealism and hopefulness. In Kupka’s “First Step,” and Preissig’s “Birds of the World,” there is evidence of a belief in a structure, a spiritual premise of grand cosmic circular forms, and of an evolving, animate universe. And, though Edward Munch is the primary influence on these artists (see Dolik’s essay), there is a less horrific expressionism. And Alphonse Mucha’s interiors do not seem existentially empty, but rather, lack the separation, distortion, or tension to mention the horror, found in Munch.

Photographic comparisons come in the “Orchestrations” of Alphonse Mucha and Franziskus Döfek from roughly 1900-1930. The dark interiors study shadow and form, and are primarily architectural, or human nudes. Preissig’s photographic study of ancient Greek bodies, laying in storage after the only wartime and mortu- matical period. They are not, however, blank. Döfek says it’s “impossible to detect anything about a subject...” from the photographs. World War I and the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic created a definite shift. It was no longer necessary to make “sensual” or to depict artist, an idea that is out of date.

Along these lines, the exhibit is laid out as a progression from Kupka’s cosmological-philosophical thought through Gabler’s romanticism, until we reach the large central hall that houses the “Functionalist” art. Ahead is a great table that holds three major exhibitions. This hall contains the collected works of modern artists, who are represented by two major painters. This is the largest section of the exhibit. The works are arranged by the artists themselves, to give the visitor a sense of the art as it was created. The main section contains the works of modern art that were created in Czechoslovakia during the period of 1900-1930. This section contains works by Kupka, Gabler, and others who were influenced by the art of the period.

The works of Kupka, Gabler, and others who were influenced by the art of the period are shown in the main section. Kupka’s works are characterized by a sense of movement and an emphasis on the spiritual and the spiritual. Gabler’s works are characterized by a sense of harmony and a sense of the natural world. The works of the other artists are characterized by a sense of individuality and a sense of the artistic. The works of modern art that were created in Czechoslovakia during the period of 1900-1930 are shown in the main section. The works of Kupka, Gabler, and others who were influenced by the art of the period are shown in the main section.

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PRIVATE EYES
By Anne Roberts

The Private Eye: Selected Works from Collections of Friends of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, was exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, from June 11 - August 13, 1989.

The large photography section of this summer's Museum of Fine Arts exhibitions, The Private Eye, organizes a unique collection of photographs with TMP's publication of their photographic "Collector's Edition," and with Roger Photography's article, "Art: These the 15 Great Private Eyewall Street Photographs," and others.

Many of the well-regarded photographs included in these publications could be seen in The Private Eye - but no matter how many times you see certain images, there's always pleasure, a smile of connection. The self-satisfied boy in Canasso Boccaccio's "Road to Montefalco," Paris, the stylish hats on the middle-aged sisters in Lucien’s Modell's "Fashion Show, Hotel Pierre," the through-the-sheer-window look at "La Dame Brignole," by Robert Doisneau, and the private but stage moment of "Lovers, Place Blanche," by Brassai, were only a few of these important pictures. No mass production technique can compare with seeing the original prints.

The exhibition, like other shows curated by Anne Tack, allowed viewers to note both connections and contrasts. The exhibition began with the credits and with ELCHO's "Birds of Paradise," a revealing portrait of the famous characters gathered from the cast of the movie Matilda in 1961, it continued with a large grouping of other images, including the "flying" figures of Dorothea Lange, the early case reports, daguerreotype, and anthropic portraits collected by photographer Karl W. Stueber and Kate Marvin; it next moved from contemporary work to the very new, with all works placed for interesting relationships. One of the earliest presentations was "L.A. Bridges in Landscape," 1852, by Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond, an albumen or albuminized salt print from a daguerreotype negative. What interested me in addition to its unique clarity, the light falling on the foreground shore and individual stones on the right, entitled in the bridge, was this artistic break from purely documentary landscape photography. The bridge, with its strong geometric form and circular opening resembling an eye in shape, and so the photograph thus becomes a statement about seeing.

Notable is a famous photogra phy from the turn of the century, two landscape pieces by Alfred Stieglitz: "Early Morning" and "Harvesting, Black Forest, Germany," 1904, and "Landscape, Lake George," 1902. "Harvesting," shows powerfully influences from the mid 19th-century, with each wheat stalk glittering in the heat, the tall ing figures partially hidden, ground forms against regular buildings. The mood changes in "Lake George," where the brown, shadowy tones of the moon, frag mented forms, the trees, reeds and houses. A lonely scene from a country vacation. Adding to the Stieglitz images is a group of various materials: copies of Camera Work, including the first reproduction of "The Statue," and an American Place publications and invasions, all collected by John Cleary. It's important to mention here this informative "Who col lects what, and why," element of the show. Some prominent collectors focus on paintings, sculpture, or decorative objects, making it interesting to see what photographs they have acquired. Others, like Cleary or Gary Black, are photographers themselves: this means we could see photographs that have perhaps influenced them. Finally, RPC's current President, Clint Wilbur, proved to be one of those valuable collectors whom the Museum may call upon to purchase photographs they would like to have.

Certainly two influential pictures by Edward Steichen fall into the "must have" category. "Brooklyn Bridge at Night," 1903, with its mist, looming overheads and statues spiked with faint lights, is a still from some space-age building; while "Portrait of J. P. Morgan," 1904, is a wonderful opportunity to draw your attention first to the stern face, down through the watchful hand to his arm linked to resemble a knife. Here is a psychologically intense and revealing portrait of a powerful and dangerous man. Equally influential is the platinum print portrait of Strauss, "Untold," 1913, in which shirt and buildings stripe down to make beautiful abstract angles. Repeated abstract cool shapes also fill the image area of Bill Brandt's "Winslow Rock," 1930's, while Ansel Adams' "Georgetown, Reis," 1952 combines people and vehicles in the brick street into an almost choreographed pattern of perfection.

In the area of landscape photography, certainly a major force has been Ansel Adams and his zone system, represented here by the stunningly printed "Clearing Winter Storm, Yosemite," 1944, in which plumes and bluffs emerge from the mist and fog, each laid distinct in the foreground aspects. More architecture in feeling is the romantic, mysterious, seed-sown stones. By contrast, to a key, cloudy sky in Clarence John Laughlin's 1941 "Enigma." Mudd also plays a key part in Aaron Siskind's "Utah 21," 1976 when the edges of cliffs are almost like faces in a shadowed crowd. Possibly all these photographic have affected "Corndon & Bains," 1976, by Richard Misrach, who breaks with the natural light tradition, using flash to illuminate a single tall cactus forming a strong vertical line against a moon low on the horizon. Misrach's use of flash has the additional effect of washing out foreground color, making the resulting night scene resemble old brown platinum prints.

Important photographic was also well-represented in The Private Eye. Dorothy Lange's "Ditcher, Stalled, and Streaded, San Joaquin Valley, California," 1935, is a good example of her groundbreaking work, detailing a new prominence for American women in photography. Continuing this sort of work, Helen Levitt added color in her representation of three generations of women in "New York, N.Y.," 1970. The characters in this one picture - a woman with an emitting from, one rather proud, almost defiant, a baby in ruffled whitechristening gown among the in a corner, seeming not to wear in front of a graffiti-covered wall - a scene common to the world's cities, with its mixture of racial and ethnic minorities.

In contrast to photographic art, rapid, steady, unremarkable intuitions two large groups of men who contrast with a third wearing a suit, promoting away, in Gary Winogrand's "Teen Team Action, Wrestling, Huston," 1971. These men, others, even the grime of pain, the other looking slyly away, are placed on a horizontal line, a stage set. The above emphasizes the oddness of the lower court and the importance of the real characteris tics of "Untold," Welsh Miners Society," 1904, by Lewis Hine. In this eerie photograph a serious little boy walks his doll and teddy bear in a grim in front of a gritty, smudged wall of some sort. How difficult it must be to keep his shirt as white. In contrast to these images, it is ordinary reality that becomes important in a portrait of a room that functions as a still life. Walker Evans' "Beechwood, Shrimp Fisherman's House, Biloxi, Mississippi," 1945. Here the machine-turned boards, chenille patterned bedspread, sheer lace curtain, and religious wall decorations quietly describe a man's lifestyle and belief. Examples of new approaches to still life are shown in both the technically amazing, toned silver print, "Khatchars," 1962, by Anish Kapoor's "Untitled," 1978, emphasizes the beauty of nature and the ordinary, with rare flowers contrasting with and highlighting the hard edges of a silver plate and knife. The question of these two pictures is also a main attraction in what may be the most famous of all the works, the image in the show, "The Last Rose, Cycle from the Window of My Athen," 1944, by Josef Sudek. Its intimate mood is achieved somehow impossible without a careful framing of a shell and three roses, one dark and two light, in a glass against a condensation-fogged win dow. These romantic details seem to encapsulate an artist's life.

An early example of descriptive presentation is Ruth (Mk) Penick's wonderful "The Empty Chair," 1973, a series of six images, like a short move, and the marvelous goodby fairy story "The Boy and the Sun," by Dave Sims, where the fairy's floating white and blue cloud does not indicate she has just arrived from the beyond. This vast exhibition also says something about the educational work of not only the Museum of Fine Arts, but also fashioned photography galleries like Croinin and MacMackin (since no are no longer open) and Bertelsen-Morgen (which is). The exhibition suggests that, however, new, breakthrough, sometimes surprising, sometimes not, do the one thing they all have in common with this rare. It demonstrates that the photo says "Composition, 6," 1986, which places a still life in collage-like form. The note to a case of small "Composition, 6," 1986, which adds a small bowl with, still with grey hair to an old studio portrait; and the "Homas Future Foals," 1986, which seems like a still life in collage-like form, and it seems to make a statement about eyes.
Robert Frank, Blind Love Faith, Mekah, 1981 (Joan and Stanford Alexander Collection)

Exhibitions

Independent Visions

By Szilárd Ujj

Three Hungarian Photographers

Three Hungarian Photographers were shown in the exhibition at the Houston Center for Photography. The three 20x24 prints were part of a group exhibition entitled Three Hungarian Photographers that hung at the Center for six weeks this fall during the first leg of its tour in the United States.

At first glance the three nudes against black background looked like ancient, classic statues where time became the second artist. But on closer view, the straight lines of the "blocky" limbs, the graphic outlines of pubic hair and strung nipples on dropped bodies gave them away for what they were: staged nude photographs posed with slight variations. The head, arms and legs were nearly covered and blocked off by pieces of black cloth. A single label described the title both in Hungarian and English: "1988/1989," by Szilárd Ujj. I wondered whether they were created and printed this impressive panel for her American debut? The surprise came when I learned that these were self-portraits. When a unique idea! I had never met Ujj before, nor had I heard about her during my recent visits to my former homeland, Hungary.

The images were visually striking in their enhanced graphic quality. They weren't sexy by a long shot, nor were they masterpieces of photographic composition, but they looked very different, thought-provoking and had an aura about them that lingered in the room. But then, again, they looked tragic and forlorn, especially the one in the middle. Here, the spotlight illuminated the body from a lower angle, whereby the large black holes under the breasts and the stomach near the torso took on a tortured look.

I hadn't got rid of the thought that with these self-portraits, Ujj may have been commenting on the idea to symbolize the European Woman whose agony became perpetuated in this century through two World Wars, the Holocaust, the Cold War along with its Iron Curtain, and the commencement of the Nuclear Age.

Later, on the opening night of this exhibition and the morning after at a workshop, I met Szilárd Ujj and her fellow artists from Hungarians, Irvin Halas and Tibor Vamossy.

Our time together proved rather short. We spoke in Hungarian and too many topics kept popping up that weren't related to analytical inquiries about their works on display. Besides, at that time I had no idea that soon after we left Houston I would be asked to write this review.

When asked whether she was a serious student of applied photography, Ujj simply told me that she was not a photographer and that she used this medium only when the realization of a particular idea calls for the photo camera. As it turned out, she is a writer, a singer and a filmmaker in Budapest. But this makes things more exciting. To create nude images with the camera always presents unexpected difficulties. Yet Ujj seems to have mastered the complexities of the task rather well.

All three of them seemed familiar with the works of their late compatriots Sandor Molykay-Nagy, Martin Manika, Attila Vereossy, Robert Cupa and Bunsai (János Grósz-Halász), but claimed no affinity with the style or the school of thoughts of any of these masters.

However, each spoke with affection about Korovics, probably because he was the master of unique personal statements that he so subtly encoded in his images. Halas spoke enough English to get by. Vamossy's vocabulary was very

Paul Strand, Gustav Lodahl, Georgetown, MT, 1927-8 (Gey Black Collection)

The photography component of The Prints & Eye exhibition attracted justified interest, and we can hope that it will also create some new photography collectors. We can hope that future shows like this one can be as rich and varied.

Anne Roberts is a photographer, artist, and writer living in Houston.

Houston Center for Photography

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limited and Ujj spoke no English. Whenever needed, the curator, PR
person and organizer of this traveling exhibition, Johan E Jacobs, was
on hand. He is a writer and expert on Central European art photography
(what we call Eastern Europe is geographically and culturally
known as Central Europe). Jacobs, an American who lives in Austin,
had gotten acquainted during his frequent visits to Hungary with
these three artists at Budapest’s LIJÉT GALÉRIA,
where he saw their works. However, the real benefactor
behind the scene is George Soros, a Hungarian emigrant who was a
1956 emigre who was successful in New York and now wants to
make good fortune with the less fortunate
in his old country. Jacobs knew of him and applied to the Soros
Foundation for a grant on behalf of Halász, Varnagy and Ujj the rest, as
they say, is history.

When I received the invitation to the opening of Three Hungarian
Photographers, my first thought was whether I should go and see
photography done by "straightshooters of government-sponsored Socialist
Realism." But, instead, I encountered a new breed of freelance,
avant-garde art photographers of sophisticated and independent
visions.

In the past, in Socialist countries like Hungary, a freelance artist should simply be "set free," in a
Rousseusian sense, by the state and could
sell, because only the state-owned firms and corporations were able to support or buy art. What
made things worse was that neither the public at large nor the officials of the Ministry of Culture were
trained or educated to be qualified critics of experimental art in
the realms of the visual media.

According to Varnagy, even the offices of the film and television corporations who can commission
art work and finance exhibitions in Hungary or abroad, simply can’t
comprehend the public relations or advertising values that could fol-
low such proactive support of the arts. Thus, the official motto for
artistic creativity remains standstill and reactionary attitude toward the
traditional.

Artists who dare to cross the fine
toward professional background. Only by wearing many
hats can they survive and succeed.
In this way, some "legitimate" jobs
make the pennies, while part-
time experimentation provides
the spiritual nourishment and a hope for the future.

Of the three Hungarian artists, only Halász makes his living exclu-
sively with the photo camera. He shoots advertisements. His clientele
include firms and fellow artists
working in various components of
advertising departments that are
part of large corporations.

And now, with these multi-image
photographic abstracts, via this
travelling exhibition in the United States,
he has entered the international arena of renowned heavy-
weight theirs of the past and present.
Yet, Halász seems confident. He
thinks that the medium’s experi-
mental potential remains infinite,
especially in the realms of manipulated images. Here at the Center,
his main piece wins the “Answer”
1980-81 40x55 rural composed of
nine photographs fitted tightly
in three rows. The images include segments of typed pages from an inventory of photo supplies in
Hungarian, a pile that looks like literature, material and parts of a
lengthy questionnaire in English he received in Budapest in 1988 from Jacobs.

Next came five 30x24 panels each carrying four frames that reveal Halász as master of visual poetry.
"Tribute to Terta Szentes of 1849"
showcases the blacks and white compositions
include what looks like multi-layered arrangements of glass plates
with postage newspaper articles, clips
of logos and slogans in different lin-
ages. Often, the reflection of some glass plates being household
objects and bricks, bricks, into the
field of view. Halás’ technique is so
simple or clever that sometimes it’s
hard to tell when he employs multi-
ple exposures and when he shoots
straight through the mirror of partial
overlapping glass plates arranged
in various angles, or does both.

In the second frame of the first
"sonnet" is a printed announcement of his very first photo exhibition at the Budapest University of the
Arts. The moody sequence ends with a reflected portrait of Robert
Frank, whose face was destined to be squeezed into the extreme lower
right corner of the center of the portrait. Halás’ show strikes me as a frag-
nished diary: a visual trip back on Memory Lane.

It took a multimedia professional
such as Varnagy, who is a painter,
graphic artist, art theoretician and
director of the LIJÉT GALÉRIA,
to contemplate a past approach in
creating photographs for his photo-
graphic debut in America. "Photographs are the key to photog-
rphy," said Molnár-Nagy in his book View in Motif. And it
seems that Varnagy went one step
further when he made his photo-
graphs without laying any object on
the photo paper. As far as we
know, he may not even used a lens
in the enlarger. He, probably, added himself only with the blades of the
cuad and the light source of the
enlarger to create his black rectan-
gles.

However, he introduced a visual
twist to finish his prints. All four of
Varnagy’s neatly printed 12x18
prints were done with double expo-
sures. The first ones became the
basis of the photographs: four 71/2 x
91/2 upright, solid black rectangles,
while the much shorter second exposure without usual blades and no film carrier in the enlarger resulted in partial eclipses of the rectangles by the created dark cero-
ras measuring about 11 inches in diameter.

The Hungarian artists were eager
to talk about the great changes in
Hungary, Poland and the Soviet
Union, but remained tongue-tied about the particulars of their highly
personal style and the mode of their
creative processes. They seemed to prefer to leave all that to the inter-
pretation of the beholder.

Regarding the unique creative
intent, form, style and communicative
substance, there is a great deal of originality and artistic, courage in
Varnagy’s work that are refreshing
even here in the United States.
And that goes for Ujj’s tonics and
Halás’ abstract sequences, too.

Bela Leghi is a Houston-based photogra-
phic and pre-press director of educational
materials. His TV documentary entitled
Andor Kertes: A Poet with the Camera
promised at PBS in 1990.
EXHIBITIONS

INTERRUPTED VISUAL STORIES

By Johannes Birring

Vernon Fisher, an exhibition, was held at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, from September 9 - November 5, 1989. The exhibition was curated by Hugh M. Danks and Madeleine Grysevitch. It was first presented at the Jeu de Paume Museum of Modern Art, Paris, before traveling to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; CAM, Houston; and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas (February 11 - April 8, 1990).

As I try to remember what I remember more concretely in Veron Fisher's narrative, text or visual texts, the images, I recall a statement the artist made for the 1984 exhibition at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Smithsonian, Washington, D.C.).

"Any corporeality that we experience in the world is to bring it. Unities is not inherent in nature, but a net-like grid or network of nature when there is something we want." What Fisher's art wants, it seems, is to pursue the uncertainties and connect the in the narrative, polysemic, polyphonic and impure experiences that are the ground for the figure of order. Their figure, like the net with which one tries to organize one's perceptions, sticks in my mind. The exhibition Vernon Fisher at the Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston is a major career survey that chronicles Fisher's narrative art from the mid-seventies to the late eighties. The striking syntheses of mediums (text, painting, drawing, photographs, sculpture, found objects) and the overall thematic organization of some of the installations still belong a child-like, yet sophisticated, sense of irony which creates havoc with the idea that our perceptions and systems of perceiving (optical, linguistic, conceptual, scientific, etc.) could actually exist or co-exist in reality.

"With the help of the 'Children's Guide to Seeing,' thoughtfully provided by the CAM, I find many part a wall of text and neon light ('Bansouled,' 1986) repair directly onto the entrance wall to the back of the museum, and to Fisher's 'Show and Tell' triptych of 1981. On the left, a photograph on laminated paper shows two fishermens proudly displaying their catch. The text (quoted below) is stenciled directly onto the entrance surface. In the middle, a blackboard is spraddled with white paint spots. Perhaps, visible, the word 'snow' is written across its surface with the chamois hand of a child. Over the image of the small cut-out figure of Anna Fritz, a character from the comic strip "Nuts!"

One little girl never brought anything to show us. Other children might bring an authentic Indian head-dress acquired on a vacation in Arizona, or a Civil War sword handed down from Great Granddad, but whatever she could find and make. "Don't, do you have anything to show us today?" she only smiled at the top of her head and shook her head violently from side to side."

"Then one long after her turn had mercifully departed, she finally left her seat and walked to the bottom of the class. With everyones's startled attention she began. "Today on the way to school I found something that I want to share. ... She held her arms stiffly out in front of her and began slowly drooping into pieces of shredded Khema. "Sono," she said. "Snow."

To ask for the unity of this triptych is to bring several levels of communication ("show and tell") into collision, and both the visual and the verbal charm, like Aunt Fritz's bland smile, begin to create a disturbing syntactical sequence (left to right, right to left) that makes the familiar cultural constructions (Bibing, vacation, classroom, comic strip) slide into a self-interpreted, inconclusive and precarious con
textualization. The image of the fishermens cannot be read as the same time as the text is being deciphered and text in fact generate illustrous fantasies of meaning that remind us uncomfortably of our desire, to connect words or stories to the pictures and/or the world we see.

Vernon Fisher, an exhibition presented matter-of-factly, without descriptive title, takes us deep into a placeless and unassimilable American universe of signs that make reference to the geography (desert, seas, freeways) and topography (sense culture, science) of an adolescent country which has already, and perhaps irretrievably, lost the innocence of the dream on which it is and its pursuit of the freedom to discover, name, and con
cerne was founded. Fisher's work traces a course of failed originality, challenging, since more existentially

Footnotes
SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

By Lynn M. Herbert

Dick Arentz: Platinum and Palladium Photographs were on exhibition shown in Gallery X at the Houston Center for Photography, November 11 - December 31, 1989.

Dick Arentz has been on the road the past two years traveling in Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia and Arkansas. He uses a large format (12 x 20") Schaefer & Fomar bellows camera and then contact prints the negatives to make platinum and palladium prints. Arentz isn't the type to buy film at the airport or go on a trip without some notion of what he's looking for. Walking through his exhibition at the Houston Center for Photography, one could see that Arentz was still seeking out traditional landscapes with awe-inspiring potential when put through his masterful printing process. Yet, upon closer examination, one could also see that Arentz's eye had done a bit of shifting into new territory. Technique is very important to Arentz as it would have to be for anyone with the patience to pursue his painstaking process. His more traditional landscapes have a romance and poetry about them that is reminiscent of 19th century photography. In "Dogwoods #1, Bernheim, KY." thousands of sparkling white flowers dance against a background of dark trunks showing off platinum's expansive tonal range. In "Tom H. Thomas, WV." a forest cloaked in fog becomes so otherworldly and ethereal that even Stephen King would be hard pressed to create an habituation for it. And "Cumberland Falls, KY." becomes picturesque with its smooth velvety water and seemingly endless detail of trees and rock formations. Even audient cynics could find poetry in nature in these prints.

Arentz is best known for his "pure" landscapes, but in recent years, he has also made note of the numerous ways in which man is conflicting himself on nature. He can be subtle as with the lone white fence quietly crossing the fields in "Pleasant Hill, KY." or with the "Tim-N-Tane" and "Sois & Stephen" type graffiti scribbled on the roadside cliff in "Route 77, KY." He can also be less than subtle is in "Mazie, KY." where a house not only has a satellite dish square in the front yard, but that satellite dish has a large Jesus painted in it with the message, "He is praying for you. Cut all your cars on him." Other nature invaders include a basketball net pushed in a forest back and a miniature golf course of poured concrete in the middle of a wood. Let us hope all hope, nature can also be seen fighting back as in "Wall, Pocahontas, VA." in which a titanic vine has climbed over a tree after many years of the Coca-Cola advertisement painted on the side of a brick building.

These photographs of nature-occupied glories and man-doing battle with nature comprise most of the exhibition, but a few additional images suggest that Arentz may be heading in a new direction. In these images he seems to be more free-wheeling and less of a slave to his large format camera and printing technique. The results are images that combine nature and that which is man-made, but in a new surreal way. In "Glebe Farm, AR." hundreds of glowing white turkeys are swarming about in the crowded confines of their commercial pen. It is a startling and puzzling image. And, at first glance, "Silver Beaches #1, FL." looks like another Arentz landscape: more trees along another waterfront. Yet a closer look reveals two pumpkin-headed ghosts swinging from the branches and a lone man tucked in the shades of a trunk. All kinds of questions arise in the viewer's mind as to what the case with surrealism. These two images are more intriguing than the more predictably surreal "Stirling Drive-In, WV." with its abandoned carousel horses scattered in a field. Yet, "Stirling" serves as a logical transition from the more conventionally Arentz manipulating battle with nature images into the world of the surreal.

It is encouraging to see Arentz going in this new direction. His technique is no burdenome, it all too often seems to stagnate artistically. It is timely to comfortably repeat themselves endlessly. In his new, more surreal work, Arentz's content is no longer reliant on his technique. Unlike the so-so landscapes that he transforms into glorious landscapes with his large format camera and platinum and palladium printing, the imagery in these surreal works is powerful enough to survive any of the quick and easy ways to make photographs. How exciting it is to see Arentz finding a new powerful subject matter, and bringing his technical mastery with him.

Lynn M. Herbert is a photo historian living in Houston.
MOVING ON
By Joan Seeman Robinson


There's a saying about the look in the eye of a man who has been burned out in combat: They have the "1000 yard stare." It's an utterly expres- sionless condition of dead-open eyes which look empty as though they've fixed on something indeterminate which is far, far ahead of them. David Douglas Duncan cap- tured it in his photographs of CLS's in the Korean War. The writer James Jones used Tom Lea's famous painting to illustrate it when he pub- lished his account of World War II, The "1000 yard stare." It's not about looking forward; it's about trauma that won't recede. In familiar jargon it's evidence of battle fatigue. In its persistent form it's an aspect of post-traumatic stress syndrome, stemming from combat experiences which are so harrowing, so unanswerable, so unanswerable that the recollection that they tell time and evoke distance. Past and pres- ent collide in the old Vietnam into an interiorized condition-sometimes immeasurably solipsistic, and, all too often, fundamentally.

Fortunately most veterans survive the extreme psychological struggles of war and accommodate themselves in various ways to the inevitable return and the necessary adaptation to civilian life. There is no way that Jean Bogdanoff could have pho- tographed the memories of the seven Vietnam veterans she inter- viewed for her small photo essays: Let Me Tell You Where We've Been: Photographs and Interviews with Seven Vietnam Veterans. But she could record their past and their present and the feelings they express--by interviewing and photographing them.

Prompted by the frequent and well- publicized reports of the many returns who have problems in readjusting, she visited a Veterans Center in Jamaica Plains, Massachusetts, and spent time talk- ing with a number of veterans who got there. This is what veterans centers are for--counseling, of course, but also to provide opportunities for commu- nication about obstacles to effective reentry into and accommo- dation with civilian life. In Rogovin's publication, which she undertook unilaterally and markets herself, the veterans' own narratives accompany each individual set of her pho- tographs and testify what was most memorable and, in turn, most pertinent about their service in Vietnam. Not all the recollections are of traumatic experiences, but that's not the basis for this account. For the most part, it's the pervasive and understandable sense of disillusion- ment, handicap, and loss these older veterans carry with them from the days of their twenties which they recall with such vividness, and which they express in their photographs. Jean Rogovin's photographs should be interpreted as the context of this recounting, and the narrative text accompanying the images of the veterans as they look today.

The subjects are infirmarian women who now is a detective in the Boston Police, a paraplegic army nurse earning her doctorate in Human Services, a veteran from Patterson who became a high school teacher, another who has

Janice Rogovin, Jones Killoy, Hingham, MA, Fourth of July, 1986

since died of Agent Orange-related cancer, an ex-Marine with a degree in psychology who now organizes protests against U.S. intervention in Central America, another who returned to Vietnam to make the internationally acclaimed film, A Separate Peace, and a former machine gunner on an armored per- sonnel carrier who has since become an umpire, again because of Agent Orange-related cancer.

The space between their stories and the photographs, both literally and temporally, is almost unbridge- able for the imagination. In most instances the two mediums are

of real time and the durability of real pain. That's what Rogovin and we both attempt to recon- struct-and it is what the veterans themselves are clearly working to resolve.

In almost all the photographs the subjects are smiling and relaxed with spouses and children, and are at work or engaged in constructive community projects helping young people, sponsoring a memorial ser- vice for a fellow veteran, organizing an anti-war demonstration. The images are black and white, crisp in definition, and photographed in clear daylight or well-illuminated

duty in Vietnam), is also pho- tographed in her living room sitting next to a replica of a memorial to Vietnam nurses. A Puerto Rican veteran is surrounded by squads of little loggers, or by ethnic minority high-schoolers the same age as doffers in the 60's. An Agent Orange victim lies on a hospital bed; another ironic one on a family cot; another wears his prosthetic leg while his little girl saves an American flag. It's the apparent ordinalness of these lives with their slight vestiges of the military which persuades us. The cynicism, the rambling out, and the bit

seems effectively to assure us of the sometimes exceptional ability of some combat veterans to turn destructive and demoralizing expe- riences in socially beneficial directions. These subjects don't act like super-patriots, apologists or advoc- ates for war, or emotional cripples deprived of psychic material. It reminds us that the world goes on, while attempting prodigiously to pro- voke us into imagining what we don't know and haven't experi- enced, and hopefully never will have to go through ourselves.

Footnotes
JOCKS AND NERDS
By Ed Osowski

The concern for the specific 'look' of pieces of fabric-woven, then designed, shaped, and sewn into work wearing apparel—is a distinctly Western phenomenon, and also representative of certain middle-class priorities and aspirations. It requires the luxury of time and money, in other words, the freedom from the controlling concerns of food and shelter, to allow one to care about fashions and about the clothes that cover one's body.

For men, the concern has traditionally, given their ability to maintain their positions in public icons depends on their frequent appearances in the press in clothing that enhances their appeal to society's appetite for the romantic or the adventurous, taking a keen interest in clothes has been a task better left to one's wife (whether she was choosing items for herself or for her partner). Or, the concern was a sign that one was homosexual and, in the stereotyped language of the heterosexual majority, was free of the restraints imposed by wife and family, and possessed the time and money to buy those pieces of apparel that would most enhance one's image as a desirable sexual object. To quote Anne Hollander, what mattered was the covering than the gaudy images and metaphors connected with the style of that covering. Clothes, she writes, are 'objects made of fabric that convey messages beyond the possess of the cloth itself to convey them.' They are the potential elements of creation fiction, enacting romantic meanings, sexual allure, power, and mystery, all dependent on the role (the fiction) the wearer chooses to project.

Richard Marnin and Harold Koda's book is the catalogue of an exhibition, organized at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology, where they both teach, that traces the development of male fashion in the twentieth century. Its illustrations are drawn principally from advertising sources, magazine pages, Hollywood publicity stills, and formal portraits. But its subject is greater than the above summary. For their book substantiates Hollander's claims. The two authors write:

Ceremonial wisdom hints that men dress to be conventional, but those with insight into male nature might hold that men dress to reality alter, to become themselves being someone other than themselves.

Martin and Koda divide their discussion among twelve types, the two named in the title, and ten others: the worker, rebel, cowboy, military man, hunter, sportsman, hipster, College, businessman, man about town, and dandy. There is considerable overlap (and confusion) in their effort to maintain these distinctions. They call these twelve types 'identities,' suggesting that there is some authentic psychological truth behind each type (and style) and that the man who chooses that look. One person can hold his emotions in tightly, is a team player or possesses an ego that thrives on a sense of being unique, is concerned with power and prestige or is free from such restraints. But, in truth, each style is a fiction, a creation. Each is a willed and deliberate choice of a look that betrays how archetypical to the notion of psychological 'identities,' these looks actually are.

How iconoclastic style is become clearer in the chapter titled 'The Worker.' From a 1987 series of advertising photographs prepared for The Gap clothing store chain by Luanne Stadler, they select three examples (pp. 54-55). Men, all handsome, young, and innocent, pose in blue jeans, denim shirts, and Stetson hats. The principal photographer faces a male and female couple, two mythical creatures who, in their youth and innocence, seem to exist in a world before corruption and echo connections with the first couple, Adam and Eve. Behind them the land diminishes into endless possibilities. That this couple has never 'worked' at anything more difficult than posing for the photographer is apparent. His shirt is freshly creased, his hat new. And she, despite the leather work glove on her left hand, with which she tentatively touches the man (and demonstrates who in this couple possesses the power and makes the decisions), has knotted a silk scarf around her neck.

Luanne Stadler, image for advertisement for The Gap Workforce clothing, 1987

Dorothy Lange, Cafe near Pismo, California, 1956

The Gap series is especially interesting because it actually used a classic Dorothy Lange photograph ('Cafe near Pismo, California, 1956,' p. 54) to introduce it and, ostensibly, to set its tone. The Gap photographs are realistic images that try to suggest that the wearer of these products will assume the freedom, purity, and determination that we associate with the outdoor worker.

In Lange's image the subject wears clothes similar to those worn by Stadler's models: a man in jeans, work shirt, and black cowboy hat, not on a bar. But, if his clothing could be called props, his context belies any connection between Lange's work and Stadler's. A juke-box, coin-operated walk telephone, and cigarette machine fill three-fourths of the space and capture sharply the most visible light in the photograph. Advertising dogs hang from the walls behind him. Lange has photographed in a dark, inky light in fact, at the photographer's center is a large rectangle of blackness. Lange's subject waits for the telephone to ring, for the juke-box to play for something or someone to interrupt his isolation. Her photographs are heavy with silence and loneliness. In Stadler's photographs that most closely resembles Lange's, the model is not alone, at a bar, a coffee cup to his right. But his languid pose and passive demeanor are not the signs one reads in Lange's photographs, whose worker wears the wall has a job tomorrow, who, like the antecedents in Lange's WPA photographs, faces the loss of his farm. The greatest risk Stadler's models face is losing the crease in their clothes. Only the most naive reader of Stadler's work will fail to see that this model's clothes and the clothes are all pass, all style, all fiction.

From the same chapter comes Michael Dufner's 'Three Working Men, 1940.' (p. 48). Martin and Koda describe it this way:

Michael Dufner's photographic chronicle of the men in the small Southern town of Elder Springs, Arkansas, during the Second World War is an essay in style. On this occasion, rather than get up and go to work, they are dressed for the day. The figure of the left wears men work clothing, the center of the middle class, the right a middle class "worker." That clothes equalize the effect, however, in the informality of their open collar and unpressed style.

Juxtaposed with Dufner's photographs is Herb Ritts' 'Body Shop,' Fred, 1987, (p. 49). Fred appears to be a worker in a car repair shop. But he is, as he says, not a worker in the ordinary sense of the word; he certain is not employed at the shots where our automobiles are repaired. Rather, charms dropped across his broad enormous and well-muscled back, leather bands tightened on his wrists, his coverall umpolled, his leather apron hanging loosely (and melodically) behind him, Fred is employed in the 'body shop' of homosexual longing and fantasy. His pinkie ring is perhaps, like this, tell-tale that Fred's work consists of developing his body into an object that can find homosocial fantasies.

Dufner's three workers face us squarely, each man conveying his own identity he brings to the world to us. Ritts' Fred, his face turned from us, as if he is not ready behind for the dwelling place of fantasy. Just how removed Ritts' photographs are any real effort to convey authentically the look of a "worker" is made clear by considering Lewis Hine's 1921 "Mechanic and Steam Pump" in the recent exhibition. Photography: The Machine Age at
Herb Ritts, Body Shop: Fred, 1984

Advertising and editorial photographers from sources like Gentleman's Quarterly, Vogue, Hommes, Esquire, and M form the bulk of Martin and Koda’s images. But they also rely heavily upon Hollywood publicity stills, many by unknown photographers, from the Kobal Collection. Apparently a very rich source for fashion images, the Kobal Collection is nowhere identified by the authors. To be fair to Martin and Koda, Jocks and Neds is not a history of the male fashion photographer. And expecting it to be such is to judge the book unfairly. As I wrote in my opening paragraphs, a hint of homosexualelligies clings to any interest in the male fashion photographer, but it seems unremarkable that a photograph like "Joe Colby in Laurel Canyon" (p. 106), in which the subject has been photographed as if seen through a peephole camera, participates in some understated homosexual flavor that manages to survive in a book note-worthy for the images that it does not include. Discounting any editorial or copyright reasons that may have prevented the authors from using Bruce Weber’s famous series for Calvin Klein underwear, for example, the book seems tame. Unlike the history of female fashion photography, which is well documented, the history of its male counterpart remains to be published. A surprising discovery, Jocks and Neds makes it clear that images never intended to illustrate fashion—portraits of Montgomery Clift (p. 171), Jerry Porteplant Morgan (p. 145), Winston Churchill (p. 150), Henry Luce (p. 151), and Jean Cocteau (pp. 172-173)—to cite several examples—are among the sharpest in their documentary and metaphorical qualities in the book. What Martin and Koda have compiled is a fascinating, if at times stringently coded, collection of photographs, linked by a text that is, at times, obvious and elementary. Vanity, of course, lies behind the notion of adorning the body. And it is the original source of that word, from the Latin "vanus," which remains to be fully explored. In the secularization of culture that marks this century, having goods has essentially replaced efforts to achieve grace. And, like their use by the recent Egyptians, acquiring goods has also become a way to deny the onslaught of age and, ultimately, to deny death. The fashion photographer, in service to the world of advertising, can only afford to confront indirectly the corporeality of the flesh. Other messages—its encoding of "values" like strength, sexual desirability and power, rhetoric, violence—form a subtle web around the male fashion image. Clothing is rhetorical and, to quote Hollander one last time, speaks a "poetic language" in which shapes are "functional but symbolic." The strength and appeal of fashion photography lie in its language of metaphor and meaning, in its ability to reveal persuasively the spirit of its time, the personality of its subject, and, most difficult to assess, the desires of its viewers.

Footnotes
2. Hollander, p. 5.
3. Hollander, p. 5.
7. Hollander calls such decorative use of clothing, removed from its ordinary purpose, "functional but symbolic and decorative." (p. 12), with "no logical generic" (p. 72). The apron, no longer used to protect the body, becomes drapery that adds "the flavor of luxury" to work should be an autarchic representation (p. 12).
8. In Ritts’s matching photograph of Fred, Fred with Ties" (not illustrated in Jocks and Neds), Fred has turned to the camera. The chains replaced by a large medallion that hangs on his chest, in his arms holds as it he holds a tie in each hand. His hair, we can now see, has been artfully "disarranged." His torso is turned in a baroque and revealing way. He averts his eyes from the viewer because to confront us directly would break the magic spell of his sexual allure, an issue Durremier’s three men do not face. Martin and Koda’s reading of the Ritts photograph is almost humorous in its effort to sum up the obvious content of the image. They write, "In this a case a standing figure, his body here from the waist up, achieves mythic presence through his physical energy and his pose, as well as through his body’s defining—his leather apron, covers, and heavy boots—which establishes a continuity with the world of work. (p. 46). Ritts has now been employed by The Gap to produce a series, featuring "real" people (New York writers, actors, designers, editors) while wearing the relatively inexpensive clothes The Gap, the underproducers in work with culture, coolness, romance, and some intellectual see.

Ed Coady is employed by the Museum of Modern Library. A frequent writer for SPOT, he also occasionally reviews books for the Houston Post.
The Greening of Houston
For the past 14 years a private nonprofit corporation has worked to preserve and improve green space in Houston. The Houston Parks Board believes a strong parks system means a high quality of life and a strong future for Houston's economic development. This year the Parks Board is joining the National Celebration of the Outdoors in commemorating the 30th anniversary of Earth Day by pledging to create a world-class parks system in Houston before the year 2000. Please join this celebration and pledge your help. Call 845-1036 for information about how you can be a part of the ‘Greening of Houston’. 

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Photo by Larry Gatz. All imaging and special effects were accomplished using specialized computer graphics hardware and software. Processing was performed by a Linotype Raster Image Processor and a single high resolution negative was output via a Linotype L-300. No manual stripping was required.
autonomy and sexual freedom and her role as a member of a community. Mulvey sees parallels between such a protagonist and the female viewer, who in her search for pleasure in the movie between aggressive and passive roles (p. 30).

"Afterthoughts" is a relatively short essay which makes brief and surprising reference to Ford in the dual and Stella Dallas. This essay is disappointingly disjointed in its approach, as if written in a rush of enthusiasm by a woman.”

On Mulvey’s positive response to Corki, Stanley Cavell has independently developed a quite complex theory of the presence of actors in film that emphasizes the passivity of certain specific roles, notably Cary Grant or Greta Garbo, and in its 1970’s and 1970’s comedies of remarriage. Cavell argues that this passivity resembles that of a woman’s sexual and emotional insecurities in movies. Mulvey’s female spectator’s enjoyment of the new genre of mainstream, successful Hollywood films with active (and even sexually or economically exploitative) female protagonists, such as the Black Mail, Working Girl, Bull Durham... It is also frustrating that Mulvey never recognizes the richness of a variety of social/feminist criticism. On “Mulvey’s thesis, a theory devised to describe European white, bourgeois society.”

The sphinx significantly presents Mulvey’s argument about nuclear family structure which is far from standard, and to recognize a filmic world with only one kind of oppression—sexism. Hence neither “VP’ and NC” nor “Afterthoughts” provide theoretical assistance in approaching and analyzing conventionally narrative films which present 

"in their traditional ways of looking at the nature of society and at the essence of individuality. Mulvey has in mind, and in Cultural Studies, "Melodrama Inside and Outside the Home, she traces links between Hollywood films of the 1920s and 1930s and the vaudeville and nineteenth-century melodramas. This essay (publ. 1985, "Melodrama Inside and Outside the Home", 1987). She illustrates how the genre of melodrama

"in the 1920s may be seen to date from the 1920s. We are left to generate our own conclusions about the separate narratives and the complex relations which exist between theatrical and political power."

In 1983 essay "Dialogue with Spectatorship” reviewing work by Barbara Kruger and Victor Burgin, she emphasizes these artistic abilities to bring the pleasure of active interpretation of mystery and unresolved narratives to their works. Both artists refuse simplistic male/female dualisms by revealing masculinity as itself a type of masquerade, one with tricks and vulnerabilities.

In part what I analyze about the category of on Kahlil and Modotti the authors’ efforts to locate both artists within the time period and culture in which they practiced. The authors discuss the impact of the Mexican setting in terms of the Revolution, the "Mexican Renaissance” and its reclamation of Mayan heritage, and folk art traditions. They refuse to succumb to overly neat and simplistic

"Sphinx from Olympia" she would reject it altogether. But instead she champions experimentation with narrative. She argues that feminist filmmakers cannot pursue one potential avant-garde path of eschewing narrative altogether. "Feminism is bound to its politics, experimentation cannot exclude work in context. (p. 113). Noticing that the basic structure of any narrative is tripartite—"motions from opening scenes to some disruptive action and then back into a state of arousal—Mulvey hopes that this will allist some room to move beyond simple dualisms. She now sees some of her own techniques in her earlier films as too limited by their inscription in a dualistic/oppositional stance. They used various methods to counter the traditional expectations of filmic narrative. These strategies, however, depend on acknowledging the dominant codes in the very act of negating itself; it could only be through an audience’s knowledge of the dominant that the avant-garde could acquire meaning and significance. (p. 164)

"Instead, Mulvey now emphasizes the middle stage of narrative in which there is mystery, disruption, pursuit of knowledge, and the absence of closure. She refers to this as the stage of the Sphinx, of riddles and "liminality" (existing outside boundaries of ordinary experience). She examines an individual’s occupation of this phase to that of a culture by talking about the role of central, prescribed periods permitting eruption beyond usual norms and laws. According to Mulvey, when an individual is culture, it lim is seen to know the knowledge and change—and thus it resembles someone seeking self-knowledge through psychoanalytic practice, which also emphasizes open narratives (p. 151). In general, she writes, it has been a goal of feminism to reflect the way in which our society narratives itself (p. 197).

As theoretical constructs the notions of riddling, liminality, and unknown narratives, I will read Mulvey effectively in her own criticism. For example, in her 1983 essay "Dialogue with Spectatorship" reviewing work by Barbara Kruger and Victor Burgin, she emphasizes these artistic abilities to bring the pleasure of active interpretation of mystery and unresolved narratives to their works. Both artists refuse simplistic male/female dualisms by revealing masculinity as itself a type of masquerade, one with tricks and vulnerabilities.

In part what I analyze about the category of on Kahlil and Modotti the authors’ efforts to locate both artists within the time period and culture in which they practiced. The authors discuss the impact of the Mexican setting in terms of the Revolution, the "Mexican Renaissance” and its reclamation of Mayan heritage, and folk art traditions. They refuse to succumb to overly neat and simplistic contrasts between Kahlil and Modotti’s very different sorts of "feminist aesthetics" (one appositely emphasizing the "private," the "public"). They argue that both women's art has a "female specificity of one sort because it is based in their bodies. For Kahlil this involved the paralleled her paintings of martyrdom and emblematic art and her own acute physical suffering, or between female masquerade and nature seen as a construct of signs. For Modotti it involved a continuing effort to reverse the look directed at her (not least by Edward Weston, her photographic mentor) because of her beauty. Mulvey and Wellen describe her as using, but ultimately failing to move beyond, the female aesthetie she adopted from Weston to record the politically biased messages she wished to transmit.
concerning the expression of women and peasants.

Still, there is a real question whether this or similar critical essays require the theoretical burden of Mulvey’s later pieces. These combine an unassuming rhetoric of psychoanalytic theory with its bold generalizations (and jargon) with a strange tenacity of actual social implications.

Patriarchy is founded on rites and rights of inheritance and exchange of women that neutralize a neotest.

ic violent barbarism (and constitute the base for a symbolic order. The idea that this symbolic dependency shall be used for the repression of the primal, pro-Oedipal father to thus cure culture to continue to be illegal, and violence and passions that claim to be guardians of the law and defense against those are regenerated by the violence that lies behind patriarchal authority...

Perhaps even the lack of recognition is significant, remaining rather in symptomatic social and aesthetic form, but afflicts our society (p. 199).

It is really plausible to think that history over the flag or the crucifix displayed in a bottle of urine stems from repressed anthropomorphic desire for, and rage against, a primate father! I am dubious about whether patriarchy’s more recent and visible forms are prone to these threats to abortion rights, free expression, etc. Can best be illuminated by a psychoanalytic approach or constituted by a kind of feministic art using alternative narratives which emphasize curiosity and refusal of closure.

Though Mulvey considers herself a materialist (and she does, for example, relatively unknown materialist analyses by Soviet folklorist Victor Proshkov or Oedipal narratives), the real base of all filmmaking, criticism, and theory is psychoanalytic. In this book the reader will find no discussions of how psychiatry and psychology help illuminate or provide a basis for concrete reactions to the disorders that psychiatry has created for British art schools and universities, increased censorship and threats to artistic freedom in both Britain or America, commodification and the “stronger factor” in the arthouse market, or the new management policy of fitting curating at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Explaining in her Introduction why she has new chosen to publish a variety of articles on diverse subjects, including some originally published anonymously and some she herself “perceived as ephemeral” (p. vii), Mulvey writes that perhaps they can be seen as documents of aspects of the women’s movement. She seems to feel a curious and ambitious nostalgia for this movement which by the early 1980s “no longer existed as an organization” (p. 159). She alludes to the “stop-in” dimensions of previous feminist theory and to its current efforts to reconcile theory and practice (p. xiv).

Though her activism extended to such practices as introducing the “Miss World” beauty pageant (see Essay 1, “The Spectacle is Vulnerable: Miss World, 1970”), Mulvey may now consider that she herself was too preoccupied with theory. In a particularly telling confession she observes, “Looking back from the late 1980s, it seems as though deeply important changes were engendering society while I was looking elsewhere, at the cinema or at the unconscious” (p. xii).

The problem of the value of truth came before us—or was it we who came before the problem? Who of us is Oedipus here? Who the Sphinx? It is a resonance, it seems, of questions and question marks.

—Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil

Footnotes


3. The exhibition was titled simply Pride Kariho and Tina Modan, it originated at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1983 and subsequently traveled to other sites in Europe, America, and Mexico.


5. See Marion Keene (note 2 above).

6. My own view is that Mulvey and other psychoanalytically oriented feminist film art and critics should inform themselves about, and address, a variety of critiques of psychoanalysis (including Lacanian psychoanalysis) published in recent years by, among others, analytic philosophers of science (Ashh Graham, The Philosophical Foundations of Psychoanalysis; theories of a deconstructive bent (Jacques Derrida, The Purveyor of Truth, Yale French, 1975), radical psychoanalysts (Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus), socialist feminists (Ann Ferguson, Blood at the Root: Motherhood, Sexuality and Male Dominance), and feminist platoons (see my own essay criticizing Lacan, “Feminism Revealed or Revelled?” in Hispania, The Journal of Feminist Philosophy, 1986). Film theorists continue to assert that “psychoanalysis has shown... x, y, or z,” revealing a naive and unfulfilled faith in the omniscience of “psychic analysis”-an institution troubled in its short history by a remarkable series of expulsions, communications, and other denouncements. The, see, for another interesting example, pp. 59-70 of Bernard Sargent, Homosexuality in Greek Myth. TC by Arthur Goldhammer (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986; originally published in France under the title Homoerotique dans Ies mythologies grecques). Mulvey, who attempts to generate some universal, cross-cultural truths from the Oedipal story, based on psychoanalysis, which purports to be a general theory of human nature, Sargent contextualizes Greek myths to the time period in which they were active and effective, a time period in which particular practices of pedantry-restricted to certain members of the upper-class—were deemed to be the norm. Sargent argues, on the basis of a comprehensive study of all major ancient Greek myths, that Sappho has a particular and singular role in conjunction with pedagogy of a certain type. Thus, like Prieur in The History of Sexuality, he would locate the significance of Greek homosexuality within a specific culture that does not even really have the same concept we have of homosexuality as a mode of orientation attributable to heterosexuality. It strikes me that a materialist analysis could take this notion of relation myths and folklore to the social systems and ideologies of the culture that generated them, rather than to begin from some purportedly timeless and essentialist conception of human nature, its “drives,” etc.

For a quite different feminist account of sex as the unstable failure to move beyond simplistic dualism, see the intriguing account of Page drill, Centers, and Margins: Women and the Pre-History of the Great Chain of Being (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982, Ch. VI).

9. Actually, materialism seems to have had no significant effect on Peng. In the construction of the like Oedipal (at least as Mulvey represents it). One can find a quite similar—and more readable—critical studies of Greek mythology and folklore that have no materialist underpinnings (e.g., the work of Verrall or that of Sargent, etc.).


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