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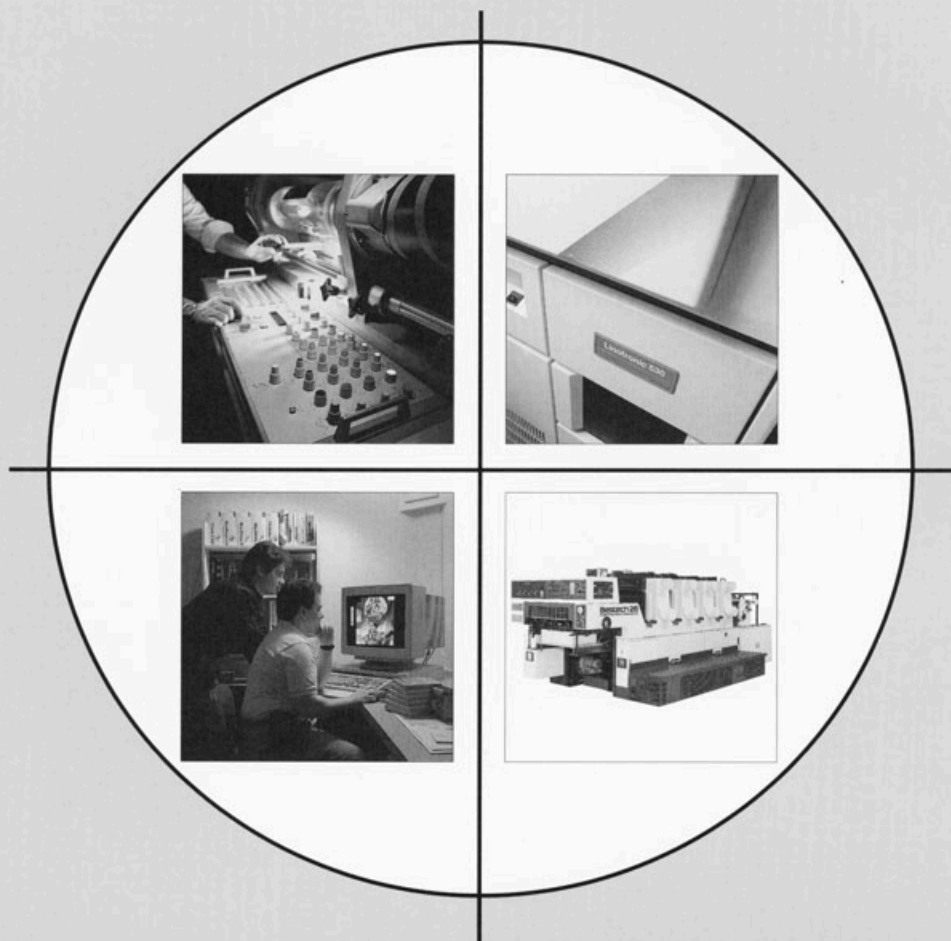
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5 FotoFest Revisited

The event is a Houston original. Many have their own opinions of how successful FotoFest was this year. Were the exhibits up to par? Is FotoFest fulfilling its mission? What's to come in '94? Some of those most involved in this celebration of photography share their views.

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FotoFest '92 had everyone agreeing that it was the best FotoFest yet. The presentation was more coherent, the installation more thoughtful to the viewer and reflective of the art, and the George R. Brown Convention Center gallery more visually attractive. Those that ventured outside the Brown found that the satellite shows also had much to offer.

The reviews in this issue of SPOT were chosen with a balance between the thirty convention center shows and the ninety shows in the other galleries, museums and art spaces in mind; but, an overriding emphasis on the FotoFest '92 theme—Latin America and Europe—was a clear priority. Ultimately, however, this issue was dictated by the photographs presented to FotoFest viewers: exhibitions with an agenda extending beyond the purely aesthetic.

We found that as we were editing this issue, national and world events were affecting the significance of both the photographs and the perspectives of the critics reviewing the exhibitions. This is clearly the case with Linda Benedict-Jones and Chris Johnson's exchange of views on the black British photographers' show, which was written before the riots in Los Angeles erupted this spring; Fernando Castro's exploration into the issues driving Peruvian and Mexican art and politics, written as the upheaval in Peru was taking place; and two non-native-born American students' reactions to the images of the Salvadoran struggle for freedom after the peace treaty in El Salvador had been signed.

The Houston Center for Photography's mission includes putting photography into a social context. This issue of SPOT provides that insight from a multicultural perspective. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we've enjoyed working with this diverse group of writers and examining the influences of the changing world around us.

—Marlee Miller and Maggie Olvey

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Correction In the Spring 1992 SPOT article "The Perspective of Censorship: A Discussion," we failed to credit the Blaffer Gallery for initiating the lecture given by Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center Executive Director Dennis Barrie. The Blaffer was a major funder of the event, which was co-sponsored by the University of Houston's Inventive Minds Speakers Series and the departments of art and drama. We apologize for the omission.

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FotoFest Revisited

Marlee Miller

FotoFest has become a Houston institution with the quality of the exhibits improving and the level of visibility around the world increasing each festival year. But the discussion following this month-long international photography celebration is not without contradiction—high praise for its artistic success, but complaints about its overestimated audience and underestimated expenses. Now is the time to ask: What will change in 1994?

FotoFest, the invention of photography dealer Petra Benteler and photographers Frederick Baldwin and Wendy Watriss, was modeled after the "Mois de la Photo" in Paris. The first two festivals in 1986 and 1988 were based at the Warwick Hotel with exhibits installed in sixty-four and eighty-four (respectively) non-profit, corporate, and commercial locations. According to FotoFest, no official attendance figures were recorded for the first two festivals, but the published estimate for 1986 was 175,000 people. The third festival, FotoFest '90, which was located in the George R. Brown Convention Center, had an estimated 25,000 people attending, with 50,000 viewing the seventy-five satellite shows. This year, 33,000 people visited FotoFest '92 at the Brown Convention Center and another 215,000 visitors attended the ninety satellite shows, according to FotoFest. Viewers came from thirty-five states, and twenty European, eleven Latin American, and four Asian countries.

The budgets for the first two festivals held steady at \$500,000. In 1990, the budget quadrupled to \$2 million in cash and in-kind expenses, with a \$400,000 debt resulting. Two years later, the budget for the fourth festival was \$2.6 million in cash and in-kind expenses, resulting in a \$400,000 debt and a carryover debt of \$200,000 from the previous festival. This debt has already been reduced substantially, according to FotoFest. Executive Director Harla Kaplan believes all the remaining debt will be paid off by December as a result of "knocking on a lot of doors." FotoFest hopes to increase its base of support by expanding year-round activities such as the Literacy Through Photography program conducted by David Brown in conjunction with the Houston Independent School District.

Much of the dramatic increase in the budget, according to Kaplan, can be directly attributed to the 1990 move to the Brown Convention Center, which includes rent, utilities, security, construction, labor, and transportation costs. This move was necessary to centralize operations and clarify FotoFest's identity. The convention hall enabled FotoFest to create a unified artistic concept, and allowed control over the viewing environment through installation design and standardized lighting. FotoFest also gained more curatorial freedom, said Kaplan. FotoFest exhibitions occasionally include controversial material, which often presents approval problems in corporate spaces.

"In some ways, I think you can say that 1990 was the first FotoFest," said Baldwin in a 1991 interview. "It's the first event that is understandable and located in one place. . . . Going into Brown was a quantum leap. It was a huge gamble on our part but it paid off in delivering a major professional festival."

The curatorial responsibility of the festival organizers grew from coordinating the programs of the various spaces around town and providing minimal programming and curatorial services to selecting, transporting, curating, and funding a much more ambitious program. Watriss and Baldwin also curated or co-curated half of the 30 shows at the Brown for FotoFest '92.

The \$600,000 increase in the 1992 budget can again be attributed, in part, to the rising costs of using the Brown, but also for the increased spending on marketing—a "huge amount," according to Kaplan. FotoFest hired an outside consulting firm to coordinate much of its public relations efforts. These expenses aren't projected to be as great for FotoFest '94 because the "breakthrough" of a first year visibility campaign has been done, said Kaplan.

The exhibits themselves also cost more this year. It was the first year FotoFest had a theme. Baldwin and Watriss went to Latin America and Europe to meet with artists and curators, taking a proactive role in FotoFest's artistic vision. Curatorial costs can be substantial and often include travel, air transport, and security

FotoFest '92

Latin America and Europe

The following is an excerpt from the introduction in the FotoFest '92 catalog written by FotoFest Curator Wendy Watriss and President Frederick Baldwin.

Curiously, and coincidentally, one of the greatest movements of people in human history occurred during the first hundred years of photography. From 1840 through the 1940s, more than forty million people left Europe for the Americas. The coming of age of a new economic order made a migration of this scale not only possible but necessary. This process left an indelible mark on all our cultures. It brought to the world both unprecedented prosperity and unprecedented destructiveness. Technology and industrial development were the engines of this migration—and photography was part of it.

It is appropriate in 1992 to look at the importance of these movements and the way they have shaped our world; 1992 represents an unusual intersection of these forces. On one part of the European continent, unprecedented unity between cultures and countries has been achieved—a testament to the inherent strength of European civilization. In another part of the continent, societies are splintering under the resurgence of old enmities. At the same time, the whole population of Europe is in metamorphosis as the sons and daughters of once-colonized peoples seek new frontiers, and even new identities, for themselves.

Across the Atlantic, the countries of Latin America are confronting the heritage of 500 years of European immigration and its insertion into the evolution of pre-Columbian civilizations. Through Spain and Portugal then to The Netherlands and England, gold and silver from Latin America helped initiate the Industrial Age. The legacy of Europe, not only its economic domination but its political culture from colonialism and Christianity to capitalism and socialism, is being re-examined and reshaped by new generations of Latin American scholars, artists, and social activists. Recognizing the significance of these forces, FotoFest dedicated the central part of its 1992 exhibition program to Latin America and Europe.

courier expenses, loan and custom fees, and matting and framing costs. As it had been in the past, however, a number of loan exhibitions were proposed to FotoFest, such as "Modernity in the Southern Andes, Peruvian Photography, 1900–1930," which was brought to their attention by curators Fernando Castro and Peter Yenne.

FotoFest bills itself as the International Month of Photography that "provides an opportunity to see major photographic works by well-known and newly-discovered photographers from around the world." But, FotoFest has added other programming activities over the years, including performing arts, a lecture series, workshops, interactive activities, and the literacy program. For the ever-popular Meeting Place, considered by many to be the "heart of the festival," FotoFest transported and housed nearly 200 distinguished leaders in photography and communications from twenty-seven countries to exchange ideas, develop new projects, and review 500 portfolios by Meeting Place participants. The cost of this single aspect of FotoFest reached \$500,000 in cash and in-kind services in 1992; \$50,000 of this was offset by participant fees.

Quality vs. Quantity

Many have said this year's FotoFest was the best ever. Each of the 30 shows in the Brown had its own clearly delineated exhibition space with its own signature color. Unlike the sun burst configuration of 1990, the 1992 festival was easier to navigate and the signs and labels were clearer, according to many who attended both. Although 75 percent of the display materials from the previous festival were reused, the appearance was improved with paint and plaster.

"It was much, much better this time in the Brown than last time," said Galveston Art Center Curator Clint Willour. "The overall quality of exhibitions in the Brown was greatly improved." While the 1990 festival featured 3,500 photographs, he praised the fact that in 1992 the number of images was reduced to 1,900. The overall level and consistency was there, Willour said, and there weren't a lot of bad photographs.

"Given the size of FotoFest at the Brown, I thought having a theme like Latin America and Europe, and themes within these locations, was a tremendous aid to the viewers—sophisticated or general—because there was a lot to see," said Anne Tucker, curator of photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and a member of the FotoFest Art Board and Board of Directors. "My criticism was that there were too many shows. Linking them made it much more user friendly." She said she visited the Brown exhibitions four or five times and still didn't feel

she had absorbed it all. A major complaint of the general public was that it was overwhelming, Tucker said. "A number of people said they never could get a handle on what they wanted to see," she said, so they didn't go at all. "Even given that the Brown is so large, they could have cut five or six shows easily and not hurt the image that it was a 'grand show.'"

Not all who attended the Brown were overwhelmed. Marianne Caldwell is an avid museum-goer who works at a Houston world trade organization. She found the Brown very inviting: "I think the way they set it up was wonderful. You get a private feeling from the atmosphere. You can focus."

The Brown hosted fifteen European and fifteen Latin American exhibits representing twenty-one countries, tracing historical and social developments through the work of past and contemporary photographers in those nations. More than 60 percent of the work had never left its country of origin nor the geographic region.

As did Willour and Watriss, Houston Center for Photography President Joan Morgenstern pointed to "Surrealism/Czechoslovakia: Karel Teige, 1935–1951," and "Photography at the Bauhaus" as two shows that were particularly outstanding. "The Bauhaus was incredible," said Morgenstern. "I went to see it, I don't know how many times. To go through the Bauhaus and then Teige was so special." Several viewers remarked that the Teige exhibition was a remarkable example of Surrealism and noted the thoughtful juxtaposition of Teige, Bauhaus, and "Art, Industry, and the State: USSR in Construction, 1930–1936" exhibitions.

"Especially with the Latin American show, the introduction of shows never before seen in this country was a tremendous contribution," said Tucker. Some of the pieces were "old friends" for her, such as the Teige and Bauhaus shows, but there were several artists whose work she knew, such as Flor Garduño ("Witness of Time"), and thought it was "wonderful" to see more. She mentioned Grete Stern, who was featured in "Crossing of Cultures: Four Women in Argentina, 1930–1970." Tucker was familiar with her work in Germany but hadn't seen any of Stern's work after she had gone to Argentina, fleeing from Nazism in the 1930s. Tucker was, as was Morgenstern, delighted to be introduced to Luis González Palma ("Núcias de Soledad"). The MFAH purchased González Palma's *La Luna* and hopes to acquire several pieces from other Latin American photographers.

Attendance vs. Audience

With a budget of \$2.6 million, FotoFest's audience and sponsorship must be broad-based. Comparable festivals are confronting the same issues about audience attendance and artistic vi-

sion. As the organizers of the Houston International Film Festival discovered in April of this year, those interested in film are already attending. "I sincerely thought that by offering the city a wider, bigger selection of films, we would increase attendance," Film Festival founder and Director J. Hunter Todd was quoted as saying in a recent *Houston Post* article. "But it appears the base of true film buffs in this city is small, and the festival overloaded them." Todd also said that the reasons the attendance was low at the Film Festival was because the weather was too beautiful, the Houston International Festival was competing for people's time, the *Cosby Show* aired its last episode, and the destructive aftermath of the Rodney King trial had begun. Supporters of FotoFest had their own justifications: there were too many shows, people were reluctant to go to the Brown at night, admission prices were confusing and too high, and the exhibits didn't have enough entertainment value for the general public.

"The question FotoFest has to ask itself is, How important is the gate?" said Tucker. "If that is the goal, then they have to structure accordingly. What I know about attendance is that it is directly related to fame—the degree to which something is known. No question that the largest attendance at the MFA was the Pompeii exhibit. It was not a marketing problem."

Willour disagrees: "Even if you throw in Ansel Adams, it won't draw that many [people]. You reach a saturation level." Willour believes that level has been reached. "They didn't miss anyone who likes to look at photographs," he said. "It's not the kind of thing that gets the attendance of the rodeo. It doesn't matter how long FotoFest has been around. Many of the blockbuster shows at museums don't draw a huge crowd."

FotoFest '94

As of press time, various FotoFest advisory boards were meeting to discuss its future, but even an attempt to decide the direction of the '94 festival won't be made until the Fall. FotoFest '94 may be comprised of four separate curatorial components, to be funded as separate entities, and marketed to distinct constituencies. These four tentative concepts are: The Mind of Japan; Latino Voices in the U.S.; The Environment: A Global Picture; and Fashion and Advertising: The Last Twenty Years. Two options being considered for the location of FotoFest '94 seem the most probable. The preferred choice by FotoFest is to return to the Brown Convention Center with the hall divided into quadrants to contain the four exhibition concepts. FotoFest says this will be possible in 1994 only with substantial advance underwriting for these costs. The second would involve a return to the 1986 FotoFest model with the Warwick Hotel serving as the center for FotoFest's administrative offices and the Meeting Place. The four FotoFest exhibition concepts would be placed at host sites in the museum district, downtown, and Galleria areas, with shuttle buses linking these sites.

The overriding concern of those close to FotoFest is that the exhibitions in the festival are of the highest quality. Kaplan said that FotoFest would only broaden the target audience if the aesthetics didn't suffer. Without a broader local audience, other sources of funding must be found and cost-cutting measures must be implemented. To broaden the audience, FotoFest wants local educational institutions to take over administration and implementation of the lectures and workshops and host them at diverse sites around Houston. To increase national visibility and credibility at home, according to Watriss, FotoFest may develop a traveling exhibitions program. A limited portion of the FotoFest '92 Latin American exhibitions is slated for a high-profile traveling program, accompanied by a scholarly publication to be issued in Fall 1993 by Rice University Press. If this traveling program is successful, FotoFest would consider touring portions of FotoFest '94.

To ensure FotoFest's future, its business forecasts must work in partnership with its artistic vision. Realistic goals and objectives must be set, audiences must be targeted, and its budget must be balanced. If the organizers of FotoFest learn from the lessons of past festivals and organize the next one accordingly, this international celebration of photography has a strong future in Houston.

Marlee Miller is co-editor of *SPOT*.

Doña Flor and Her Two Shamans

Witnesses of Time, Flor Garduño, Mexico, was exhibited at the George R. Brown Convention Center during FotoFest 92, curated by Laura Gonzalez and organized by the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, and Eureka y Eureka, Mexico.

Fernando Castro

A few months ago, the Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes lectured at the University of Houston about the baroque spirit in Latin American art. From Bernini's *Ecstasy of Santa Teresa* in Rome through Aleijadinho's sculpted prophets in Brazil to Flor Garduño's photographs of religious syncretism in Latin America, Fuentes distilled the extravagant substance of the baroque in the New World.¹ The model of cultural hybridization suggested by his lecture is one based on European pictorial schemes modified by forces native to this continent—often to the point where the original scheme becomes merely a façade for the presentation of indigenous themes. The world depicted by Garduño's images is one in which the logic and the energy of those agents of cultural integration lie. In it those incongruous musketeer angels created by the *mestizo* painters of the eighteenth-century escort patron saints, whose real identity is a pagan earth deity.² Garduño's keen photographic sensibility probes into that hermetic yet magical realm strewn throughout Latin America; her ways of depiction, however, do not necessarily belong to that same world. Confusing these two different things has been common in much of the literature about Garduño's images, which more often than not focuses on the referents of her work rather than the work itself.

FotoFest '92 provided us with the unique opportunity to understand Flor Garduño's work by showing "Witnesses of Time," her largest American show yet, simultaneously with other shows that, by contrast, should give us a grasp of the uniqueness of her current work. Perhaps the most important of those shows was of Houston's Museum of Fine Arts' recently acquired collection, "Contemporary Mexican Photography," shown at the Transco Gallery East and West during FotoFest (now on view at the MFAH). There, Garduño's work is pretty much indistinguishable from some of the work of photographers like Pablo Ortiz Monasterio and Graciela Iturbide. The widespread strategy followed by many of the photographers in that show seems to be to capture characters exemplary of Mexican culture against a more or less neutral backdrop—evocative at most because of texture or props.

Flor Garduño, *El Rayo*, Bolivia 1990



Flor Garduño, *Canasta de Luz*, Guatemala 1989

Whether the photographers know it or not, this formula of depiction is a legacy from the traveling nineteenth-century European artists who toured the Western Hemisphere making visual reports for European eyes. Some of these artists were trained academically in the neo-classical or romantic schools of Europe. In the process of depicting the New World, their academic schemes suffered the modifications suggested by Fuentes' model so their work often becomes a mixture of bias, fantasy, and visual record.³

Moreover, the depiction of what is locally commonplace as extravagant is deeply entrenched in the Latin American mind because, in a sense, that mind is both native and alien to the land. In order to become less alien to their own land, and

therefore to themselves, Latin American artists—like Garduño—often look for the characters of their oneiric life in the scenarios of the native cultures around them.⁴ In this quest, there is a sense of urgency derived from a realization that those cultures may soon vanish—taking away part of what the artists themselves are. Their imperiled survival makes it seem as if the very personal art of Garduño were fundamentally an anthropological document.

Nevertheless, it is erroneous to classify her photography as documentary or direct as opposed to artistic, creative, or expressive. As suggested, there is a history of art in Latin America that dissolves that dichotomy. The subject matter of the George O. Jackson show, "The Essence of Mexico," at the Museum of Natural Science, Houston, overlaps with that of Garduño. And yet, Jackson's images are primarily reportage, whereas Garduño's are not. Although many photographers are—like their unused film—pretty unexposed, it is not the case that any photographer is a *tabula rasa*—a blank tablet with no cultural inscriptions on it. Garduño evidences a plethora of cultural and iconographic influences; national as well as global.

Whether she likes it or not, her *Canasta de Luz* (Basket of Light) pays homage to Diego Rivera's 1925 painting *Flower Day*.⁵ Rivera's painting is rooted in the work of those traveling artists alluded to above and concurs with the reevaluation by the 1920s Latin American avant-garde of the Indian or so-called "primitive" cultures of the Americas. But, whereas the nineteenth-century European artist was probably motivated by the picturesqueness of an Indian woman carrying exotic flowers, Rivera may have been inspired by the weight of the symbol of phanerogamic fertility over his generic Indian women. By medium or by

design, in Garduño's photograph that schematic woman has found a face, a light, a moment. In a sense, Garduño is reconstructing the history of her own iconography. That her own first name means flower must not be taken lightly. Is Garduño's image of a white flower tenderly held in rough Indian hands a metaphor of her own work *vis à vis* the cultures she is depicting?

Some of Garduño's detractors object that her images are too concocted. When she speaks about her *modus operandi* she describes herself as a spectator in the theater of life; witnessing how life's scenes unfold before her. Often it is not she who chooses how her characters are to be photographed, she claims, but the actors themselves. Thus, her work assimilates not only her way of seeing but also that of the people she photographs. Like theater, her vignettes mix fabrication with imitation of life—except that the fabricator is not necessarily Garduño herself.

Garduño moves elegantly from the rigidity of a nineteenth-century studio portrait to a modernity of downward and oblique viewing to a precision of compositionally perfect still lifes and animistic landscapes. It is

as if through her, Edward Weston, Tina Modotti, and Henri Cartier-Bresson—all of whom photographed Mexico—became incorporated into Mexican art history. Having started as a painter herself (she regards painting as "her impossible love"), Garduño's art education at the San Carlos Academy must have familiarized her with works of those 1920s Mexican painters who turned their gaze to native themes. Amado de la Cueva's painting *El Torito* (The Bull) is a predecessor of Garduño's own image of the same ritual, and her two images of trees in the show echo Guillermo Meza's *La Milpa*—although *La Milpa* is about death and Garduño's trees are about life. Indeed, if her title, "Witnesses of Time" must resist the Kantian accusation of being a witless platitude—as time makes witnessing or any other consciousness possible—one must rethink the phrase in light of how artists have related to mythical cultures across time. On one hand, artists' motivations to depict their change in the history of art; on the other, the depicted ritual reenacting myths both endures and evolves in itself and in the understanding of the artist of it and of themselves. Myth according to Eliade—and life according to Nietzsche—follow the path of eternal return. Repeatedly we find ourselves in at crossroads where we face the same choices we did before. Only the long distance travelled since the last time makes the situation different—although the mythical mind may not regard as such. If Garduño's Gauguinesque bathers of *Agua* ritually cleanse herself time and time again, she does not do it on the same Heraclitean waters; analogously, neither will artists ever remain in the same relationship to their mercurial subject matter.

What is Garduño's relationship to the rituals she photographs? Often she appears

to be secularizing the rituals by showing us the people behind the costume, the effigy or the mask. (Albeit somewhat materialistically, that would be interesting enough.) At other times, however, she appears to be doing just the opposite; that is, anointing people and nature with mystical or even divine powers. The tornado over Lake Titicaca, which she regards as a gift, is an unlikely apparition that moves one to take seriously the hallowness of that body of water where many civilizations were born. And what of that masked character, deceptively named *Tio Jorge*, demanding from miners either hard liquor offerings or blood? He is one with his mask; almost as if no one were behind the mask or that the mask were not a mask at all. The arcane power of the shaman is never secularized by Garduño; rather, she seems to be married to its mystery. It is only with her best technique and utmost sensibility that she faces the Tarahumara governor and the Bolivian shaman of *El Abuelo del Tiempo*; in the process, even ordinary objects surrounding these characters, like a plaid blanket and the iron picks, undergo a strange transfiguration.

How, if at all, does this new direction in Garduño's work relate to that of her Mexican peers? One thing she does not do that some of her colleagues do, is focus on the impact of politics, technology, and social change on these ethnic groups. Neither is her concern for the material welfare of the people she photographs or about the fate of their cultural beliefs in the modern world. Although other photographers have shared her themes—their individual images must be interpreted in a way consistent with their respective portfolios. Take for instance, Pedro Meyer's *Iguanera* (1983), a character made famous by Graciela Iturbide's *Nuestra Señora de las Iguanas* (1979). One feels inclined to find something shocking in Meyer's portrait of an old *iguanera* (iguana woman); instead, it is the exotic made digestible. Iturbide, using an angle that tends to exalt, follows folk religion in its sanctification of popular idols. Her *iguanera* is a mature, not particularly attractive woman wearing a halo of iguanas. In a sense, Iturbide is following a very current artistic exploration of popular culture in its route to becoming dominant. Garduño's *iguanera* is represented in a way that is classical both in its approach and its penchant for beauty. The black background is no longer a backdrop but a container; a dark celestial sphere where shines the angelic face of a young woman in the constellation of the iguana. It is an image born of popular culture, but no longer as a social phenomenon but as a symbol of something more enduring than particular social circumstances or anthropological peculiarities.

Flor Garduño, *Agua*, Mexico 1983



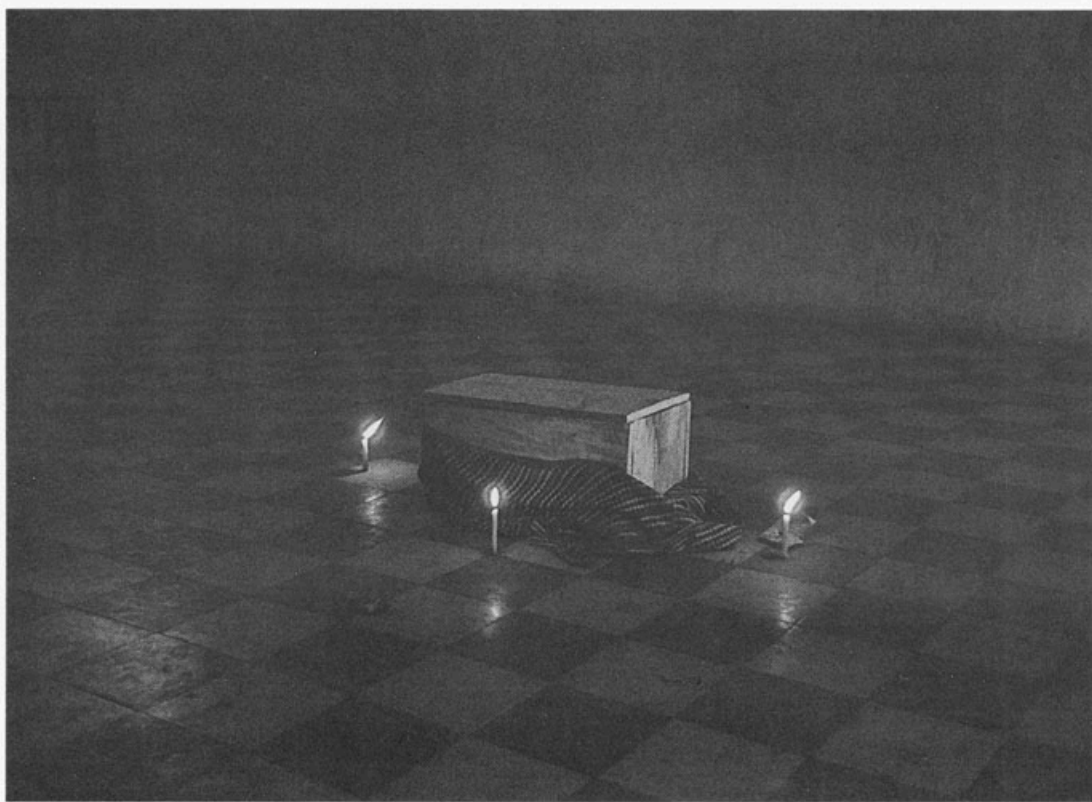
Some of the images by Garduño are absurd to the point of seeming somehow unreal. Although Garduño has on occasion given into the temptation of the comical, it is not comical absurdity which is linked to that unreality but one that is enigmatic and uncanny, and thus inviting further scrutiny. Such is the absurdity of the Indian kneeling before the small equestrian image of Spain's patron saint, Señor Santiago (St. James), slayer of infidels. Absurd because of the Indian's submissiveness to something

approach and adopts unusual angles, which add to the dream-like quality of some of the images, it is to show objects more pagan than Christian; as is the sacrificed llama or the candlelit corn-offering where the plane in which they lie is oblique to the film plane. This syncretic array of approaches can only be rendered harmonious by a mestizo personality that has come to terms with its own schizophrenic nature and a photographer reaching maturity.

With very good intentions, but often

2. "Mestizo" in the Webster dictionary means "a person of mixed European and American Indian ancestry;" but its range must be understood to include cultural as well as racial mixture. As such, it is one of the key notions in understanding Latin American culture.

As to the musketeer archangels, these creatures were concocted by the eighteenth-century mestizo painters of Bolivia and Peru. The logic behind them is the belief—assimilated by their mythic Indian imagination—that the archangels were the soldiers of God. As such, their weapons could be no less



Flor Garduño, *Tres Velas*, Guatemala 1989

so small and so foreign; and ironic too when one learns that "Santiago" was the signal for Pizarro's cohorts to capture the Inca Atahualpa. Perhaps it is an absurdity akin to Surrealism. Indeed, it is hard to keep Surrealism out of one's mind while looking at Garduño's masked rider of the giant turtle—no matter how much explanation one gets about the ritual of fertility involved.

Although two of Garduño's mentors, Manuel Alvarez Bravo and Kati Horna, had associations with Surrealism, she resists the label precisely because it is used as a label. Garduño's resistance is better understood in relation to the powerful influence Horna exerted on her. A self-avowed Surrealist, Horna became the center of the Mexican Surrealist group in the 1940s. Yet,

Horna's relation to the Mexican mythical world was external in the sense that the artist had no roots in that culture (Horna is Spanish-Hungarian). Inspiring as she was, Garduño seeks to distance herself from the intellectualism or psychological automatism of Horna's surrealistic vision so unlike her own.⁶

The container or cloister-like space in many of her images of interiors expose how very Catholic and Mediterranean Garduño's vision is. The image of a small wooden coffin surrounded by candles in a dark room is constructed with an unbaroque simplicity, which recurs throughout the show. Also of Catholic/Indian descent are many of her still lifes put together like *retables*. In those compositions loaded with amulets and symbolic objects, her frontal approach suggests the presence of an altar. When she does depart from that frontal

with not much dexterity, many avant-garde Latin American artists and writers in the 1920s turned their gaze to the native cultures of their respective countries as a source of inspiration for an art that was to be congruent with their times and national character. Some of them looked beyond their national borders and theorized about a Pan-American cultural continuum as the muse of a future, braver art. Flor Garduño's photographic pilgrimage—starting in her native Mexico and going as far as the Bolivian highlands—has fulfilled the promise of those who merely sketched a desirable program. Her subject matter extends to all those native American cultures where myth and its representation in rituals still survive. Although very much in the mainstream of photography, her style bears very personal markings and remains consistent with Mexican and European iconographic traditions. She follows two shamans: one pulls her to the dark confines of a cloister or cave where unspeakable secrets are kept; the other brings her out into bright open spaces, where trees grow and people dance, bathe, eat, sleep, and keep unspeakable secrets.

The book Witnesses of Time, with text by Carlos Fuentes, will be published this year by Jean Genoud, Lausanne, Switzerland. Contact the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, for more information.

Fernando Castro is a Peruvian photography researcher, critic, and curator currently living in Houston.

NOTES

1. Born Antonio Francisco Lisboa in 1738, Aleijadinho ("Little Cripple") was the son of a black slave and a Portuguese father. He lost the use of his hands at thirty and yet continued to work as a sculptor to an old age. Fuentes showed his sculptures of prophets at the Sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matozinhos, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

powerful than the King's soldiers. In the meantime, manuals illustrating the use of the musket circulated in Europe and found their way to America where local painters used them—adding to them the attire of an eighteenth-century European gentleman and the wings of divine troops. Thus, though the materials are European, and the pictorial decorations are hybrid, the logic is native. In other icons, the setting is native, the pictorial conventions European, and although the character portrayed is officially Christian, he clandestinely refers to an Indian pagan divinity. Houstonians may be able to see paintings of those angels in the show of Colonial Latin American art "After the Arrival" at the Transco Gallery East and West.

3. I am referring to artists like Debret, Rugendas, and Alexander von Humboldt. Their occasional fits of fantasy arise from their European mind, which tended to see the natives and their land through the myths available to it—biblical, literary, philosophical, etc. 4. There seems to be a resurgence of this type of artistic quest. Marta Palau, another Mexican artist, presented at the XIX Biennial in Sao Paulo an installation called "Recinto de Chamanes" (Enclosure of Shamans). In the April '92 issue of *Smithsonian* magazine, she says, "Art begins as ritual magic" and is paraphrased as stating that even civilized people carry the memory of magic in their genes. The work of Guatemalan photographer Luis González Palma and Brazilian photographer Mario Cravo Neto (both featured at FotoFest), although following less anthropological strategies than Garduño, also touch upon popular myths.

5. Diego Rivera's paintings of women with flowers recurred for over twenty years: *Flower Seller* (1926), *The Flower Carrier* (1935), *Profile of an Indian Woman with Calla Lilies* (1938), *Nude with Calla Lilies* (1944), *Flower Vendor* (1949), etc.

6. In some of Garduño's images of interiors (and some outdoors as well) there is an intimate, cloister-like space that echoes the work of another Mexican-Spanish Surrealist painter, Remedios Varo. Of course there is also the possibility that said space has a common root in the proximity of both artists to Catholic convents and churches.



Luis González Palma, *Child's Portrait*, 1991

The Force of Grief

Nupcias de Soledad, Luis González Palma, Guatemala, was exhibited at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston during FotoFest '92.

Maria Cristina Orive

In each work, in every exhibit, Guatemalan photographer Luis González Palma speaks of grief. Like a pounding force that echoes through time, pain seems to spy in ambush at every movement, like a stigma. Every title of his exhibits: "Nupcias de Soledad" (Nuptials of Solitude, or better still, Nuptials in Solitude), FotoFest '92; "El Sueño Tiene Los Ojos Abiertos" (Sleep with Open Eyes), Buenos Aires and Paris, 1990; "La Fidelidad del Dolor" (The Faithfulness of Pain), Mexico 1991.

Despite González Palma's relative youth (born in 1957) and his short photographic career of only six years, his work is surprisingly powerful and original, and possesses a defined and personal style clearly rooted in photography.

In *Child's Portrait* (1991) and *Cherubim* (1992), the photographic image becomes the evidence of life, of existence, a testimony against death, time, disappearance or oblivion. Like an artisan of memory, he reconstructs the portraits piece by piece; some pieces are darker than others—

traces of time or suffering?—glued along with ledger paper, another proof of existence, official in this case? The emotional impact grows through the expression in the eyes, the frequent use of religious symbols—crown of thorns (martyrdom)—as well as in the coarse way in which he paints the prints with tar, scratches on the surfaces, and uses nails to hold the images on the flaking backgrounds—the walls of his hometown? The manipulative mistreatment of his works is yet another symbol of the constant suffering of the being—the everlasting crucifixion.

The richness of his aesthetic language seems to find root in his quest to determine the profoundness of the grief. Through the use of images on Kodaliths superimposed upon others printed on paper—such as in the beautiful *Intimate Memories*—González Palma represents the intimacy of their sorrow: the memory of a loved one, the probable disappearance of a whole family or a village, and so on.

Through the repetitive use of the same image in *The Silence of a Look or A Place without Repose* and even in *The Secret*, he evokes the intensity of pain on the emotive memory.

Death is ever present in González Palma's work. It is the epicenter of his grief, but the poet in him replaces blood with a red-colored ribbon and death itself with a pair of winged feet in *Await Me in Heaven*.

Imbued with decorum, González Palma's work never falls in the category of "arte povera" or "miserabilism." On the contrary, pain is expressed through beauty, both formally and conceptually. It is shown through the beauty of his characters.

They are *mestizo* Indians, for the most part: common people full of serenity and dignity with an impassive force that evokes an ancestral wisdom, an ancestral resistance to all evils—evils imposed by others, by destiny, or by oneself. *The Rose*,

America, The King, The Moon are handsome examples.

The artist exalts these canons of Latin American beauty with photographic excellence and studied *mis-en-scènes*. Using masks, small wings, crowns of flowers, fish, and other recognizable cultural icons, González Palma not only accentuates their Latin American-ness but reinterprets reality. He has transported them into a timeless, universal plane. As it always happens when confronted with a "new" image, the viewer might feel a certain confusion at first, but emotion has its own language of comprehension.

If in the beginning González Palma was influenced by Joel-Peter Witkin, later influences from the Doug and Mike Starn or the German Anselm Kiefer have surpassed it. But these influences represent only aesthetic horizons that open up to his continued experimentation. As he sums it up: "To make it important, I have to portray our own experiences, but with a contemporary language."

Editors' Note: This review was originally written in Spanish and then translated by the author.

Maria Cristina Orive, born in Guatemala, is co-founder and director of La Azotea Publishing Company, which is devoted solely to Latin American photography. La Azotea will publish a book on Luis González Palma by the end of this year. For more information about the forthcoming book, contact Orive at La Azotea, Paraguay 1480 P.B. "B", (1061) Buenos Aires, Argentina; (54-1)41-0931/812-0562, or FAX (54-1)812-7720.

Luis González Palma, *The Moon*, 1989
courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston



Beholding War

In the Eye of the Beholder, The Secret Archive, El Salvador, 1980–1991, curated by Katy Lyle, was exhibited at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston during FotoFest '92, courtesy of Panatecal The El Salvador Archive.

"The archive from which this exhibit is drawn—80,000 negatives documenting the past twelve years—was prepared by Salvadorans to preserve and protect an accurate record of their lives," wrote curator Katy Lyle in the FotoFest catalog. "... Some contributing photographers are journalists, filmmakers, or artists, and others acquired their photographic education through experience. Most are Salvadorans; the work is presented anonymously to safeguard their lives and the lives of their relatives. ..."

The following reviews of "In the Eye of the Beholder" are by two women who have been touched by war first-hand in their lives; both are currently undergraduate students at the University of Houston. Jacqueline M. Taylor is studying art history and Pamela Dean is studying interior design.

Remembering El Salvador

Jacqueline M. Taylor

This is not the El Salvador I remember, but I was only a child then, and children see the world in different ways. I remember the *sampopos*—big ants the size of your thumb that crawled around in the garden. My brothers and I would sit and watch them for hours. I was only three, but I remember thatched, palm leaf cabannas as we played in the black volcanic sand. My mother says I was too young to remember all this, but I'll never forget the smell of the tropical fruits as we picked them off the branches and brought them home to eat, the juices dripping and the sweet, sticky residue left on my face.

As this same child, I don't remember the political and social upheaval that was just beginning in the larger, immediate world around me, but a child's world is dominated by the things that give her pleasure and it is a mother's job to protect her young from the things that bring pain. My mother had said that Daddy would be away for awhile and that is why we were at my grandparent's home in San Salvador. I would later learn that my father was an American in the Marine Corps, fighting a war in Vietnam thousands of miles away. All I remember is that Daddy wasn't with us. Who could foretell that a decade later El Salvador would become the battlefield, mirroring all the previous bloodshed that comes when men decide it is all right to kill one another.

I see the pain in the photographs of El Salvador. But I see something more—a struggle between two groups that think they each know what is best for their country. To put it a bit simply, it is the elite ruling few who own the land and would like to keep things as they are versus the opposition of the *campesinos* led by an educated few. El Salvador has the highest illiteracy rate of all Central American countries, but one does not have to know how to read to feel the pain of social and political injustices. These photographs show the cruelty by the government toward its own people and the people fighting back to preserve their existence.

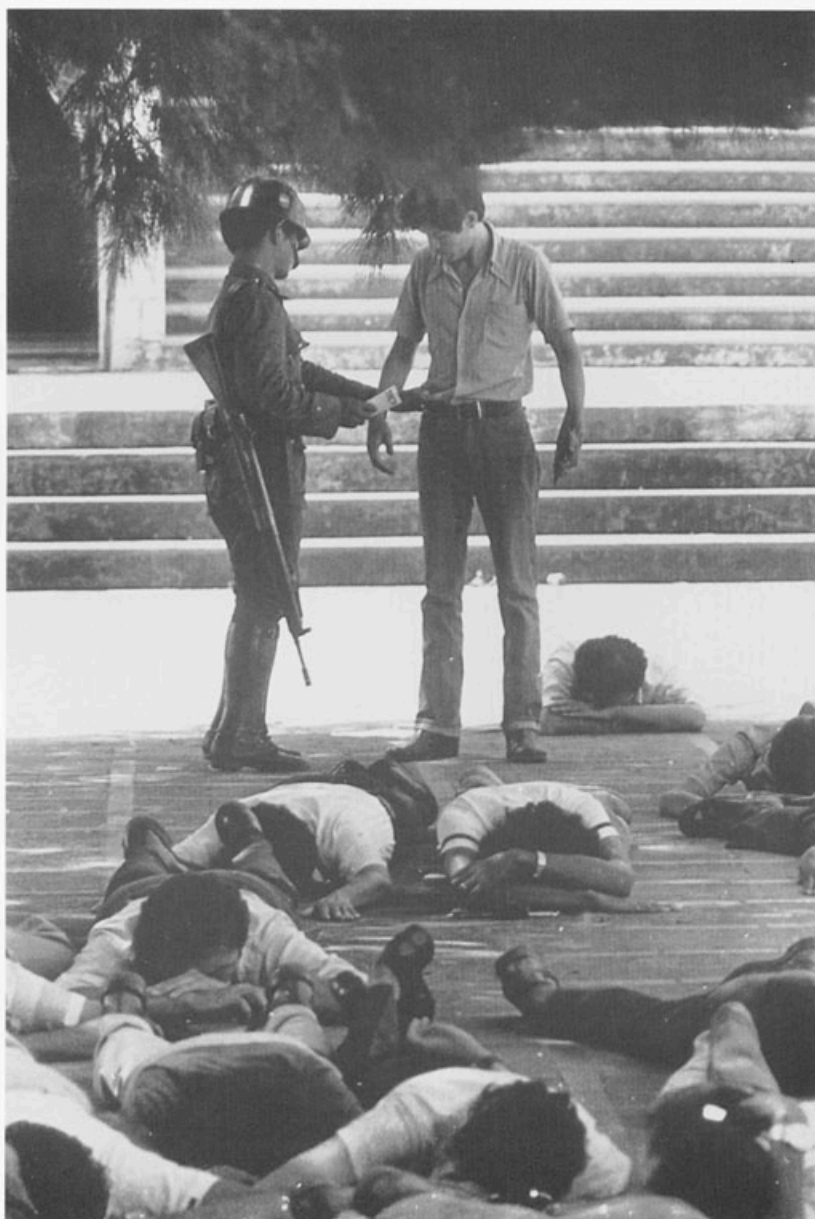
History has shown us that civil wars

are some of the bloodiest ever fought. It is sad to think that a country should have to take up arms against its own, but we know what has happened and can happen. Robert Capa once said, "I would have preferred to be an unemployed war photographer." But, the bitter truth of war can be painfully felt in his photograph *Death of a Loyalist Soldier* (1936), made during the Spanish Civil War. Capa's work is revealing and poignant. It does not glamorize; it documents. Capa died in his efforts to bring photographs of struggle to the public because he felt that "if the picture wasn't good enough, you weren't close enough."

The anonymous photographers of "In the Eye of the Beholder" have to get "too close" in order for us to see the struggle for

catching photographs. But the one photograph that affected me the most was of the assassinated Irma Elena Contreras, juxtaposed with a cross lying next to her martyred body.

To think that these are just a few photos among thousands is an overwhelming statement in itself. But as I think of this, I recall the last image of the exhibit. It is of a young child running down a dirt trail lined with trees toward an unknown destination, and as I read the peace agreement on the wall, I hoped for the future of this child and all others like him. Maybe they can share in my memories of the sampopos and the black, volcanic sand beaches.



National University, San Salvador, 1980

human rights as we sit in our relatively safe environments hundreds of miles away. We know only what we hear in the news, but a few know a little more. My great-aunt's garage was destroyed by a grenade and her house was ransacked as she hid in the basement. A friend of the family was shot while sleeping in a hammock; his body was then torched and burned beyond recognition.

"In the Eye of the Beholder" chronicles the struggle of a decade lost in pain, bloodshed, and hope. It is a heart-wrenching picture essay of the irrationality of war, an expression of compassion for the victimized, and of empathy toward its subject. The exhibit is not just anonymous photojournalism, but social documentation that encompasses the need for social justice. These photographs are more than just visual fact, many are artistically brilliant. The guerrillas training for mine fields and the camouflaged guerrillas are especially eye-

Remembering the Truth

Pamela Dean

I remember hearing my father curse for the first time. It was late one night and he'd just returned home from a "meeting," an event he never talked about. But that night he was talking, rapidly and angrily in Farsi. The subject of his ire? A picture, or rather a series of photographs, extracted from a Russian newspaper.

"Look at this trash . . . you'd think that those Russian dogs were heroes . . . of course, they'll never show any of the dolls." The "dolls" were exploding toys left behind by the Russian soldiers for the Afghani children, many of whom had become amputees in short order. But the photographer had made his decision: the Russian populace back home would be fed a strict diet of images that portrayed the dignified

valor and bravery of their fighting men abroad. The atrocities would remain out of sight and, if those in power had their way, out of mind.

Meanwhile, scattered on the front pages of many American papers, was a different image: one of hardship and carnage and the countless other brutalities that accompany an invasion.

As a young Afghani girl living in Afghanistan at the time, my first taste of propaganda was not an easy one to swallow. What was most "real" to me was the suffering of my people. I was the beholder, and what I beheld was *their* situation—a terribly unjust and ugly one. If my eyes had been recording the event in photographic form, then naturally they would

have focused on the misery common to my own people. Never for a moment would my sensibilities have been informed by the concepts of Russian courage, valor, and duty.

So it is with the exhibit at the Brown Convention Center, ambiguously titled "In the Eye of the Beholder." Immediately, the cliché "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" comes to mind, which is ironic because the photos depict anything but beauty. Pain and misery, sure; violence and hate, yes; repression and death, OK; but beauty? Only a hardcore sadist would find beauty here. This is perfectly understandable given the relationship between photographer and subject. The photographers, whose work is on view, are from among the people who are variously labelled as "rebels," "freedom-fighters," "insurrectionists," "terrorists," "guerrillas," or whatever politically-charged moniker you happen to choose. This is relevant because you will not see portrayed any grand traditions of the rich, land-owning El Salvadorans. No glitzy deb balls, or lacy first communions; no overly starched military reviews, or visits from foreign dignitaries; no glamorous cocktail parties, or sophisticated soirées; and certainly no "travails of the rich" stuff, such as bombed Mercedes or devastated swimming pools, are pictured here.

But if the vocabulary is different and darker by necessity, it is not completely devoid of light. Occasionally, we are treated to glints of optimism and hope. Often it is reflected in the children's eyes. Most notably, however, it is contained in a not-so-grand finale photograph that captures the playful walk of a child, coming toward us along a set of railroad tracks. It may be a whisper, but the message is clear: this generation of Salvadorans has suffered the hellfire of political and social reform so that tomorrow's generation might benefit.

Accordingly, the trees on each side of the track could symbolize tradition and change, standing equally tall and reverent, in placid observance of that which is new life—the child.

As I left the exhibit and walked to my car, never once having to overstep a mutilated corpse or fear a government bullet, several questions lingered in my mind. Had I fallen prey to an artfully executed piece of political propaganda? Certainly, the right strings had been pulled. My empathy with the Salvadoran masses had been easily evoked by a barrage of images done so compassionately that only an insider could have pulled it off. My sense of anger and desire for change had been aroused; anger that reform had exacted such a human toll, anger that a government had been complicit in such barbarism toward its own people, and desire that the fragile peace be kept intact.

Defining The Cutting Edge

On the Edge—Colombia, featuring Juan Camilo Uribe, Bernardo Salcedo, Jorge Ortiz, Fernell Franco, Miguel Angel Rojas, and Becky Meyer, and The New City, Medellín, Colombia: 1890–1920, curated by FotoFest and Juan Alberto Gaviria from Centro Colombia Americano in Medellín, were exhibited at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston during FotoFest '92.

Hans Staartjes

When I left Colombia in 1974, I had never held a camera in the seventeen years that I was there. Now that I have had about thirteen years to verse myself in this art and profession, accumulating a mindful of technical and artistic ideas, I confess that an undeniable feeling of nostalgia fell over me when I saw both "Medellín—The New City" and "Colombia—On the Edge" during FotoFest '92. To see Jorge Obando's panoramic photographs of taxis and taxi drivers, Melitón Rodríguez' photos of the military and privileged classes of Medellín, and Benjamín de la Calle's touching studio portraits of barefoot *mestizo* peasants and their families, and to see the exciting artistic directions of photography in Colombia today, was for me all the more moving having been a part of this country of warm, greatly passionate people.

The Chibcha Indians long ago paved the way for art and culture in Colombia. The Chibchas were not architects like the Aztecs and Incas, but sculptors, ceramicists, and goldsmiths, with rich mythological and religious traditions and a deep sense of morality. The Spaniards introduced Catholicism and scientific innovation, and of course other less savory idiosyncrasies. Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, came to be known as the "Athens of South America," because of a ravenous appetite for cultural and technical knowledge. Medellín, the second city, was a rapidly growing industrial and mining center. Foreign technical innovations like photography were received with great enthusiasm. Photographers like Rodríguez, De la Calle, and Obando, operating in rudimentary circumstances, added status and immortality to their subjects in their time, and education and pleasure in ours.

But what of today? "Colombia—On the Edge" was a show that clearly indicated new directions in photography. True, these images reflect the clichéd image of a country under the violent influence of the drug trade. But rather more interestingly, this is a country clearly under the influence of artistic trends and ideas from the rest of the world that still reveals a unique vision of its own. Artistic influences are creating a new profoundly Colombian photography in the works of Jorge Ortiz, Juan Camilo Uribe, and Miguel Rojas. Becky Meyer's photographs of murder victims at the morgue and Bernardo Salcedo's reworked photographs are a protest to daily drug violence and a corrupt establishment. Fernell Franco's images are more gently evocative memories of indoor life and aspects of Colombian society.

Three stacks of rotting newspapers greeted the viewer at the entrance to the show. They were covered with plexiglass, and next to them were three acrylic cubes containing charcoal (the artist's original intent was three cubes: one with coal, one with powdered developer, and one with powdered fixer.) On a panel in the back were a series of images with grids of small intriguing abstract images. This is the work of Jorge Ortiz, from Medellín, a teacher at the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá.



Bernardo Salcedo, "Los Fusilados"

Ortiz' cameraless work is concerned with the photographic process. The stacks of newspapers have in fact been dipped in exhausted color developer, bleach and fixer, to represent the standard photographic process. (The newspaper dunking was done personally by Ortiz, with his bare hands while in Houston!) The cube of coal is a symbol of the layering of time itself; a photograph is the human equivalent of a mark in time, though a pathetically more ephemeral one. The soaked newspapers were in constant flux as the chemicals crystallized and browned the paper over time. Not only was this a visual spectacle but a rather pungent olfactory one too! The newspapers, like coal, both made of vegetable matter, keep a record of time and are both subject to inexorable change. The grid-like photographs on the back panel were subtle

photos were shot surreptitiously (sometimes the shutter's noise was hidden under the guise of a cough) in the Teatro Faenza, a well known gay movie theater in Bogotá. The images are framed by unequal black borders, evoking a feeling of a poor quality projection. The mood is pervasively sordid; the images gradually become smaller and smaller, until barely perceptible, when it is revealed that the two men are engaged in a sexual act. Another series of images include keyhole photographs of male subjects on a black strip of paper and pasted on large pieces of crumpled paper. Again here, the mood is sordidly sexual. The viewer must strain to see the little images. The crumpled sheets of silvery textured paper become the projection screen and the small images become the movie. The act of looking and the art of photography combined become a sexual act.

Perhaps the most humorous exhibition in this show is the work of Juan Camilo Uribe. Hundreds of strings with little souvenir slide viewers are suspended from the ceiling above. A large photograph of the city of Medellín hangs on one wall. The ridge of mountains surrounding the city contains hundreds of little faces of Christ, looking down in protective fashion. On the other wall is another framed and backlit photograph of Christ; this one is winking at you at regular intervals. Looking through the little slide viewers are amongst others: a picture of Christ holding an announcement to Uribe's show, viewers looking through slide viewers at a different



Miguel Angel Rojas, "Cupido Equivocado," 1989

abstracts created purely through the effects of developer on outdated photographic paper. The intent of the work is for it to change as it ages. Certain areas of these pieces remain undeveloped, others developed, but never fixed, never static.

Three large-scale prints with partially exposed and partially developed images welcome us to Miguel Angel Rojas' work. Like Ortiz, Rojas is interested in the effects of time on incomplete photographic processes. Rojas, however, combines an extensive background in drawing and collaging with photography and film.

Thematically, this work is about eroticism and religion. The three large-scale pieces include erotic figures, Christian icons, and Chibcha statues. This work was profoundly Colombian in tradition and yet distinctly contemporary. A strict Jesuit upbringing and a taste for voyeurism are strong elements in Rojas' work. A case in point is a row of grainy images of two men in a movie theater, one standing and one seated towards the back of the theater. The

show, the artist's head on a plate on a table with a balloon reading "art, you silly girls," a picture of the artist's face surrounded by heads of Christs, and an assortment of other hilarious images. Through laughter at the notion of serious or high art, Uribe not only makes fun of the notion of "high religion," but makes fun of the audience as well.

Moving past Uribe, it's perhaps unfortunate to be brought down in such a shocking manner as with the images of Becky Meyer. The effect of seeing these victims of violence in full color is simply repulsive. The accompanying artist statement is in itself a relief to look at, but not necessarily convincing. Meyer writes that she wants to "present the reality of death in Colombia" through the effects of the drug trade, and to remove the "negative stereotypes" of "less professional" disseminators of information whose only aim is personal financial gain. The poor image of Colombia internationally is unfortunate and is attributable to a great extent to sensationalist

elements in the press, but of course the facts of violent death in Colombia are undeniable; not just today, but in the not-too-distant past with episodes like the "Violencia" of the late 1950s. In view of this notorious fact, the value of seeing these images is probably questionable. The revulsion of these images seems to fulfill few purposes: the negative international public perception of Colombia will not be changed but reinforced by these images and can create nothing but morbid curiosity. The effect of this work, though perhaps well intentioned, is to leave the viewer totally cold and in a hurry to move on.

By contrast, the black-and-white images of Fernell Franco had a soothing effect. Two series of images were shown: "Interiors" and "Prostitutes." One billiard hall interior had particular appeal; through six old window panes are several old men in suits and hats playing billiards on tables with green-tinted cloth. There is a feeling of timelessness, of a ritual that has gone on for years. But Franco's more interesting images are his earlier "Prostitute" series. These images revealed an insight into a world rarely seen. One image was of a young girl, barely twelve years old, lying on a bed. Her face was a contradictory look of innocence and knowledge. Other images of fat *mestizo* prostitutes in their underwear had charming empathy. The sticky squalid surroundings tended to create more affinity for the subjects than aversion. The subjects embodied an iconic femininity that is unexpected in this context. Some of these images were solarized and tinted, adding a feeling of antiquity. Others were printed in multiple strips and mirrored frames; this technique was perhaps of more questionable value and created an unnecessary pop art feeling that seemed inappropriate, particularly in light of the subtleties of the subject matter.

Bernardo Salcedo's photo sculptures were a mixed success. The artist appropriates old photographs and adds elements to them to throw on a new context. In the case of *Los Fusilados* (The Executed), where Salcedo has placed empty bullet shells over the faces of a large group photograph, the message is a clear subversion of the bureaucratic establishment. *Los Obstétricos*, 1978 (The Obstetricians) is a more humorous poke at the medical establishment, where Salcedo has pasted lightbulbs over the faces of a group of lab-coated physicians. Another photograph has an old ice bag pasted on the face of a man in a suit, probably a compress for an imaginary bruise. Somehow this work gave a feeling that there was more potential to these ideas than expressed with these pieces.

"Colombia—On the Edge" brought forward talent and a view of work rarely seen this side of the world. Though recent photography in Colombia has definitely been influenced by work of Doug and Mike Starn and other contemporary American artists, certain Colombian artists are forging their own vision, and in doing so, are turning the heads of a visually over-indulged audience in this country, and becoming in their turn influences on us.

Hans Staartjes is a Houston freelance photographer and writer of Dutch nationality. He grew up in Colombia and is currently the chair of programming at the Houston Center for Photography.

Photographs Of the Day Before

The Urban Landscape: Argentina and Uruguay, featuring Juan Travník, Oscar Pintor, Eduardo Gil, Mario Marotta, and Juan Angel Urruzola, was exhibited at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston during FotoFest '92 and was curated by FotoFest.

Diana Mines

FotoFest '92 proposed a global interpretation of today's photography in Latin America. Be it totally or partially correct, it was the first serious attempt to analyze what is being produced in our countries.

According to that interpretation, the photographers in the countries facing Rio de la Plata—Argentina and Uruguay—are focusing their attention on the oppressive solitude of the urban environments. With the variety of styles that characterize each individual, our photographers are acting like witnesses, or perhaps survivors, of some terrible catastrophe that killed most of the inhabitants, but left the scenery intact—the photographers of the Day After. At most, a few men who escaped death wander around without direction, homeless, loveless, historyless.

This tendency to the melancholic, critical, or even tragic view of society can be traced back to the very beginning of our music and our literature. Without a doubt, this attitude toward life among our people and our artists was consolidated by the military dictatorships that both countries suffered almost simultaneously from the mid-70s to mid-80s. The particular brutality of the repression had traumatic effects, both for Argentina—in spite of its authoritarian tradition—and for Uruguay—contrarily, a country with a strong democratic tradition. The feelings that rose during that period were rebelliousness, fear, and impotence, but there was also a sense of loss. Our countries threw themselves into the hands of multinational capitalists and that action was followed by the destruction of our traditional architecture and many forms of popular communication. Photography played an important role in raising political awareness and in restoring the links with the real world. So much so that many people who had worked in other areas, took up the camera to speak in the visual language, a more appropriate one

to elude censorship.

The case of Juan Angel Urruzola (one of the photographers featured in *The Urban Landscape* at FotoFest) is in part representative and in part different from this situation. Urruzola was 20 years old at the time of the military coup in Uruguay, and was arrested for his political activity. A few months later, he was set free but told to leave the country. As many thousands of Uruguayans did, he waited twelve years before he could return. During that time, he lived in Paris, where he studied art photography. He showed his work both in Mexico and Colombia, and worked as a photographer for Latin American filmmakers living in Europe.

In 1985, once the new democratic government was installed, he visited Buenos Aires and came to Montevideo, Uruguay, where he stayed a few hours. In his brother's company, he walked the nearly empty streets of the past while taking photographs. He printed them in Paris and brought them for an exhibition in Montevideo one year later. He returned to Uruguay in 1987 and has lived here since, although he travels to Paris regularly to visit his daughter.

In Montevideo, he has worked as a graphic designer and an advertising photographer. He took part in several group exhibits, where he showed the Cibachrome prints that he had done in Paris.

In 1990, a large exhibition was put together by the City Council of Montevideo that celebrated the anniversary of photography in Uruguay. It was called "150 Years Later." There, Urruzola showed photographs



Juan Angel Urruzola, "Granja Pepita" series, 1990

that were part of a series called "Granja Pepita," which he completed and exhibited one year later at the Gallery of the Alianza Cultural Uruguay—USA. That series was a moving homage to a beautiful old mansion built at the turn of the century for the Mendizabals—a traditional Montevidean family. The building would soon be torn down to make room for . . . a shopping center. Most of the photographs in the series were taken from a lower angle and show large shadow areas, giving them the mood of Eugène Atget's photographs of the Parisian parks.

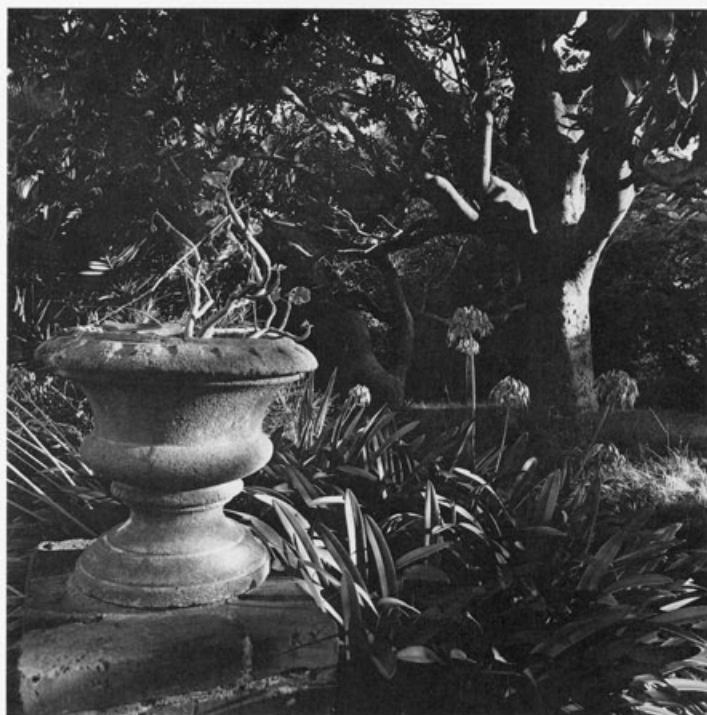
During his exhibition at the Gallery of the Alianza Cultural Uruguay—USA, Urruzola showed a video that he made on the same subject. There again, the camera was placed at a low level and traveled continuously around the old house, whose

walls had been literally devoured by wild vegetation. The tender, detailed representation of Granja Pepita resembled a farewell tour. At some moments, it looked as though the camera would enter the tall rooms still inhabited, but it preferred to stay outdoors, unable, as it were, to scare away death.

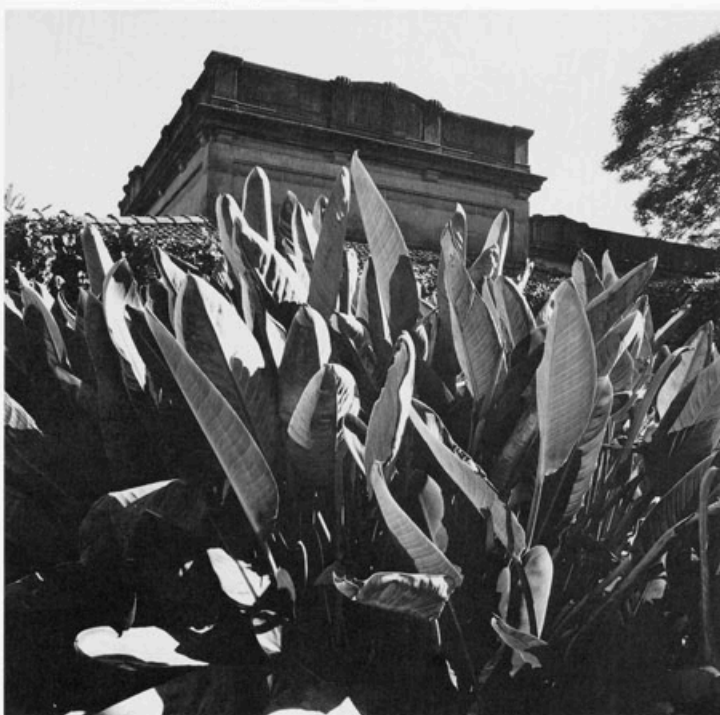
Juan Angel Urruzola's photographs don't cry over the debris of the past. They rather stick to what is still up but soon to be gone: the photographs of the Day Before.

Diana Mines is a photography critic for BRECHA, an independent weekly in Montevideo, Uruguay; a teacher at the Catholic University of Uruguay; and a curator. Mines was curator of "150 Years Later." This was the first time in Uruguay that a photography critic was asked to put a photography exhibit together, according to Mines.

Juan Angel Urruzola, "Granja Pepita" series, 1990



Juan Angel Urruzola, "Granja Pepita" series, 1990



Letters of Hope

Because of her interest in British photography, Polaroid Collection Curator Linda Benedict-Jones was asked to review "Inside Out: Black British Photographers," featuring Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Claudette Holmes, David A. Bailey, and Ingrid Pollard, shown at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston during FotoFest '92. She suggested presenting a dialogue with San Francisco photographer Chris Johnson to reflect more accurately a multicultural North American response to the exhibition. Their correspondence, which follows, was written before the dramatic events occurred in Los Angeles.

—The editors

Linda Benedict-Jones and
Chris Johnson

Dear Chris,

I'm sitting at a gate of Houston Hobby Airport waiting for the plane to carry me home. Since we only just started our discussion about the photographs from the "Inside Out: Black British Photographers" exhibition, I thought I'd continue it in a letter—the fast-disappearing form of communication.

I thought the show was really quite rich in its offerings. Two of the photographers—Ingrid Pollard and David A. Bailey—were familiar to me from their work reproduced in the book *British Photography: Toward a Bigger Picture* [see her review in SPOT, Spring 1992].

Pollard's work had the same resonance for me that I felt when I first saw it. It was gratifying, of course, to see the whole series of *Pastoral Interludes*. The prints are beautiful with their rich hand-colored tones, but their primary strength is that they engage me. I have asked myself many times what is so compelling about this work. The answer, I fear, is simple: we don't see images of black people in lush countryside settings. We may or may not, depending on where we live, see black people in the countryside, but part of the force in her work is that she is offering *images* of this. I find them startling, and it rattles me that I am startled! Pollard seems aware, of course, of the effect her images will have and the text that she uses to accompany these pictures furthers this notion of displacement: "... it's as if the black experience is only lived within an urban environment A visit to the countryside is always accompanied by a feeling of unease, dread Or again, "... searching for sea-shells, waves lap my Wellington boots, carrying lost souls of brothers and sisters released over the ship side. . . ."

I suspect, as does Derek Bishton, the editor of *TEN 8* magazine who helped organize this show, that elements in this series will be long-lasting. There is a new voice at work here. Pollard has succinctly captured the notion of ambivalence, sometimes bordering on alienation—shared by a growing population of people of color in the United Kingdom—*vis à vis* the oftentimes heady and impenetrable world of English heritage and traditions. Her single images may become icons for this expression, and I would not be surprised to see some of them appear again and again in the yet-to-be-written histories of photography.

Incidentally, did you know that *Ten 8* is the British expression for 8x10? Many Americans miss that reference, I think. Bishton did an admirable job of helping to pull this show together. His ambitious magazine will, I believe, be getting wider and wider recognition in the States within the near future.

In the show, David A. Bailey had one large series of images about his native Barbados, which I truly admired. As a north-



Claudette Holmes, *Carol* (original in color)

erner, I must confess to frequent dreams of golden sand and translucent warm waters (especially in February!), but his pictures remind us that these Caribbean climes are not only for sun-seeking snowbirds. Real people live there; I, of course, know that. The travel pictures that saturate *The Boston Globe*, however, would have us forget. His pictures are a gentle reminder, not angry, yet determined. I felt that to be the case with most of his work, in fact.

As well as being an articulate spokesperson for the group of photographers in the show, Bailey is smart. In his lecture, he demonstrated his knowledge of the current rhetoric surrounding image-making in the late twentieth century. Wisely he saves this for lectures. His pictures are not so steeped in the rhetoric, to their advantage, and ours, I believe. Do you recall his piece *Absence/Presence*—where the profile of a black man moves gradually out of focus through a series of four pictures? In reverse order, gradually coming into focus, is a headline in one of the London papers, *The Sun*, boldly stating "Fury Over Lazy Blacks." I think Bailey has effectively used this sequence of images, including the newspaper, this channel of human communication, to offer evidence of racist notions in the press. The opposition of person and headline is a good one. Headlines we all experience daily; our various interpretations of them are usually kept to ourselves.

Claudette Holmes' work was the nicest discovery for me in this show. I was especially drawn to the personal and intimate nature of her work—with the hand-applied colors and the hand-written messages. These pictures felt strangely familiar, though I've never seen them before. They suggested memories to me; they offered glimpses into my dreams and different states of mind. Below one image she noted, "I can be quite practical and realistic but my thoughts let me down . . ." and that was like a gentle song. I like the careful, yet free, spirit in her work.

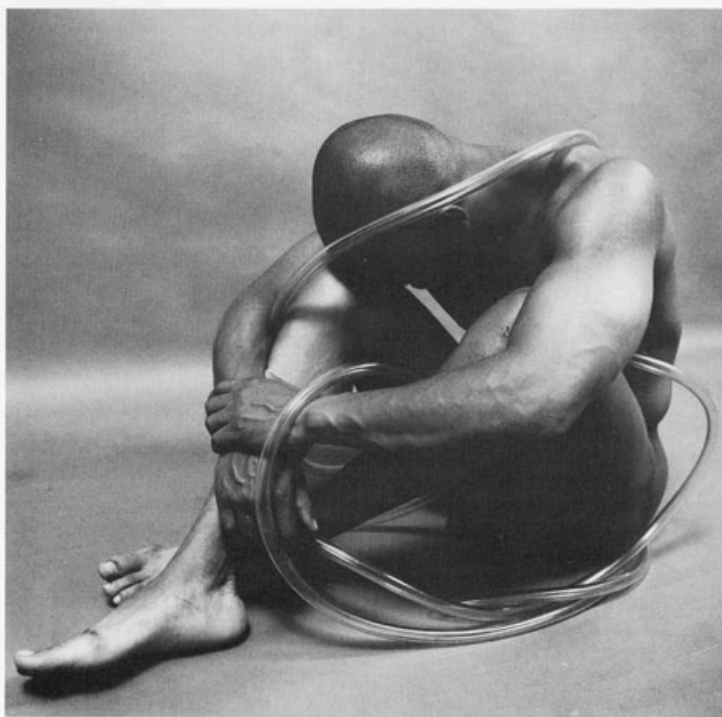
While I appreciated the work of both Pollard and Holmes, I had to say it was for dissimilar reasons, even though they both use hand-applied techniques and they both employ the use of words in concert with the pictures for establishing a context. They are both black women, but I think it was the "blackness" of Pollard that reached out for my attention, and the "womanhood" of Holmes that did. In other words, I appreciated Pollard and identified with Holmes. Is Holmes' reach only effective for

women? I'm eager to know your thoughts.

One thing that these three photographers have in common with each other and with contemporary British trends is their attraction to the combination of pictures and words. We've seen a lot of compelling work of this nature in the States in the last decade, too, of course. I remember, though, that people like Victor Burgin, Jo Spence, and others were challenging us with image/text combinations in Great Britain already by the mid-1970s.

By far the most challenging—and perhaps approachable—pictures for me in the show were those by Rotimi Fani-Kayode. I understand that some of his work was created with Alex Hirst, a white artist with whom he lived for several years before

reminded me of the virtuosity of Robert Mapplethorpe, complete with the best of professional studio lighting and the highest standard of printing. (Though Kayode is a native of Nigeria, he grew up in the United Kingdom, but then studied in the United States at Pratt before eventually returning to the United Kingdom. Perhaps he even studied with Mapplethorpe? Surely he was influenced by him.) From a formal point of view, his pictures were a feast for the eyes. However, in spite of my desire to listen to these images, I'm afraid that the formality of them hindered that very process. I felt distanced, unable to appreciate them except at that superficial level of technical expertise. Most of the message, I'm afraid, was lost on me, though I'm not sure at all



Rotimi Fani-Kayode, "Abiku" series, 1988

Fani-Kayode's recent death.

There are a couple of things I'll mention that seem quite obvious. First, whenever I hear that a young person has died of AIDS, I die a little, too. Learning this about him undeniably made me feel more receptive to his message, more willing to hear his cry.

Secondly, the pictures on display were technically and formally exquisite. They

that this would be the response from a general audience. Perhaps it was unfortunate that I learned that Fani-Kayode died and that he died of AIDS—before seeing the work. Clearly that served as extra "baggage" in my appreciation of his work.

There was one image I found to be genuinely arresting on both a conceptual and a formal level, though. *Escape from the Amniotic Sac*, made in 1988, showed a

man enveloped in plastic, trying to break through, and issuing a silent, painful cry in the process. Symbolically I trusted this picture; the yearning it expressed was forcefully conveyed and it had the power to communicate a range of possibilities. These possibilities felt within the reach of us all, black or white, man or woman.

In closing, I'll just mention that by and large I felt this exhibition opened an important door both for the viewers and for the photographers themselves. Many of the old, negative stereotypes were not perpetuated here, and that has got to be to everyone's advantage. Looking forward to your response.

—Linda

Dear Linda,

Thank you for your letter, and for taking the time to respond to the show in such detail. It gives me an opportunity to air some of the complex, mixed feelings I have, not just about the work in this show, but also about being a black artist in this remarkable phase of our cultural history.

This is such a charged time, when all of our assumptions are subject to critique and must be seen in relation to what had emerged as fascinating questions: What roles do we play in the over-arching problem of creating a civil society? What is a civil society, and how can it best sustain and nurture human potential? Between the positive developments in South Africa and the disturbing events here and in Europe, we see trends moving powerfully in opposite directions, leaving the rest of us in a dynamic void with few models to guide us. Here's a good example: I casually used the expression "black artist" just now, well aware that even those seemingly obvious words are in fact loaded with coded meanings that could inflame painful debate.

Am I in fact a "black" artist? Yes, of course, but just as definitely, no I'm not. And it isn't just the question of appropriate labels. I respect the concerns of those who petition to be called "African Americans" but I frankly don't consider myself to be African in any significant way. For me the term "black" still carries the political weight of the 60s when being "black" meant embracing a healthier social identity.

So, ironically, I find myself much more comfortable with being "black" than I am with being defined as a "black artist," especially when the term suggests that my ethnicity necessarily shapes the core of my creative practice. In simplistically obvious ways it does of course, but it doesn't mean much to claim that my life and work are informed by my background. With that said, you very quickly have to ask, "What else do you have to say about the content and meaning of your work?" This explains why some of us tend to avoid being curated into "black" shows in "black" venues. Doing so risks reinforcing the audience's preconceptions of what "black art" should say and mean. In general, I find it much more important, to both personally and professionally, to upset those assumptions by demonstrating the universal nature of the human condition. More on this later.

As you can see, I bring a heavy load to the act of seeing a show like this one. With this in mind, you won't be surprised if what follows is full of conflicting opinions and attitudes. It's fair to say that, at times like these, I'm much more likely to trust an honestly confused person to someone who projects confident, well-resolved positions. In general, I mistrust ideology in favor of the blur of undifferentiated human nature. Someone said, "I know I'm hearing the truth when what's said contains its opposite." That's how I feel.

I find it impossible to look at work

like this without considering the question of who the work intends to speak to, about what, and why.

Clearly didactic artwork intends both to "speak from" and "speak for." By this I mean that it represents both an immediately felt personal, emotional, social, political, or spiritual position, but it also in some ways represents the position of committed artists of color to the mainstream audience. This raises other interesting questions: Are there codes that indicate whether or not the work is directed inward, back to the home community, or outward to the "other"? If the direction is outward, then what do these codes suggest about what the artist assumes the intended audience is to know or feel? Are you as the reader of the work comfortable with having those assumptions

Another way of putting it would be: "OK, I hear you, and I accept you. Now help me to *know you*. I can only know you to the extent that what you say reflects things I've experienced." This brings us back to the desire to hear broader, more universal human expressions. Speak "for" yourself. Speak "from" your heart. I have a heart too, and I want to better understand us both.

I may finally be ready to comment about the work in the show itself.

Ingrid Pollard clearly anticipates what you describe as the dissonance of "black people in lush countryside settings." My reaction to her work is similar to yours, although I find the images themselves a bit redundant and simplistic. She is clearly expressing deeply felt sentiments, and I'm

(She's a wonderful person. Did you meet her in Houston?) I also agree that David balances refined image-making and political bite very well. I do remember "Absence/Presence." It's a great piece.

I'm going to skip your comments about Claudette Holmes for a moment and address the work of Rotimi Fani-Kayode/Alex Hirst.

Your appreciation for the formal quality of the work, together with mixed feelings about its content, is a perfect example of what I was trying to say about the troubling aspects of "black art." If you ask yourself who is the intended audience for those images, and what do they intend to convey, you quickly encounter disturbing issues. I was frankly upset at how those photographs overtly elaborated stereotypes of black male exotic/sexual alienation.

Compared to the work of Lyle Ashton Harris, or the film work of Marlon Riggs, these pictures seem forced and a bit desperate for effect. I think we can sense the difference between genuine expressions of outrage at the alienating effects of homophobia and the internal identity disputes that result, and work that is more or less simply a display of mannered flamboyance. This may explain the distancing you felt—despite the emotional appeal of his death.

Your comments about *Escape from the Anniotic Sae* evoking "possibilities felt within the reach of all of us, black or white, man or woman" are a perfect preamble to my feelings about Claudette Holmes' work.

I'll tell you a true story.

After listening to David A. Bailey's lecture, I went over to see the show. I quickly reviewed most of the work and then was struck by Claudette's beautiful, small, densely-worked pieces. The collage work was so spirited and precise that I immediately thought of Max Ernst, but then I began reading the text. . . .

I've paused here because I couldn't find appropriate words to describe my reactions . . . until I glanced down at your letter. . . "strangely familiar" . . . "suggested memories" . . . "offered glimpses." Actually, your words speak directly to what I felt. I have a good friend, an East Texas photographer who I wanted to see this work immediately. I went to get him, and he felt just the way I did: that Claudette's work speaks in a delicate but penetrating universal voice.

Just then, David A. Bailey came in with some friends and I introduced myself as the person who had co-curated his work into a traveling show last year. When I asked who is this person Claudette Holmes, he said, "Claudette? She's right over there." Needless to say, I was delighted to meet her. We spent many hours talking and looking at work together.

The distinction you make between Pollard's "blackness" and Claudette's "womanness," is almost perfect. I would only change that word to "humanness" to include at least me, a black kid from Brooklyn, and Robert, a white East Texan. That's a very long reach. Her work couldn't be a better example of what I was trying to say earlier about "broader, more universal human expressions."

This has turned into a much longer letter than I thought, but as you can see, I have strong feelings about these issues. This is such a remarkable time. Actually, I'm very optimistic. We still have so much to learn about "humanity," about the nature of our bodies and souls. As long as artists like this continue to explore these questions, interactively and with social content, there's every reason to hope. Thanks again for your letter. I'm looking forward to hearing from you again soon.

—Chris



David A. Bailey

projected onto you? For example, much didactic work assumes bias and insensitivity; or conversely, that all like-skinned people have the same experience. Also, does the work try to celebrate or persuade? Here's where it becomes problematic for me. Celebrations that "speak from" are unchallengeable. It's the artist's inherent right. We as the audience bring insight and are close to seeing into and sharing another's soul. If the work seems both intended for the "other" and is didactic, then assumptions and messages must be critiqued.

My typical reactions run somewhat like this: "What are you trying to say and why?"

Are you trying to say, "I'm beautiful, proud, worthy, outraged, empowered, etc., etc.?"

To my ear, this harkens back to the "Say it loud—I'm black and I'm proud" days of twenty years ago. It's a message I try to give to and get from children; but otherwise, I'm sympathetic but frankly, I'm also somewhat bored and tired of this.

"Blackness" and "worthiness" are assumed, now tell me what you have learned about and can add to the great questions that confront all of us.

looking forward to seeing more of what she has to offer.

This is an aside but I was very moved by the fact that you were disturbed by your own response to her work: the slight guilt of being "startled."

You may know that there are those who argue against the concept of "race" as a valid way of defining human differences; the idea being that two Asians (one tall and one short) can be genetically more different from each other than two people of different "races." This may be biologically true but I'm sure that we will continue to perceive racial and cultural differences (among others) as being significant; and these days always with a twinge of guilt. My view is that what's important is how we respond to these differences that we will continue to perceive. It's a matter of developing tolerances to "otherness" whenever we perceive it, internally when we encounter things about ourselves we don't understand or accept, or externally in social situations.

I love your reaction to David A. Bailey's Barbados pictures. It reminds me that another British artist, Roshini Kempadoo, has also done important work based on her experiences growing up in the Caribbean.

A Glimpse into the Past

The War of the Triple Alliance, 1865–1870: Estaban García, from the collections at the National Library of Uruguay in Montevideo; Photography at the Bauhaus: The Formation of a Modern Aesthetic, 1919–1933, curated by Jeannine Fiedler, from the collection at the Bauhaus Archiv in Berlin; The Illegal Camera: The Netherlands, 1940–1945, curated by Flip Bool and Veronica Hekking; Art, Industry, and the State: USSR in Construction, 1930–1936, curated by Rune Hassner, Hasselblad Center, Gothenburg, Sweden. All these were exhibited at the George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston, during FotoFest '92.

Maggie Olvey

For the first time in its six-year history, FotoFest arranged to have a number of historic exhibitions hung in its George R. Brown Convention Center galleries. In itself, this is remarkable because it reveals a commitment to the roots of much of today's most innovative work and a commitment to spending time and money to properly take care of ephemeral photographic archives lent to FotoFest. Two of these exhibitions, those highlighting Charles Marville's and John Thomson's photographs, are reviewed elsewhere in this issue; four others—three European and one Uruguayan, with a distinctly European look to it—are addressed here.

The first is an installation that traveled extensively throughout Europe before coming to Houston for its only American stop: "Photography at the Bauhaus, The Formation of a Modern Aesthetic, 1919–1933." Accompanied by a significant and generously illustrated catalog, the show was culled from the collection of the Bauhaus Archiv in Berlin (the repository for much



From "The War of the Triple Alliance, 1865–1870: Estaban García"

of the original artwork created by the students and masters of the Bauhaus school), but represents only a portion of that collection—and only a fraction of the original traveling exhibition. In spite of this smaller scope, the viewer cannot escape the sense of *joie de vivre* that emanates from these images. As editor Jeannine Fiedler aptly states in her introduction, "To observe the Bauhäuslers in the group portraits reveals the collective spirit that reigned at the school." From rooftop parties complete with Oscar Schlemmer costumes to advertising material, nothing was too plebeian, too ordinary, to place before the camera lens of the Bauhaus photographer. Light bulbs, friends, theatrical productions, and Bauhaus buildings were among the myriad subjects for both masters, such as Moholy-Nagy, and their students.

It has been often stated that there is no Bauhaus "style" per se. The independence of artistic pursuit fostered by the teaching atmosphere precluded such an academic outcome. Students were encouraged to experiment quite literally with every available medium—from photography to the newly-introduced plastics. Nevertheless, the spirit that pervades these images provides us with a singularly unified



From "Art, Industry, and the State: USSR in Construction, 1930–1936"

aspect of school life at the Bauhaus. The exhibition reveals, with great perspicuity, the artistic experimentation, the camaraderie between the Bauhäuslers, and the quotidian accoutrements of life in avant-garde Germany of the 20s and early 30s.

Installed next to the Bauhaus show, "The Illegal Camera: The Netherlands, 1940–45" exhibition wrenches you away from the high-minded ideals of Bauhaus philosophy into the harsh realities of Nazi-occupied territories during World War II. The hand-held camera—introduced into

use only just over a decade before—becomes a formidable weapon in the hands of amateurs and professionals alike as it peeps around corners, into hiding places, and out onto the occupied streets. During this time, cameras were an unwelcome sight instead of the ubiquitous machines every Bauhäusler held in

his hands for at least a short time. Photographs in this exhibition, whether staged after the fact or taken "live," have never been exhibited outside the Netherlands before, and, to some, are still too painful to view at all fifty years later. Absent most certainly is the Bauhaus *joie de vivre*.

Then there is the utopian Constructivist-influenced assemblage of the periodical *USSR in Construction*, an illustrated magazine published from 1930 to 1936 with artistic contributions from noted artists Nikolai Troshin, El Lissitzky, Alexandr Rodchenko, and his wife Vavara Stepanova. *SSSR na Stroyke*, as it was known in Russian, was an illustrated magazine of the type popular elsewhere in Europe during the 20s and 30s and made ubiquitous by the introduction of *Life* magazine in 1936 in the States. *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung (AIZ)*, published in Germany and Czechoslovakia between 1924 and 1938, is now one of the most well-known of these. But there is a significant difference between the Soviet publication and *AIZ*: where the German magazine used John Heartfield's photomontages printed straightforwardly to pointed effect, the idealist and ideological messages purveyed by the Soviet publica-

tion were enhanced by innovative die-cuts and fold-out pages. And while most page layouts were strikingly similar, content and intent diverged. *USSR in Construction* was an avowed arm of the Soviet propagandist machine seeking to put forward its program in order to homogenize society, both internally and externally. *AIZ* was for all intents and purposes an underground publication singular for its contemporaneous invectives against Hitler's regime.

Inclusion of some of the Heartfield montages in close proximity to these three exhibitions might have provided an apt counterpoint to the utopian ideals of the Bauhaus and USSR exhibitions and to the harsh realities of occupation imposed by a foreign power seen in the Netherlands installation. As they were presented, however, these shows did provide a convincing glimpse of life and community during three of the most crucial decades in modern European history.

On the other side of the exhibition hall, across a rather wide chasm (perhaps the Atlantic?) you could find the earliest of sixteen installations of Latin American photography. *The War of the Triple Alliance, 1865–1870*, with photographs by Estaban García, depicts a European war fought on Paraguayan territory that nearly obliterated an entire people. Not only was the fighting Euro-motivated, but the photography, learned at the hands of European masters, has much the same look as Marville's strikingly haunting views of Paris streets (in García's work we see similarly composed unpopulated views of city streets, but they are unpaved) or Thomson's London street life Woodburytypes. (García's unflinching views of the ravages of war have the same directness, but are grittier.) These are albumen photographs, mounted on period paper surrounds, aged and spotted and flawed, victims of the ravages of time and climate. The condition of the photographs was redeemed by the fact that here were

photographs taken and printed at the time. Other installations of Latin American historical photographs in FotoFest relied on modern prints of original negatives and/or copy prints. While interesting as documents of their time and evidence of their makers' photographic predilections, the modern prints lacked the aura of the weathered Paraguayan views and thus some of their charm and immediacy. After all, the García images arose from a conflict that began when the Civil War in the United States had just ended, and more parallels and contrasts could be drawn from that fact.

In all, these four historically-oriented installations provided a welcomed insight into the lives, communities, and political circumstances of their own times. How much they helped to convey the general theme of FotoFest '92—the relationship between Europe and Latin America—is



Erich Consemüller, from "Photography at the Bauhaus: The Formation of a Modern Aesthetic, 1919–1933"

problematic. While the organizers of the festival should be congratulated for their programmatic approach as structure, the extent to which that message was received and/or understood should be assessed prior to the inception of FotoFest '94.

Maggie Olvey is co-editor of *SPOT*.

From the Streets of Old Europe

Charles Marville's *The Modern City—Reconstruction of Paris, 1865–80*, curated by FotoFest and Marie de Thezy, and John Thomson's *Street Life in London, 1877–78*, on loan from the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, were exhibited at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston during FotoFest '92.

Linda Benedict-Jones

The nineteenth-century photographs of Scottish photographer John Thomson and Frenchman Charles Marville are familiar to all who have studied the history of photography. Less familiar, by far, is the opportunity to gaze upon original prints by these two European masters. This year's FotoFest offered visitors just that opportunity, and it was a rare treat.

"The Modern City—The Reconstruction of Paris, 1865–1880," includes thirty original collodion prints by Marville in pristine condition, though one of them revealed what happens when there is considerable cracking of the collodion emulsion on the original glass plate. The prints belong to the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, which was kind enough to loan them for this occasion.

When the negatives were made, it was a time of enormous change for Paris, the largest city in continental Europe. As with their neighbors across the English Channel, industrialization was changing the way people lived and worked. Napoleon III, hoping to be remembered as a modern ruler, wanted to make Paris the model of urban existence, with emphasis on the grand power of the state. With Prefect of the Seine Baron Haussmann, the architect of the vast rebuilding of Paris, he succeeded in transforming much of the layout of the city, demolishing existing alleys and impasses to create wide, new avenues, and annexing adjacent villages to increase the size of the city itself. A second aim of this gentrification was to displace the poorer quarters, often the centers of popular revolt. For those that remained, the grand boulevards offered an easy means of access and control to Parisian police forces.

One of the unsettling realizations in viewing this exhibition, as noted by curator Marie de Thezy in her gallery tour, is that much of what is represented in these photographs no longer exists. Fortunately, about 1865, the municipal government of the city of Paris commissioned Charles Marville to photographically document the condemned neighborhoods prior to their being demolished. It is because of this that a remarkable collection of some 400 photographs of urban camera documentation was created. Some prints depict the then recently completed Boulevard Haussmann, wide and regal and lined with impressive, stately buildings. Some preserve the more humble symbols of the time, such as the *reverberères* or streetlamps, which Marville photographed systematically.

Marville was not the only photographer working under commission in the mid-nineteenth-century. In the 1850s, Edouard-Denis Baldus documented the building of the new Louvre and the flooding of the Rhône. And in that same decade, other recognized photographers—such as Henri LeSecq, Gustave LeGray, and Charles Nègre—along with Marville, photographed France's mediaeval architecture at the invitation of the *Commission des Monuments Historiques*. It was a uniquely active period for photographic documentation in France in spite of the fact that it was the mere beginning of the new medium of photography.

The commission also purchased photographs in the first decades of the twentieth



From Charles Marville's "The Modern City—Reconstruction of Paris, 1865–1880"

eth century from the man who so totally devoted himself to his photography that he lived on bread and milk and sugar for twenty years: Eugène Atget. More recently, since 1970, phenomenal architectural changes have again changed the complexion of Paris—the Centre Beaubourg, the new I.M. Pei entrance to the Louvre, the reconstruction of Les Halles, to name a few. We can only hope that this venerable commission is continuing to extend its support to documentary photographers in France.

"Street Life in London" by John Thomson was also created during the late nineteenth century, when England was the greatest industrial power in the world. The city streets, however, did not necessarily reveal this prosperity. Instead, they were home to women and children who had no permanent shelter, the unemployed, the poor from the countryside, and others who didn't share in the affluence of the period.

John Thomson, a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, is best known for photographs in his four volume work, *Illustrations of China and Its People*, published in England in 1873. This enormous work, complete with 200 images of scenery, peasants, and architectural studies, attempted to make life in the Far East less exotic and more comprehensible to a British audience at home.

After returning from his four-year stay in China, Thomson trained his camera similarly on the street people of London: market vendors, public disinfectors, street doctors, and others. According to Mark Haworth-Booth, curator of photographs at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, Thomson was always careful to say these pictures were made with the permission of the people depicted. Haworth-Booth also mentioned that Thomson, in his ample writings, noted how it was "social skills" that were of primary importance in photography, rather than technical skills.

Preferring the book medium, Thomson published these images in twelve monthly episodes. Though each photograph originally served to illustrate a story written by Adolphe Headingley, who was exploring the living conditions of the urban poor, this exhibition is comprised of twenty-four photographic images only. Compared to present day photojournalistic studies of poverty, this work is tame. In its day, however, it was persuasive enough to provoke the embankment on the Thames River to prevent occasional flooding in the dwellings of London's poor people.

As with the Marville display, the lighting was necessarily low for viewing "Street

Life in London." Nineteenth-century processes, such as albumen and collodion prints, are vulnerable to fading under normal levels of illumination. At the request of Haworth-Booth, however, it was amplified somewhat for the Thomson show because his Woodburytype originals are actually richly pigmented prints, made from mechanical printing presses, which are considered to be more stable than many nineteenth-century processes. The Thomson pictures were more difficult to discern than the Marville images, largely due to size. Each of these was roughly 4 x 5 inches,



From John Thomson's "Street Life in London, 1877–1878"

whereas the Marville prints were approximately 8 x 10 inches, and sometimes larger. These pictures are important to us today because they offer us evidence of early sustained efforts of social documentary photography. Thomson was not alone in this pursuit in the United Kingdom. A fellow Scottish photographer, Thomas Annan, was commissioned in 1868 and again in 1877 to record old and interesting land-

marks in Glasgow, and in the process, documented what might be regarded as the earliest look at inner-city slums. During World War I, photojournalist Horace Nicholls focused on women doing "men's work" while the gents were off fighting the war. And though none of the aforementioned provided the primary influence on Bill Brandt's legendary studies of class in Great Britain done in the early 1930s (we now suspect that Atget gets credit for that influence via Brandt's exposure to the Frenchman's photographs while working in the Paris studio of Man Ray),

they collectively form part of a strong tradition of documentary photography in Great Britain.

Although it is challenged or abandoned entirely by many contemporary photographers in the United Kingdom today, the social documentary legacy is still in evidence among a great number of today's British photographers, including Nick Waplington, Martin Parr and Chris Killip, to name but a few. Because of the great diversity of photographic expression coming from the U.K. in the 1990s, British photography circles have no need

to feel apologetic about their long documentary tradition. It is no longer a burden. They can now share their rich heritage with considerable pride, as this exhibition of Thomson's "Street Life in London" so aptly demonstrates.

Linda Benedict-Jones is curator of the Polaroid Collection in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Discovering Teige

Surrealism/Czechoslovakia: Karel Teige, 1935–1951 was exhibited at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston during FotoFest '92, curated by FotoFest and Dr. Rumjana Daceva, director of The National Museum of Literature, Prague.

Alison de Lima Greene

While virtually unknown outside of Czechoslovakia, Karel Teige (1900–1951) was one of the truly innovative proponents of the avant-garde in the laboratory era between world wars. A founder of the *Devětsil* movement in Prague in 1920,¹ he was also a passionate champion of film and photography, a prolific theorist and art critic, an inventive typographer and witty collagist.

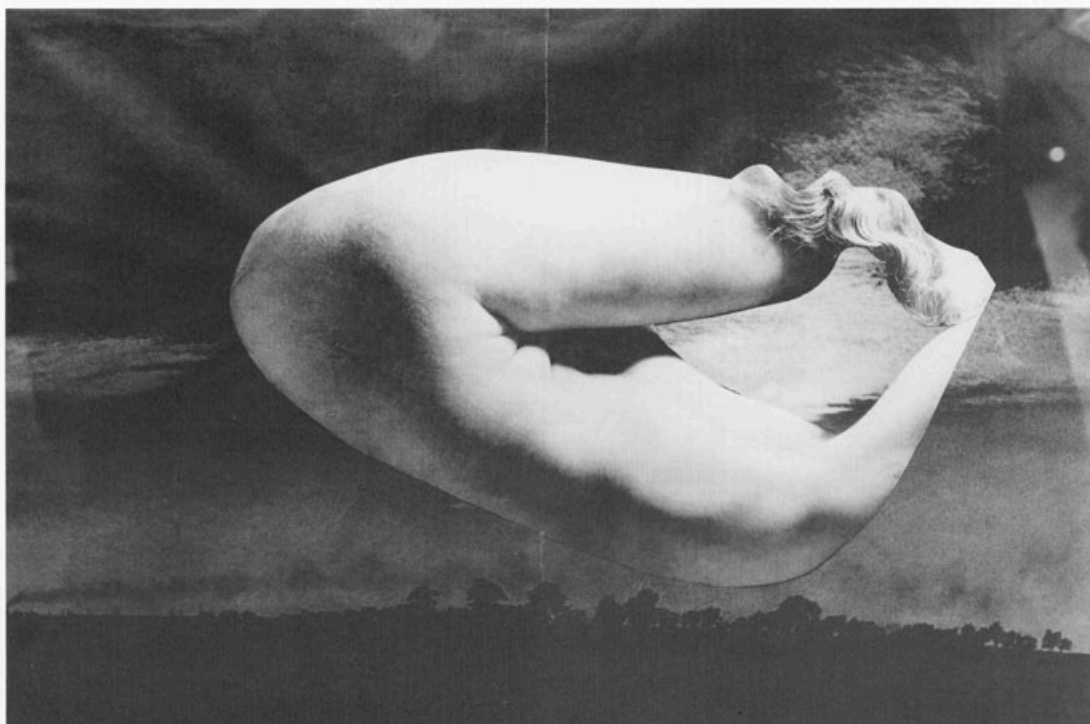
A year before André Breton published the "First Surrealist Manifesto," Karel Teige issued his *Devětsil* proclamation on "Painting and Poetry." Seeking to reconcile the iconoclasm of the Dada movement with Functionalist idealism, he proposed a new primacy for collage: "We face a logical consequence of the fusion of modern painting with modern poetry. You will see . . . the VISUAL POEMS which represent a solution of the problems shared by painting and poetry. Sooner or later this fusion will probably eliminate the traditional methods of painting and poetry, not instantly but gradually. The visual poems absolutely conform to present needs."²

Teige produced an enormous body of photocollages throughout his career (approximately 374 have been preserved in Czech museums). His early *Devětsil* collages of 1923 originated as travel souvenirs, combining maps, nautical and astral imagery, fragments of text, and postcards. Teige regarded the montage technique as a new artistic language, "These hints should be sufficient to evoke an impression and represent reality in a way that is inaccessible to words."³ In 1926 he collaborated with Karel Pápa and Vítězslav Nezval to publish in book form the wonderfully energetic *Abeceda*, which combines bold Constructivist typography with photographs of the dancer Milča Majerová interpreting each letter of the alphabet.⁴ A 1930 visit to the Bauhaus inspired a tribute made up of reproductions of other Bauhaus photocollages, and it is possible to recognize fragments of T. Lux Feininger and Edmund Collein in Teige's crazyquilt composition.

Several of these early works are reproduced as an introduction to the remarkable exhibition "Surrealism/Czechoslovakia: Karel Teige, 1935–1951," presented by FotoFest '92. The exhibition was organized by Dr. Rumjana Daceva and presents forty-six photocollages, a selection from the long-suppressed Teige archives now in the National Museum of Literature in Prague.

The Prague Surrealist Group was established in 1934 with André Breton's blessing, and the first issue of the *Bulletin international du surréalisme* was published in Prague the following year. Teige was a reluctant convert to Surrealism and only joined the Prague Surrealist Group in 1935; however, the poetics of *Devětsil* translated with ease into the aesthetics of Surrealism.⁵ Teige's photocollages from 1935 until his death in 1951 were conceived as a private chronicle by the artist; rich with erotic content, they are also an irreverent resumé of the themes and motifs that dominated the Surrealist movement.

Teige drew inspiration from his fellow Surrealists and in several instances appropriated images circulated in the Surrealist periodicals. For example, a 1939 photocollage incorporates the solarized silhouette of a Marcel Bovis nude study, and a 1942 composition features the reclining figure of



Karel Teige

the actress Musidora, taken from a film still published in a 1929 issue of *Variétés*. At times these appropriations reach further back into the history of art; Ingres' *La Source* is transplanted to a modern tiled bath. In general, however, Teige's sources are arcane—there are no Kertész Distortions nor Bellmer *Poupées*.

The artist also delighted in making reference to the compositional strategies

during the traumatic years of World War II. Czechoslovakia was one of the first victims of Nazi expansion, invaded by Germany in March 1939 and for six years almost all public activity ceased in the arts. Direct references to combat are rare in Teige's work—more typical of his disquieting wartime compositions is the foreboding coupling of a truncated torso in a baby carriage with shell cases. The historical events

or exhibition has been devoted to these fascinating objects. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, introduced Teige in the *Czech Modernism: 1900–1945* exhibition of 1989 and FotoFest is to be thanked for giving us this unique chance to study this artist in greater depth. However, the presentation is seriously compromised by the lack of a catalogue. While financial restraints, as well as Central European red tape, may have made a scholarly or comprehensive publication unfeasible at this time, some form of documentation should have been attempted. Teige's achievements have been removed from the public realm for far too long, and these photocollages deserve to be recognized as a unique contribution to the history of Surrealism.

Alison de Lima Greene is associate curator of twentieth-century art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. She was co-curator of the 1989 exhibition "Czech Modernism 1900–1945."

FOOTNOTES

1. Established in 1920 by Teige to promote what he termed "poetic naivism," the *Devětsil* movement defies any simple definition. The membership was varied over the years and included painters, photographers, graphic designers, architects, writers, and poets. *Devětsil* artists broke with the Symbolist, Expressionist, and Cubist conventions that dominated the pre-war avant-garde, advocating instead a visionary modernism that embraced both the tenets of Dada and Futurism, as well as the quotidian aesthetics of Constructivism and Functionalism. The association formally dissolved in 1931.

2. Karel Teige, "Malířství a poesie" (Painting and Poetry), *Disk*, vol. 1, 1923, p. 20. As translated by Jaroslav Andel, *The Czech Avant-Garde and the Book, 1900–1945*, The Visual Studies Workshop, 1984, p. 9.

3. Karel Teige, "Obrazy" (Images), *Veraikon*, 10, nos. 3–5, 1924, pp. 38–39. As translated by Jaroslav Andel, *The Czech Avant-Garde and the Book, 1900–1945*, p. 9.

4. A selection of these works, as well as later Surrealist photocollages were featured in the exhibition "Czech Modernism: 1900–1945," Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1989.

5. For exceptional summaries of Surrealist activities in Prague, see František Smejkal, "From Lyrical metaphors to Symbols of Fate: Czech Surrealism of the 1930s," and Antonín Dufek, "Imaginative Photography," *Czech Modernism: 1900–1945*, pp. 164–83, and 122–147.

6. Jindřich Chaloupecký, "The Exquisite Corpse in Prague," published in André Breton, *The Exquisite Corpse, Its Exaltation*, Milan, Galleria Schwarz, 1975, p. 42.



Karel Teige

of the Surrealists. The *cadavre exquis* is evoked by his hybrid figures; René Magritte's disjunctive bourgeois interiors are echoed by a number of Teige's compositions; and Max Ernst is mined for a variety of disquieting allusions. However, the example of Man Ray provided Teige with some of his most haunting images. A large 1951 composition of a truncated, folded figure floating over a landscape summons the ghost of Man Ray's 1934 *Hour of the Observatory: The Lovers*.

Most of these works were produced

of 1948 once again marginalized the Czech avant-garde. As a colleague of Teige's later recalled, "Surrealism remained for us a flame, thin, pure, and unfailing that guided us in the ever heavier fogs . . . we practiced (poetry)—for ourselves, to save us."⁶

Teige died in 1951 and his possessions were seized; during his lifetime, only a portion of these photocollages were seen in a Paris exhibition of 1947. Twenty years later they were shown for the first time in Czechoslovakia in an exhibition held in Brno; to date, no comprehensive catalogue



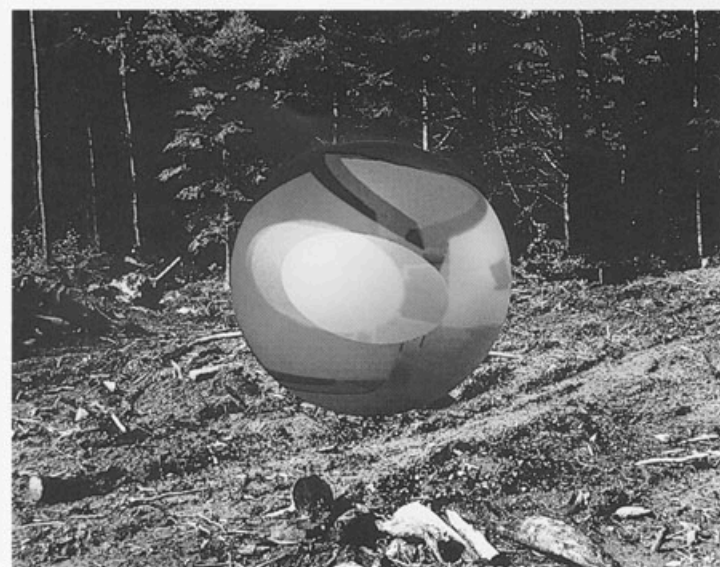
From "Skeet McAuley: Recent Works"

A Challenging Par Three

William Christenberry: *Southern Views*, *MANUAL* (Ed Hill & Suzanne Bloom): *Two Worlds*, and Skeet McAuley: *Recent Works* were exhibited at Moody Gallery in Houston, March 7–April 11, 1992.

Lynn M. Herbert

Seen altogether, these three exhibitions offered a variety of approaches to dealing with contemporary landscape issues. Skeet McAuley's amazing large-scale panoramas of golf courses somehow manages to both seduce and repulse. Twilight on those lush greens surrounded by generous landscaping makes you want to sit back with a cool drink and watch the sunset. As your eye begins to take it all in, you see what lies just beyond the boundary of the course—in one case desert and cactus. Suddenly, you'd rather know just what the water bill must be to keep such an anomaly verdant. The exhibition included five such slick and alluring courses. How tragic that something so dramatically beautiful is also so "environmentally incorrect."



MANUAL, *Worldmaker*, 1992 (original in color)

Equally engaging is McAuley's "Portage Glacier, Alaska," which offers untouched nature at its most powerful. A small boy looks out an enormous picture window at a glacier from the comfort of a climate-controlled lookout point. Despite the architectural structure, the unbridled power of the glacier makes you fear for the boy's safety.

MANUAL's work reflected their continuing investigation into the divergent needs of mankind and forests. There were some familiar motifs, including stereo images, historical lumber mill photographs, computer chips and diptych formats. Yet,

as one would expect from MANUAL, there were many new associations. Enter Kasimir Malevitch and El Lissitzky. Enter three-dimensional objects including the handsomely crafted "Maple/PCB." And, enter *Worldmaker*, which depicts a computer-generated ball hovering in a forest clearing. Its inviting and playful colors would suggest "Toys R Us," but it seems to have blazed a path of destruction through the forest. This is no ordinary beach ball. It's hovering, and if Nintendo doesn't already have a forest-clearing game, this ball could score quite a few points in the Amazon.

William Christenberry's "Southern Views" brought us back to a more romantic and traditional approach to landscape. With photographs and mixed media works from 1975 to the present, Christenberry captures the indigenous south with storefronts, country signs, tombstones, red clay and lots of vernacular architecture. As presented by Christenberry, kudzu swallowing up an old house in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, has more charm than menace. It just seems to belong.

From CNN to Bigger Unavoidable Truths

Michal Rovner: *Decoy—Works from the Gulf War* was exhibited at New Gallery in Houston, March 7–April 5, 1992.

Michal Rovner watched the Gulf War on television just as the rest of us did. But she was watching from her loft in New York, knowing that her family's home in Tel Aviv was under a scud attack and being destroyed. The photographs in this exhibition represent her way of dealing with this nightmarish situation. Photographing im-

ages of the war from videotapes presented on television, Rovner produces results that are timeless and universal images of man confronting man. Her soldiers don't wear a particular country's uniform or have any recognizable ethnic facial features. All such particulars are lost. As Rovner has pointed out, these photographs are not about specifics or about who's right or wrong. They are about the general threat she felt to her own existence. Looking at her blurry figures, it is frightening to realize how commonplace their gestures are in our visual vocabulary. Though she gives us very little in the way of specific information—a shadowy figure with his arms raised, or a blurry group of figures running across the landscape carrying objects close to their chests—these images powerfully resonate war and hostility. The lumpy forms in the background could just as easily be tanks as the outline of a mountain range. And the crosshatch lines inevitably mean that the landscape below is now in target range and in danger.

It is interesting to see how Rovner can achieve the same power without the highly charged imagery of a recent war. Her series of photographs of a lone hut in the Negev Desert, taken over a period of years, reminds one of Monet's obsession with haystacks seen in different light conditions and at different times of year. Rovner's hut sits along in the landscape in much the same way, and is presented in the same straightforward yet impressionistic manner. Such a simple structure, alone in a vast desert, it has not survived. Its vulnerability and mortality become our own.

Photogram, Photograms, Photogram³

Floris M. Neusüss: *Photograms* was exhibited at Benteler-Morgan Galleries in Houston, March 3–April 4, 1992.

Never assume that Floris Neusüss has done all there is to be done with the photogram technique. Never. Look at a number of the works that were included in this exhibition. A recent series of works entitled "Nachtbilder" were made outdoors at night with perhaps the help of flashlights and maybe a bit of the moon or lightning. They are predominantly abstract compositions with an occasional recognizable object such as a fern leaf. The unusual paper used to make these prints offers up an intriguing blend of positive, negative and solarized imagery.

The exhibition also included several of his elegant ULO's, or "unidentifiable lying objects." The simple forms and curves of his lying objects are very lyrical against their stark black or white backgrounds. They also speak to one another from a diptych format as in one where two shoes seemed to dance back and forth between

positive and negative space.

Neusüss' series of "Roppongi" reflect the work of one who knows his photogram history. The recurring object in them is the roppongi, a wire revolving basket that turns lottery balls, similar to those used in



Michal Rovner, *Man 1*, 1991

bingo. It is the kind of object one could comfortably have found in a Man Ray or László Moholy-Nagy photogram. An object associated with chance, Neusüss has taken the idea a step further, placing inside it torn pieces of photograms. With any Neusüss exhibition, there will always be more to learn about the possibilities of the photogram.

Lynn M. Herbert is associate curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston.



Floris M. Neusüss, *Vice-Versa*, photogram 1985

Switching Places

TAFOS: Talleres de Fotografía Social was exhibited at INNOVA Design Center, February 1–March 30, 1992.

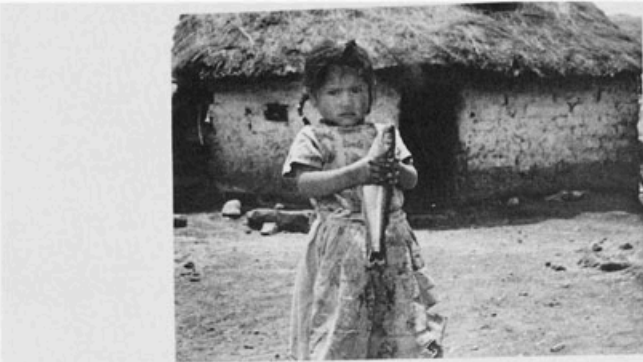
Fernando Castro

TAFOS is the acronym for *Talleres de Fotografía Social*, which means “workshops of social photography.” The idea is not new: photography as a means to effect social awareness and, hopefully, improvements in society. What is somewhat novel is that the people empowered with image-making machinery are those who, up until recently, were only the subjects of photography, not the agents. Photographic glimpses of the Andean world and its people occur in the work of Penn, Frank, Salgado, Chambi, Garduño, etc. But as is only natural, outsiders see different things than do insiders—albeit not always less or worse. Still, what Andean people themselves find interesting in their own world is something that the TAFOS project—at least in principle—promises to reveal. And yet TAFOS is conceived so that the main recipients of these revelations are their communities and not necessarily the international public.

Although last year TAFOS had a show at Photographers’ Gallery in London and this year at INNOVA Design Center, exhibits of this work usually take place in the mining centers, peasant communities and shanty towns of Peru. TAFOS photographers are elected by their communities to be their representative image-makers and visual record keepers. Paintings as visual records in Peru date back to pre-Columbian times, although none survived the religious zeal and ethnocentric vision of the European invaders. At every TAFOS exhibition, one community familiarizes itself with another distant community with which the former may not otherwise have any reason to interact. A sense of belonging to a larger community (nationality?) begins to emerge as viewers realize they share similar problems or learn visually how other communities deal with the problems of drought, education, commerce, terrorism, or repression. Thus, photography becomes both a socially cohesive force and a means of educating.

If some of the images of TAFOS have that militant look, which has almost become a Latin American cliché, it is because its members live in a politically risky environment. In such an environment, you need to quickly define your position, and they have chosen theirs. Mind you, the project was not conceived by well-meaning activists eager to turn photography into a weapon of the socialist avant-garde. In fact, its beginning was rather serendipitous. Some eight years ago, its founder, German photographer Thomas Müller, was traveling in the Andean highlands when one of the townspeople asked him to teach him photography. That incident triggered a chain of events that only later shaped the ideological contours of the project.

Many writers covering the Latin American FotoFest shows with themes of political upheaval have failed to notice how timely the TAFOS show is perhaps because they ignored or failed to recognize the Peruvian political situation. The war in Peru is going on now and the political situation is so unclear that it is hard to say which team one really wishes to win—although it is clearer what team ought to lose. People, like those in TAFOS who are trying to build rather than destroy, usually end up in the crossfire of the incompetent military forces accountable to corrupt politicians and of the Maoist terrorists of *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path). Sectors of the American and European left, eager to jump onto the wagon of radical chic-ness, have unscrupulously endorsed the sinister



Child, front and peasant house, Ayacucho, Peru



Peasant neighborhood, built by the community, Huancayo, Peru

Today, nothing can conceal what was hidden for many years from the sight of rulers, businessmen and intellectuals. Migration has put the life and culture of the majority, with their misery and heroism, on their doorsteps. The intense search for progress by those who live in the cities and those who remain in the countryside has cracked the dark glass that had blocked them from view.



Preparing soil for a road, Ayacucho, Peru



Harvesting grain, Cuzco, Peru



Senderistas, maybe because they sound like Sandinistas and/or because they have bought their propaganda.

“Only power is real” is Sendero’s motto. The phrase not only describes their ontology but also their no-concessions program on the way to absolute power. That they will stop at nothing in pursuit of that goal is clearly shown by the recent assassination of shantytown organizer Maria Elena Moyano. (El Diario, the official medium of Sendero, voiced Sendero’s claim to her killing accusing her of being a spy.) And yet, so far to the left was Moyano that some suspected her of being a Senderista herself. Her real crime was to organize neighborhood soup-kitchens to curb the starvation of Lima’s poor, and probably, not to have followed Sendero’s dictates.

During the period of 1985–1990, only the Aprista party, which governed Peru, rivaled Sendero in destroying the country’s economic infrastructure. The economic damage caused by their sabotage and destruction equalled the Peruvian foreign debt and the number of victims of terrorism went—like hyperinflation—to five digits. Every successful project to improve production and/or the lives of people—whether by foreign sponsors or by indigenous ones—has been targeted by Sendero.

In one of the TAFOS images, one sees how the Quisuni cooperative, one of the most successful cooperatives created by the radical Agrarian Reform of the 1970s, was destroyed by Sendero. From their actions, one easily infers that Sendero’s design is to create such an acute crisis in Peru that nothing will be left standing except their

organization.¹

Always hidden and under lock and key in order to protect those who appear in the images, TAFOS archives provide clues to the daily life of most Peruvians. Although they occasionally fall prey to the merely emotive or picturesque, TAFOS photographers also record compelling scenes of daily life, ranging from situations of struggle and despair to those of work and celebration. They constantly run the risk of recording too many things for which people on both sides of an invisible trench would rather not be remembered. It is not clear whether gruesome images of torture victims or mutilated bodies have been obliterated from TAFOS shows in an effort to de-escalate the level of violence in Peru. That the latter has always been a top priority in their agenda is a moral lesson more should heed.

Photographers and curators who saw the TAFOS exhibit were impressed by the outstanding quality of the prints. TAFOS has a team of local technicians that develops hundreds of rolls of film monthly, and then edits and prints the work. The process of editing is indeed one that casts a shadow in their otherwise democratic process. I am far from believing that democracy is a panacea or that there are unpolluted visions, but how would a TAFOS show look if the editing was done by the photographers themselves? The photographically-adept technical team of TAFOS may simply have a different set of biases about the importance of certain images than the photographers and/or the other members of the communities to which they belong. May we one day see the latter’s biases?

Last year’s show at Photographers’

Gallery was democratically and optimistically concocted to outrage the European public by bringing to it a barrage of objects of “chicha” culture.² It was meant as an anti-celebration of the Quincentennial of Columbus’ arrival in this continent. But frankly, three quarters of a century after Duchamp’s urinal and the latest pissed-on-deity, the international art world and its public have become virtually shock-proof (although their sponsors may not be). To its credit, except for being framed and matted, the photographs at FotoFest more closely resemble a diluted form of the actual shows TAFOS holds in its own territory than the high-schoolish London installation. A show with all the photographs pasted on banners (the way they are usually held in Peru) would have been specially appreciated by those who attended FotoFest’s Colloquium on Research of Latin American Photography. How a TAFOS show looks when its target audience is miners, peasants, and the urban proletariat is certainly of interest to those working in that field.

As to the photographic gravity of the images themselves, a clever curator could probably put together a superb show from the TAFOS archive. But as I have already suggested—and in spite of the editing issue—that is not the point of the TAFOS project. It does not exist to turn out Magnum photographers. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the TAFOS postcards credit individual photographers with copyrights. With those cards and the rather elegant (un-chicha-like) catalog from the Photographers’ Gallery show titled “Viva el Peru, Carajo!” one can identify the work of individual photographers as being consistently solid.³ The work of Serapio Verduzco, Sebastián Turpo, Severo Salazar, Melquiades Ramos, Sabino Quispe, and Gabino Quispecondori seem to be more than just statistically correct. It will be interesting to see what the future will hold for the project and its photographers in the ensuing tensions between communal and individual objectives. Finally, it is worth thinking about what kind of photography by outsiders is rendered superfluous by TAFOS—if any.

Fernando Castro is a Peruvian photography researcher, critic, and curator currently living in Houston.

NOTES

1. Recent political developments in Peru came about as I was editing this critique. President Fujimori dissolved the congress with the support of the armed forces; thus becoming a dictator. The polls indicate that this move enjoys 70 per cent of popular support. Peruvians now call him “Chinochet,” a mixture of “Pinochet” and “Chino.” (Fujimori is obviously oriental.) Although I was against Fujimori during the 1990 elections, the situation in Peru merits that a statesman govern with emergency powers—especially in the light of the widespread inefficiency and corruption in the legislative and judicial branches of government. The question is whether Fujimori is that statesman who will use the power wisely.
2. Although “chicha” is a quechua word for a pre-Colombian corn-brew, the term is also used today to denote the syncretic popular culture of Peru.
3. I find it curious that TAFOS chose to use this phrase for its catalog because it was a phrase made popular by the populist military dictator Juan Velasco Alvarado, whose leftist followers were more numerous when he was in power than they are now. The title phrase, whose lewdness is obviously impermissible to the English reader, may be roughly translated as “Long live Peru, fucking A!”

The Benetton
Photographs:
Selling Social Change?

Advertising and Social Issues, United Colors of Benetton was a lecture given by Oliviero Toscani at the George R. Brown Convention Center during FotoFest '92

Marlee Miller

If you had a \$100 million to place images in magazines and newspapers, on billboards, posters and the sides of buses around the world, accompanied only by a company logo, what would you choose to show? Would you celebrate the beauty that the world has to offer, or would you reveal its injustices? Would you commission works of art or choose to sell a product?

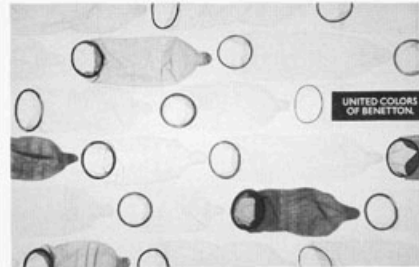
Oliviero Toscani, a fashion photographer born in Italy and living both in Paris and New York, got such a chance eight years ago as the creative director for Benetton Group SPA, an international clothing chain. With the support of company founder and Managing Director Luciano Benetton, Toscani says he is using his advertising budget as a "vehicle for social change." He believes he can focus attention on social issues through the photographs in his ads, raise people's awareness, and eventually affect change. The question is: Can



he ever get away from the fact that advertising's most basic function is to sell products?

Patrons of FotoFest '92 were given the opportunity to debate the many issues provoked by the Benetton ad campaigns in a one-hour discussion with Toscani. His presentation was the last in a series of 26 wide-ranging lectures offered during the month by FotoFest. The debate was heated at times during Toscani's presentation, but it seemed none of the attendees missed his point: advertising is powerful. Their reactions were also the calculated result of his manipulation of that power.

Benetton has more than 7,000 shops in 100 countries around the world. In the early '80s, it charged Toscani with creating



an image for "a global company known for its use of color" in its United Colors of Benetton campaign. He began by creating photographs filled with young people of different races, yet rarely showing the Benetton clothes—the "product." The company currently uses a combination catalog and magazine "of world events"—as one Benetton shop salesperson described it—called Colors to display the clothing. "Most companies say in their advertising, 'We have the best product in the world, the cheapest—go buy it.'" Toscani said to the capacity crowd. "Benetton doesn't do that. It says, 'Diversity is



interesting, take a look." In 1985, when he produced a photograph of a young man dressed in Arab clothing hiding a young man dressed as a Jew, Toscani got a lesson on the impact of advertising. The image was censored by the Jewish community in France, according to Toscani.

"It made me think that even through the advertising media, which is normally used to sell clothes, you can reach and touch a different problem," he said. "You can disturb some people because they have prejudices."

In his lecture, the photographer discussed these prejudices and how the responses to them vary from country to country. His photograph of three children of different races sticking out their tongues was censored in Saudi Arabia because in that country the display of internal organs is prohibited. The Japanese simply laughed at Toscani's image of a priest and nun kissing, but it caused an uproar in Italy. His favorite photograph, that of a new-born baby still attached by an umbilical cord, is the most censored photograph in the world, according to Toscani.

It's not necessary to show the clothes, he said, because it is the impact of the image that lasts in the consumers' minds; therefore, they remember the company. "When we look at an advertised product, we don't just drop the magazine and go out to buy that product; we think about the image and what it's trying to tell us," he said.

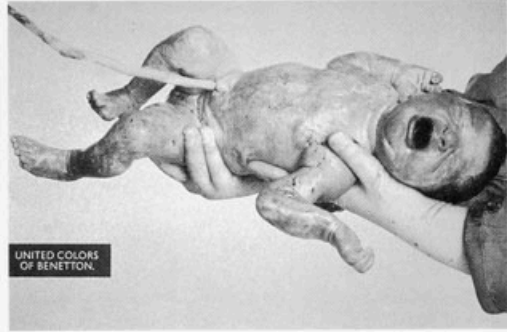
"With all the money and all the power that advertising has, it could do something more interesting than sell products. We will go on consuming and buying products but we can make it more interesting."

The crowd took issue with his motives and expressed its views when the lecture turned to discussion. One member of the FotoFest audience claimed that Benetton was really no different than Calvin Klein or Marlboro in its advertising approach: "If I buy these clothes because I bought the Benetton image—that people who wear these clothes care about the world—how is it different than Calvin Klein saying that if I buy this image, I will get lucky tonight?"

Another member of the crowd said the ads "prostitute" the issues—such as with the photograph of AIDS victim David Kirby—to shock the public into remembering the company. The photograph of Kirby on his deathbed surrounded by his family was originally published in black and white in Life magazine. Toscani "colorized" it and has been accused of altering the photograph to make Kirby resemble Jesus Christ. Toscani has denied such charges and has

brought issue with the fact that people accepted the image when it was printed in Life but now it is much more controversial as part of the company's seven-part "disaster" series.

In the April issue of Interview magazine, Toscani spoke of the controversy further: "At Benetton, we are trying to create an awareness of issues. AIDS is one of today's major modern problems in the world, so I think we have to show something about it. That's my work: to report something that exists. We can't be like ostriches who put their heads in the sand. . . . Communication is the responsibility of a company as much as it is, say, the responsibility



of the media. I don't believe we're using human tragedy to sell clothes."

In his lecture, Toscani said that he cannot claim all the credit, but Benetton's profits have gone up during the recent

campaigns. Toscani has received extensive media attention, analysis, and interviews—the kind of coverage of which marketing directors dream and the name recognition that increases sales.

The dialogue these photographs provoked at FotoFest seemed expected by Toscani. One photograph that was repeatedly criticized was of a blond girl dressed as an angel and a black boy as the devil. Critics claimed this perpetuates the cultural myth that white is

good and black is evil. A portrait of a black woman nursing a white baby was also disliked by many because they said it reminded them of the role of black women as slaves and wet nurses for whites. No words explain these images; the viewer has to listen to his or her own reactions. Toscani said he did not present a white woman with a black baby because he simply wants to show cultural realities. He displays the stereotypes, draws attention to them, gets negative reactions, and makes people focus on them. The crowd danced to Toscani's tune.

"Today, we started with an advertising campaign and ended up discussing AIDS, racism, overpopulation, and pictures that we don't want to see," Toscani said. "We've been discussing different issues starting from an advertising communication. I think that is a lot to do. I'm not saying this is the right way, but this is probably the way to get out of the plastic world that is advertising."

Now, could you do that with \$100 million—and still sell clothes?

Marlee Miller is co-editor of SPOT.

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From *Coming to Terms: The German Hill Country of Texas*

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Compiled by Neils P. Highberg

Suggestibility Is the Secret

Ralph Eugene Meatyard: An American Visionary, edited by Barbara Tannenbaum, with essays by Tannenbaum, David L. Jacobs, Van Deren Coke, and Wendell Berry. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., and the Akron Art Museum, 1991. 207 pages. \$25.

Adele Horne

When a feeling reaches its highest pitch we remain silent, because no words are adequate. Even seventeen syllables may be too many. In any event Japanese artists more or less influenced by the way of Zen tend to use the fewest words or strokes of brush to express their feelings. When they are too fully expressed, no room for suggestion is possible, and suggestibility is the secret of the Japanese arts.

David L. Jacobs, essayist for the book *Ralph Eugene Meatyard: An American Visionary*, notes that this passage was heavily marked in Meatyard's copy of Suzuki's *Zen Buddhism*. Underscored three times were the words "suggestibility is the secret."

Meatyard's photographs are masterpieces in the art of suggestibility. Three children sit on bleacher steps wearing grotesque masks. They confront us with the simultaneous reality of youth and old age, growth and decay. The photograph, *Romance (N.) of Ambrose Bierce #3*, is unsettling not so much because of the ghoulish masks, but because it is impossible to assign a clear meaning to this powerful image.

The ambiguity of much of Meatyard's imagery may be part of the reason his work has not received the critical attention it deserves. He was not mentioned in Beaumont Newhall's 1964 edition of *History of Photography*, nor in the 1982 revision of that book. In the twenty years since Meatyard's death there have been only a few publications of his work, and certainly nothing as scholarly and comprehensive as this 1991 book, *Ralph Eugene Meatyard: An American Visionary*. The book is published in conjunction with a touring exhibition of the same title, organized by the Akron Art Museum, and co-curated by Barbara Tannenbaum and Jacobs. The exhibition is currently at the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and will continue touring through 1993.

Although Meatyard has not always been recognized by photographic historians, he has had an impact on many young photographers. His work is especially relevant to today's contemporary art and its interest in ambiguous and multi-layered narrative. Cindy Sherman, a widely exhibited artist known for her photographs of constructed tableaux, counts Meatyard as one of her primary photographic influences.

This book is a long-awaited feast for information-starved Meatyard fans. Best known for his figurative work with blurred images, masks, and shadowy interiors, Meatyard worked in several distinct styles throughout his life—sixteen according to his own count. In this publication, several photographs from each of his major series are gorgeously reproduced in more than one hundred plates. Here, for the first time, we see the breadth of Meatyard's vision. Accompanying the images are four essays, full of anecdotes about this enigmatic man's life and work, as well as thoughtful insights into his images. All the essays are well worth reading, each providing a different perspective on Meatyard and his art.

The first essay, *Fiction as a Higher Truth*, by Tannenbaum of the Akron Art Museum, outlines Meatyard's life work, with critical commentary on each of his seven major series. One of his early series is



Ralph Eugene Meatyard, *Untitled (Twig)*, 1963

aply titled *No-Focus*. Before making these images Meatyard spent three months just looking at the world through an unfocused camera—without taking any pictures—in order to acclimate himself to this new way of seeing.

The *No-Focus* photographs explore the capability of the unfocused camera lens to soften and dissolve the edges of objects so that they appear to have lost their solidity. Tones of black, white, and grey melt into one another, forming abstract patterns that only sometimes border on being recognizable forms. Completed in the late 1950s, this investigation of the camera's unique way of seeing is nothing like the straight landscape and documentary photographs that were being made by his contemporaries. Meatyard seems to have been more influenced by other art forms such as poetry, literature, and painting. He was an avid reader, and educated himself in art history by studying reproductions in books. Perhaps some of the inspiration for his *No-Focus* work came from the Modernist credo of faithfulness to the essential qualities of one's medium.

A particularly compelling series is *Zen Twigs*. In these photographs the depth of field is limited to an inch or two so that only a small segment of a twig is in focus. The sharply focused area emerges like a bold calligraphic stroke from the soft washes of grey in the unfocused background. Tannenbaum likens these images to the literary device of "synecdoche," in which a part stands for the whole: the small focused area representing the life of the entire tree. This seems a very plausible reading, especially considering Meatyard's interest in Zen philosophy.

The *Romances*, Meatyard's figurative works, are quasi-narratives staged in crumbling buildings. His family serves as actors in the dramas he creates. Their faces, usually masked or blurred, are both questioning and contemplative. Although these images bear little resemblance to his more abstract work, there is a likeness in the images' relationship to Zen philosophy. In teaching the way of Zen, a tool called a "koan" is sometimes used. A koan is a deliberately paradoxical question or riddle that baffles logic and encourages contemplation instead. The *Romances* have been compared to koans probably because of the way they combine the absurd, the grotesque, and the beautiful.

One of Meatyard's final series uses multiple exposures of one subject, with a slight shift in camera position between exposures, to create the illusion of vibration

or movement in otherwise motionless nature scenes. He entitled the series *Motion-Sound*. This work accomplished a goal he had set for himself in the *No-Focus* series: to "represent in the area of a single picture, the equivalent of several frames of a motion picture, or several actions of life . . . to express the movement and the passing of a time that is relative to me, to my life."

The appearance of vibration in these photographs implies sound as well as the passing of time. Tannenbaum observes that the *Motion-Sound* images are an amplified version of the potency of nature expressed in the *Zen Twigs* photographs. She goes on to make a rather stretched comparison, likening a particular *Motion-Sound* image of a building to a mask of the human face. Most of Tannenbaum's insights are very enlightening, but there are a couple of instances where she should have heeded Suzuki's caution about over-expression stifling suggestibility. For the most part though, her interpretation of Meatyard's imagery is thoughtful and intelligent, a valuable piece of work, considering how little serious criticism his photographs have received in the past, and that Meatyard himself said almost nothing about the meaning of his work.

David L. Jacobs, chair of the University of Houston Art Department, contributed an essay entitled *Seeing the Unseen, Saying the Unsayable: On Ralph Eugene Meatyard*. Jacobs pieces together Meatyard's artistic and intellectual influences, creating a fascinating account of the development of his photographic vision. Although it is tempting to look to Meatyard's life history for some clue to his mysterious imagery, the facts available can only make one more curious about the man and his photographs. Meatyard's life is as much a paradox as are his images. On the one hand, he lived a very ordinary middle-class existence. Born in Normal, Illinois, in 1925, he later moved to Lexington where he owned an optical business, "Eyeglasses of Kentucky." Working six days a week and devoting much of his time to family life, he had, at most, one day a week to spend on photography. On the other hand, Meatyard created an enormous amount of photographs—an archive of more than five thousand prints—and developed a unique and memorable artistic vision.

Jacobs quotes Guy Davenport as saying, "Meatyard lived an ordinary life, but he was far from an ordinary man." Meatyard's study of photography introduced him to several gifted artists and writers in the region who stimulated his intellect and

encouraged him in his work. In 1956, Meatyard attended a photography workshop where he met Minor White, who introduced him to Zen and its relationship to photography. Meatyard became a devoted student of Zen philosophy, incorporating it into his art and his daily life.

He read an eclectic assortment of books, mostly ones that his literary friends recommended, but he was no mere dilettante. Any book he read got a thorough reading, with lots of notes made in the margins. Meatyard had a lively curiosity and would doggedly pursue any subject that interested him. He even read telephone directories, gleaming unusual names to add to a list he kept in one of his notebooks. An especially delightful example of Meatyard's eclecticism is that, according to Guy Davenport, he had in his house a recording of the Andrew Sisters singing Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*.

A good balance to the more scholarly essays by Tannenbaum and Jacobs are the essays by Van Deren Coke and Wendell Berry, both close friends of Meatyard. They provide personal insight into his character and vision. Van Deren Coke, his mentor in photography, explains Meatyard's formative influences. He asserts that Meatyard was more inspired by words than by pictures, which accounts for his voracious reading. Coke admits that even he, who knew Meatyard well and with whom Meatyard must have discussed his work to some extent, "cannot decode the iconography of his work. That is part of its appeal."

Wendell Berry, who collaborated with Meatyard on a photographic book documenting the Red River Gorge, tells of watching him transform an unremarkable scene into a magical, other-worldly picture in the ground glass of his camera. He also speaks of Meatyard's courage in his battle with the cancer that led to his death in 1972. Up to the end, Meatyard continued to work and photograph, living life to the fullest, even as he was dying. For all of Meatyard's examination of the dark realm of the psyche (many of his photographs contain large pools of deep black, often at the very center of the image), his work and his life assert the transcendent power of the spirit.

Berry summed up Meatyard's artistic achievements best in an essay he wrote for their collaborative book of photographs, *The Unforeseen Wilderness*:

[His] pictures . . . are not ornaments or relics, but windows and doors, enlargements of our living spaces, entrances into the mysterious world outside the walls, lessons in what to look for and how to see. They make us a little afraid, for they suggest always the presence of the unknown, they suggest the possibility of the sudden accesses of delight, vision, beauty, joy, that entice us to keep alive, and reward us for the living; they can serve as spiritual landmarks in the pilgrimage to the earth each one of us must undertake alone.

Adele Horne is an artist who works in photography and video, and is membership assistant at the Houston Center for Photography.

Ralph Eugene Meatyard, *Lucybell Crater and One of Her Good Mertonian Friend's Seven Children*, 1969-72.



A Clear View Of Their Reality

Living with the Enemy by Donna Ferrato. New York: Aperture Foundation, Inc., 1991. 176 pages. \$24.95.
Shooting Back: A Photographic View of Life by Homeless Children by Jim Hubbard. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1991. 115 pages. \$14.95.

Ed Osowski

Statistics can never tell a complete story. Recalling what we know about the Great Depression, we are still caught short when looking at Walker Evans and James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. In their collaboration, the economic and social effects of the Depression in the rural South become hauntingly specific. Their subjects were not simply statistics: they were living persons, victims of a system that had failed them, prisoners of war, losers in a battle fought not with bullets but with dollars.

Two recent publications, *Living with the Enemy* and *Shooting Back*, underscore a point that Agee and Evans knew well: to understand and solve a problem, it is necessary, first, to feel the problem. Donna Ferrato's photographs of battered women, their spouses, children, and the individuals who staff the agencies that serve them, coupled with photographs by homeless children collected by Jim Hubbard, address two social problems with emotion and directness. These are photographs engaged in changing hearts, and then minds. Whether these images fit standard tests of photographic excellence is not a question that concerns either Ferrato or Hubbard. Writing recently in *The New York Times*, Vicki Goldberg considered the issues such photographs raise: "Photography of this order cuts through the net of aesthetics with the sharpness of its emotional power."

Ferrato, a gifted photojournalist, has been documenting domestic violence in the United States for more than ten years. Her position is quite clear: she does not stand apart, watching and photographing objectively from the sidelines. She calls herself "obsessed" with her task and frustrated by the resistance of magazine editors to publish her work. Her camera is her weapon, she tells us.

Living with the Enemy is a record, then, of Ferrato's ability to win the trust and respect of the women she has photographed. Gaining the permission to enter the lives of battered women was a rare gift, she writes. Domestic violence is one of society's great secrets. That its victims, shamed and powerless and abused, would reject her requests is exactly what she came to expect.

Still, eight women agreed to let Ferrato enter their lives. Two are famous: Charlotte Fedders, whose husband was an official in the Reagan administration, and Hedda Nussbaum, whose companion Joel Steinberg was convicted of murdering their adopted child Lisa. Her other subjects could be any number of women. Statistically that claim is no exaggeration. Experts call domestic violence "seriously underreported" and guess that one in two women will be physically battered in a marital or quasi-marital relationship.

In one of the book's chapters, "Lisa and Garth's Story," Ferrato records the American dream turned into a nightmare. When she met them, the couple lived on an estate just north of New York City.



Donna Ferrato

Japanese *Playboy* had commissioned Ferrato to photograph couples who epitomized the glamorous lifestyle of the 1980s. At first, Ferrato writes, she found Lisa and Garth to be "privileged people with all the happiness money could buy." She moved into their home. "No one ever seemed uncomfortable with my camera," she said. "A sense of trust and ease was quickly established." But their parties quickly turned to slug fests; Garth forced his wife to have sex with male friends, and alcohol and drugs fueled a rage that soon seemed to consume Garth. He beat his wife repeatedly, always denying his actions even when confronted with the camera's evidence. So great was

optimism is not the feeling she wants to leave with her reader. In the book's final section, "Women in Prison," her subjects are women who have chosen the most extreme form of escaping their spouses—murdering them. Without irony, Ferrato writes that a male-controlled penal system places "heavy sentences" on these women—most of whom are first offenders—whose only crime was "self-preservation."

One turns to Jim Hubbard's collection *Shooting Back* (an exhibition of these works is currently touring the country) to understand more about the problems and effects of homelessness. Like Ferrato, Hubbard is a photojournalist who has devoted



Mario Lamont (age 12), *Sewer Grate*

his desire to injure his wife, Ferrato writes, that "he hardly noticed my presence, nor did he seem to care that anyone was watching." But Ferrato watched and, as her book demonstrates, cared as well.

Many things are lost when the facade of marriage cracks under the blows of physical and emotional abuse. Bodies are broken, spirits weakened, the bonds of family torn, and children become victims as well in the wrenching, uprooted world Ferrato records. Diana, another subject in the book, is photographed in the hospital after one of her husband's attacks. She examines herself in a mirror, cautiously, skeptically. Her photograph painfully recasts classic representations of the woman at her mirror: here, it is not vanity or time's cruel passage that Diana considers, but the blows, unmediated by metaphor, to her body and to her spirit, from her husband.

Ferrato's *Living with the Enemy* has as its goal to depict with text and photographs the evidence of spousal abuse. But she does not stop there. When Ferrato photographs the activities of groups that offer counseling to spouses who batter and to their victims, there is some reason to hope. But

more than ten years documenting homelessness in the United States. Several years ago he founded Shooting Back, Inc., which teaches homeless children in the Washington, D.C., area how to use cameras to record their lives. Getting the "victims" to tell their stories could become a very subtle way to invade the privacy of a group that certainly does not deserve the exploitation, but nothing taints Hubbard's commitment to these young people. His book offers an interesting twist: this is how a group of children, aged nine to eighteen, see themselves when they are empowered. In this case, they are empowered with the seeing eye of a camera.

Like spousal abuse, statistics on homelessness are difficult to obtain and to appreciate. One study suggests that there are more than 500,000 children in this country who have no place to call home. *Shooting Back* is about those feelings (joy, anger, pain, love) and the "things" (toys, a room, a place to play or sit or fight) that add up to some definition of home.

Several years ago I organized a similar project for Houston Public Library to get children to understand, by looking closely

at their worlds through a camera's lens, what it meant to live in a city. The results were always surprising—usually naive, seldom "professional"—yet frequently revealing of how children respond with awe and wonderment to facts that adults miss or dismiss. This was very apparent with the photographs of abandoned cars. For adults, the photographs summarize urban decay, neighborhoods gone to seed, environments at risk to children. In their comments, however, the children show another way to see these hulks. The abandoned cars amused them. Do children possess a keener awareness of the limits and breakdown of technology than adults? Probably not. But what was clear was how deeply and truly children will find amusement where least expected.

The same spirit—call it hope or optimism—fills *Shooting Back*. Mario Lamont (age 12), in *Sewer Grate*, photographs a young girl, smiling, as she clings to the grating over a storm sewer. There is nothing precarious about her life as we read it in this image. In these photographs, children play wherever they can find a place to play. The smile of Lamont's subject makes this point obvious. In a caption beneath Daniel Hall's (age 9) *Twins in Bath*, is a child's comment: "This exhibit shows the way homeless people want us to see them and not the way magazines want us to."

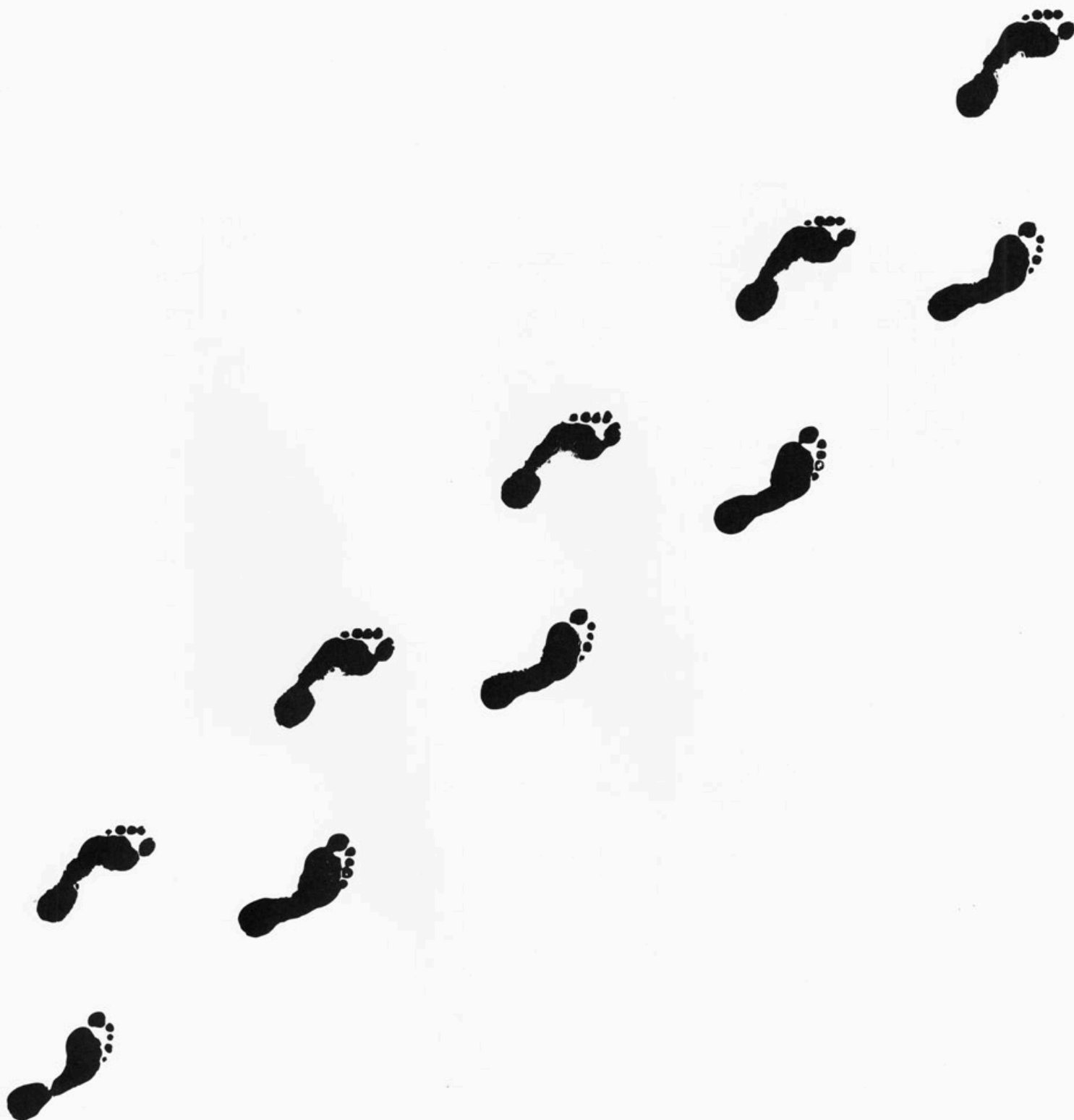
One finds children at play and at rest, posing in an alley, jumping into a swimming pool, examining a dead bird, showing a trophy, hugging their parents, their siblings, their toys, their pets—the world most children trustingly inhabit. These are photographs remarkably free of cant, free of any hidden tricks, free, in a sense, of the burden to prove how inhumane it is to live a homeless life. That joy survives is a sign, for some, that the human spirit can take great amounts of abuse before it crashes.

Were these the only images in *Shooting Back*, one might be hard pressed to understand what makes these children homeless. They inhabit rooms; they have beds and places to play and to be quiet. But *Shooting Back* does not create a place called "homeless" that we would all enjoy visiting some day. Carissa Etheridge (age 15) photographs a rat gnawing through garbage. And the concluding pages of the book

show how deeply violence is woven into the lives of these children. Daniel Hall and Kevin photograph boys posing with guns. In *Scuffle*, Chris Heflin (age 9) photographs two youths fighting. Facing his opponent, one young man smiles. Is their fight just a game for Heflin's camera? At the right edge of the photograph stands a young girl, watching us and watching the fight. A television, its image blurred, stands in the middle of the room. Is it turned on to Vanna White or to a cops and robbers broadcast? Heflin, surely too young to realize it, has summarized a world of violence, a world in which violence is just another fact of life for the homeless.

Ferrato's and Hubbard's projects speak directly to our hearts. Her photographs are raw, angry. The works by Hubbard's students belie their youth. They range from formal, posed portraits to images that have the feel of scenes quickly seen and then photographed on the street. Both projects are serious, committed, and important.

Ed Osowski is a member of the National Book Critic Circle, and his reviews appear regularly in the *Houston Post*.



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© Julie Newton, "Eloina's Mother," 1978. Kodak Tri-X film, professional film and Kodak Polyflex paper. © Eastman Kodak Company 1982

*The light through the doorway pressed gently
on her face,
showing me her world, her house, her bed,
her eyes.
She looked into my eyes through the camera,
as if she knew she would be looking at the world,
and without fear.
She always cried when I showed her a picture
of herself.
Eloina told me later her mother was unhappy
with how she looked,
old and wrinkled.
"Julie's camera never lies," Eloina said.
I never thought of her as old and wrinkled.
I saw a woman, a friend.
And she always asked me to take another picture.*

—Julie Newton

Julie Newton is a photographer in Austin, Texas, and a faculty member at the University of Texas at Austin.

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