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MAGGIE OLVEY: REPRESENTATIONS OF A LIFE
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Sally Gall, *Colombe d'Or*, 1986

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STAFF

EDITOR
Karen Gillen Allen

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Jean Caslin
Ed Osowski

DESIGN
Jim Tiebout

ADVERTISING SALES
MICHAEL G. DeVOLL

PHOTO RESEARCH
THUY M. TRẦN

HALFTONES
Masterpiece Litho

PRINTING
Drake Printing

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HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY
1441 West Alabama
Houston, Texas 77006
TELEPHONE
(713) 529-4755
FAX
(713) 529-9248

For details about membership or advertising contact HCP.

Executive Director
JEAN CASLIN

Associate Director
MICHAEL G. DEVOLL

Development/Marketing
Coordinator
LINDA A. RENNER

Program Coordinator
THUY M. TRẦN

Program Assistant
JUAN GARCIA

Assistants
TISH LEHEW
VICTORIA PEÑA
PATRICK RENNER
SARITA TALUSANI
TERRY TRUXILLO

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Editor's Note

Striving for excellence is often equated with reaching for the moon, the stars and the heavens. Humans have dreamed of traveling among the celestial bodies for hundreds of years—in essence attempting to reach something outside our grasp. In much the same way, once aware of the fleeting nature of our lives, we also sought to freeze the moment in time with the photograph. Both acts, once unattainable, are now a reality. It is the shared qualities of these two achievements that make the combination of photography in space so alluring and remarkable. Not only has man exceeded his grasp but he has captured it for posterity. Dr. Joseph Allen spoke of the challenges and rewards he faced as a mission photographer on two NASA flights in conjunction with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston exhibition "Quest for the Moon." His comments are excerpted here in *Recollections of a Space Photographer*. As Allen points out, the great thinkers of the ages would not be astonished to find that humans have traveled to space but they would be astonished that we have the ability to "freeze-frame a slice of time" in a photograph.

Also in this issue of **SPOT**, William R. Thompson reviews "Maggie Olvey: A Tribute" at Houston Center for Photography. At the time of her death in August 1994, Olvey had distinguished herself as a visual artist with work exhibited throughout Texas, a teacher of photographic history, a co-editor of **SPOT**, and a curatorial assistant at the MFAH for thirteen years. Thompson looks at the span of her artistic career and finds inspirational links to several art historical roots in the self-exploratory nature of Olvey's work. The exhibition was the first project of the Maggie Olvey Endowment Fund. It is hoped that the example Olvey set as a colleague and a friend of HCP will be perpetuated through this endowment fund.

In *Agricultural Fare*, Daniel P. Younger assesses *In Search of the Corn Queen* by Greta Pratt and *Ordinary Life, Festival Day: Aesthetics in the Midwestern County Fair* by Leslie Prosterman. Both books document the agricultural fairs and festivals that sprang up in the early days of the country more as a source of education than entertainment. Younger, who is involved in his own documentation of the agricultural fair, offers unique insight into these celebrations.

Looking at the related medium of film, Michael G. DeVoll's *Robert Frank's Journey from Photography to Film* explores the transformation of Robert Frank from photographer to filmmaker. Frank's long career in film is framed in relation to his initial photographic success. DeVoll seeks out many sources to find an explanation for the filmmaker's change in career direction.

Karen Gillen Allen

• • • •

Louise Ozelle Martin 1911-1995

Louise Ozelle Martin, 84, one of Houston's first African American women photographers died July 11, 1995 after a long illness.

Born in Brenham, Texas on Jan. 9, 1911, Martin was well known as a society photographer in Houston's African American community. Some of her most recognizable subjects were Marian Anderson, Jesse Jackson and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin's aerial shots of King's funeral and portraits of the widow Coretta Scott King appeared in *Life* magazine and earned her national acclaim.

The first female member of the National Professional Photographers Association, Martin worked for years as a photographer for the *Informer* and the *Forward Times*. She was also featured in *Viewfinders*, the first book recounting the lives of African American women photographers.

Martin's work has been exhibited at several institutions including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Texas Southern University.

Cover:

Robyn McDaniel, *Oscar Takes Larry to the Moon, 1990*
from *Quest for the Moon*, reprinted courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Highlights from the Sonia and Kaye Marvins Portrait Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, April 19-June 4, 1995.

Holly Hildebrand

Pathos and scandal. Celebrity and decadence. Glamour and poverty. Revolution and mystery. Old worlds and lost beauty.

These are a wide range of qualities, but, almost astonishingly, these, and more, were recently brought together in an exhibition of seventy-six images from the Sonia and Kaye Marvins Portrait Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The exhibition, "Highlights from the Sonia and Kaye Marvins Portrait Collection," celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Kaye Marvins Studio in Houston.

The Polish-born Marvins and his family have made portraiture their business for 120 years, and sons Mike and Buz carry the tradition on into the fourth generation. In 1984, on the eve of the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of their portrait studio, Sonia and Kaye Marvins proposed to build a photographic portrait collection for the museum not only out of their family's long interest in portraiture but because as Marvins said, "Houston has been very good to my family and me and we wanted to do something in return."

The result is a collection of rich diversity that adds strength to the museum's holdings in photography. Anyone with a passing knowledge of famous photography will instantly recognize some of the images: Yousuf Karsh's portrait of *Pablo Casals*, 1954, his back to the camera as he bends soulfully over his cello; Arnold Newman's *I.M. Pei*, 1967, peering through a narrowly-lighted slit in one of his structures; Agustin Victor Casasola's fierce *Portrait of Zapata*, 1914; Peter Stackpole's rather coy *Alfred Hitchcock* gazing into his fireplace, dog at his side, a Picasso above, in 1946, the year he filmed *Notorious*. This portrait is a rare print because its negative, and many others by Stackpole, were destroyed in a fire in 1987.

But just as arresting, perhaps more so, are the lesser-known portraits, especially those that can be classified mainly as oddities. Foremost among these is the very peculiar *The Duke of Polignac*, 1858, a series of *cartes-de-visite* by André Adolphe-Eugene Disderi, a Parisian considered the father of commercial portrait photography. The Duke consists of seven poses, the first two of which are the strangest: they show the sitter, a man who today might be regarded as someone who needs to go to the gym, proudly showing off his physique while wearing only checkered underclothes. In other poses, he appears quite the dandy in top hat and fez, and in still others he assumes the quite considerable dignity he lost while revealing to the world how God made him.

For those with a taste for scandal, even if it happened ninety years ago, the portrait of *Evelyn Nesbit*, 1901, by Rudolph Eickemeyer Jr. must be a high point. An extremely successful portrait photographer from New York, Eickemeyer served a great many of the social elite in and around New York

City. Among them was architect Stanford White, who designed Madison Square Garden and counted the exquisitely beautiful Nesbit, a former chorus girl, among his mistresses. This Nesbit portrait, considered a rather traditional pose (although she looks a bit like a down-dressed *Marie-Antoinette*), was one of a series that included some controversial and risqué depictions. When



the British throne to marry "the woman he loved," the former King Edward VIII stares mournfully, even a bit stupidly, into Avedon's camera; at his shoulder is the former Mrs. Wallis Warfield Simpson, her face a sad mask whose weird whiteness is only accentuated by the blackness of her hair and brows and the dark gash of her lips. If, as Avedon avowed, his goal was to make his subjects,

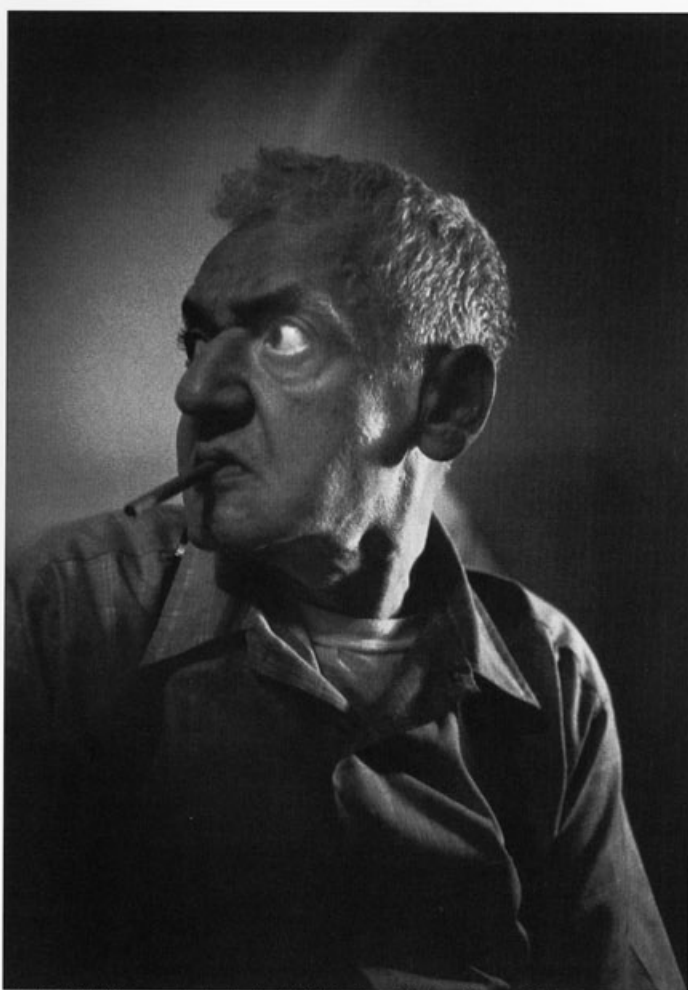
part of Smith's famous *Man of Mercy* essay for *Life* magazine. In *Josef Sudek*, 1945, Zdenko Feyfar captures the resilience of the artist who influenced the Modernist movement in Czech photography. Rumpled and a bit bewildered, Sudek looks straight into Feyfar's camera, which records, too, the strap circling his chest. There is an irony in that strap: although the photograph makes it appear to be a restraint, it was an instrument of Sudek's creativity. When he lost his right arm in World War I, he gave up his profession of bookbinding for photography and used the strap to help transport his camera. And if ever a man showed off his heroics to the public, it is the *Victor Hugo* photographed by Bertall in 1876 after his return from exile following the downfall of Napoleon III. Confronting the camera with leonine fierceness, Hugo displays the qualities that not even a Bonaparte could cow.

Yet one does not have to look into the faces of the famous to discover heroism. It is in the determined looks of the impoverished Polish immigrants photographed on their Pittsburgh porch in 1943 by Jack Delano (*Polish Steel Worker's Family*, Pittsburgh). It is in the us-against-the-world stance of the weather-beaten Arkansas couple, their arms wrapped around each other, in Mike Disfarmer's *Ed and Mamie Barger*, part of this mysterious artist's Heber Springs portraits, an archive of working-class portraits discovered in 1973, fourteen years after the photographer died in anonymity. And it is in the face of the forgotten: in 1968, art historian and critic and sometimes photographer Bill Jay visited Weegee, renowned in the '30s and '40s for his spontaneous, almost quirky photographs published in New York news papers. Ailing and with not much longer to live, *Weegee* is portrayed in semi-darkness, his head slightly averted, one eye still shining with wildness and intensity. Looking at that one bright orb, you wonder what that man has seen and how he has survived it, how he has turned it into art; on the side of the photograph, Jay writes a poignant description of what he himself saw: the grimness of *Weegee's* lonely life, but also the beauty that lay in the artistic archives crowded around him.

And of beauty there is much in this collection. Some of it is so strange as to be unreal; an example is Julia Margaret Cameron's *The Wild Flower*, 1867, an ethereal portrait of a young, long-haired woman (in real life, Mary Ryan, a maidservant, Cameron's ward and frequent model). Almost unreal in another sense is the glamorous *Tyrone Power* and *Loretta Young*, c. 1938, photographed by George Hurrell, a leader in the development of the Hollywood glamour portrait. In Hurrell's lighting and pose of the two stars, it is hard to imagine that human beauty could be so perfect (which, is, after all, what the studios wanted their audiences to think).

Both the Cameron and Hurrell portraits are images of lost worlds yet they do not move the viewer in the same way as other images from the past in this collection. One of the most touching is *My First Photograph of Maman and Papa*, taken by Jacques-Henri Lartigue in 1902 when he was eight.

THE Business
— & —
PORTRAITS



Top: Rudolph Eickemeyer, Jr., *Evelyn Nesbit*, 1901 Above: Bill Jay, *Weegee*, 1968

Nesbit's mentally deranged and jealous husband, Harry Thaw, shot White to death at Madison Square Garden in 1906, the already famous Eickemeyer collection was made even more so through the notorious murder and trials.

Also in this school of scandal is a Richard Avedon work of a rather more pathetic, even ghoulish interest, *The Duke and Duchess of Windsor*, April 16, 1957. Twenty years after he abdicated

shot always in harsh studio light, reveal themselves as "symbolic of themselves," he did so with this strange, isolated, exiled pair.

But if there is room for the curious and decadent in this collection, it does not elbow out the heroic. It is difficult not to be touched by W. Eugene Smith's image of *Albert Schweitzer*, 1949, head bowed as if weighted down by the sorrow of the world. The portrait, taken in Aspen, Colorado, was

The photograph, which shows the Lartigue couple in a garden on a idyllic day, the father's hand lovingly placed on the mother's shoulder, evokes not only the warmth of a son but the sun: the viewer can practically feel the touch of summer and smell the scent of the blooms the Lartigues pass. Although one of the most joyous photographs in the collection, the portrait still can be viewed with a tinge of sadness: this, after all, is a world that no longer exists, a world that was not very far removed from the horrors of a sort of war humankind had yet to experience.

How that war came to be might be read in the faces of the three young men in *Jungbauern*, a scary image by August Sander. Dressed for a dance in 1914, as the clouds of total war were gathering, three young German farmers regard the camera with arrogance and a sort of self-conscious bravado; one wonders how history might have been different if more humility had been the order of the day. Even the beautiful portrait of *Baroness Olga de Meyer*, 1900, created by her husband, the fashion photographer *Baron Adolf de Meyer*, has overtones of death: the fading light falling on a row of graceful chairs in the background seems a harbinger of loss, a farewell to one century and a sad greeting to the beginning of a new one marked by massive destruction.

Although the Marvins collection is filled with such images of social and historical significance, it does not ignore modern images of celebrity. Annie Leibovitz is present with a breezy portrait of *Pat Benatar*, 1981, and in one of the most fascinating images of a contemporary actress, *Sheila Metzner* gives us *Jeanne Moreau in a Striped Kimono*, 1983, a portrait notable for what it does not show about the actress. Taken in profile, Moreau gives us no chance to see her most arresting feature, her mouth; instead, Metzner concentrates on the Japanese qualities of her composition. *Kaye Marvins* himself is present with a graceful portrait of the actress *Erin O'Brian Moore*, photographed in 1954 when she was a guest performer at the Alley Theatre. Son *Michael H. Marvins* contributes *E. O. Goldbeck*; taken in 1987, it is the last portrait of the pioneer photographer who took a "snapshot" of *President William McKinley* in San Antonio in 1901.

Seen together, this varied group of photographs puts a special face on the subject of portraiture. Diverse in its kinds of images, the Marvins' collection provides an opportunity to explore not only the way artists look at their subjects but also at how we behold them through time. Hindsight can make many of these portraits clearer—and in a sense more mysterious. Perhaps that makes *Edward Weston's Spencer Kellogg Jr.* one of the most emblematic portraits of the collection: photographed in 1920, Kellogg, a Pictorialist photographer, is shown cloaked and in shadow, slightly blurred as he moves through a sepia-toned room. The image whispers "mystery" to us, and perhaps that, in the end, is what all these pictures are saying.

Holly Hildebrand is a playwright, poet, and freelance writer. She recently joined *Houston Chronicle Interactive* as a wire editor.



Mike Disfarmer, *Ed and Mamie Barger*, from *The Herber Springs Portrait series*, 1939-46



August Sander, *Jungbauern*



Kaye Marvins, *Erin O'Brian Moore*, 1954



Sheila Metzner, *Jeanne Moreau in Striped Kimono*, 1983
Original in color



Richard Avedon, *The Duke and Duchess of Windsor*, 1957



Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Wildflower*, 1867



Agustin Victor Casasola, *Portrait of Zapata*, 1914



Peter Stackpole, *Alfred Hitchcock*, 1946

Initially published in conjunction with the exhibition "The Sonia and Kaye Marvins Portrait Collection," April 10-June 22, 1986, the revised edition of the catalog is published in conjunction with a new exhibition featuring works from the original selection as well as photographs acquired since 1986.

REPRESENTATIONS of a Life

Maggie Olvey: A Tribute, *Houston Center for Photography*, March 17-April 30, 1995.

William R. Thompson

At one time or another virtually every photographer steps from behind the camera and stands before the lens—a critical juncture, commonly known as the self-portrait, that transforms the photographer from author into subject. Before her death in August 1994 at the age of 42, Maggie Olvey did this many times using methods that distanced her from photography's conventions. In her work, Olvey explored the issue of self-representation while pushing the boundaries of the photographic medium to its limits.

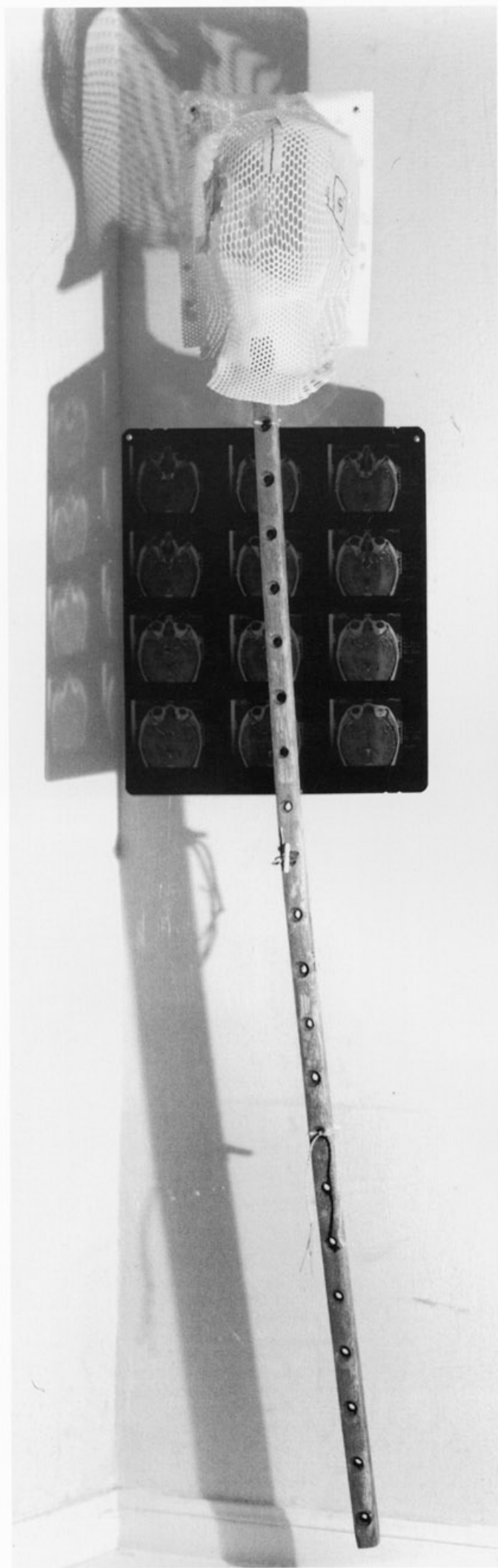
Olvey is well-known to many practitioners of photography in Houston as a founding member of Houston Center for Photography and a former co-editor of *SPOT*. She received a B.A. degree from Rice University in 1974 with a major in French and a minor in science. Judging from her career path, it may be assumed that Olvey loved to work with paper, whether it took the form of a book, manuscript, drawing, print, or photograph. In 1978 she began working as an archivist at Rice's Woodson Research Center and later for the Houston office of the Archives of American Art. In 1979 she joined the staff of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston as an Assistant to the Registrar; two years later she became the Curatorial Assistant for works of art on paper and took responsibility for managing the museum's rapidly growing collections of prints, drawings, and photographs. In addition to working at the museum and raising two children, Olvey earned an M.F.A. degree in photography at the University of Houston in 1991. Throughout her career she took a serious and systematic approach to the study of photography. Olvey curated several exhibitions for HCP and frequently researched and wrote about the medium's history and innovators. She constantly drew upon this knowledge when creating her own work as well.

Spanning the period from 1982 to 1994, the works included in the HCP exhibition display a wide range of intellectual concerns and technical experimentation. Olvey's intensely personal constructions are complex in terms of appearance making them difficult to categorize based on media alone. Of the fourteen works comprising the exhibition, only one is an example of straight photography—a small postcard titled *My Icon*, 1982/85. Most of the works are constructions or assemblages incorporating various found objects along with innovative approaches to printmaking and photographic processes. Although the structural elements are different for each work, they all share a sense of experimentation. Most important, they

collapse the traditional boundaries and presumed hierarchies between printmaking, painting, sculpture, and photography. Despite her primary devotion to photography, Olvey was never satisfied working with one particular medium and her work represents a constant struggle to utilize new materials and sources.

Olvey first experienced the symptoms of cancer in 1991 while traveling as a museum courier. The artist's appropriation of photographic images and leftover paraphernalia from various medical treatments is a chilling reminder that conventional therapies for cancer can be as devastating to the mind and body as the disease itself. In *Fallout*, 1992 the artist created a self-portrait using a Plexiglas support, a wooden component from a hammock, a mask of plastic mesh that held her head in place during radiation treatment, and a sheet of film showing twelve computerized views of the interior of her brain. Olvey assembled these disparate objects—each a symbolic fragment of her life—in a minimalist reconstruction of her body. The molded face mask and weathered hammock fragment represent her head and spine while the computerized film rigidly defines her shoulders and chest; each of these elements leans against the Plexiglas support and casts an eerie shadow on the wall behind. In a written statement from 1993 included as part of the exhibition, Olvey noted that "without the invisible support of friends and family, represented by the Plexiglas framework of *Fallout*, my recovery would not have come so easily." She described these assemblages as "metaphors of my experience while coping with difficult diagnoses and potent treatments. The various elements of each piece may be read as narrative symbols of my struggles...as each month of treatment came and went, another element would be added, subtracted, bolted, or tied down." *Fallout* and the other works from this series were as much a part of Olvey's therapy as the surgery, radiation, and drugs.

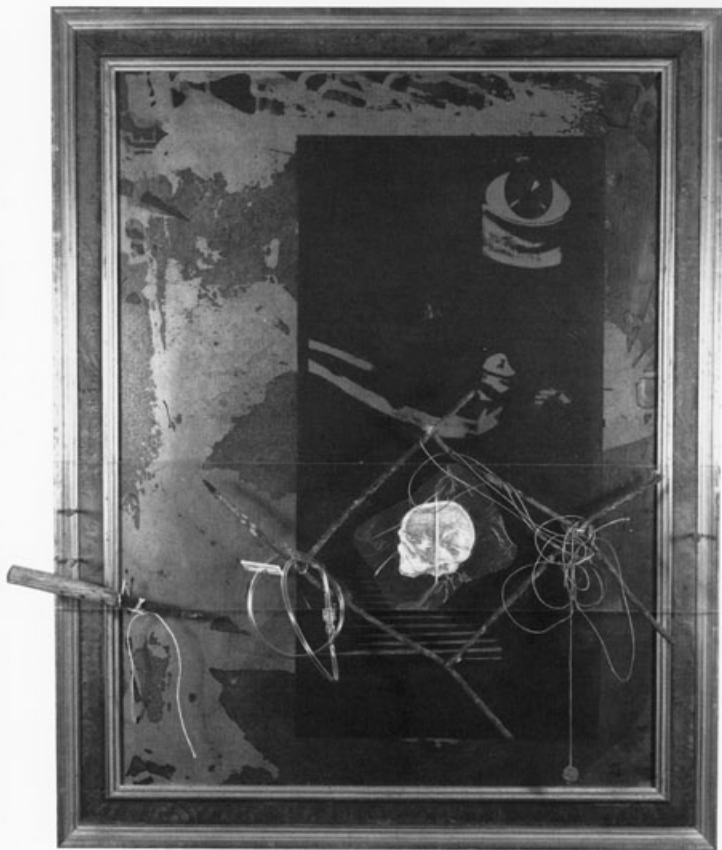
In *Backbone*, c. 1994 Olvey again represented a fragment of herself by incorporating the other wooden piece from the hammock in a symbolic rendition of her diseased spine. Gauze bandages and a strip of film from another medical test are tangled among the wooden vertebrae, creating a striking dichotomy between the fragile, ethereal nature of the work and the strength and fortitude implied by the title. Although she confronted the issue of her cancer openly in these constructions, Olvey remained private and guarded in terms of representing the Self, and only revealed aspects of her experience by documenting her body section by section with almost scientific precision. The viewer reads the story behind these objects one chapter at a time but never as a complete tale,



Maggie Olvey, *Fallout* (self portrait), 1992, mixed media: plexiglas, wood, film, mesh mask, string



Maggie Olvey, *sHe*, 1991, collage: paper on etched zinc plate, reprinted courtesy of the MFAH



xMaggie Olvey, *Recollections*, 1992, mixed media on etched zinc in antique frame



Maggie Olvey, *A Barthes Reader*, 1987/94, an artist's book of gelatin silver prints, etchings, and collage
Installation photograph by Tish LeHew

much less an open book. It is not surprising that Olvey rarely represented the human body as a whole in her assemblages, both those created before and after the diagnosis of her cancer; she preferred instead to represent the body in metaphorical fragments. In *My Icon*, for example, she playfully incorporated a pair of feet with painted toenails in a postcard sent to friends. In the collaged Type C print *me*, 1990/92, another self-portrait, Olvey used a contact sheet to show only her face from twenty-five different profiles.

Although Olvey's illness is by far the most pronounced theme of the exhibition, it is by no means the only subject that engaged the artist. A number of her constructions reflect a wide-ranging and critical interest in art history, no doubt due in part to her scholarly pursuits and the years she spent working in a museum with "encyclopedic" collecting ambitions. Using the now standard formula for Post-Modern appropriation, Olvey attached reproductions of well-known works of art from throughout history to some of her assemblages; several figures from Hieronymus Bosch's paintings, including the famous drinker from *Ship of Fools*, c. 1495 adorn *Untitled*, 1993-94 an elegant grid painting by Mondrian has been collaged to a page in *A Barthes Reader*, 1987/94 and the image of Hans Bellmer's *La Poupée*, 1936 has been transferred onto the hanging fabric in *Obsessions*, 1991. The use of such appropriations problematizes the issue of intellectual property and questions the sanctity of so-called artistic originality, concepts Olvey seemed to relish exploiting in these and other pieces.

The images Olvey chose to appropriate, however, are much more than exercises in critical inquiry; they function on a deeply symbolic level as well. In *Recollections*, 1992 Olvey's appropriation of an anatomical study done by Leonardo da Vinci in 1489 reveals her historical interest in the drawing and its relevance to her cancer. The drawing shows a meticulously rendered cross-section of a human skull with numerous cavities, arteries, and nerve clusters. Although executed more than five hundred years ago, it is a beautiful and astonishingly accurate study of human anatomy—a testament to Leonardo's accomplishments as both artist and scientist. Ironically, the drawing was displayed at the Museum

of Fine Arts, Houston in the summer of 1992 in the exhibition "Leonardo da Vinci: The Anatomy of Man" not long after Olvey was treated for a brain tumor. Olvey's appropriation of the image is not a coincidence, but rather a deliberate attempt to relate the five-hundred-year-old drawing to her experience.

Olvey also paid homage to other canonical masters in one of the most visually successful pieces in the exhibition, the collage *sHE*, 1991. The work bears striking formal and iconographic resemblance to the early Dada collages of Max Ernst and Hans Arp. The support for *sHE* is a zinc plate that Olvey used in 1988 for another print called *By Whose Measure Are We Ruled?*; a portion of the title is still visible in reverse on the surface of the plate. By recycling components from old works of art and utilizing them in new compositions, Olvey followed the direction of Arp who at one time tore up his old artwork and rearranged the pieces into collages that explored the role of chance in artistic creation. It was an important exercise for him, and no doubt for Olvey, as it demonstrated that new creative possibilities could emerge from the destruction of past work. Taking a cue from Ernst, who also manipulated images from magazines in his early collages, Olvey glued photocopied images from a nineteenth century *Harper's Weekly* onto the zinc plate to form the letters that spell the word "sHE." In her collage, the "s" is made primarily from objects with rounded, curvilinear forms possessing traditional feminine associations—a baby carriage, corsets, flowers, a stove-top with pots, and soap. Most of the objects comprising the "H" are phallic and typically masculine accouterments, including a handgun, a man's shoe, the lower half of a leg, and the tip of a fountain pen; the "E" is made from a grand piano lying on its side. At first glance the work appears to be a clever and humorous play on the sexual possibilities of Victorian merchandise, in much the same way that Ernst's collages revealed and in some cases subverted the gender of everyday objects and mechanical devices. Unlike Ernst's collages, however, *sHE* possesses a distinct feminist critique of male violence and female victimization; the placement of a bulls-eye and yawning hippopotamus in the female "s" and a handgun with an elongated barrel in the male "H" is no doubt intentional.

While Olvey's constructions are usually self-referential they are far from self-serving. She described the work executed during her illness as a means of both utilizing the photographic medium and challenging tradition. Above all, her assemblages were an exploration of possibilities—exploring them all was a lifelong journey for Olvey that sadly ended much too soon.

William R. Thompson is the Curatorial Assistant for Twentieth-Century Art and Textiles and Costume at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Editor's Note: This article was inspired by a screening of Frank's films at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston in May 1995. The films of Robert Frank are distributed in the United States by the Film Department of the MFAH (713-639-7531) and in Europe by Vega Film A. G., Zurich, Switzerland (01-252-6000)

"That crazy feeling in America when the sun is hot on the streets and music comes out of the jukebox or from a nearby funeral, that's what Robert Frank has captured in tremendous photographs taken as he traveled on the road around practically forty-eight states in an old used car...and with the agility, mystery, genius, sadness and strange secrecy of a shadow photographed scenes

the taste of a generation that had had its fill of heroes and icons." Although his images would influence the next generation, they were not well received at the time. Published in France in 1958 and in New York in 1959, "his disillusioned images were seen as an attack on American optimism."²

In this series, Frank trained his camera on the indecisive moment: the down-time between life's important episodes. We are shown the glimpses and fragments of people's lives that Frank encountered during his two years of wandering the United States with his family. Because of his "anti-aesthetic" approach, we also get a sense of his peregrinations—the physical act of wandering has been translated into his images.

There is a consistency of vision in Frank's photographs that is difficult to describe. Duane Michals says: "It's an atmosphere; there is always an atmosphere of light, an atmosphere of the relationship between the people." Michals goes on to say that Frank's images are "poetic—the indelible, indescribable part that we respond to."³

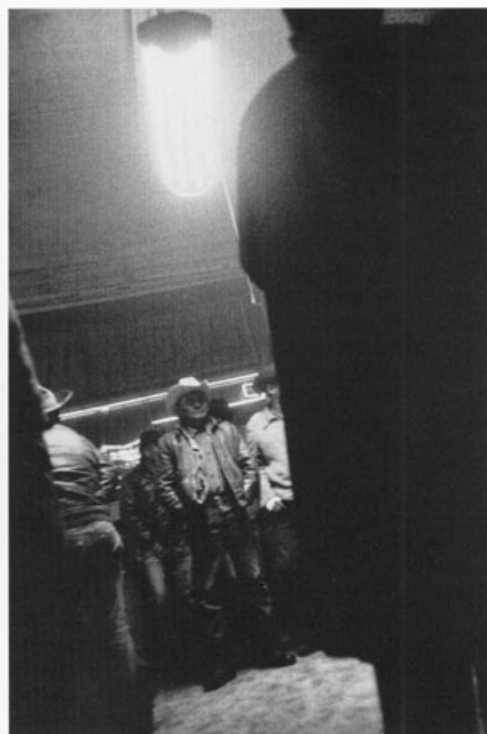
With such a level of praise, one might assume Frank turned from photography because he had created a reputation that was almost impossible to live up to. "Frank, aware that his style had reached some sort of climax, was faced with the question of what to do with the rest of his life. He switched to film and eventually changed his subject."⁴ Frank offers a

more lyrical explanation: "I became more occupied with my own life, with my own situation instead of traveling and looking at the cities and the landscape. And I think that brought me to

"A photograph is fiction and as it is moving it becomes reality."⁶

Pull My Daisy (1959), Robert Frank's first film (co-directed by the painter Alfred Leslie), is adapted from the third act of *The Beat Generation*, an unproduced play by Jack Kerouac, loosely based on an actual event. The film begins with a woman opening her New York City loft for the day: pulling back the drapes, straightening yesterday's messes, feeding and getting her son off to school. This routine is interrupted by the arrival of three poet friends who decide to spend the day waiting for Milo, the woman's husband, to return from his job as a railroad brakeman. They pass the time drinking, smoking pot and talking about poetry. Soon after Milo's return, the group is joined by a bishop, his sister and aunt. As the discussion meanders around a range of subjects including religion and the meaning of life, Milo's wife struggles to maintain order in the midst of the chaos of drunkenness and a spontaneous jazz recital. After the bishop and his attendants leave, she finally compels her husband and his poet friends to continue their revelry elsewhere.

However straightforward the story, the film itself is far from conventional. All the footage was shot silent and the sound track consists of improvised voice-over narration by Kerouac. Although the action is based on his play, the spontaneous narration is a combination of his words in place of dialogue and asides about the events portrayed. The results are disorienting; at times we feel the narrator is relating the action, at other times creating the



Robert Frank, *Bar—Gallup New Mexico, c. 1958, from The Americans*

beat generation poets (Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky, and Gregory Corso) each portraying himself. The bishop's visit actually occurred while Kerouac, Ginsberg and Orlovsky were visiting a friend in California. So does that make the film a fictitious narrative or a re-creation of an actual event?

The filmic style of the work also adds to the dilemma. The film is shot in grainy, high-contrast, black-and-white. At times, some faces are obscured in shadow; at other times, lights wash out large portions of the image. The camera is hand-held and shaky, at times with dizzying pans and sweeps, *cinema verité* in its infancy. This style of filmmaking is generally associated with documentary films rather than more formally composed narrative films.

Most of Frank's films defy categorization. It may be because he sees no difference between who he is and what he does, so he intentionally blurs the distinction between truth and fiction. Several of his works have been autobiographical: *Conversations in Vermont, 1969*; *About Me: A Musical, 1971*; *Life Dances On... 1980*; and *Home Improvements, 1985*. At the close of his video *Home Improvements* Frank states: "I'm always doing the same images. I'm always looking outside trying to look inside; trying to tell something that's true. But maybe nothing is really true—except what's out there and what's out there is always different." With this as a starting point, all of his films, even the ones that are not overtly autobiographical, are about him and his search for "truth." He prophetically alluded to this in a letter home to his parents not long after moving to New York City: "Never have I experienced so much in one week as here. I feel as if I'm in a film. Life here is very different than in Europe. Only the moment counts; nobody seems to care about what he'll do tomorrow."⁷

It is the nature of the moving image that has pulled some artists away from the still image. Unlike still photography that "stops time," film retains the fluidity of time and motion and so is perceived to be more closely linked to

Robert FRANK'S Journey FROM photography to FILM

that have never been seen before on film. For this he will definitely be hailed as a great artist in his field."

Jack Kerouac, Introduction to The Americans, 1959

Michael G. DeVoll

That same year, Robert Frank gave up still photography. Why would an artist, about whom such grand statements have been made, decide to give up the practice of that medium to pursue other visual interests? This question leads to an examination of the similarities and differences of Frank's media of choice: photography and film. Because Frank's photography is so greatly acclaimed and his film/video work so prolific, it presents an opportunity for a comparative case study.

Robert Frank, born in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1924, immigrated to the United States in 1947. Frank is, and probably always will be, best known for *The Americans*, a body of work created under a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1955-56. Naomi Rosenblum writes that Frank was "predominant in establishing a time and style for the next generation. [His] irreverent, unposed, erratically framed, and sometimes blurred forms (reflective also of their maker's anti-aesthetic attitude toward print quality) adumbrated



Robert Frank, *Restaurant—U.S. 1 Leaving Columbia, South Carolina, c. 1958, From The Americans*

move away from the single image and begin to film, where I had to tell a story. And I guess I most often choose to tell my own story or part of it or make up some story that was related to my life. So sometimes the two paths crossed."⁵ Upon close examination, it becomes apparent that even though he changed media, his vision remained consistent.

The addition of original jazz music, composed by David Amram, adds to the frenetic energy of some portions of the film.

There is also confusion about the nature of the film: documentary versus narrative fiction. This is brought about by the choice of actors and the style of filming. The poets are portrayed by a virtual "Who's Who" of

reality. There is also the added element of sound, a filmic device with which Frank has experimented throughout his film career—from the only slightly cohesive voice-over of *Pull My Daisy* to his use of non-synchronous sound in the '70s and '80s.

C'est Vrai!, 1990 combines many of these same facets of Frank's filmmaking. This video piece was created for French television and the assignment, given to several film/video artists, was to shoot one hour of unedited video of their lives. Frank starts at his studio and proceeds to a van that carries him around New York City, stopping periodically so he can get out and film. He is accompanied by an assistant with a clipboard (who keeps track of the locations and gets model releases when warranted), a sound person (we only see an arm or leg from time to time as they load and unload from the van), and a friend who joins them at the second stop. As in previous works, Frank subverts the "documentary" aspect of this film. At the various stops, he casually films passersby on the street and eavesdrops on phone conversations, but he also tapes prearranged, scripted vignettes with actors. The friend who joins them constantly tries to get Frank to let him play out some scene so he can be included in the project. The friend is actually Peter Orlovsky, who appeared in Frank's first film. During these various interludes, the sound technician may be concentrating on one subject while Frank, with the camera, focuses on another. With this project, the prophecy of forty-three years prior comes true: there is so much going on, he feels like he is in a film.

So where does this leave Robert Frank? In 1986, Anne W. Tucker and



From *Life Dances On*, 1980, directed by Robert Frank

Philip Brookman curated "Robert Frank: New York to Nova Scotia" that was accompanied by a 111-page catalog and a documentary video, *Fire in the East: A Portrait of Robert Frank*. After the initial viewing in Houston, the exhibition traveled to five other sites in the United States and Germany. That same year, in conjunction with the MFAH, the Center for Creative Photography published *Robert Frank: A Bibliography, Filmography, and Exhibition Chronology, 1946-1985*, a 183-page comprehensive overview by Stuart Alexander. Also in that year, Robert Delpire edited *Robert Frank by Robert Frank* in conjunction with a retrospective exhibition in Paris and a new edition of *The Americans* was published in three languages. In 1994, Sarah Greenough and Philip Brookman curated "Robert Frank: Moving Out," a comprehensive retrospective for the National Gallery of Art, Washington,

D.C. This exhibition is accompanied by a 335-page catalog and has an international traveling schedule through 1996. Curatorial Assistance in California is currently touring an exhibition of work from *The Americans*. Pick up any photographic history book and it will talk about Frank and *The Americans*.

When asked about the differences between the two retrospectives, Anne Tucker said the MFAH exhibit was intended as a chronology and an evolution of ideas related to Frank's life. This show served as a framework for his career while the National Gallery exhibition is a sophisticated examination of Frank as an image-maker. She noted that this exhibition illustrates the shift in his work from the '40s and early '50s to the work from *The Americans*; from spacious images of lone figures on the horizon to crowded images with the subject right on the surface. It drives home the fact that he is "a man who has constantly needed to shift." This then puts his shift to filmmaking in context: it is yet another step in a life of constant change.

So where does this leave Robert Frank as a filmmaker? He has seen himself primarily as a filmmaker since 1959 and has made twenty-one films in those thirty-six years. Although the exhibitions mounted by both the MFAH and the National Gallery included screenings of his films, which are also addressed in the catalogs, his oeuvre is still overshadowed by his photography and especially *The Americans*. One is hard pressed to find a film history that mentions him. Film critic and historian Jonas Mekas has said that Frank's *Pull My Daisy* was one film that "marked the end of the *avant-garde* experimental cinema tradition of the '40s and '50s."

The disparity of how Frank is viewed in the two worlds of photography and film could be attributed to timing. *The Americans* came at a time when photography was on the cusp of

change and Frank was there as an innovator. As a filmmaker, he was finding his stylistic niche at the end of a filmic generation. Economics are another contributing factor to this dilemma. His photographs were, and continue to be, a hot property in the photographic market while his films have less broad-based appeal. *Candy Mountain* is his only film to have received national distribution when it was produced; the others have had limited distribution, either self-distributed by Frank or a few through the Filmmaker's Coop in New York. Today, their distribution through the MFAH Film Department is steady but slow. As far as funding to produce the films, Frank has received that through the American Film Institute (1971), the Canada Council (1975) and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (1981). This is evidence that he is respected as a filmmaker and continues to be an innovator.

So Frank remains a filmmaker today not because of the interest from others, but for the reason any artist continues to make his art: because of the passion within. Frank's films are, for him, the most satisfying way for him to express himself and to find his truth.

THE FILMS OF ROBERT FRANK

<i>Pull My Daisy</i>	1959, 16mm, b/w
<i>The Sin of Jesus</i>	1961, 35mm, b/w
<i>OK End Here</i>	1963, 35mm, b/w
<i>Me and My Brother</i>	1965-68, 35mm, b/w and color
<i>Liferaft Earth</i>	1969, 16mm, color and b/w
<i>Conversations in Vermont</i>	1969, 16mm, b/w
<i>About Me: A Musical</i>	1971, 16mm, b/w
<i>Home Is Where the Heart Is</i>	1971, 16mm, color (cinematography only)
<i>About Us</i>	1972, 16mm with Super-8 enlargements, color and b/w (a class production with students at Visual Studies Workshop)
<i>Cocksucker Blues</i>	1972, 16mm, b/w and color
<i>This Film is About...</i>	1973, 16mm with Super-8 enlargements, color and b/w (a class production with students at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design)
<i>Keep Busy</i>	1975, 16mm, b/w
<i>Life Dances On...</i>	1980, 16mm, b/w and color
<i>Energy and How to Get It</i>	1981, 16mm, b/w
<i>This Song for Jack</i>	1983, 16mm, b/w
<i>Home Improvements</i>	1985, video, color
<i>Candy Mountain</i>	1987, 35mm, color
<i>Hunter</i>	1989, 16mm, b/w and color
<i>C'est Vrai! (One Hour)</i>	1990, video, color
<i>Last Supper</i>	1992, 16mm (enlarged to 35mm), color
<i>Moving Pictures</i>	1994, video, color and b/w, silent

FOOTNOTES

1. Rosenblum, Naomi, *A World History of Photography*, Abbeville Press, Inc., 1984, pp 517-518
2. Lemagny and Rouille, *A History of Photography*, Cambridge University Press, p. 193
3. *Fire in the East: A Portrait of Robert Frank*, 1986, documentary video, co-produced by MFAH and Houston Public Television (KHUT), directed by Amy Brookman and Philip Brookman
4. Vicki Goldberg, "What to Do With the Leftover Pieces of a Life," *The New York Times*, October 16, 1994, review of "Robert Frank: Moving Out," at the National Gallery
5. *Fire in the East*
6. Robert Frank in a letter to Sarah Greenough and Philip Brookman, curators of the National Gallery of Art's retrospective exhibition, "Robert Frank: Moving Out."
7. Robert Frank in a letter to his parents, reproduced in "Robert Frank: New York to Nova Scotia," exhibition catalog, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, edited by Anne W. Tucker, p.14
8. Sidney, P. Adams, *Visionary Film: the American Avant-Garde 1943-1978*, Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 340

Michael G. DeVoll is another artist who has given up still photography to pursue the moving image. He works as HCP's Associate Director.



From *Pull My Daisy*, 1959, directed by Robert Frank

Editor's Note: Dr. Joseph Allen shared his experiences as a photographer on two NASA flights during a lecture on December 18, 1994 held in conjunction with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston exhibition "Quest for the Moon," December 18, 1994-February 5, 1995. This essay is drawn from his remarks and includes references to slides unavailable for publication.

Joseph Allen

In the invitation I noticed that I was to speak about my "extraordinary experiences in space." I will do that. But I want to be very quick to point out that the very act of making a journey out beyond the edge of the Earth is extra-terrestrial, it's extra world, and it is indeed extraordinary travel, and there are a number of men and women who have made such journeys now. After all, we're in the thirty-some years of the Space Age. Beginning in 1967, I was an astronaut with NASA for eighteen years. In November of 1982 I flew aboard Columbia on STS 5. I also flew as a Mission Specialist aboard the space shuttle Discovery on STS 51A in November of 1984. So, the experience is not uniquely mine. But [it] is nonetheless a unique experience. Many of the persons who travel from this side of the world, by the way, live in the Houston area, and I think it is fitting in the extreme that the account of space journeys is documented in a very innovative way here in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

I've made two space journeys. I am truly an over-the-hill astronaut in that both of them were ten years ago. Hard to believe—because I find myself thinking about them today almost as though they were yesterday. During the course of the space journeys I was the ship's photographer. With that assignment I had the great fun of taking about 1,500 pictures from the vantage point of a spaceship.

As you know, my background is technical and it's also physics. I, for a number of years, studied the laws of Sir Isaac Newton, learned about Galileo, studied elements that had been first recognized by Leonardo Da Vinci and Johannes Kepler. And, I believe, if those great thinkers of some hundreds of years ago were to be told that we humans had traveled from Earth out into space, they would be interested, but frankly they would not be all that astonished. They would not be flabbergasted by that. However, if they somehow were here today, and we told them that space travelers had been able to capture, to freeze-frame, a slice of time and hold it on two dimensions in a representation called a photograph, they would think it clearly magic! They would not understand photography or how it's done. And yet we accept it as just a matter of our daily life. It's an invention about 150-years-old and the invention is rather well documented in this exhibition. But, it's clearly magic that we can do that. And, space travelers can, through

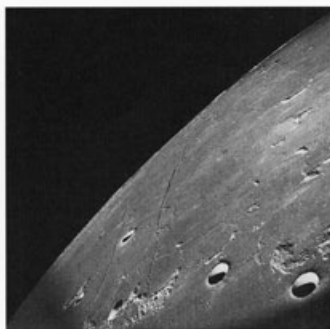
photography, freeze-frame time and bring back the two-dimensional representation of that to share with everyone. I think that is one of the greatest contributions of human travel out from space—that we can turn and look at the Earth. It can literally be said that on the way to space we caught sight of Planet Earth. It is that thought with which I would like to begin.

I really have only three minor objectives—the main objective, I think, is to set the stage for the exhibition. But my aim is also to share with you three separate things. I would first like to share with you, as best I can in words, the feeling that photographers have when they take these photographs. What does it feel like? I am often asked, "What's it like to be there?" I think through the pictures and perhaps through some of my descriptions I can give you a sense [of] what it is like to be there just as you take the photograph. The second is a



little more practical—I would like to give you an indication of some of the frustrations that a space photographer faces in the environment in which he or she is working. In some cases they are quite different (from) here on Planet Earth. Some of them are perplexing, some are amusing. They are funny to everyone but space photographers here on Earth. Although all of these problems are problems faced by photographers here on the surface of the Earth, they are somehow compounded in the comical zero gravity of space. And, finally, the third impression that I would like to leave with you is the sense of, when the photography works, what sorts of things can we really capture. I will say, at this point, that the photos are good—in some cases, excellent. But, like photos of anything, it's not quite the same as being there.

The space journey begins in a modern spaceship. This is a launch—a somewhat different launch photo. Some of the more traditional ones are in the exhibition. The two solid rockets each are generating about two-million pounds of thrust, and the three main engines each are generating about a half-a-million pounds. The vehicle goes outbound, first starting straight up. I'm obliged because of my past profession to include a little



physics here. The acceleration is such that the astronauts and all the camera gear, everything inside, weighs three times its normal weight. So, each of you can do your own calculation. You would weigh three times your normal weight. You would be seated but lying on your back because the chairs are mounted to the floor of the flight deck and the flight deck is nearly vertical here. And, so you are lying on your back, weighing three times your normal weight for a period of eight and a half minutes.

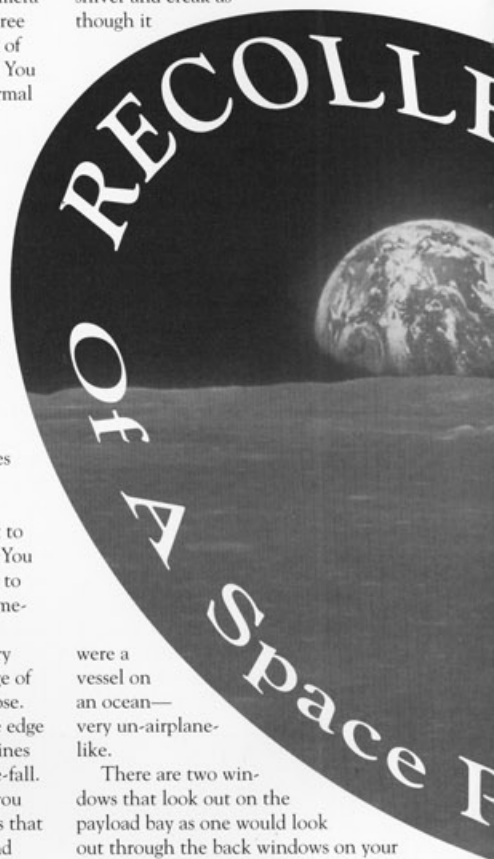
The first part of the journey is extraordinarily loud. The sound drops off a bit when the solid rockets are jettisoned after two minutes' time, but the acceleration continues. Then the engines shut down and within about a quarter-of-a-second you go from weighing three times your weight to weighing your weight times zero. You are weightless. You have traveled to the edge and on purpose done something that we are told the sailors aboard Columbus's ships were very fearful of—sailing toward the edge of the Earth and falling off on purpose. You have accelerated towards the edge of the Earth, shut down your engines and you are now in perpetual free-fall. You float from that time on and you coast in orbit about the Earth. It's that environment in which we live and work and in which we take photos. We use quite ordinary cameras. We use Nikons, Hasselblads, Linhofs and others. And they are off-the-shelf cameras, by and large. In the zero gravity you don't have to hold it. You just put your finger on it and push the shutter release.

Taking space photos in the interior of the spacecraft is exactly like taking

photos here. By the way, the inside of the spaceship is very much like a ship. It looks like an airplane on the outside, but don't be fooled. The inside is very ship-like. It's silent. You can talk easily. You hear an occasional hum of electronics, electric motors. You hear an occasional hissing of air being vented into the cabin. But, otherwise it is as quiet as can be. No loud airplane noise at all. You hear the ship from time to time creak against various ventings external and various forces put on the ship by perhaps a rocket sixty feet away from you that causes the ship to shiver and creak as though it

were a vessel on an ocean—very un-airplane-like.

There are two windows that look out on the payload bay as one would look out through the back windows on your Texas pickup truck. And two that look out through the ceiling. The windows are three panes thick. And, so already from a photographer's point of view, it's a bit of a complication. And the sills are thick. It's easy to see a sight out the window but be confounded by the thickness of the sill. You can't get yourself positioned to take a good photograph. You are also floating toward the



windows with the cameras. After twenty-four hours in orbit there will be nose smudges all over.

Are the windows clear? Well, sometimes, but not always. It had been made a bit dirty on one of the windows because of the launch. And to add insult to injury, after one day in orbit we obviously got hit by a small meteorite—a very high energy impact that clouded it. And, so, sometimes the windows are not as clean as you might like, and it's considered very bad form to go outside to wipe the windows. Reflection. There are lights on inside the spaceship, and it's often very dark outside. And, again, it's like taking photographs through windows—it's not always as easy as one might think.

In one situation, I was floating up to the back window looking out at the tail. And, already you begin to get a hint of what's out there. The colors and light are



lighted part of the Earth here and the dark part of the Earth here. And the beautifully illuminated tail end of the orbiter. This happens to be little bits of moisture, of ice, that have aggregated because we have done a rocket burn fairly recently.

A photograph of Planet Earth. It's perhaps more natural or intuitive to show the picture rocked ninety-degrees to the right, but keep in mind that we're floating as we take this picture. There is no up or down. The orbiter does not coast around Earth with its wings level because it's not an airplane. It need not be pointed end forward. And, for that reason, one does not look outside the ship, through the windows, and expect to see Earth below the wings. The Earth can be anywhere. It depends upon mission profile and the attitude of the spaceship. The "attitude" is a technical word, not a psychological word. And it refers to the direction it points. But Earth is very rarely below the wing. Earth is just there. As you look at it physically—I should say intellectually you know that you are, as a photographer, speeding around the Earth towards the east at the velocity that I have mentioned already. You travel once around Planet Earth every hour and a half. Even so, you could convince yourself that you are just floating and that the Earth is turning for your viewing pleasure. You have no way of knowing for a fact, other than having been a student of the laws of physics, that the Earth is turning and you are still or vice-versa. The actual fact is

taking photos inside. It's possible to take the cameras outside. This is a photograph taken I believe with a camera that's outside, but the exposure was not correct and notice that the film has burned because of the very bright direct sunlight shining on a satellite named Westar.

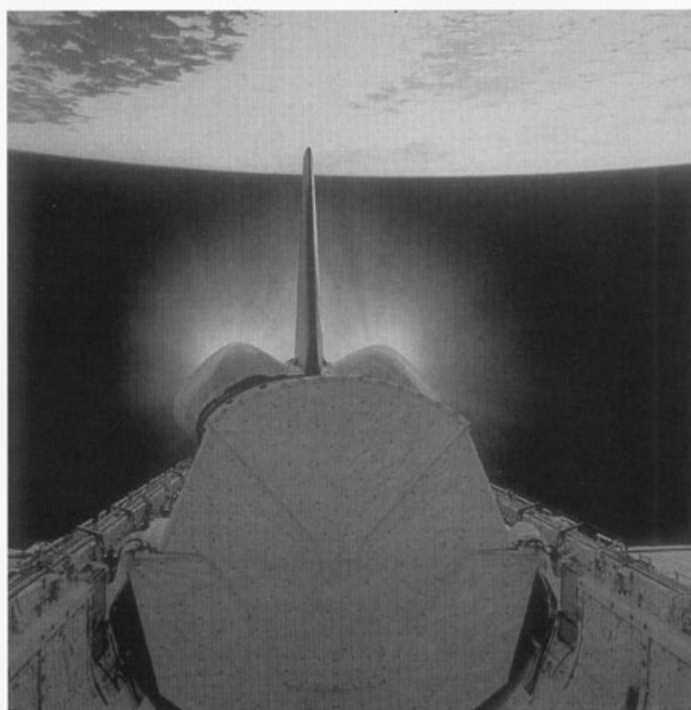
The bright sun is not yet on the satellite called Earth—a satellite of the sun. But there is still bright sun on a satellite and fellow astronaut called Dale Gardner who is moving up towards the satellite Westar in order to salvage it.

This photograph taken from inside the ship shows me and Dale Gardner. I'm carrying a camera. Hard to believe.

Dale has fetched the satellite Westar. He is bringing it back to me. I have been asked wasn't I rather brave to fasten on to what in effect is about 2,500 pounds of mass. And, I will tell you from this vantage point I would have grabbed anything that came past!

I thought you'd be interested in this image. It's taken under unusual conditions because I have with me a Nikon camera, 35 mm, outside the spaceship. And, it is extraordinary, but it's an off-the-shelf camera. Not one thing has been done to it except it has been enclosed in a little snowsuit of sorts—a white little wrapping goes around it to try to keep the film at a reasonable temperature.

And, this is what one sees from the vantage point of the arm. This is the open hatch. This is the air lock that comes from the mid-deck. Dale Gardner and I have come out through



The camera is just off to the side. This is a good photo. It's also a bad photo. It's bad because notice the internal reflection off the window takes from it a bit. This is also internal reflection. That's a reason it's not particularly clear there.

the open hatch. There is a rather solid door that has been moved inside and is there on the floor of the airlock. This rather floppy cloth is not what keeps all the air in. The trick in airlock is to have two people in there in space suits and open the door into yourself at the same time to come out.

This photo brings us toward the end of a journey. One returns from space by changing one's velocity by only 200 miles-per-hour—not very much considering the very high velocity of 18,000 miles-per-hour. But it changes the shape of the orbit. And, that leads us to another physics lecture, which I won't be permitted to deliver. With the change in shape of the orbit, the ship then is no longer a spaceship but must be an airplane because it's going to start to hit the atmosphere. And, at that point, it is very important to put the pointed end forward, and the wings level.

Here is a photograph of the burn. We call it the ohms burn. And, it is a particular favorite of mine. The reason being that all astronauts are brave and give no indication of being frightened. But, the first time I saw an ohms burn I thought the back of the ship had blown off. Nobody had mentioned to

continued on pg. 17

Photographer

dramatic in the extreme, and I cannot underscore that enough. The colors are often very stark. The light is so bright that the otherwise gray, dirty orbiter looks brilliantly white. The Earth in direct sunshine is very, very bright. Space is as dark, as black, as anything you can imagine. Picture yourself at the bottom of a cave, your eyes open—space is that black. And, in the daytime part of the orbit, there is no hint of stars in the blackness of space. Again, because I should say our eyes do not have the latitude to see both the very faint stars against the brilliant surfaces lighted by the direct sunlight. Often it looks like black-and-white film to both your eye and to the camera itself as you look out.

We travel from daylight to darkness every forty-five minutes. And this is a photograph taken as one crosses the terminator. We have come from the daylight part of the Earth into the darkness. And a scene like this would exist only for about four or five seconds because the spaceship is about to "set" behind the Earth and all this light is now gone. You see the



that we are moving and the Earth itself is turning with us.

A few words about going outside the spaceship. I've talked so far about

On this particular frozen slice of time I was on the robot arm. My feet are firmly affixed in almost nothing at all. And, this is the Pacific Ocean.

Depictions of AIDS

Living Proof by Carolyn Jones, Abbeville Press, 1994, 88 pages, and *Positive Lives: Responses to AIDS A Photodocumentary* edited by Stephen Mayer and Lyndall Stein, Cassell Publishing Co., 1993, 144 pages.

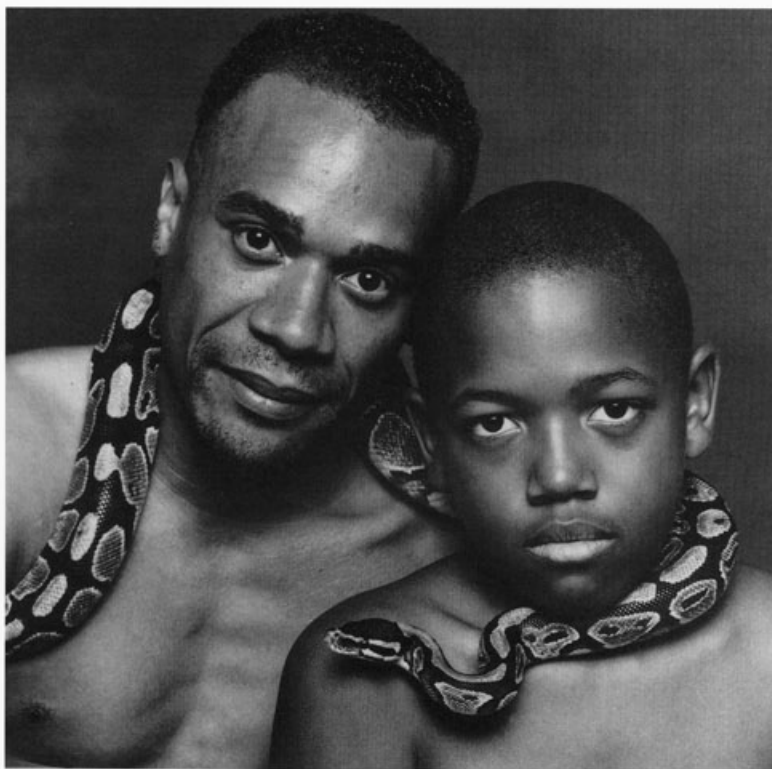
Ed Osowski

Look through the collection of works by twelve photographers who worked for the Magnum News Agency collected in *The Fifties: Photographs of America* and one will notice an interesting gap. In the collection, scenes of domestic bliss and middle-class harmony are slowly pushed to the sidelines by the increased attention to issues that exploded in the sixties—civil unrest, the struggle for racial equality, the alienation of a younger generations. Illness is curiously missing. Wayne Miller's two photographs of soldiers lying in hospital beds is as close as one gets.¹ Wasn't it during the fifties, one asks, when polio was such a threat, when photographs of children in "iron lungs" served as warnings of what would happen if one did not follow certain preventative measures? And wasn't there a collective sigh of relief when the Salk vaccine was introduced and students formed lines in their school auditoriums and cafeterias to receive the life-preserving but somewhat frightening shot?²

Two recent collections of photographs—one British, the other American—face the challenge of how to depict lives affected by a positive HIV status. What both books demonstrate in the broadest sense is how the opening of closets, windows, and doors has also brought about a profound change in the very nature of what is the appropriate subject for art itself.

Living Proof, with approximately sixty portraits by Carolyn Jones and text by Michael Liberatore, is the simpler book. In an "Afterword" Jones writes that her aim was to present individuals "living positively with HIV/AIDS."³ Her portraits are sleek, crisp, almost glamorous, and optimistic for the most part, appealing examples of good commercial art. Without Liberatore's text there would be no way to know what links these individuals. But it is the very randomness of Jones' selection—or call it the way in which AIDS democratizes those it visits—that shows, to quote Liberatore, that "people with AIDS are as normal and regular as anyone else."⁴

Other qualities link Jones' subjects as well. They all possess a certain self-assurance, an ease before the camera as performers and as participants. If there is something antic-like or playful in their poses—Robert Vagell, Jr. smiling as he sits in an enormous flower



Carolyn Jones, David Tuzo, his son, and their pet python, 1994

pot, a dahlia in his hand or Robert Vasquez holding an inflated condom—it is to reinforce what another subject, Dennis Cornelius, asks, "Do I look like a victim?"

Jones' subjects include several



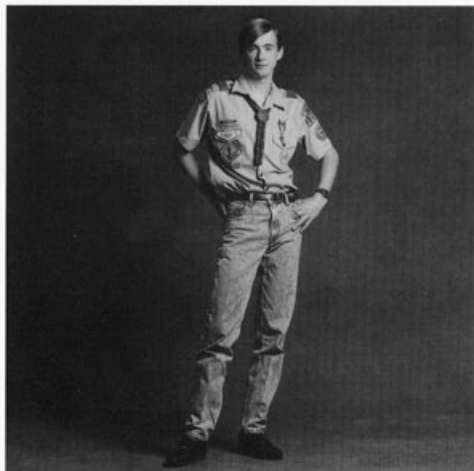
Carolyn Jones, Robin Horowitz, 1994

well-known individuals—the writers David Feinberg and Scott McPherson—and more whose names are known within the ranks of New York's AIDS activists. For the most part, however, she photographs the ordinary and the unfamiliar—lovers appear with their partners; parents pose with their children; three sisters, blonde and glowing, smile and touch; seven members of a swim team, wearing goggles and swim suits, camp it up for the camera. Jones' subjects, all posed against the same grey and neutral studio backdrop, may exist in a world that does not speak the word victim, but they also exist without context, in isolation. Even those individuals she photographs with props—a mixing bowl, pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, a cat, a scarecrow—seem peculiarly empty of meaning, almost stripped of content.

That is why a small group of portraits, not more than a handful, are truly startling. In them metaphor is allowed to hint at meaning. A father and a son, one free of the virus and the other HIV positive, are joined at their necks by their pet python. The image is troubling and disturbing. Depicting the writer David Feinberg with a hand covering his mouth holds one's attention in a way few of Jones' images do. Are Feinberg and Jones suggesting that what he has to speak—the tragedy of AIDS, the lost lives, the lost talents, the emotional and political turmoil it has created—is beyond speaking? In a third moody and somber portrait, a mother and son share the frame but not the same emotional space. Each looks away, each separated in shadows, their emotional distance a jarring note among a collection that strives, so frequently, to be "up."

Positive Lives assembles the work of thirteen British photographers. It presents a grittier, more challenging, and more confusing look at how HIV and AIDS affect both the individual and the body social.⁵ The most striking works in the collection are essays by four photographers—John Sturrock's bleak images of residents in a housing project in Edinburgh; Barry

Carolyn Jones, Henry Nicols, 1994



Lewis' color images of young drag queens; Judith Pasnow's scenes from the marriage of Katherine and a man identified only as "F;" and Gideon Mendel's photographs of patients, their lovers and families in hospital wards. All are documentary images at their best.

Where *Positive Lives* loses its focus is when it strays from what makes the documentary photograph such a compelling piece of evidence. Mike Goldwater's attempt to depict the response of the church to the AIDS crisis is strained and overdrawn: his staged scenes lack the emotional pull of images that are closer to the tradition of the documentary. They fail, as well, at raising any questions about image making in a post-modern environment. And Jenny Matthews' pieces—in which she reworks and manipulates her negatives—come across as vague, dreamlike, and evasive.

In his introduction to *Positive Lives* Edmund White writes that "AIDS is happening to us all." What links these two books are not visual echoes—they are too eclectic in their styles to accomplish that—but, rather, an over-reaching, democratic impulse to give a visual dimension to that "all" to which White refers.

Ed Osowski is president of Houston Center for Photography and a member of the National Book Critics Circle.

FOOTNOTES

1. Looking through other pictorial histories of the fifties reveals a similar absence of images of individuals affected by polio.
2. While recognizing what Susan Sontag says about the role of metaphor in distancing one from illness in her essay "Illness as Metaphor," it seems possible to read polio as "expressing" larger cultural/social issues like control and regimentation. What better image can one find for the safety that comes from acting like everyone else than the photographs of the long, orderly lines of students waiting for their "polio shots." How American, one thinks, to find salvation by staying in line, by keeping to one's place. One also realizes that being depicted as sick may simply have gone against the American grain, the Rotarian simple-mindedness, that refused to see a world with illness. It is not surprising that only two photographs of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt showing him in a wheel-chair survive. Decades before the country realized that physical disabilities only made one different, not inferior, FDR had to wage a camouflage campaign to keep his paralysis from public view.

3. *Living Proof*

4. *Living Proof*

5. The visual confusion in Mayer and Stein's collection works effectively as a metaphoric equivalent for the cluster of illnesses it tries to depict. AIDS challenges the belief that science can heal all ills. That its appearance in the waning days of the twentieth century forces AIDS to carry apocalyptic overtones. Jones depicts a world pleasantly standing still. For the photographers in *Positive Lives* we all are hurtling forward, at a pace that defies comprehension, towards a frightening future.



Lois Greenfield, Bill T. Jones, Janet Lilly, Arnie Zane, Amy Pivar, 1983



Jack Mitchell, Elizabeth Roxas and Desmond Richardson in Donald MaKayle's, "Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder," 1989

Dancing Images

Dance and Photography by William Ewing, published by H. Holt, 1987; Fonteyn and Nureyev: The Great Years by Keith Money, published by Harvill, 1994; Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater: Jack Mitchell Photographs published by Andrews and McMeel, 1993; Breaking Bounds: The Dance Photography of Lois Greenfield by William Ewing published by Chronicle Books, 1992.

Margaret Culbertson

Dance is a fluid and fleeting art. Photography, which produces two-dimensional, silent, and, most of all, still images, can never catch the essence of dance. Nonetheless, driven by a desire to explore and preserve, photographers have pursued dance for more than a hundred years and have produced striking images in the process. Dance photographs can thrill, perhaps because of the paradox of the opposing natures of the two contributing art forms. Four recent books provide fascinating examples of successful dance photography as well as some indications of the difficulties and pitfalls that face dance photographers.

Although its 1987 publication date may not qualify as recent, *Dance and Photography*, by William Ewing, is included in this review as the best survey of the subject. A twenty-six page history of photography and dance is followed by more than 200 images grouped within six sections, each representing a different approach to the subject. As Ewing acknowledges in the foreword, many of the images could fit in more than one section, but the purpose of the divisions is to "remind the reader of photography's many and varied functions." However, no definitions or textual explanations are given for the sections. The most clear-cut of these divisions is the "Invention" section, containing images using different technical developments to explore the movement of dance, including sequential photographs by Eadweard Muybridge and a combination of time exposure with stroboscopic lighting by Gjon Mili. The "Independent Eye" and "Tour de Force" sections are more

amorphous, and no clear rationale emerges from the photographs included. Despite the somewhat arbitrary groupings, Ewing has succeeded in discovering and presenting not only images representing a wide variety of dance and dancers, but also images of the highest quality that should interest even those without any particular affinity for dance.

The works of a few photographers do stand out in the book. Arnold Genthe produced some of the finest early work, with striking photographs of Anna Pavlova, c.1915 and Isadora Duncan and her pupils, 1914-18. Barbara Morgan's work with Martha Graham in the '30s and '40s has probably never been equaled in its successful presentation of the power of a dancer as well as the spirit of the choreography. Max Waldman, Jack Mitchell, and Lois Greenfield offer the strongest contemporary photographs in the book. Waldman's 1976 photograph of Natalia Makarova displays the tension of opposing forces so essential to ballet. Her body is moving forward, with the triangle of her bent, leading leg visually indicating that forward impetus. Her head and arms stretch backward to the full extent possible, in opposition to drive forward, and her filmy costume ripples in the wind of her own creation. The photograph's grainy texture softens the image and contributes to a



Max Waldman, Natalia Makarova in *Other Dances*, 1976

sense that Waldman has caught this spectacular moment without batteries of lights or powerful strobes.

Keith Money's book *Fonteyn and Nureyev: The Great Years* is the result of a fascination with particular dancers that Ewing would have grouped under "Icon and Idol" in his book. Money photographed these two outstanding dancers extensively during the '60s and

early '70s, and has now published more than 250 images from his files in this book. Some of the photographs were previously published in his books about Fonteyn and about the Royal Ballet, but many are published here for the first time. The photographs are grouped by individual ballets, with shorter sections interspersed showing the dancers in off-stage moments.



Barbara Morgan, Martha Graham, 1940

Money provides background information on the dancers' experiences with the different ballets as well as anecdotes of his time with them. Although filled with beautiful images, the book's narrow focus and romantic approach make it more of a ballet book than a photography book. However, having been lucky enough to see Fonteyn and Nureyev dance in person in the late '60s and early '70s, I can testify to

Money's success in preserving some of their magic in these images. Ballet-lovers will be thankful to Money for persevering in his photographic pursuit of the dancers and for finally gathering his images and publishing this book.

The dancer caught in mid-leap appeals to both photographers and viewers. In such photographs dancers appear as they can never be seen in real-life, real-time performances—suspended forever in the air, in perfect focus, free of the pull of gravity. Jack Mitchell excels in producing such photographs and includes many great ones in his 1993 book *Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater: Jack Mitchell Photographs*. However, the book is not limited to images of virtuosic leaps. It documents the variety of dances and dancers in the company with photographs from 1961 through 1993, all of which are

characterized by an impressive clarity. The strength of the dancers and the basic elements of the choreography are repeatedly presented in sharp, powerful images. But however much I enjoy Mitchell's photographs of dancers planted firmly on the ground, I inevitably find myself going back to his photographs of those amazing leaps.

The photographer Lois Greenfield has also developed a great facility in photographing leaps, but her intent is different from Mitchell's, and her photographs, not surprisingly, differ as well. Her 1992 book *Breaking Bounds: The Dance Photography of Lois Greenfield* was assembled by William Ewing, who compiled *Dance and Photography*. Ewing also wrote the introduction

and conducted the interview with Greenfield included at the end of the book. Greenfield does not try to document the work of a particular choreographer, as Mitchell does, but instead uses dancers to create images exploring the human body in motion and in space. She doesn't like to think of her photographs as serving or documenting dance but instead prefers to think of

herself as a photographer whose subject matter happens to be the dance. As she says in the book's interview, "You might say that dance is my landscape. The root of my interest is movement, or rather how movement can be interpreted photographically."

Many of her photographs capture dancers in seemingly impossible positions of flight, where broken noses or bruised bodies might appear to be the inevitable result. Her photographs used in an advertising campaign for watches is typical, and they inevitably succeed in catching the eye, whether one is driving past a billboard or flipping through the pages of a magazine. Dancers hover in horizontal positions inches above the floor, while others project partially into the picture, apparently flying in from the mysterious reaches above and to the side of the photographic frame. Her photographs arrest our attention, intrigue us, and challenge our customary vision of motion. Their strength is reinforced by strict spatial and formal conventions, such as plain backgrounds and black borders. Greenfield's later, borderless photographs with a dancer moving through a physical frame, simulating the black border of her earlier prints, appear to be an effort to move beyond the conventions of her earlier work.

Although photography cannot completely capture dance, it can enable us to explore its visual components in surprising and exciting ways. It can also give us tangible mementos of an evanescent event. All of these books have contributed to our understanding of a basic art form and expanded our experiences in the process.

Margaret Culbertson is head of the William R. Jenkins Architecture and Art Library at the University of Houston.

Agricultural Fair

In *Search of the Corn Queen*, by Greta Pratt, National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C., 1994, 96 pages, and *Ordinary Life, Festival Days: Aesthetics in the Midwestern County Fair*, by Leslie Prosterman, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995.

Daniel P. Younger

Agricultural fairs and related festivals in the American midwest are complex, tradition-based recapitulations and celebrations of the practice of daily life in farming communities. The more transient spectacle of the midway, and other such attractions as talent and beauty shows, country-western music acts, and the demolition derby eventually became integral to the agricultural fair when fair boards came to embrace entertainment as a way of increasing paid attendance. Historical antecedents for the two primary ingredients of the midwestern fair today—agricultural education and entertainment (trends of spectacle and display)—are to be found in somewhat different precincts in the nineteenth century. Leslie Prosterman, author of *Ordinary Life, Festival Days*, cites the need following the Revolutionary War for “agricultural cohesion and improvement” as the primary impetus for the early appearance of agricultural societies and organizations, the subsequent formation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1862, and around the same time, the increasing popularity of county agricultural fairs.

The basis of the agricultural fair today, invigorated by nostalgia and the back-to-the-land movement, is rooted in the nineteenth century need to communicate increasingly sophisticated principles of farming and agricultural business to rural, isolated communities. Then as now, the fair was chiefly an annual, socially-based forum enabling farmers to share information and learn about labor-saving devices, improve the quality and yield of their produce and livestock, and keep up with advances in fertilizer. With the passage of the Smith-Lever act of 1914, the Agricultural Extension Service was formed, making federal aid for agricultural education in partnership with land grant universities available; today extension agents are often prominent and active figures participating on fair boards. Four-H (standing for: Head, Heart, Hands, Health), a junior division of the extension service, is an organization with a high visibility in county fairs, inculcating farming techniques and civic values among the children of these communities.

Situating the agricultural fair historically and contextually, as Prosterman does, provides a background against which to consider Greta Pratt's photographs presented in *In Search of the Corn Queen*. Pratt, a freelance photographer, formerly with Reuters and UPI, covers a diversity of subjects including baton twirling, hog chasing, Junior



Greta Pratt, *Johnson County Peach Festival*, Clarksville, Arkansas, 1990

Miss beauty pageants, young teenage girls smoking, twin toddlers with pacifiers, barkers, midway rides at night, Native American pow wows,

Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming.

If anything is missing from the panoply of sights and the number of locales that Pratt has visited, it is more concrete evidence of the agricultural activity of these fairs. Prosterman, in *Ordinary Days*, notes that the judging of horticulture, and the breeding, grooming, showing and judging of livestock, while open to the public, tends to discourage outsiders. These competitions are usually scheduled earlier in the day, are not always listed on the programs made available to fair goers, and often take place on the outside perimeter of the fairgrounds. Typically, the judging proceeds slowly, and the rules are evident only to insiders. Moreover, competitions often take place in dark, cavernous arenas, with seating some distance from the action. Indeed, as Karal Ann Marling notes in her introductory essay in *In Search of the Corn Queen*, fairs celebrate what it



Greta Pratt, *Pow Wow*, White Shield, North Dakota, 1990

and fruit preserve judging. Pratt has travelled widely; her photographs represent the following states: Arkansas, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota,

Leslie Prosterman, *Carnival Rides*, Henderson County, Illinois



means to be an insider.

Documentary photography, on the other hand, has long favored the outsider and the outside perspective. If a canon for the photography of fairs exists, it has tended to focus on their more exotic and seedy exterior. Traveling carnies and the more “picturesque” specimens of the working class who attend these fairs are frequently offered as the subjects of fair photography. *In Search of the Corn Queen* manages to avoid some of the more obvious of these pitfalls, and yet more than a third of the images amount to grab shots of anonymous fair attendees. Only fourteen photographs from a total of sixty-one feature subjects having some relationship to agriculture, and a number of these only nominally so. With the title of the book indicative of an agricultural context for Pratt's project, and with essayist Marling's statement that “the rhythms of festival life in the mid-American countryside are agricultural,” one might expect more attention paid to the seriousness with which agricultural tradition and ritual are played out again and again each year in the American midwest. County fairs do incorporate a greater diversity of activity than their agricultural basis would suggest. And yet, one suspects that if fair organizers were asked to identify the most central aspect of state and county fairs and rural street festivals, they would conclude that it is the opportunity that fairs provide them to acknowledge and perpetuate the agricultural ethos of their community. This ethos, this generational exchange of information, continues to be under-represented in the photographic documentation of fairs, in part, because skilled photographers are often neither members of these communities, nor privy to the continuities and concerns of agricultural life.

To the more astute observer not distracted by the array of fast food and flashy, whirling rides, the values of farming communities are, in fact, profusely on display at these fairs. Though the intricacies of this culture may not always present themselves as obvious



Leslie Prosterman, *Lead and Wool Clothiers Class*, Carroll County, Illinois

“photo opportunities,” civic pride in the commerce and fecundity of agricultural life is enough in evidence that it may be said to be worn on the sleeve.

The following are several examples of the kinds of photographs that might be taken at county fairs; these subjects are sparsely—if at all—represented in Pratt’s book. Four-H competitions are ritualistic, detailed and prolonged both in terms of preparation and exhibition. Farm animals are exercised, washed, shaved, sculpted to advantage, combed, brushed, and weighed prior to their entry in the ring. Showing is, in part, a sartorial event, as 4-H boys and girls often dress elaborately—even formally—for the competition. Standing posture is of great importance as contestants can be seen with their long prods bringing their animals’ hooves to parallel stance. Posture, agility, and obedience are also carefully observed as animals are walked to and fro the circumference of the ring. Judges, often respected senior members of the community, are dressed in white smocks conveying their authority; discussions with participants may take place, and nearly always, judges are required to explain publicly their rationale to rapt audiences of family and friends. Most fairs feature a contingent of old-timers who show, explain, tinker with, and periodically run antique farm equipment for passersby. Families sit, eat, and nap with their animals in open stall buildings throughout the course of the fair. The awarding of trophies and ribbons to openly proud or stoic children, whose pictures and names are taken by local newspaper photographers, is revealing of the importance of this process, and in ways, of the criteria and hierarchies observed. Produce and flowers, usually labeled by species and often formally displayed and decorated in such a way as to suggest folk art traditions, reveal the diversity and pride of horticulture in these communities. Some didactic displays may reveal, for example, the economics of farming, informing visitors of the farmer’s average profit from a loaf of bread, quart of milk, or box of cereal sold at the supermarket. Other displays set up through the auspices of local 4-H programs

incorporate a complex array of images, constructions, and text to emphasize civic values such as charity, leadership, and resourcefulness. Similarly, detailed, diorama-like Grange organization exhibits communicate dedication to community activity and to themes of fertility and abundance.

for licensed restlessness. “Time,” during the day she states, “moves from binding, improving events to... anonymous events.” It is apparently typical for members of farm communities to dismiss the midway carnival in conversation, but to frequent it in actuality. Agriculturalists celebrate nature



Greta Pratt, *Griggs County Fair*, Cooperstown, North Dakota, 1989

Prosterman’s *Ordinary Life* is an outgrowth of her extended and detailed field study of agricultural fairs in Illinois. She reveals that fairs serve as a focus for lives associated with agriculture. The rituals of competition at these fairs are a dramatic reenactment of the participants’ cultural rules. The fair season is logically scheduled following most of the spring and early summer work, but before harvest. While the judging of agricultural achievement usually occurs during the first few days of the fair, the more publicly promoted spectator events are scheduled over the last few days. The midway, Prosterman contends, is a place for spectacles removed from the business and seriousness of agriculture, an arena

and their connection to it at the fair. Prosterman, who often notes symbolic resonances and contrasts in the juxtapositions of the fair, observes that the garish machines of the midway, seem an apparent divergence from the emphasis upon nature in other parts of the fair. The mechanization and specialization of farming caused a decline in the participation in country fairs from the ‘40s to the ‘70s. The ‘70s saw a reverse in this trend. Since this time, fairs have been increasingly oriented toward youth; most fairs today incorporate or rely on 4-H, the Future Farmers of America, and Future Homemakers of America. Prosterman finds that fairs have prospered during periods of

recession, when local energies are refocused within.

Prosterman concludes that the primary concerns of the county fair are to involve the community, and to make manifest cultural rules by performing them. It is through the interaction of participants and ritual that “texts” such as cows, quilts, and canned beans emerge possessing clues to shared values. If items exhibited for competition have no place in the community’s realm of experience they are likely rejected. Exhibitors use the same criteria for their products on display as they do in their everyday lives; the same set of values apply to fair aesthetics and to life. County fair participants tend to favor the recognizable patterns of nature for their pictures, patterns, and designs. Abstraction, ambiguity, risk, and ambivalence are generally not part of their aesthetic preoccupation.

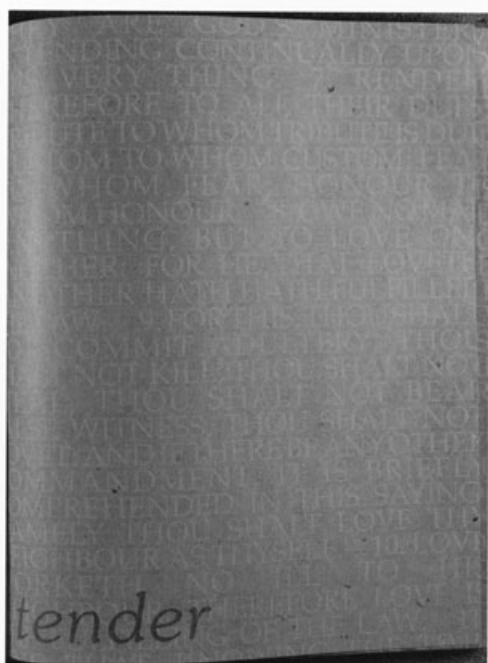
Prosterman states, “In the county fair, exhibitors create significance about ordinary people, not startling exceptions or singular events.” Thus, her title, *Ordinary Life*, is indicative of her findings that despite the fact that the county fair presents an alternative world of concentrated value and artistic enactment and rearrangement, it concerns the valuation, continuity, and preservation of everyday experience. Maxims such as the following overheard by the author typify the everyday: “Early to bed, early to rise, work like hell and fertilize.”

If Prosterman’s text (illustrated throughout with her own photographs) is repetitive and even plodding in places, it is also sensitive, thoughtful, and detailed. It is this author’s thoroughness and commitment to taking the agricultural fair on its own terms that might serve as a model for photographers who will surely continue to turn their cameras to this subject. Interestingly, Prosterman’s photographs (which seem to be shot and presented with a more informational than fine art objective) provide a rather thorough visual trace of the agricultural aspect of fairs only glimpsed in Greta Pratt’s and others’ photographs. Without denigrating Pratt’s well-composed and often poignant photographs, we might wish that ensuing efforts would countenance in a more balanced way the nuances of farm culture that permeate just about every aspect of these fairs.

Daniel P. Younger is the former editor of *VIEWS: The Journal of Photography in New England*. He is also a photographer and is currently engaged in an extended documentation of county fairs in central Ohio.

Greta Pratt, *Cokato Corn Carnival*, Cokato, Minnesota, 1989





Sally Rice, Untitled

Defending Our States

Public Bodies—Private States: New Views On Photography, Representation, and Gender, edited by Jane Brettle and Sally Rice, Manchester University Press, 1994, 171 pages.

Nichol Bradford

If women are to be defined in a manner of their own choosing, then it is the responsibility of women to construct their own definitions. Self-definition is only possible through dialogue. Dialogue must cross disciplines and artistic mediums. Women must write to one another, create for one another, and learn to voice constructive criticisms about one another's work, as we seek to establish a feminine self-definition. *Public Bodies—Private States* contributes to this dialogue by addressing the boundaries of public and private

and their convergence in the site of the "body"—an area vital to feminine self-concept. What is public? What is private? In a separate public and private space, where does the feminine belong? Historically, the answer that society has given these questions has contributed to a definition of "woman" that is not her own. It then becomes relevant for women to ask if the division between these two polarities is reality or illusion. The book under review suggests that the division is a fictitious construct and that it is crucial for women to examine how the "division

was created and constantly reinvigorated, what work it does, and why maintaining it was so seductive."¹

Therein lies the importance of dialogue as females unravel the mystery of the public/private domain. Composed of the textual and visual work of women, *Public Bodies—Private States* juxtaposes the ideas and backgrounds of artists and writers who explore the public versus private metaphor. By selecting work that shares and acknowledges common concerns while celebrating and allowing different "ways of seeing," the editors have created a space for meaningful discourse.

The collection of five essays and four sets of photographs offers a sophisticated and thoughtful "body of work." Raising questions that require examination in any serious attempt to re-think and re-define, the artists and writers challenge themselves, one another, and the reader/viewer to grapple with long-held assumptions and beliefs concerning social structure and women.

In "Bodies in Public and Private" by Elizabeth Wilson, the writer questions Western culture, demanding, "Why is it so important to 'see everything' and

to have nothing veiled?" Through historical analysis, she explores the dimensions of public versus private, of seeing versus looking, and the position of the feminine moment in each. Wilson turns an honest eye to the city as text. Yve Lomax in "Telling Times: Tales of Photography and Other Stories" considers the idea of time and the photographic moment. Her mythic reverie works the concept of private and individual against universal laws as she examines fixed ideas in a non-fixable cosmos. A storyteller at heart, Lomax uses myth, astronomy, and word origin to relate the photographic image as a "body" that is continually becoming.

"Gender and Picturesque: Recording Ruins in the Landscape of Patriarchy" by Christine Battersby addresses the feminine force and the Queen sublime. While challenging chauvinistic definitions of picturesque, she goes beyond advocating simple ideological renovations of "seeing." Calling for the wholesale disruption of a male-dominated aesthetic, Battersby understands that the female perspective is shackled (often unknowingly) by a patriarchal past.

Mary Grey in "Women, Theology and the Embodiment of Truth," looks at the definition of truth and discusses the feminist theological thought. She describes a new way of listening and of self-definition. A way lined with 'other' logic—non-confrontational and inclusive—born of survival and marginality. Undaunted, she openly challenges traditional religiosity to re-think and re-image the symbol of the Cross from the position of the 'crucified peoples' themselves.

In "Caveat Sponsa: Violence and the Body in Law" by Alison Young, the writer considers the influence of "public law upon private life that in turn generates certain social structures supportive of a power base to which the individual and community are increasingly subjugated."² Through the analysis of a conjugal murder case, and its wider implications, Young examines the concept of marriage and offers two words of warning to women: *caveat sponsa*.

The images created by Wendy McMurdo reflect her interest in the moving image. She questions the historically determined concept of the photographic image as a representation of space and alludes to the illusion of such notions. The series included in the book features skyscapes and landscapes, digitized to abstraction, compelling the viewer to search the image for a fixed point in a moving scene.

In her work, Jane Brettle dislocates archeological fragments. She employs the temporal qualities inherent in the medium of photography to question cultural constructs from a feminist perspective. She presents the monuments of goddesses and hints to time of feminine power. Images of decontextualized ruins capture the inherent tension of the present versus the past.

"Transfusion-Reunion," Ruth Sterling's site-specific imagery takes the viewer through seven Scottish religious structures. Disorienting, Stirling's work allows the comfortable examination of cathedral and castle ceilings.

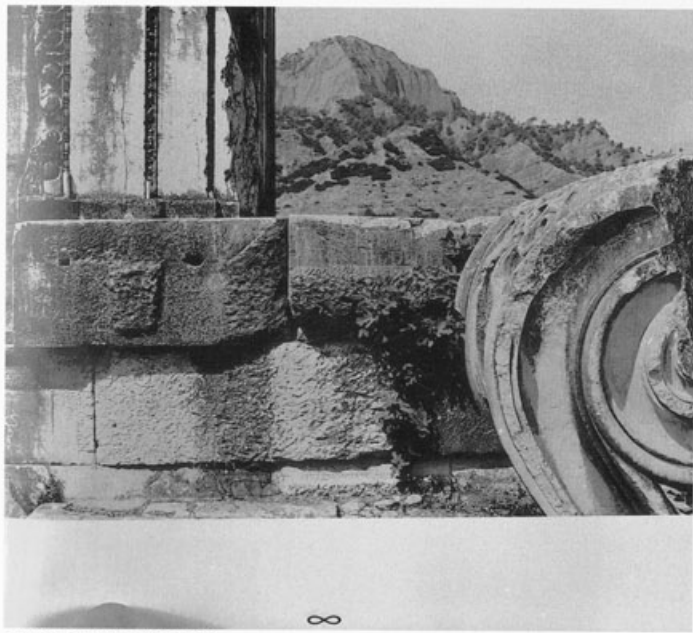
She re-images the photographs. For example, by surrounding a image of Christ with red tinted IV tubes, Stirling lays modern meaning on top of already loaded imagery.

Sally Rice's interests involve language and the processes through which our "histories, cultural experience, identities, and 'vision' are constructed."³ Her work currently uses sound and visual texts to explore and intervene with the language of the law, and highlights the relationships between the interior and apparently private body and public written realm of information and knowledge. Sally Rice's imagery is a universe of words—caressing, ordering, and accenting one another. Subtle backgrounds of biblical text in masculine font underlie words of endearment in cursive script: tender—my—words—dear. The viewer strains to read the background as the foreground demands our attention. Words play gender roles.

Public Bodies—Private States is an excellent forum to examine the issue of public versus private in our society. Each writer and photographer articulates her position clearly and eloquently. While enjoyable, the text is serious



Ruth Sterling, Katherine Burnett's Workroom at Crathes Castle, Kincardineshire, c. 1630



Jane Brettle, No. 6 of 15: TpAS

and demanding in that it calls for the reader to examine the foundations of their own belief systems. How often are we influenced by dominant traditional systems without our conscious knowledge? Do we know? For example, in the organization of this review I've separated the writers from the artists. Is that my own decision or is it the format acceptable to social norms? While *Public Bodies—Private States* does not answer many of the questions it raises, it does remind the reader that we must be ever vigilant in the defense of our minds. Perhaps that reminder is its most important contribution.

Nichol Bradford is a freelance writer living in Houston.

FOOTNOTES

1. Brettle, viii.
2. Brettle, 1.
3. Brettle, 167.

The Real People— A Photographic History

Grand Endeavors of American Indian Photography, by Paula Richardson Fleming and Judith Lynn Luskey, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993, 176 pages

Otilia Sánchez

Many archeologists believe that the first inhabitants of this country descended from Mongolian tribes crossing the Bering Strait as they followed game that they depended on for survival. Regardless, when the white man came to this country, these tribes had settled in different locations—the Northwest, the Southwest, and the Plains—and adapted their lifestyles to conform with what the land offered them. Thus, some were fishermen, others were farmers, and others were nomadic hunters who constantly moved to follow the buffalo. Many of these original inhabitants referred to themselves as the “real people.” For example, the Yaqui call themselves *Yoeme* and the Navajo call themselves *Dine*. Not until the white man made his presence known in Indian country did these “real people” begin to experience diseases unknown to them, subjugation, theft of the land, and unmerciful killing of the buffalo. They were also referred to by the name of *Indian*.

In recent years, the American Indian has become the focus of numerous writings. No discipline seems untouched: anthropology, herbal science, literature, history, law, art, musicology, and photography. From the first image on the front jacket of *Grand Endeavors of American Indian Photography* (*Red Cloud of the Oglala Sioux* by Joseph Kossuth Dixon, 1913) to the image on the back cover (*Hopi Belle at Her Window* by Sumner Matteson, 1901), the authors have successfully collected photographs of this country’s first inhabitants by many of its early photographers. The images depict different Indian cultures as seen through the cameras of photographers using varying approaches to their work. The book includes photographs by lesser-known photographers such as William Henry Blackmore and the

Sumner W. Matteson, *Hopi Belle at Her Window*, 1901



Gerhard sisters as well as lesser known photographs from well-known photographers; most notably, Edward Curtis and George Catlin.

Organized in four chapters, this photo-history first recounts the “early grand endeavors” of photographers such as George Catlin, Thomas McKenney, Charles Bird King, Seth Eastman, and William Henry Blackmore who risked their lives on the frontier to capture their subjects on film. Among the eye-catching photographs are those of *No Heart* (an Iowa Indian photographed by King in 1837) and *Petalashara* (a Pawnee).

Next, the authors present the photographic accomplishments of four “independent master photographers”: John Anderson, who captured the Brulé Dakota tribe; Lloyd Winter and Percy Pond, who recorded the lifestyle of a Northwest coast tribe; George Wharton James, who chose the Indians of the Southwest as his subjects; and Sumner Matteson, who photographed the Indians of the West.

The third chapter includes the works of official photographers who attended expositions and world fairs to



Joseph Kossuth Dixon, *Emma, A Kickapoo draped in an American flag to symbolize the patriotism of the North American Indians*, 1913

record historic events. Depicting the traditional lifestyles of the North American Indians, the photographs in chapter three are strong reminders of by-gone days.

The final chapter is devoted to the work of Pictorialists, such as Roland Reed, Joseph Kossuth Dixon, and Edward Curtis. This group of photographers attempted to record the vanishing lifestyle of the Indians; their

work is perhaps the most dramatic and stunning. Roland Reed’s *The Council and Not a Real Woman with horse and travoi* in *Glacier National Park* are good examples of the disappearing lifestyle of Blackfoot Indians. Dixon’s portraits of *Chief Red Cloud*, *Holding Eagle*, and *Chief Tin-Tin-Meetsa* are powerful character studies.

This book is not an anthropological or ethnographical interpretation or an in-depth study of the photographers’ works. The authors have instead selected photographers who sought to understand and admired these people’s traditional ways and their ability to live with the land. This book is an attempt to honor the “real people” depicted in these “early endeavors” of photographic artistry—the real people who have managed

to survive despite centuries of tribulation.

Otilia Sánchez (Yaqui) is Vice President of the Board of Directors of the American Indian Chamber of Commerce of Texas, Houston, which she founded. She also serves on the Advisory Council of Houston Center for Photography.

Recollections of a Space Photographer

continued from pg. 11

me that it made an enormous flash of light. The flash lasts only for a tenth-of-a-second and then the rocket burns in a very steady way, completely colorless, without sound—like a powerful magic force moving the spaceship. I tried on all of my missions to take a photograph of the flash of the ohms ignition, and of all of my attempts this is the only one that came out. But, I’m very pleased—it’s proof that an amateur photographer can get an occasional good picture, exactly as a blind pig will find an occasional turnip.

A photograph coming home. We are now in the airplane coming down through the atmosphere across the night side of Planet Earth. Many of you know that the ship begins to glow outside. This [photo] is taken through the windows. The glow begins very, very gradually—very deep orange and gets brighter and brighter. At the same time you begin to hear the sound of the wind. And, you begin for the first time in days to feel weight. And, it’s just the slightest bit of tingling on parts of your anatomy that you have felt nothing for days. The skin feels prickly as though it has been asleep but now begins to revive, and you realize that you are on your way home. All the while, the light builds outside, your weight increases, the sound of the wind increases, and to fly home in the orbiter is like flying down an endless neon tube. The brighter light outside,

the lights of the dials, the helmet in this case of Vance Brand as he flies the spaceship Columbia home.

An image that is really not shown anywhere. This was taken through the top window. This is the glow as it comes around the orbiter, and it projects above the vertical stabilizer. It’s enormous, and it looks like a shrouded figure—almost like a helmeted Darth Vader with the cape coming out, and it waxes and wanes. It comes out and is very brilliant right at the neck. And, we can look out the back and see that. We refer to it as the “God of Good, Solid Engineering.”

The last photo—famous indeed—and well it should be—twenty-five years ago this photograph was taken. Some day we’ll return to the Moon. I’m not certain exactly when it will take place. But, this is kind of where my thoughts began on the way to space. We caught sight of the Earth—and what an extraordinary sight it can be.

I say as a footnote—an understanding and appreciation of photography travels very well on these long journeys, and they can add immeasurably

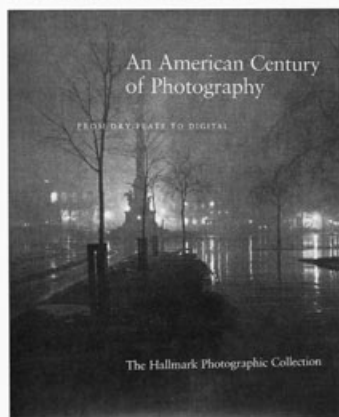


to the pleasure that you, the space traveler, take in the journey, and I hope that it adds immeasurably to you, the space viewer on the ground, that can enjoy these slices of space travel after the fact.

Joseph P. Allen currently serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of Space Industries International, a technology-based company serving government and private industry.

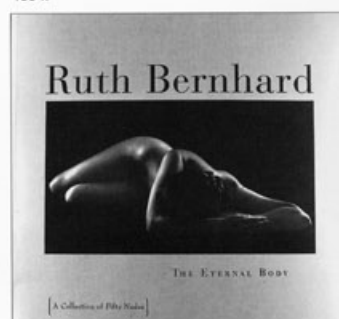
Editor’s Postscript: Photos from *ENTERING SPACE: An Astronaut’s Odyssey*, Joseph P. Allen with Russell Martin, published by Stewart, Tabori & Chang, New York, 1984 and NASA Archives.

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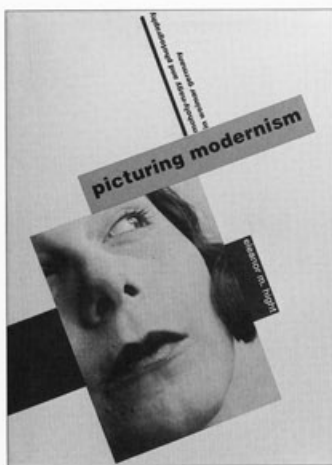
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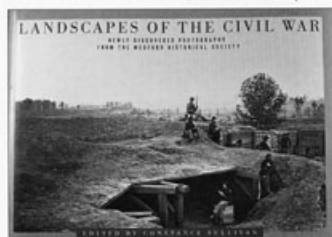
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compiled by Juan Garcia

• P A R T I N G S H O T S •

Keith Carter in Argentina

Editor's Note: "Reinventing the World," an exhibition of thirty-six photographs made by Keith Carter between 1988 and 1994 opened in Buenos Aires at the Lincoln Center on June 7, 1995. It is scheduled to travel to ten other locations within Argentina and remain on view through Summer 1996.

It is impossible to translate Keith Carter's name into Spanish. Other Spanish names—Roberto, Jorge, Miguel, Luis immediately come to mind—possess English-language equivalents. But Keith is another case entirely. Resolutely Anglo-Saxon and archly Protestant, it defies translation. Among the multitude of saints who still seem to exert a cultural, if not religious, influence on our Spanish-speaking neighbors, one looks in vain for a St. Keith.

If one feared that Keith Carter's name would be a stumbling block when Houston Center for Photography opened its first exhibition in a foreign country, how, one wondered, would the photographs themselves in "Reinventing the World" be received? How would Carter's subtle and haunting images, photographs taken in the fields and farms and swamps and forests of the American South, be received by a cosmopolitan audience in a city with a metropolitan population of more than nine million, over 5,000 miles from where they were made? How would Carter's expressions of the elusive and mysterious qualities that give his photographs their distinctive and compelling look be understood? And how would the narrative framework within which he works, a framework that relies on the elusive rather than the obvious, and one that also finds connections in certain Southern writers like William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, and William Goyen, be read?

In his remarks at the reception that opened the exhibition Carter addressed directly the questions of cultural differences and aesthetic links. He chose to tell the story of Glenn Ramey, the "Blue Man," whose name gave the title of one of his books. In the small East Texas town of Trinity, Carter told his audience, there lived a man who was blue, whose skin had a smoky, slate-like color brought about by a freakish chemical reaction he suffered to a medication he once took for a heart problem. In Carter's eyes, Ramey, the "Blue Man," was fantastic, wonderful, the material of folktale and legend. But to those who knew him and had lived with him, there was nothing about him that was out of the ordinary. He was just a fact of ordinary life.

The seamlessness that exists between the mundane and the rare in Carter's photographs is also a quality that exists in the writings of the great Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges. And in that fact may lie the explanation why his photographs traveled so well to Buenos Aires. There is nothing strange about two children dancing a waltz in the desert or two dead hummingbirds lying in a box or a boy sitting quietly beside a tall stack of blocks of ice or another boy carrying the head of a duck—to mention just four of the photographs in "Reinventing the World"—because they partake of that quality called "magic realism" that informs so much of the literature from the Southern hemisphere. The angle of vision that sees the ordinary and the strange dwelling harmoniously lies behind those writers and Carter's photographs as well.



Keith Carter, *Chicken Feathers*, 1992

Tómas Hess, Director of Marketing for Esso Petrolera Argentina, S.A. a major supporter of the exhibition, returned to Carter's anecdote of the "Blue Man" in his remarks at the reception. He stressed the continuities of wonder and amazement that made the photographs easy to approach. For Hess it was not their physical or scientific presence but the spiritual or emotional truths present in the photographs that made them familiar.

With "Reinventing the World" HCP brought together a new group of supporters to further its aim to show the work of mid-career photographers. Pampa Riso Patrón, who organized the exhibition and worked with HCP's Executive Director Jean Caslin in preparing the catalogue and selecting the photographs, secured funding from the U.S. State Department through its U.S. Information Agency. With private funding from Esso Petrolera Argentina and Aerolíneas Argentinas, Salomé Hernandez at Lincoln Center in Buenos Aires produced the tour that will include nine other cities in Argentina.

Translating was on everyone's mind as Keith Carter spoke at the reception. In a city where just about everyone seemed comfortable with English, his remarks were translated, nevertheless, as he spoke. His name remained a problem, but only for a brief amount of time. Before the evening was over he had been renamed Cacho, a name as close to Keith as any Spanish-speaking person with a respect for the language can adapt the name Keith for cross-cultural purposes.

Ed Osowski

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brings you the highest quality work in contemporary photography. HCP's diverse exhibitions and publications present timely, issue-oriented work by emerging and mid-career artists from the regional, national, and international photographic community.

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Publications

Members receive our award-winning magazine *SPOT* three times a year. *SPOT* is recognized internationally as the source for news and criticism of photography in the South and Southwest, as well as the nation. A large format magazine, *SPOT* is full of thought-provoking articles, book reviews, and contemporary images.

CENTER, the members' newsletter, keeps you up to date on activities at HCP, exhibitions in the region, calls for entry, and members' news. The newsletter is published every other month.

Education

Monthly portfolio critiques led by curators, gallery directors, and photographers provide artists with valuable insights on their work in a relaxed and supportive environment. Acclaimed photographic artists teach hands-on workshops at all skill levels. Members receive reduced rates on all workshops and portfolio critiques.

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Each year the juried Membership Exhibition offers members a chance to exhibit at HCP. HCP's annual Photography Fellowship program provides awards and exhibitions at HCP to emerging regional artists, who have been awarded more than \$30,000 in fellowships over the past decade.

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HCP's biennial benefit Print Auction features work by master and mid-career photographers. Recent auctions have included original prints by Ruth Bernhard, Imogen Cunningham, Flor Garduño, Luis Gonzáles Palma, Patrick Nagatani, Jerry Uelsmann, and William Wegman.

Community Projects

As part of a diverse community with rapidly changing needs, HCP uses photography as a creative educational tool. HCP conducts an annual Community Outreach Teacher Training Institute for visual and performing arts professionals and volunteers involved with community outreach programs.

In a program called *Direct Exposure*, HCP establishes darkrooms in local community centers and teaches photography to young people. *Girls' Own Stories*, teaches girls to use photography, video, and writing as tools for autobiography.

HCP also administers *Windows on Houston*, a public art project for the Municipal Art Commission at Houston's Intercontinental Airport, and *Windows of Wonder*, a pilot project to benefit cancer patients and their families at Texas Children's Hospital.

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