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EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of *SPOT* focuses on some of the areas of life touched by photography today. One means of doing this is through reviewing many of the shows that were up during FotoFest '96. Our reviews will put the social trends encapsulated in the exhibitions associated with this event into context through essays and critiques. Among the areas covered are directions in landscape photography, an historical perspective on fashion photography and the impact of the work of the Magnum photographers, and the approaches to dealing with the issues of women.

We will also seek to contextualize the work of visual and performance artist Dorit Cypis through her own words. In Anita Douthat's interview with Cypis we read in the artist's words the motivations for her work and her thoughts on her progression as an artist working in a variety of intertwined media.

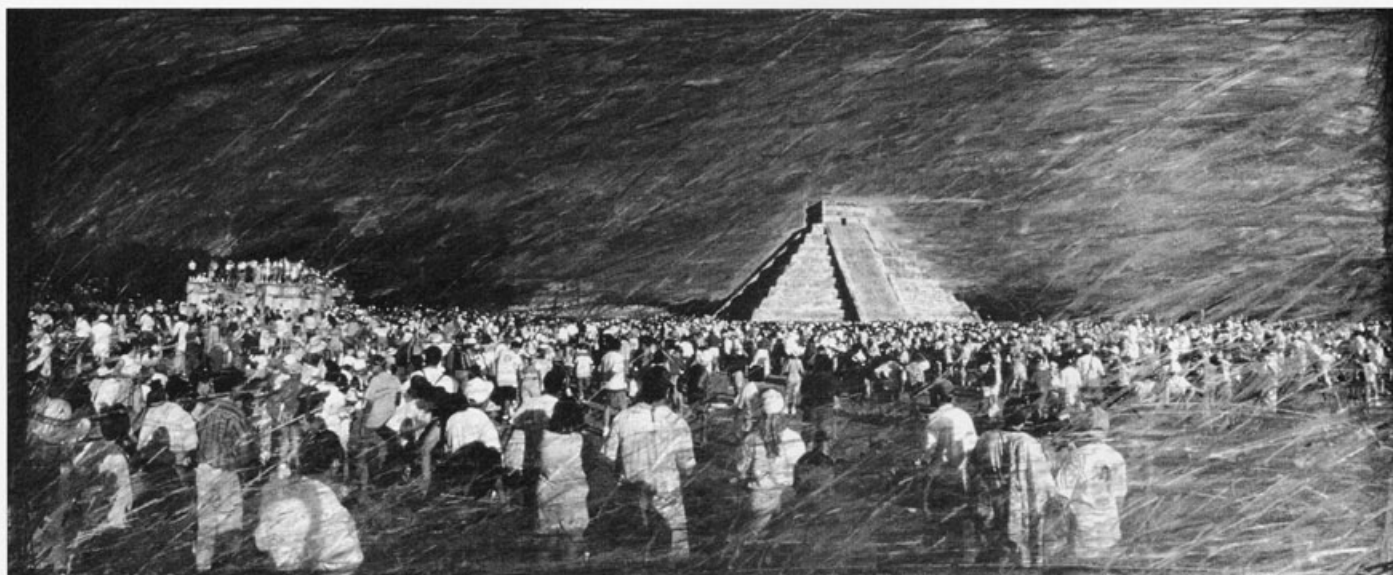
Another essential aspect of photography we will examine in *SPOT* is the ease with which photography adapts to the multicultural perspective. It is a willing tool for those who want to tell their story while documenting the shared journey of life. *Points of Entry* by Antonella Pelizzari looks at the experience of the immigrant as told through photographs.

Also included in this issue is Henry Horenstein's review of *Gaza*, a photographic and journalistic examination of that war torn area by Houston photographer Dick Doughty. Peter Brown assesses two biographies of Alfred Stieglitz—*Alfred Stieglitz, A Biography* by Richard Whelan and *Alfred Stieglitz at Lake George* by John Szarkowski—and sifts through the differing approaches of recounting this photographer's life and the respective merits of each.

Karen Gillen Allen

"Before the land there is nothing and before us there is the land."

Pierre Menard, *La sapience de les indiennes de l'Amérique*



Rick Dingus, *Equinox Sunset Snake Creeps Down, Chichen Itza, Mexico, 1995-96* (original in color)

Before the Land

Mexican Landscapes 1858-1920
Houston Community College,
March 1-31, 1996;
Great Plains 1985-1995
by Peter Brown, Harris Gallery,
March 1-30, 1996;
Long Views by Rick Dingus, James
Gallery, March 1-April 13, 1996;
La Toma Del Paisaje: Fotografías De
Enrique Carbo y Alfredo De Stéfano,
Institute of Hispanic Culture,
March 1-30, 1996

FERNANDO CASTRO

Depicting the land seems to be one of those human acts as natural and fundamental as symbolizing and yet, it is not. The land is implicit but invisible in the prehistoric cave paintings of Altamira, Lascaux, or even the recently found, Chauvet. Rather, it is the things in the land that were of interest to prehistoric humans and that they first chose to represent. Perhaps only a human who sows the land and understands that her very survival depends on the land regards it as something fertile, prior, and even sacred. In photography, of course, depicting the land was one of its first exercises—if only because it is less mobile than the creatures it sustains. In fact, it was clearly William Henry Fox Talbot's aim to improve upon the camera lucida's tedious demands for depicting the Italian landscape that prompted him to search for a way to fix its image. In the second part of the nineteenth century, the mature medium of photography copiously depicted landscapes around the world with intentions that are not simple but have been extensively scrutinized; among them, the desire to exert a physical and conceptual dominion over the land. More recent landscape photography, however, has become less

transparent perhaps because the clues are no longer provided by the optimism of a now dwindling modernity.

Several exhibits of landscape photography were shown during FotoFest 1996. In this essay I would like to comment on the following: "Great Plains 1985-1995" by Peter Brown, "Mexican Landscapes (1858-1920)" curated by José Antonio Rodríguez, "Long Views" by Rick Dingus, and "The Taking of the Landscape" by Enrique Carbo and Alfredo De Stéfano.

Starting with the exhibit "Mexican Landscapes (1858-1920)" is advantageous because it allows us to deal with some issues related to the history of the genre. Its curator, José Antonio Rodríguez, has succinctly spelled out some of the major moments in the evolution of landscapes according to evolving intentions. Rodríguez points out on the one hand, that "Dozens of traveling photographers came from Europe and the United States to document these territories [i.e., Mexico], fascinated with the notion that they were still conquerable." The implication is that landscapes were done to show Europeans and Euro-Americans a land that could be possessed. Désiré Charnay, a Frenchman whose work is included in the exhibit (and which strictly speaking is not landscapes), focuses on the ruins of pre-Columbian buildings that continue even today to suggest that there are still undiscovered treasures to be had by exploration of remote lands. But one must not regard the project of traveling photographers so cynically so as to lose sight that although some viewers no doubt regarded their images coveting the lands they depicted, others considered them an addition to their knowledge of the world and/or a prop for envisioning Utopian ideals. Charnay was indeed an agent of Napoleon III in Mexico in 1851, but he also shared the encyclopedic goals of the Enlightenment. He wrote, "these ruins fixed my resolve to make archaeology the business of my life."

Charnay's images, where mostly desolate ruins are populated only by the usual native indispensable for



Enrique Carbo, *Fictional Primitive Sculptures* (original in color)

estimation of relative size, are in sharp contrast with Rick Dingus's contemporary images of Chichen Itza showing ancient pyramids overridden with tourists. The Disney-size crowd in Dingus's

hand-painted color photograph shatters our yearning for exotic, "untouched" places that we inherited from the Romantic literature of Charnay's contemporaries.



Désiré Charnay, c.1858–1860



Peter Brown, *Plowed Field, West of Levelland, Texas*, 1992 (original in color)

exotic places for private or social perusal, or for inspiring travel to distant lands. In all of the above, it was important for the viewer to know that the depictions were made in the “truthful” medium of photography; for it implied that such lands were really there to be known about, conquered, invested in, included within national frontiers, visited, or dreamed about.

In a final moment landscapes were done in the style of more “artistic” media like lithographs, drawings and paintings without regard to truth. Although the pictorialistic aesthetic was tainted with a Romanticism that twentieth-century modern photographers found indigestible, insofar as it rid itself of the strict demands for veracity, it

over the span of a decade by Peter Brown in the land where the buffalo once roamed. By “straight” I mean that his images and those of many of the photographers in the “Mexican Landscapes” exhibit have been spared an overt kind of intervention by the photographers’ hand. Except for careful attention to composition Brown’s work is far removed from the pictorialist project and shares instead in that great American landscape photography tradition of Ansel Adams, Eliot Porter, and Richard Misrach, as well as in the documentary tradition of Walker Evans and Joel Sternfeld. Having said that, we do not mean to claim that placing Brown’s project inside the same Venn diagram as others explains it; only that it clues us into its ideological and iconic lineage. In fact, the nuances that distinguish Brown’s work from those other oeuvres are helpful in our understanding it. To that end, it is important to establish for the purpose of analysis that his project includes works that are strictly landscape, as well as “cityscapes” (for lack of a more elegant word), architectural photography, and contextual portraits. It is Brown’s intention, however, to have us consider the different groups as part of a whole: “This simple idea [of a trip] has allowed me to cover much that I’ve found of interest in the landscape, from open grassland to agriculture and ranching, to crossroads towns, to the roads themselves, to the entrances to the small cities, to strips, main streets, signs, churches, schools, theaters, neighborhoods, and people.” It would be to misinterpret Brown’s work not to take into account his intentions, because what he is asking us to do is to consider the landscape as the substance that endures the accidents of time and human intervention. To put a Heideggerian hyphen to it: landscape is thus the horizon in which things-in-the-world show themselves to us; or hide.

Some of Brown’s strictly landscape imagery is deceptively simple: flatland, horizon and sky. However, the minimalism of the image, although conscious, is not some sort of art-historical echo, rather it is an appreciation of the nature of the land he is depicting where vast distances and an austere ecosystem are the rule. The merely informative nature of his titles notwithstanding, a certain poetry of the vernacular seeps through them. In *Plowed Field*, Levelland, Texas, 1992, Brown presents us with a patterned land of brown hues so rich one can almost smell the soil in the image. On the one hand, the image delights us synaesthetically, while on the other, it documents the transformation of the natural landscape. Unlike the overtly partisan photographers of the FSA and more recent ecologically-minded photographers, Brown maintains a neutral—though not detached—position with regard to the treatment of people and nature. *Potash Lake*, Sand Hills, Nebraska, 1993 captivates us with its delicate, almost impressionistic color, but an unassuming carefully placed barbed-wire post scars the image like a Barthesian punctum. Even in images like *Red Water*, near Dalhart, Texas, 1990 that one may be inclined to interpret in the ecological vein of another desert photographer, one must refrain in adjudicating a denunciatory stance because Brown is more interested in establish-

continued on page 25

Rodriguez adds that “Little by little, though, the natural landscape began to acquire its own expressive strength as a subject.” We join the curator in wondering why such aesthetic improvement in the depiction of landscape occurred. Was it simply due to a new wave of photographers more conscious about composition? Was it the early nineteenth century discovery of the intrinsic value of depicting landscape for itself—even when no momentous human event had occurred there? Was it the Romantic adjudication of lofty meanings to the commonplace? Was it a by-product of the encyclopedic quest of the Enlightenment to neatly complicate the “book of nature”? Or, was it perhaps the late eighteenth century discovery of the sublime as a kind of non-canonical experience in which we are overwhelmed by nature (In one of Kant’s accounts: “Nature is therefore sublime in those of its phenomena whose intuition brings with it the idea of its infinity.”)? The appreciation of landscapes in the nineteenth century is the aesthetic equivalent of our post-modern belief in nature and animals as proper objects of moral concern. The nineteenth century mind is so deceptively similar to ours that we often fail

to realize how very recent it was for its notions we assume ancient.

Nationalism was another such notion and in a third moment, Rodriguez correctly points out that “Others created panoramic landscapes that documented the development of the vast territories.” In this case, the intention was to show the right viewer the opportunity for exploitation and/or investment in the infant nations. On the other hand, in *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820–1920*, author Anne Farrar Hyde argues that “In the first half of the nineteenth century, landscape provided an ‘iconography of nationalism.’” So in the age of emerging nations, the United States found in nature what it could not find in culture or history as a basis for national identity. Perhaps herein lies an explanation why such a strong tradition of landscape photography—almost without parallel in the rest of the world—has developed in the United States. Landscape became part of its national culture.

A fourth moment was facilitated by the technology of mass reproduction of postcards and the improvement of transportation. Photographs were intended for people who collected “vistas” of

helped to lay the ground for other visions of modernity—more than some of the former would care to admit. Pictorialists added darkened clouds for effect, included picturesque buildings, fauna and flora, omitted objects if composition demanded it, and blurred edges for looks. Their intention was to make photographic landscapes like landscapes in other media; i.e. to make them look and be produced more “artistically.”

Hitherto, we have been merrily adjudicating intentions to images as if the images themselves spelled them out. But such adjudication is always, at best, an intelligent guess, an inductive inference, or a working hypothesis. We are not about to join the crowd that dismisses authorial intentions as useless for understanding works, but neither are we prepared to accept that they are necessarily irrelevant. Moreover, from working in the medium ourselves and from our involvement with photographic archives, we know that often photographers either do not have very neatly defined intentions in producing an image, or they have various independent intentions.

The “Great Plains” exhibit gathers straight color photographs produced

EXHIBITIONS

Eve Arnold: In Retrospect, The Menil Collection, March 1–April 28, 1996; *Magnum and the Cinema: 50 Years of Filmmaking*, Sweeney Coombs Building, March 1–31, 1996, and "Fashion," Frank Horvat, Two Allen Center, Feb. 26–May 4, 1996

BY HOLLY HILDEBRAND

When Eve Arnold showed her portfolio to Robert Capa, he said, "Your work, metaphorically, of course, falls between Marlene Dietrich's legs and the bitter lives of migratory potato pickers."

And, as if to drive home the point, the curators of "Eve Arnold: In Retrospect," shown at the Menil Collection as part of FotoFest, hung *Marlene Dietrich, recording session, New York, 1952* next to the series on migrant workers Arnold shot on Montauk, Long Island, in 1951.

Yet this juxtaposition of glamorous star in a closed setting versus the mundane, bleak lives of men, women and children scrabbling for a living in a big world set against them is far from being the only one to point up the dichotomous theme in Arnold's work. Throughout the retrospective, the viewer sees Arnold tackling projects that are polar opposites of each other: the mystical, quietly joyous *Childbirth and Baby and mother's hands five minutes after birth*, both taken in Port Jefferson, Long Island, in 1959, hang in the same room as the despairing portrait of the beautiful *Bar girl in a brothel, Havana, 1954* and the disturbing *Milltown experiment insane asylum, Haiti, 1954*, with its child wearing filthy rags and an almost accusingly lonely stare. Even in the photographs themselves, Arnold takes care to show us the opposites; for all of her sensuality, Marilyn Monroe is sadly awkward with her soon-to-be-estranged husband in *Arthur Miller demonstrates (with Marilyn Monroe) steps appropriate for a scene in The Misfits, Nevada, 1960*. The portrait of the smiling and confident *Roy Cohn and Joseph McCarthy, House Committee on Un-American Activities, Washington, 1954* contains an element of censure in the background in the almost grim image of an elderly man, his face and dress, complete with old-fashioned hat and bow tie, prototypical American. In *Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor during the filming of Becket, Shepperton, England, 1963* the actor and actress are shown at the height of the scandal surrounding their love affair, Miss Taylor's face, despite all the public vilification she was bearing, glowing white and pure like the mask of a Madonna.

Arnold's preoccupation with opposites can be startlingly complex, loading her images with humor and tenderness while at the same time facing tough public issues head on. One of the most striking examples of this is *Integration Party, Alexandria, Va., 1958*, in which two little girls, one white, one black, but both with the same name of Stratford, smile broadly at each other as they share a dinner table. And there's a determined love that shines through the depiction of grim social conditions in *Saturday night bath, South Ormsby, England, 1963*, the portrait of a mother washing her youngest baby in a

metal tub while the rest of her brood watches TV, the wash, hung carefully, drying above them.

Arnold says she came to photography by accident, when a boyfriend gave her a \$40 Rolleicord and taught her how to use it. It was 1950, and two of the photographs in the retrospective celebrate the beginning of her career. In *Self-portrait the year I started photography, Philadelphia, 1950*, her smooth, young face floats in the middle

newlyweds of the future, look determinedly away from each other as they await a decision on their marital future in a dark, cold office. The cynical use of psychiatry lies at the heart of *Psychiatric Hospital, Moscow, 1966* in which two attendants giggle in a corner as a psychiatrist interviews a woman in the foreground. And although one has to move between rooms to note it, the hypocrisy of the free world has also been captured by Arnold's camera:

golia, 1979; and tenderness of man for beast in lush landscapes, *Horse training for the militia, Inner Mongolia, 1979*. There's an exaltation of technology, too; in *Shanghai, 1979*, a TV set is lovingly balanced on two stacked tables that resemble a shrine. But perhaps one of the most famous images from Arnold's China work is *Retired worker, Gwelin, China, 1979*, a woman whose lined face and deep eyes seem to hold all the wisdom and trials of her country.

FROM ARNOLD TO

of blackness, the edges of the images cracked as if by age; it is a newcomer meeting the history of her recently adopted profession. In *Self-portrait in a distorting mirror, 42nd Street, New York, 1950* an elongated Arnold, turned away from the stretched and shadowy figures of the street scene, her camera aimed at not just the mirror but also the viewer of photography, seems to be asking not only herself but us what part illusion and what part truth lie in photography.

It is a question that Arnold tweaks in one of the strangest series in the retrospective, the photographs that were part of the 1959 *Life* magazine essay on Joan Crawford. Crawford wanted Arnold to show the public how hard it had been to maintain her image as a star for thirty years, and for three months one of the vainest of actresses cast aside all illusion of effortless beauty to have Arnold detail her fierce beauty regimen. Arnold captured the half-dressed star in a girdle in *Joan Crawford dress fitting, New York, 1959*; on the massage table with a white poodle climbing over her back, and, close-up and looking like a car-wreck survivor, as the bandages swathing her face were removed in *Joan Crawford undergoing a beauty treatment, New York, 1959*. Close-ups of Crawford curling her eyelashes, applying eye makeup and putting on lip pencil (*Joan Crawford makeup session, 1959*) reveal not only the arduousness of her image-making, but, in a most moving way, the pores of her humanity. Crawford even had Arnold photograph her as her legs were waxed, and she stripped naked too—pictures that Arnold did not use. The photographer called it the "most personal story I ever did—but she wanted it so." And, as if to make a point about Crawford's grand use of artifice, the series hangs next to a large close-up portrait of *Isabella Rossellini, Finland, 1985* who, in a sort of virginal repose, seems the very personification of natural beauty.

The illusions created by societies and not just their celebrities are also strong themes in Arnold's work, and some of her most affecting work in this regard includes the photographs she took in the former Soviet Union during several visits. Grimness, not joy at what the future holds, is the emotional center of *Newlyweds celebrate at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Moscow, 1978* a photograph in which nobody appears to be celebrating anything at all. It is accompanied by *Divorce, Moscow, 1966* in which a couple, just as grim as the



Eve Arnold, Marilyn Monroe in *Misfits* on the Nevada desert going over her lines, 1960

compare the loneliness and meanness of *Old age home, Cotteswolds, England, 1961*, to the misty, aristocratic beauty of *The Marquis of Bath at a shoot, Longleat England, 1961*. Or, for that matter, don't leave the United States: the black migrant workers whose grim lives Arnold documents inhabit the same island and nearly the same time as the Davis family, whose members happily peel apples in idyllic summer settings in *Miss Davis peeling apples for church supper pies, Miller Place, Long Island, 1958* and eat satisfying dinners a few feet away from the graveyard holding the bones of their ancestors, who, unlike the migrants' ancestors, have not been forgotten (*The Davis family church supper, Mount Sinai, Long Island, 1952*).

Arnold considers her work in China, culminating in the book *In China*, to be most the exciting assignment of her professional life. Long eager to work in that country, she was not granted a visa until 1979, when diplomatic relations with the United States were resumed. Arnold calls the mood then euphoric, and her pictures show it: among the few in the retrospective that are shot in color, the photographs depict happy, fat-faced toddlers, *Nursery in a cotton mill, Beijing, 1979*; proud cultural groups, *Folk song group, Inner Mon-*



René Burri / Magnum Photos, Mel Ferrer and Ingrid Bergman in *Eléna et Les Hommes*, 1956

China was not the only culture to fire Arnold's imagination. While working in Tunisia in the late 1960s, she was intrigued by a plea from the country's president for women to come out from "behind the veil" and enter the twentieth century. So began Arnold's trek through the forbidden women's world of Afghanistan, Egypt and the harems of the Arab Emirates, an investigation of which once again brought forth the dichotomous nature of her

work. For, even though these women have hidden most if not all of their faces, mystery, fierceness and power still radiate from them: one needs only to gaze in the dark eyes of *Veiled woman, Dubai*, 1969, to feel her threatening force, and even though the *Three widows on their way to their mutual husband's grave* (Kabul, Afghanistan), 1969 are completely covered, one feels a strength of purpose combined with a sort of terror in their personas. In

of the Brides of Christ in Goldaming, England, in 1965. After two years of work designed to see if they are suited to the nun's life, the postulants of this order dress as brides, complete with long dresses, veils, and orange blossoms. A lock of their hair is cut, and a wedding cake is served. They work and pray for three more years, then are ready to take final vows. In a series of almost ethereal black-and-white photographs that also capture the earthly joy of the Brides of Christ, Arnold depicts their rituals: five brides happily watching another creating their three-tier wedding cake; a serene-faced young woman praying as the lock of hair is cut from her head; four brides chatting almost excitedly at their wedding. How in contrast they are with Arnold's portrait, hanging across the room, of a veiled Indira Gandhi, power personified, speaking in Uttar Pradesh in 1974.

Eve Arnold's work spilled over into another FotoFest exhibit, "Magnum and the Cinema, 50 Years of Filmmaking." Magnum was a co-op of photographers founded in 1947 by Henri Cartier-Bresson, George Rodger, David Seymour and Robert Capa. Capa's friendship with director and actor John Huston was crucial to not only Magnum but the film industry, providing the link that resulted in many images of the makers and makings of the cinema.

Arnold was one of the prestigious photographers invited to join Magnum Photos, and some of the photographs shown in her retrospective also appeared in the Magnum exhibit. One of the most moving was *Marilyn Monroe resting in Bernier,*

impossible to find a truly joyous picture. Two stand out: a laughing *Marilyn Monroe*, 1960 by Dennis Stock and Wayne Miller's *Ava Gardner in car behind steering wheel in On the Beach*, 1959 a series of three in which a jaunty, devil-may-care actress throws her hair and everything else to the wind. But pictures of the aloneness, even the torment of the cinema's stars prevail: there's Arnold's isolated *Marlene Dietrich in the studios of Columbia Records, New York City*, 1952 her head averted from the camera; Stock's shot of James Dean strolling through a rainy Times Square in 1955, with the legend: "In many ways, James felt more at home in New York than in Los Angeles;" Arnold's *Elizabeth Taylor with her children on the set of Becket, starring Richard Burton*, 1963 with the star enveloped in darkness and misery.

If the separateness of the artist is a major theme of this exhibition, so is the illusion of the cinema. A great many of the pictures use mirrors to make their statements and create their effects; in Raymond Depardon's *Jean-Paul Belmondo in Robert Enrico's "Ho!"*, the star surveys himself in a slightly damaged mirror on which is taped a headline that reads, translated from French, "The most beautiful of the century." Old women are reflected in an antique mirror as star and director play chess in Erich Lessing's *Anthony Quinn with Michael Cacoyannis—the director of Zorba the Greek*, 1964 and an old-fashioned mirror hanging over the star and director captures the activities on the set in Stock's *Stella Garcia and Dennis Hopper, actor and director of the Last Movie*, 1970. As if to make absolutely clear the importance of mirrors in the cinema, cans of film stacked are reflected in the foreground of Martine Franck's *Portrait of Agnes Vardas at her home in the rue Daguerre, Paris*, 1983.

The cinema could not exist without its directors, and with wit and feeling, the Magnum photographers looked through their lenses to show others in the process of looking through their own. Two levels of reality are portrayed in Costas Manos' *Elia Kazan to the left of the crew gesticulating, filming America America*, 1962 and Rene Burri captures the great Japanese director in *Akira Kurosawa at the camera*, 1961. There are even camera taking pictures of cameras whose pictures are being taken, as in Don McCullen's shot of *David Hemmings in Michelangelo Antonioni's Blow-Up*, 1966.

But if cinema is about illusion, perhaps no series of photographs in this show better illustrates it than Rene Burri's *Ingrid Bergman and Mel Ferrer in Elena et les Hommes*. A series of three photographs shows the stars being coached in one of the most intimate of human activities, a kiss. They seem ill at ease, clumsy students as they listen to their director. But a fourth, larger picture shows the result: perfect, convincing, utterly human. A lens shows up another lens.

When Frank Horvat began his photography career in the 1940s and 1950s, his aim was to create "photo-

reportage" and "seize spontaneity." It was as a fashion photographer that Horvat became famous, however, and his insistence on taking models out of the studio and into the real world was his trademark. Yet for all his emphasis on spontaneity, his models still seemed elevated beyond the real world, true "mannequins"—French for model—in a living, breathing world. It is this tension between the profane and the sacred, the exquisite and the ordinary that makes Horvat a true original.

Many of Horvat's pictures are masterpieces of the juxtaposition between the real and the unreal: take, for instance, *Rome (for Harper's Bazaar New York) Deborah Dixon (model) with Antero Piletti (writer)*, 1962. Half of Piletti's face eyes us as he scoops up a forkful of linguine; Dixon wears such an elaborate, heavy veil that no linguine could ever near her with any success, much less elegance. In *Paris (for Elle) with Michael Horvat*, 1958 the photographer's young son tickles the model with a feather. Yet she keeps her composure as well as any guard at the Tower of London; she is a model of a model beyond the sensations of ordinary women.

Even when Horvat takes his models out into the streets, he likes to maintain their other-worldliness. In *Paris, au "Chien qui Fume" (for Jardin des Modes)*, 1956 two models strike humorous poses while they are perfectly posed in the window of a commuter train. Off to the right, however, a man of the ordinary world looks out of a window himself, in a perfectly natural, curious pose. In *New York, 1960*, a model moving through the streets wears an impeccable suit and a far-off look even as men crowd her and gaze at her; in an accompanying picture, she manages a shadow of a smile when the shadow of man passes over her body.

Yet the man who created as formal a shot as the two models sitting on pillars and puffing elegantly on slim cigars (*Londres, for English Vogue*, 1959) could also create the perfectly natural picture of two women unabashedly and naturally enjoying their cigarettes (*Paris, for Harper's Bazaar New York, Iris Bianchi, model, with Marie-Louis Bousquet, writer*). He shoots model Judy Dent ever so naturally leading children down a street in *Yorkshire, Angleterre (for English Vogue)*, 1961. And it is the model, not the stableman, who shows the greatest lack of formalism and purest amount of humanity in the rather mystical *Londres (for English Vogue)*, 1959.

Fashion before life or life before fashion? The black platform shoes that dwarf not only a family but the Eiffel Tower (*Paris, for Stern*, 1968) seem to say the former, but the exquisite photograph from 1957, its model, wrapped in a white creation through which we see only one eye, seems to say the opposite, albeit in a humorous way. Look into me, not at me, is the message, even as five men behind her are turned away, their binoculars trained, *à la Ascot*, on something in the distance. ●

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HORVAT



Raymond Depardon / Magnum Photos, Catherine Deneuve in Alain Cavalier's *Lq Chamade*, 1968



Frank Horvat, *Fashion, Paris 1958, for Jours de France*

contrast, *Veiled woman in harem, Abu Dhabi, Arab Emirates*, 1970 is serenely beautiful in her spangled elegance, and there is an eerie passivity to *Bride awaits husband she has never seen* (Afghanistan), 1969.

While Arnold was inspired by these women forced to bow to the wishes of a patriarchal society, she was also intrigued by women who purposely cut themselves off from the society of men. The result was a project in which she photographed the cloistered world

Illinois, where she spent a publicity tour, 1955; both lovely and lonely as she sleeps, the picture seems a premonition for Monroe's sad death seven years later. In another Monroe shot, also shown in the retrospective, Arnold captures the actress in a pensive, rather exhausted mood as Monroe thinks through lines on the set of *The Misfits* in 1960.

Indeed, sadness and loneliness fill the images of cinema celebrated in this show to such an extent that it is almost

BARBIE, BARDOT, and Reclaiming Woman's Body

In an era when activist women are vigorously reclaiming a wholeness, an integrity, lost under patriarchal domination, the visual and verbal representation of woman as a sexual/maternal body part, at the most a peculiar assemblage or dissemination of such parts on a male-owned site, just as vigorously continues. Facing the threat to its privileged position of control over the female body and, of course, the cultural perceptions of it, patriarchy has intensified its practice of mutilating, abjecting, and fetishizing the female body, which becomes the mutilation, abjection, and fetishizing of woman herself. Facing the threat to a passive role with which they have become familiar and for which they are familiarly rewarded, passivist women continue to collude and to accept plasticity. In toy departments, "Barbie" doll has made her reappearance in life-size form as the visual and tactile testimony to what woman has become.

1/2 of a 1/2 of a 1/2
The Work of Matuschka
The Firehouse Gallery
March 1–April 22, 1996

PATRICIA YONGUE

Despite their claims to political, intellectual, and technical radicalness, mainstream literature and the arts remain radically conservative in their treatment and positioning of women. Often they operate on the female no differently from lurid productions and hence cannot make claim to authentic rejection of oppression. Seldom naming or picturing the penis or testicles, they have always felt free to dismember and disburse the female in their texts and depictions, to name and use distinctly female body parts as objects of male lust, desire, aggression, and play.

Current examples are not difficult to locate. Philp Roth's *The Breast* immediately comes to mind. The latest edition of William Gass' 1968 book, *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*, yet has as its front and back covers full size photographic images of female breasts and buttocks, respectively. The short text itself is liberally supplied with erotic photos of a nude young woman (often, just parts of her) and also with verbal images confining woman to a partial existence as a bodily part and the plaything of the man (not to mention of the text). During a plenary session at a recent scholarly literary conference I attended, the audience, at least half of it women, was treated to several minutes of one man reading, from another man's new novel, that singular passage describing a woman's buttocks. Nowhere at the conference is/was man's body so featured.

Since, in the dominating strains of Western philosophy, the female is but a fraction of the male to start with, because she lacks the significant and signifying male part—to be a part/apart from the male in a secondary way is her acceptable destiny and identity. The parts she has—rather, the parts that "count"—likewise define her. Either way, she loses. Without them she is the object of revulsion.

She is unfeminine. She is unsightly. Invisible. With them, however, she is simultaneously the plaster, plastic goddess and the devouring monster. Venus (without arms). Medea. Medusa. Many post-structuralist theorists trace this oppressive practice to a culturally-mandated unhealthy passage through the pre-oedipal, mirror, and oedipal stages of psychological development—in Lacanian theory, the stages crucial to language and perception, thus to the production of textual and visual images. In "1/2 of a 1/2 of a 1/2," the artist Matuschka, whose body has been mutilated, organically by breast

(photographic subject) of her camera lens and artistic, ideological eye. Despite the loss of breast, there is no minimizing or minimizing of the body. It is there, it is focal, it is hers.

Matuschka's exhibitions of photographic images and connective text—"1/2 of a 1/2 of a 1/2," have been outrightly called exhibitionism. Viewers have suggested that her work is largely insensitive to women who have had mastectomies. I agree with neither reaction, although I suspect 'that most of the images, separately and as a unified body, do not have mass audience appeal, even among those who have



Matuschka, *Arms Around You*, 1993–95

cancer, technologically by the surgical amputation of her right breast, and culturally, her work says, by being a woman in a world that desecrates the whole woman, reacts with an aggressive certification of her wholeness. This wholeness is a wholeness of self as an individual whose individuality is a fractal (rather than fraction) of daughter, granddaughter, citizen, artist, writer, speaker, reader, thinker, consumer, lover, patient, amputee, poser, environmentalist, technologist, etc. Matuschka pronounces her body, which, even in her photographic work before her mastectomy, is the primary physical object

had mastectomies.' Matuschka's combination of overt and often flamboyant portrayal of the mutilated and nude female body with covert (her "veiled") foldings and unfoldings of postmodernist theory and technique would be generally intimidating, not to mention misconstrued. She neither emphasizes the tendency to ashamedness or self-disgust, feelings which women are culturally induced to emphasize; nor does she valorize mutilation, illness, or secondariness.

In technique as well as theory, Matuschka ruptures traditional lines of thinking and seeing. She may, with the

textual narrative that dialogues with the images and viewers, try to abrogate what she clearly understands, even intends, as the elongation and deepening of the usual, meaningful distance between the viewing subject and the photographic image. But the images are so striking and so violate cultural sentiments about women's bodies and mastectomy that, by themselves, they will offend those primed to be offended and resentful.

With the exception of the second image, a 9x12" tinted photographic portrait of her mother (head and shoulders), the images (most 11x14") are indeed all of Matuschka herself, nude or partially nude. The mother's elevated photo, along with the text issuing from it that tells us she re-entered the

The central site of most of the images is the site of Matuschka's missing breast. A three-image, light-oriented series adjacent to the mother's photograph and to the viewer's left, entitled *Two Weeks after the Mastectomy*, depicts Matuschka holding her hand over the place where the breast once was. On her left and positioned between her knees and ankles, is a ragged hole in the wall. The hole in the wall and the hand over the hole in the chest are veiled or revealed by a specular light depending upon the order in which the images are viewed. The wall symbolizes the barrier to her sense of wholeness created by real loss and constructed, worsened, by societal devaluation of the breastless woman. The hole, as much a womb image as

seam literally fusing the separated skin and tissue after the excision of the breast, represents the seam that is the "seem" of Matuschka's one-eighth existence as a woman without a breast. That woman is virtually a non-human, in terms of how she is culturally perceived and treated and how she is taught to perceive herself. The scar is man's mark on her.

This monstrosizing makes Matuschka unappealingly angry. Her anger appears most stridently in her larger poster and collage style images and in the conditional humor of her Hitler masque (*I Am One Woman*). At the same time, in her Foucauldian schema, where she resolves some of her anger, that seam makes her whole, not merely because a surgical incision has been sutured, but because now she repre-

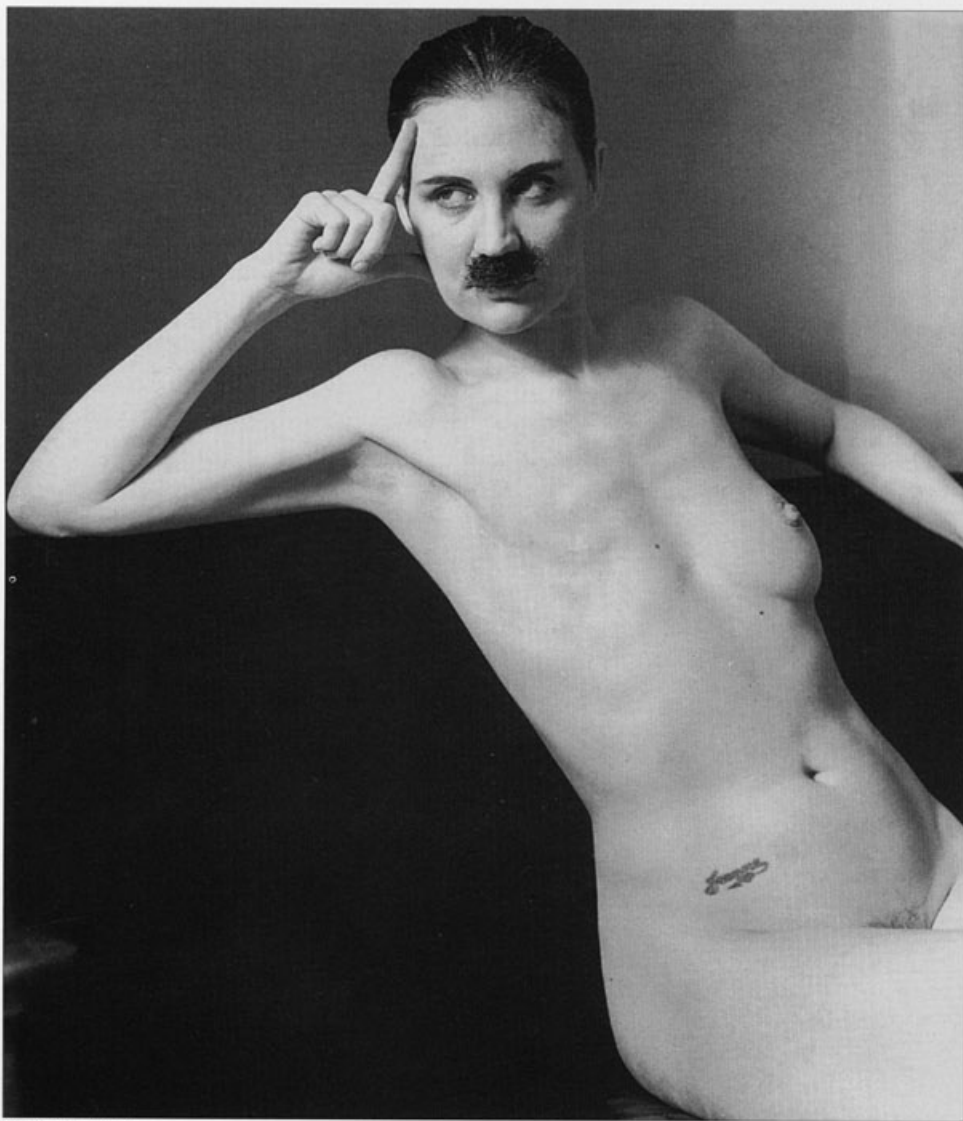
especially *Two Weeks After*. This is *Two Days Before My Mastectomy*, which leaves the woman viewer no option but to observe it as if she were observing herself in a mirror and experiencing what it must feel like to know that one of those two uptilted, full breasts that are an authentic part of her and yet the part society inauthentically deems the most desirable was going to be cut off to save her life. Like myself, most of the women viewers I observed got very close to the image, closer than to any of the others. When we did, we saw the embryonic, blurred markings of disease, the theater where the biopsy was performed, the blueprint showing where the distinctive scar would be.

Technology, its positive and negative dimension, is a repeated theme. Matuschka shows and tells of the partitioning, immobilizing, and silencing of woman through the instrument of the camera—used in ads, fashion photography, porn, film, illustrations, etc.—until she herself is nothing more than another piece of technology (like Barbied and earlier Bardoted women) aimed to destroy other women, a concept poet Emily Dickinson expresses stunningly in "My Life had stood a Loaded Gun." Matuschka knows she walks a fine line in using the camera both to parody her own parody of technological invasiveness, violation, and objectification of the person/female and to redress a grievance done to woman. But she does it, adventurously.

In *The New Deal*, one of her more obviously political and I think successful images, Matuschka stands in a rural, vaguely edenic setting, holding an infant who is grasping at the breast scar, hands forming a roundness where there is now only a jagged line. It is a deceptively poignant scene—the simple, beautiful peasant mother who cannot nurse, the baby who is unhappy—whose poignancy stems much more from the implicit threat to the environment, the woman, and the infant posed by the very chemicals, including those from traditional photography, and technologies that decimated the original "new deal," that may have been the carcinogens at the root of the breast cancer, the unhappiness of mother and infant, and the use of even more chemicals and technology to remove the cancer and the breast.

In the spirit of environmental and personal health, Matuschka says she moved to the use of electronic reproduction of earlier images and of digital photography of more recent images. She feels the distancing, since a neutral third party (re)produces the images, but she feels that by avoiding exposure to chemicals she is expressing and doing something obviously consistent with the themes of her work. With wry humor, she says she also likes the clearer resolution of an image digitally reduced or enlarged. For her the camera and the computer provide more illumination than the mammograms and tests which failed to detect her carcinomas in sufficient time to prevent the radical surgery doctors said was her only option for survival. They enable a breast reconstruction of the only sort she will allow. ●

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Matuschka, 1993-95

hospital with breast cancer two days after she brought her newborn son home, strikes an immediate sentimental note, and we are grabbed (Matuschka's mother died at forty-one; Matuschka herself was operated on for breast cancer in 1991, at thirty-seven). But then it is all Matuschka, and, save for two images that are surfacely, parodically traditional (*Madonna* and *The New Deal*), where she is holding a baby at the place that cannot provide milk, there is no old sentiment. Some of the poses are solemn and elegant (*Pink Lady Classic Nude*), some are whimsical (*Mermaid*), some are, shall we say, avant-garde (*Arms Around You*). All challenge the binary system and symmetrical doubling challenged by the woman without breast(s).

of an amputated breast (and of a space where there is no "thing" for a camera to objectify), is where the whole of the story begins to take shape and she, like the camera and the viewer, must fill the space that is still her with herself.

After this series, the absence of the breast is profoundly recognized in most of the other images by the presence of a large, ragged scar. Geometrically, each image, and Matuschka's body itself, is divided in half and usually in half again, to represent the linear, Euclidean world of spatiality and shape privileged in the manmade world which also privileges man's vision. These halvings ironically mimic the natural body lines and mimic also the societal sectoring/mapping of the body according to certain meanings that are not biological ones. The scar, the

seems—the wholeness of humanity. She is the otherness we all fear and repress and yet are. She uses her own beautiful body, scarred but conditioned and cared for, to represent the whole beauty of woman. The fraction is subsumed by the fractal, perhaps the kaleidoscopic image, where privilege is universal. If one sector disappears, the others reform and there is never a hole, only a whole that is the site of an aesthetic and an ethic. The images as a cluster accomplish this (in part) by avoiding chronological and embracing carnivalesque arrangement.

For me, personally, one of the most dramatically compelling of the images is compelling in itself and because of all the images that swirl around it, that integrate historic and historical, but



“Points of Entry” on a Straight Line

MARIA ANTONELLA PELIZZARI

“The man [the woman] who finds his country sweet is only a raw beginner; the man for whom each country is as his own is already strong; but only the man for whom the whole world is as a foreign country is perfect.” I am borrowing this challenging quotation from Tzvetan Todorov’s masterful essay *The Conquest of America: the Question of the Other*¹ while trying to reflect on the contemporary dilemma between cultural exile and multi-culturalism, between displacement and cosmopolitanism. This reflection rises from my personal questioning about the relationship to a country that is not as “sweet” as the original one I left, that is not “my own” yet, and that is still far from being “the whole world.” Like most immigrants/exiles in the United States, I have my own niche: I am a critical observer, a passionate participant, and an enigmatic voyeur of a foreign life. Photography relates to the immigrant’s experience in an exceptional way: it functions as a documentary means, as a diaristic notepad, and as a secret relic of the immigrant’s cultural past.

Three major institutions of photography in the American West—the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson, the Museum of Photographic Arts in San Diego, and The Friends of Photography in San Francisco—have brought these issues to the fore with the orchestration of three exhibitions titled “Points of Entry.”² The exhibitions study the binomial of photography and immigration in their relationship to the United States. The choice made by the three institutions is very meaningful, and quite unique. Indeed, the United States represent a model for the assemblage of ethnic groups throughout the cen-

turies. Furthermore, they have carefully kept and archived the records of this process. Photography has been—and still is—an indispensable index to point out specific patterns inside the American pluralist cultural magma.

The individual curators have confronted a huge amount of work, and they have made their own selections—chronologically and thematically. I applauded the project, I enjoyed the vast range of work exhibited, but I remained somewhat puzzled, and not fully satisfied, by the conceptual premises, and the conclusions, offered to the theme of photography and immigration. I wonder whether we can really speak of “entries” in a new country. How are their deep manifestations revealed? What are the most poignant photographic indexes for this process? And what are the organizers’ “points,” or individual agendas, in exhibiting specific indexes?

Chronologically, the exhibition “A Nation of Strangers” takes the first position in this discussion. Arthur Ollman and Vicky Goldberg co-curated the exhibition at the Museum of Photographic Arts: they assembled more than two hundred pictures—mostly photographs, but also a few engravings, magazines, and advertisements—which illustrate the immigrants’ strenuous passage to the United States, from the nineteenth-century to the twentieth-century. Terry Pitts’ exhibition at the Center for Creative Photography, “Reframing America,” surveyed the work of European photographers landed in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s; Andy Grundberg’s exhibition at The Friends of Photography, “Tracing Cultures,” focused on the subjective vision of contemporary naturalized American artists, dwelling between



Above: Lewis Hine, *Albanian Woman, Ellis Island, 1905*
Top: Don Barletti, *Highway Camp, Encinitas, CA., 1989*

their imaginary homeland and their visual construct of the new country.

The chronological order of the exhibitions does not help to trace a linear pattern inside the complex montage of

immigration. The three exhibitions frequently overlap and create their own montages, while the curators formulate their individual credos concerning the large theme. Ollman-Goldberg’s exhi-

bition proclaims with pride the beautiful cultural complexity of the United States. This "nation of strangers" has some overtones of an earlier "nation" in the American 1950s, in specific, of the disenfranchised "family of man." The American nation contains a universal oneness: as Ollman writes, it holds "the tale of all of us together."³ "Stranger is good": it's America's strength. But is it, really? Terry Pitts overcomes the question. He does not proclaim: he admires and enjoys the foreigners' "new vision." The work on display seems to suggest that we can learn

something from the strangers' "innocent eye": they "see" things we (natives) cannot see anymore. Estrangement helps us "see" better. But, I wonder, what is the prize for the loss of our original roots and our innocence? Andy Grundberg raises these questions, yet he does not fully answer to them: he chooses to give them voice through subjective and autobiographical work. Curiously enough, the spokesman of postmodernism in photography traces back a subjective vision, and values the strangers' "true" experiences. Todorov's notions of "perfection," "strength,"

and "sweetness" are all contained in these "points of entry." But let's have some glimpses.

From its first page, the cover-jacket of the catalogue, Ollman-Goldberg's "family of man" exhibits photographs of children: Ollman points out that the face of Pok Chi Lau's newborn baby is American, rather than Asian. Naturalization is not such a malleable and sweet process; yet the serial display of Lewis Hine's photographs at Ellis Island insists on the young immigrants' beauty, innocence, and expectation. Sweetness and kindness are part of the "American enterprise" which aims at perfection. Grim poverty certainly goes with it, as one is reminded by Jacob Riis' "other halves." In Ollman-Goldberg's exhibition photography works as a proof, as a statement, and as a social inquiry: a chronological thread links these documents, and builds up a tension that goes beyond the objective record. As Duane Michals would remind us here, "there are many things not seen in these photographs."

One 1874 photograph made in Utica Township, Dane County, Wisconsin, reveals the slow process of European acculturation: a family of Norwegian newcomers is portrayed having a cup of tea in front of their new house, while a man stands precariously on the roof, spreading the fetish of their belonging, the Norwegian flag. Against this symbolic background, the Norwegian sitters look like characters in a play by Samuel Beckett, their thoughts traveling back and forth from the old to the new world. We can only imagine what took place before and after the picture was taken, and thus reconstruct our personal narrative about this Norwegian family. The photograph does not reveal the shiver of the departure and the arrival; the endless moments of waiting on the steerage; the pride of sending this picture to the relatives remained in who Norway; and the overall process of staging a dream (the American dream, of course). The process of acculturation is not instantaneous, and photography can only do so much to retrieve its memory. One snapshot from the turn of the century shows the thrill of the passage from

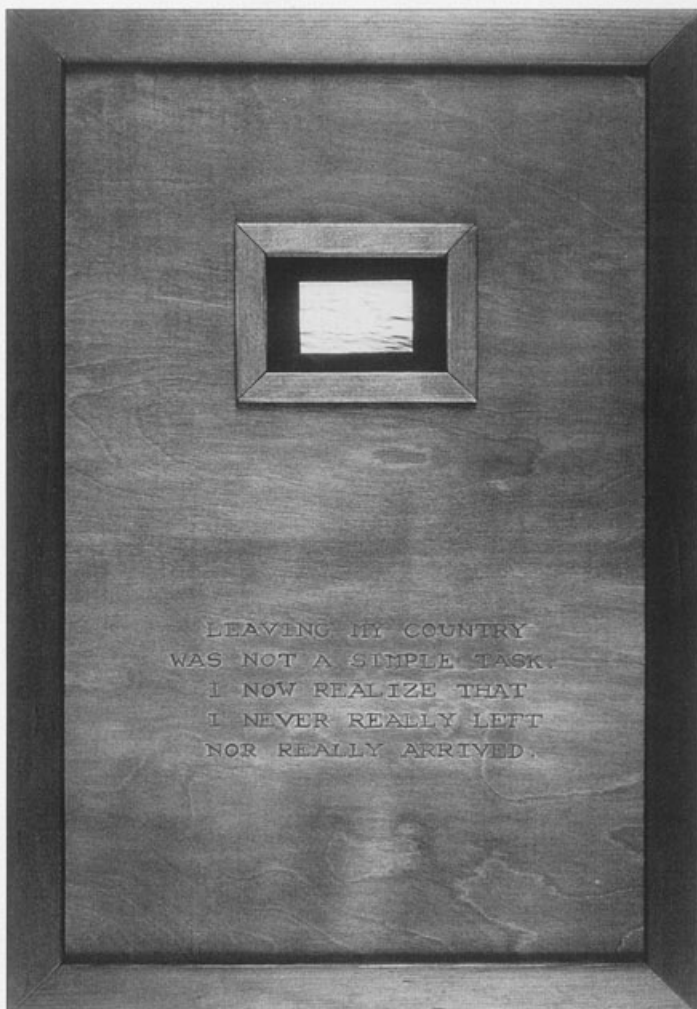
the American borders, both East and West, North and South. Don Bartlett documented the Latin Americans sleeping above the California highway, or dangerously running through the highway, and crossing the border. David McNew documented Chinese people trying to touch the American coast, seeking bread and freedom. A series of color photographs by James Newberry and Audrey Gottlieb illustrates the immigrants inside their local working and religious communities: they have settled like the nineteenth century Norwegian family, and they have attempted to recreate their original country within foreign walls.

But which type of "family" is this really?

A family of outsiders, spies, and voyeurs. Trinh T. Minh-Ha reminds me that "in principle a foreigner is already a spy," and that, as a foreigner, "you have to know how to compose yourself to be admitted in the heart of the system."⁴ If you learn that lesson, you may succeed in "Reframing America." The issue is complex, neither black nor white. The photographers selected by Terry Pitts succeeded in making America their own country: their vision became composed by the new territory, while their individual drives helped them find specific visual strategies. The process is reversed when naturalized Americans look at these photographs: they become the voyeurs "learning" from a foreign vision. Nobody here is "innocent." In one way or the other, Alexander Alland, Robert Frank, John Gutmann, Otto Hagel, Hansel Mieth, Marion Palfi, Lisette Model (and many others not included here), were all "spies," or intruders, who embraced a certain dream of America, and became part of the dream. Robert Frank is the quintessential case for this story, soon transformed into a romantic fairy-tale. America was his utopia and became his country, the place which he needed to depict: this need gave him the impulse to see with "fresh eyes," or rather, with the spontaneous force of his gut feelings. Frank became the unobtrusive observer of his beloved country. A spy and a lover.

Many foreign European eyes encountered the United States during the time span chosen by this exhibition. Lisette Model, another "lover" (of the snapshot, as she said), re-composed her vision when she arrived in New York, in 1938: overwhelmed by the city's vitality, she reflected her excitement and unease into the surfaces of store windows. Once again, the American territory acted on her as an impulse to find visual strategies, and orient herself. All photographers grouped in "Reframing America" are apprentices to the new world, as they are all searching for particular signs to interpret the unfamiliar culture. They are involved in a slow process of apprenticeship and in the translation from a foreign language. As Gilles Deleuze has explained, "every act of learning is an interpretation of signs or hieroglyphs."⁵ Thus, a variety of signs and visual patterns of orientation become contextualized inside this show: the flag, Frank's cipher for multi-racial "America," recurs, together with the portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, in many other pictures. Otto Hagel, escaped from fascist Germany to San Francisco in 1928,

continued on page 26



Young Kim, from the installation *Distances*, 1992



Alexander Alland, *Turkish Americans*, 1942

The View from the Head of the Table

The Kitchen Table Series
by Carrie Mae Weems,
Contemporary Arts Museum,
March 2-April 28, 1996

BENNIE FLORES ANSELL

Judy Chicago's unveiling of *The Dinner Party* in 1979 was a turning point in art made by women. Reflecting on this piece, the artist concluded that "the general lack of knowledge of our heritage as women was pivotal to our oppression." Chicago's statement brought to mind a line of the text in "The Kitchen Table Series." Carrie Mae Weems writes, "I can tell you that I sided with men so long I forgot women had a side."

Until recently, women in the world of art possessed a side or a history of their own that remained on a personal level and was not available for mass consumption. Some believe Chicago's work turned the tables on this code of silence and made women aware of a history, some "moss under our feet," ground to stand on and grow. Since 1979 an increasing amount of art by women dealing with overtly feminine issues has been exhibited. Weems is an artist in this tradition who also brings an African American perspective to her image making—something the main doctrines of feminism often overlook. The often muted voices of African American feminism today emerge from "a long tradition of structural 'silence' of women of color within the sphere of the production of knowledge worldwide."

The status of black women is thwarted for the issues are left silent and unaddressed by mainstream and radical feminists. As Michele Wallace writes about the silencing of the true African American feminist voice, "It is mass media that promises to offer the main attraction, that always seems to determine our image, our absence of critical voice: as in a silent movie, we are always pictures without words, or music without lyrics." In answer to this ventriloquist's act Weems writes accompanying text for some of her images. In the bell hooks tradition Weems "talks back" with her images and text and breaks this code of silence impeding fact or history of black women. This body of work gives African American women a voice and an account of their history which has long been held under the table.

The black-and-white narrative photographs in series depict the complexities within the relationships of the main character, played by Weems, with her man, friends, child and most importantly self. All of these interactions take place around a rectangular wooden table where the viewer of the photo sits at the head of the table and the interactions occur at the opposite end. Hanging above the table is a light fixture that leaves the bulb and all of its emanating light exposed giving the



Carrie Mae Weems, *Untitled (Eating Lobster)*, 1990 from *Untitled (Kitchen Table Series)*.

images a musty feel of a pool room where a high stakes game may soon take place. However, the showdown never takes place within these photographs leaving the tensions unresolved and laying on the table.

The most successful of the fourteen pieces in the exhibition are the three triptychs, favorite format of Weems, which added another layer of narrative to the works. One piece that stands out is *Wonderful things happen in threes*. It shows the tension of the main character and her daughter. In the first image the daughter appears defiant as she looks out of the darkness at her mother reading what seems to be a book of great importance. The next image shows the two leaning on the table in a staring at each other. The final image shows the two sitting at the table, Weems (or the viewer) at the head and her daughter at the viewer's right side. Weems is reading the "great book" and taking notes while her daughter sits with a note pad drawing or waiting. What is apparent in these pieces is equally as important as what takes place when the camera is not focused. The accompanying text reads: "Oh yeah, she loved the kid, she was responsible, but took no deep pleasure in motherhood, it caused deflection from her own immediate desires, which pissed her off. Ha. A woman's duty! Ha! A punishment for Eve's sin is more like it."

Her blunt account of motherhood is one instance where Weems shows the complexities of this character whose love of her child is a "duty" that takes away from her individuality.

Throughout the series it is a constant struggle for the main character to do what is expected of her as an African American woman within the context of others and her fight to have a voice and mind of her own. Weems takes the bold step in the questioning and re-writing of the most sacred of women's blessings, childrearing—Ha!

The use of text is necessary for this body of work, for through her art Weems fabricates a new reality within the African American female voice. The "repetition" of image and text that relates to the photographs stabilize meanings, confirm and duplicate her subject positions. She invites the viewer to re-learn and rethink an African American female's experience: "...like momma said there'd be days like this, like her man didn't love her, like she needed a little tenderness. Like maybe get herself a white man, see what he'd do."

Weems again writes the profane, and dares to test the will of her man and her experience, as if to take control of her situation, one which her momma would have easily accepted without question.

Weems' photographs and text revise feminist history and call into question Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," asking, "Where does the African

American female fit in this picture?" Does her double sense of otherness render her invisible, without mention? Mulvey's essay, published in 1975, links the pleasures of film and, by extension, much of modern art, to a repressive social structure. Mulvey writes, "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female." Weems masterfully shows the active



Untitled, (Woman with friends), 1990 from *Untitled (Kitchen Table Series)*

working with the passive in that she embodies both the active and passive roles. She is both the creator and the created in these images and has control over how the character is represented and to an extent, how she is viewed. Her main character in these images embodies vulnerability and strength, with her friends she can let her guard down and cry, with her husband and child she must hold her own for her own self respect and sanity. She creates a palimpsest, erasing the old history and leaving a place for the African American feminist voice to be rewritten and heard as history and truth.

This palimpsest is replaced by text that accompanies most of the images. Weems claims that the text is not there to explain the images but to act as a companion narrative to the theme. Yet, it is difficult to separate the two forms of expression for their side-by-side presentation couples them. At best, the text will expand the image. Such is the case with the image of Weems and daughter with friends playing cards.

"...The kid had seen her parents loving and fighting and had started playing house herself. She felt like HOT spelled more than hot, like she was little Sally Walker, and not Mary with bleating sheep, like she wanted to wipe her weeping eyes,... like Mother May.... It was too real to be a game, like step on

a crack break your momma's back could be a plan, like red light green light was the song to the key of life..... Weems eloquently uses childhood rhymes and games and plays the words together with the loss of innocence of the daughter. In excerpt form the text flows with a hypnotic rhythm and provides the viewer with more than the image allows.

Although the text is fascinating for the viewer who takes the time to read it, the photographs gain universal meaning without the third person voice and allow the viewer to apply it directly to their own framework. These images alone have the power to cross over racial boundaries where they can provide meaning to all women of color. One such image shows Weems' character and her male companion eating a lobster dinner. In the background a caged bird lurks in the shadows while the two sit at the table where "the man" sucks the remaining meat from his lobster. Weems' lobster remains untouched with the rubber bands still on its claws. Her glass of wine is full. His almost empty glass sits next to two, supposedly empty, cans of beer. There is a scattered deck of cards in the foreground with the three of hearts singled out. As the male character eats his lobster with both hands Weems places her right hand lovingly on his head and says shhh... The intense feelings and symbols portrayed in this tender image are more than words can tell. Weems' text is vital to this piece yet the photographs at the same time are powerful enough to stand on their own and create a multitude of meanings to the viewers without the restrictive frame of the text.

Accompanying "The Kitchen Table Series" and following table theme, were Weems' commemorative plates placed on a plain black tablecloth. These white, gold trimmed Lenox plates are once again reminiscent of the place settings in Chicago's "The Dinner Party" that honor females. In Weems' case she is honoring her "brothers and sisters." Weems makes the text on these plates hard hitting. Such is the case of the plate "FOR ANY BLACK MALE WHO MAKES IT TO THE AGE OF 21." This leaves one to contemplate the oppressive conditions for most African American males in the inner-city. Weems also honors other African Americans such as Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and Thurgood Marshall. Another plate reads "COMMEMORATING ADAM CLAYTON POWELL, JR. FOR DEFYING EVERY EXPECTATION OF WHAT A BLACK MAN SHOULD BE AND WASN'T."

This plate rings through in the truest voice. With the exchange of few words Carrie Mae Weems' work as an artist defies every expectation of what an African American female should be and wasn't—silent. Weems excuses herself from the "Dinner Table" and tells her own story, which is fact and history. ●

Bennie Flores Ansell is an artist living in Houston.

FOOTNOTES

1. Michelle Wallace, "Negative Images: Towards a Black Feminist Cultural Criticism," *Cultural Studies*, 1992, p. 655.
2. Ibid, p. 243.
3. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Art in Theory*, (Cambridge, UK, 1992), p. 967.

Heidi Kumao, *Kept*, 1993, detail

Precursor to Light

Hidden Mechanisms
by Heidi Kumao,
Houston Center for Photography,
March 1-31, 1996

PETER HARVEY

One of the many questions raised by Heidi Kumao's recent exhibition is: "What is a zootrope?" Beaumont Newhall, in his *History of Photography*, describes the zootrope as a toy popular in the late 1800s.

"...a precursor to motion pictures. It was an open drum with slits in its side, mounted horizontally on a spindle so it could be twirled. Drawings showing successive phases of action placed inside the drum and viewed through the slits were seen one after the other, so quickly that the images merged in the mind to produce the illusion of motion."

The principles of the zootrope are effectively employed in the elegant "low-tech" work of Heidi Kumao.

Entering the gallery through a black curtain, one has the feeling of walking into a movie theater in the middle of the show. The environment inside the curtain is dark, and while the eyes adjust to the dimness, the flickering of light dancing across the walls becomes apparent. Immediately to the left of the door, one of the many sources of the dancing light emanates from inside what appears to be a modified bird cage. Squeezed inside the cage like a ship in a bottle there is an electric turntable which had been dissected from an old mono phonograph. Spinning around on top of an old 78-rpm record is a hand-made crudely sophisticated projection device, which is a descendent of the zootrope. Twelve 2x2 inch black-and-white transparencies are placed around the outside of the disk. The images stand, edge-to-edge, perpendicular to the turning vinyl surface. Along the perimeter of the cardboard label portion of the disk are twelve mirrors, each aligned with one of the transparencies. A light source, located outside the open door of the bird cage shines on the mirrors and as they spin they reflect light back out through the photos and onto a paper screen approximately five feet away. Just as in the case of the zootrope, the timing of these separate illuminations has been calculated to create a perception of motion. I stood observing the wondrous spinning contraption and attempted to interpret its meaning for a long while before I realized that the device was a projector of sorts and I needed to look at the screen to com-

plete the experience of viewing the piece. I turned around and saw a paper screen, about six or seven feet long, suspended in mid air with a projection resembling the transparencies on the turntable, except the image on the screen appeared animated with the jerky motion of an old cartoon or the passing pages in a flip book. The image is a silhouette of small human wearing a conical "dunce" cap being fed heaping spoonfuls of something. The image is looped so that just as one spoonful leaves the mouth the next is on the way in with another ample mouthful. The title of the piece, *Childhood Rituals: Consumption* (1991-93), adds one more element to its expanding synergistic meaning.

The show consisted of eight individual pieces, each employing at least one of Kumao's animation devices. *Defense Mechanisms: A Marriage* (1995) includes two of the turntable zootropes and two screens measuring about 8x10 inches perched on an "antique" end table. The screens are actually set into what look like family portrait picture frames. The image on the left shows two slippered feet in the act of tight rope walking. Opposite the tightrope scene is another rope being pulled by

a word made up by Peter Harvey to refer to the zootrope, phonograph-projection-devices created by Heidi Kumao.) The feeling of entering a performance in progress is certainly evident in this piece. The color image being surveyed by the empty chairs depicts a pair of dancing (shuffling) legs from the knees down in front of a red drapery which is reminiscent of a school house stage perhaps a talent show is in progress. The artist points out that little girls are taught to seek approval through putting on a good show and giving family members and other validators something to praise. This type of gender-specific training is a key element to the artist's work and is at the core of many of the hidden mechanisms referred to in the show's title. One of the things that makes her critique effective is its subtlety and lack of dogma. The situation does not overtly suggest an injustice or an abuse of power and yet there is a tension which calls out for interpretation. One may wonder what all these elements have in common and come to a completely different conclusion to the meaning of *Adore* than the one Kumao had originally conceived.

The most successful pieces in the

scraps of paper along the edge of the box sliding in to smother her if she ever ceased swinging her broom. Details are unveiled to the viewer at discrete moments as she/he becomes more closely involved in the piece both in terms of proximity and cognizance. From a distance, one doesn't see the projected image at all because it is confined within the walls of the box on the coffee table. This process of discovering each element consecutively, instead of seeing everything at once and then dissecting it, clues the viewer in to the creative process involved in the evolution of the works.

To paraphrase Kumao, the pieces are created over whatever span of time is required to assemble the right images for animation along with the rest of the props in the piece. *Catch* (1996) is a work Kumao had been mulling over for some time before all of the elements were assembled. She had wanted to make a long table and place *projectotropes* at either end: one in the role of the boss and another as secretary. In the finished product, the two "characters" face each other from opposing ends of an 8x2 foot table. The animations interact on a screen measuring about 2-1/2 by 3 feet which hangs just above the table, roughly bisecting its length. Since the projected images can be seen from either side of the screen, one can see the hand of the "boss" tossing a bone to the hand of the "secretary." The looped action stops and restarts before the bone actually completes the trip between the hands. As the bone halts just above the outstretched fingers of the "secretary," *Catch* reminded me of another childhood game called keep-away which may be an apt subtitle.

The possibility of multiple meanings and interpretations is one of the strengths of a type of work which is not self referential, but on the contrary, requires an assembly of disparate elements to formulate meaning. The very process of interpreting this work requires each viewer to become involved in the creation of the meaning. Although they involve mechanical electronic devices, the pieces have a genuine handmade, personal and sometimes autobiographical feel. The process of their creation becomes something to consider in the interpretation of their meaning. Which came first the images or the screens? Are the turning devices the art or is it the image they project or must each part be weighed in the derivation of meaning? Why did the chicken cross the road? The experience of viewing these works involves more than an individual consideration of a message. Just as they were assembled over time in an evolutionary process, they can be viewed from each of their many facets. The idea for an animation, the shooting of the sequence, the decision to make the images black-and-white or color, even the name of the song on the record can be incorporated in the viewing experience. Heidi Kumao's multi-layered approach to creating art builds a synergistic meaning that can be very rewarding for the viewer who is willing to invest the time, curiosity and imagination in the experience. ●

Peter Harvey is a writer living in Houston.

Heidi Kumao, installation of cinema machines, *Adore*, 1995

two hands. Kumao mentioned in her gallery talk that she views the projection devices as people—that attribute is a valuable piece of information in the interpretation of this work. Kumao's defensive feelings vis-a-vis marriage are placed in animation on the little table for us to contemplate.

Just around the corner, in a little room of its own, the piece entitled *Adore* (1995) is an installation complete with chairs for the fictitious audience watching the only color animation in the show. Kumao points out that the projection apparatus for this piece is placed beneath one of the chairs facing the screen along with the viewer. The artist explains that since the device is under a chair, it is not to be seen as one of the audience members. This caveat was lost on me until I recalled that Kumao thinks of these gizmos as people, thus if she had placed the *projectotrope* on the seat it might be interpreted as a viewer (*Projectotrope*:

show have an aspect of exploration in their presentation which draws a viewer in and acts as a prize for participation. *Kept* (1993), is an example of the curiosity, discovery, reward process to which I am referring. Unlike the other installations, the mechanical works for *Kept* are mounted in the vertical plane rather than the horizontal (in Ferris wheel fashion instead of merry-go-round). From across the room, one can tell that the *projectotrope* is enclosed in an old medicine cabinet or spice rack with wooden doors that obscure the view of the apparatus until one is directly in front of the piece. Beneath the cabinet a shallow box of approximately 11x12 inches is placed in the middle of a coffee table. The box contains some small scraps of paper which have been pushed to the edges, clearing a space for the projection from above. The animation here depicts a woman in "housewife" attire sweeping *ad infinitum*. One might imagine the

INTERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Some feel the current political and economic climate in the United States offers little encouragement to artists, particularly those engaged in experimental forms. This atmosphere demands new survival tactics. A growing number of artists have proven themselves to be amazingly resilient. They have reinvented and diversified their activities, often by interacting with communities beyond the "art world." Ironically, in many cases, these are the very artists who only a few years ago enjoyed considerable public funding support for their progressive, interdisciplinary art activities. Such transformations have not come easily, and have often involved difficult reassessments and huge leaps of faith.

One artist whose life embodies such a process is Dorit Cypis, a well respected visual artist, performance artist and educator. The following interview traces her artistic reevaluation and progression over a five year period. She discusses the threads linking her work in photography, performance, and alternative education. This interview took place in her Minneapolis home in September, 1995.

ANITA DOUTHAT

Douthat: What first brought you to Minneapolis and why do you think you've stayed here?

Cypis: I first came here in 1983 from Los Angeles for a teaching job at Minneapolis College of Art and Design, where I taught until 1988 when they asked me to leave. I had serious doubts about staying here after that and I actually left for about half a year, but I did come back. I returned because I needed a place that would support a kind of reflection in my life—self reflection and a way for me to stay grounded as I went out onto all kinds of extreme pathways, particularly with my work. Often people would say to me about the work where I was naked in performance or in photographs, "God, Dorit's work is like watching somebody on a tightrope without a net." I know what they were talking about now, but I didn't know back then. In hindsight, I see that Minneapolis was my net. It wasn't in the work, and there was not much of a net in the art world sponsoring my work. It wasn't deeply inside me, so it must have been in Minneapolis. I don't think I could have done that same work, and remained sane, if I was living in L.A. or New York. Minneapolis has really afforded me a kind of home support, grounded support. When I first got here from L.A. I started working with dancers, partly because I have always been

fascinated, by movement, movement as a philosophy. Philosophy moving. But I also learned that the dancers I got involved with here were, in their own ways, deconstructing the body and how the body/mind functions or interrelates. I took that information into my work and put it into my questions about the body, how does identity live with and through the body and how is identity prescribed through the body, by culture.

Douthat: Were you reading a lot of theory at the time about the body, a lot of feminist theory?

Cypis: A lot of the theory that I was reading was actually during the 1970s and it was mostly about deconstructing culture and social bodies. It never occurred to the people that I was studying with at Cal Arts or to me that I could take those same questions into my own physical body. Then it was all social construction. The 1970s were quite split between nature and culture, so there were problems in taking those same questions into the biological body. Here, I was released from that because the people I was working with were not interested in nature or culture. They weren't philosophers. They hadn't studied theory. They were just moving in the body. I started to read extensively about the body when I began teaching at MCAD. The classes I began to teach were about the questions I was asking. I read a lot of anthropology, biology and physiology. I was also reading Michel Foucault, on sexuality and a lot of different people on desire. The more I lived with myself, my own questions about myself, the more I realized that it all lies in my body. Everything that I read, I process through my life. I never take things on face value. To me theory is a tool. If I can't identify with the theory and bring it into the process of my life, I forget it.

Douthat: You spoke a little bit about being naked in performances, but I think you once told me that for a long time you were not even present in your performances. You were doing performance pieces, but you weren't on stage. Other people were speaking or dancing. When did the transition occur? Weren't a lot of the early pieces projections in which there might not necessarily have been performers?

Cypis: Right. A lot of the earlier works (1979–1984) were performative, but the audience had to perform the projections, so they were more like multimedia installations. I did do some pieces where I was the projectionist and the director, but there

were other characters moving in the images. In the mid-1980s I designed projection systems for other dancers to move inside. I taught them how to work with moving the images and projections, but it was their content that I was structuring.

Douthat: Were you using the technique where the performer would move in front of one image, cut it off and blend into the next image? Were you doing that early?

and that's when I entered the picture, both in performance and photographically. In 1989 I began doing that. Over the next three year period I learned what I needed to learn.

Douthat: What followed during this three year period?

Cypis: In 1989 I did another computerized installa-

Cypis: Yes. In the performance, my sister Johanna played the nightclub singer, singing about her desire in jazz and blues. I designed this into the ICP's period architecture. I came out of a painting frame as the nude and on stage talked with the audience about turning from nude to naked and gave them

On A Tightrope



Cypis: Yes, I started doing that in 1981. I was doing things that were site specific that called for interaction. Then in 1988, for the Whitney Museum of American Art, I created "X-rayed," where I photographed another woman naked/nude and asked her the question "Can a woman who knows she is being looked at, allow the gaze and at the same time remain present within her own body? (To not separate herself from the other's gaze.)" It was the first time that I designed a multi-link computerized projection that involved eight or ten projectors, 300 images, three prosencia and lots of props. It wasn't a performance. It performed itself on timed tape. But the woman I photographed, investigating her own body as I photographed her, was enraged at the Whitney. Even though she understood the nature of the project and our collaboration, seeing the finished piece in public was extremely upsetting for her.

Douthat: Was that when you began to enter the performances?

Cypis: Awhile after that, I realized there was something about being looked at that I did not understand and that's when I realized I had to put myself in the position of being looked at and ask the same questions that I asked of the model, but of myself,

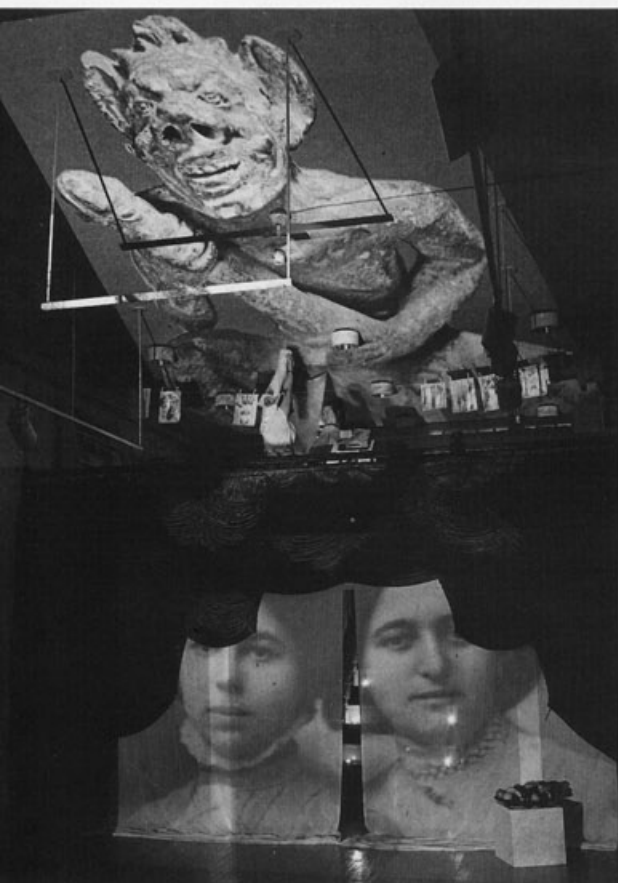


tion work, called "The Naked Nude" at International Center of Photography. It was a multimedia installation and another part was a performance.

Douthat: Were "My Father's Nudes," in which your father sent you photographs he took at the Louvre of famous reclining nudes from the history of art, in this installation?

permission to look. At Randolph Street Gallery in Chicago in 1990, I completed a project called "A Sacred Prostitute (One Within Herself)" which was another complex, computerized multimedia projection. It also had a performance aspect. I played the role of the Venus of Willendorf dressed in a puppet shell over my naked

Without A Net



clockwise from upper left: *Naked Nude*, 1989, Dorit Cypit in performance International Center for Photography, N.Y.C. • Performance view from *Phantasmagoria*, 1987, at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, • *The Body in the Picture* Harvey Sherman, 1993, print of multiple projections • *The Inquisition*, 1991, performance

make the papers. It wasn't Mapplethorpe, but videotapes of *The Devil in Miss Jones* and *Depththroat* taken to court by a fundamentalist group called The Berian League, known in the Twin Cities for trying to stop gay ordinance rights. They were testing obscenity codes right after the Mapplethorpe situation. I was called by the First Amendment lawyer from L.A. who was defending the video store owner, to testify on behalf of the defense. Supposedly, I was an expert on representation of nudity and sexuality from an artistic point of view. They asked me to testify through deconstructing the films, that they had artistic merit, and, if so, they could not be obscene, based on the Miller vs. California ruling of 1972. I did. It was an extraordinary experience. There was only one other defense witness called, a nun. A nun and an artist defended these two films. The nun, a wonderful woman, Margueretta Dwyer, one of the directors of the Human Sexuality Program at the University of Minnesota working with sexual offenders, defended the films on educational and scientific grounds because the program uses them in their studies.

I based "The Inquisition"

and a lot of it felt very abusive. In "The Inquisition," my sister Johanna played an extraordinary Miss Jones who fell from the grace of God. I was the inquisitor, her defense attorney trying to get her and the jury to question from where did she learn her desire. What constituted the social construction that led her to ask for desire through lust?

Douthat: What happened in the court case?

Cypis: Initially the defense lost. This was in Winona, a Catholic community. The judge was a woman, the person being accused was a female manager of the video store, the prosecutor was a woman, the chief attorney was a woman and the two witnesses were women, a nun and an artist. The jury was probably 60 to 40 women to men. The prosecutor called no witnesses. All she needed to do was show the tape to the jury on a big TV screen. In a way, she trespassed the context... video is for private use. She showed it in a public context. She transgressed an important aspect of how the average person receives that content. Every time there was a sexual scene, she would point at it or freeze frame and just call out: "Is this not prurient?" or "Is this not offensive?" What is a Catholic jury going to do? Right after the court case, I found a book published by the University of California, Irvine, called *Hardcore*. It is an academic book deconstructing pornographic films from a feminist point of view and it talks extensively about both these two films.

I sent a memo and a booklet down to the judge. I said: "Look, these are being studied academically. How can you censor something that the culture is really trying to investigate." The decision was overturned. Not just because of my actions, but the case was overturned.

Douthat: Did you have any support from feminists against censorship? Or weren't there any around to help support you?

Cypis: Not really. Is the left really there? Well certainly the cast of "The Inquisition" was supportive. Eight of the fourteen were women who had taken my workshop on sexuality and representation and decided to work on this project with me and became witnesses in the trial. Their testimonies were their autobiographical stories of growing up and learning about their sexualities. They were not performers, but a university professor, a marketing consultant, bakers, artists and a psychologist. They

formed an incredible network around my being able to do this piece. There was not much public support for it.

Douthat: So when you emerged from a more reflective period, what happened in your work?

Cypis: It is the same question that I had to ask myself after the Whitney, what do I do now? Literally, I had the floor taken out from under me. I designed a project that I've been involved with since 1991, since "The Inquisition," called "The Body in the Picture," which is a series of what I call psychoportraits. There are 30 or more of them. I have exhibited eighteen at a time. I worked with individuals, and with their autobiographical and public domain, cultural images. These they chose to inter-reflect on their own identities. I adapted the strategy that I have used many times since 1981, in my multiple layer projections, for these portraits. I layered their photographs in projection. I still have a formal eye and I am still an author, but more and more I want to look at how other people construct how they look at their identities. I rephotographed these individuals using the movement of their bodies inside these multiple projections of their chosen images so that their shadows interacted with the projections. I set up my camera behind the projectors while they continued to move. When I saw a frame that really caught my eye, I called out "freeze" and they held their position while I rephotographed them and the screen of projections.

Douthat: They couldn't really tell what was happening visually because they were inside the projections?

Cypis: What they could see was their shadow intersecting and mutating the projections on the screen. What I could see behind them was another layer, which was their body, their shadow and how they interacted with the screen. So they were only interacting with the projections and their shadow, I was seeing them doing it.

Douthat: How were you selecting people to work with? Were they coming to you?

Cypis: Initially they were people who came to me. I put out public notice that I was teaching these classes called "The Body in the Picture," deconstructing identity through representation. Individuals signed up for these classes from all walks of life.

Douthat: Where were you setting these up?

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body and my sister Johanna again played the blues singer, a.k.a. the prostitute, singing of her desire and ultimately losing herself to the audience's desire. Also in 1990 I did a series of photographs titled "On the Nature of Experience." They were about questioning my looking at my own naked body. In 1991 I did a major theatrical piece called "The Inquisition" based on the 1973 porno film *The Devil in Miss Jones*. It asked questions about how female sexual desire gets constituted and patterned. That

was the last show that had to do explicitly with mine or someone else's naked body.

Douthat: And then what followed?

Cypis: A breakdown! (Laughter) If you really want to know... seriously it was 1991 and the end of that project happened to coincide with the heat of the Robert Mapplethorpe affair. The summer before, I was asked to be a witness for the defense in a court case in Winona, Minnesota, a small Catholic town south of Minneapolis. It was an obscenity case that didn't

on this trial. It was a huge event and very public because censorship was such a public issue. At the time, I was constantly jumping into the fire. I was accused by both feminists against pornography and fundamentalists of being really inappropriate. I was on panels from the public library, to public radio defending that gray area between desire and morality, which is what "The Inquisition" was about. That particular feminist point of view chastised me as a sexist, anti-women. It was horrible! I was under a lot of chal-

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Cypis: I had a studio, just a big room, a screen, three projectors, that's it! I also taught this at Randolph Street Gallery. Then I worked at a neighborhood clinic with a group of people, male and female incest and rape victims, who wanted to do this work with a psychologist present. That was fascinating. In hindsight, I realized that a lot of the people who came to me were also involved in some kind of psychological counseling. I heard from some of the psychologists, psychotherapists who would call me asking: "What are you doing? These people are moving through their material in three months when it would take two years for an average person. What are you doing with them?" I said that I was giving them an opportunity to really move inside their projections.

Douthat: They brought in visual images from their lives and psychotherapy doesn't usually involve images?

Cypis: Sometimes it does, but not in that kind of active way. But I also taught this class at First Bank Systems. I taught it with real estate bankers. I called it "The Body in the Bank." (Laughter). Since then it has been taught in many places, in universities and, oh god, I'd have to get the list out.

Douthat: And so "Personae" is based on that same model?

Cypis: Yes, it's based on what I started to understand in doing this portraiture work. I was constantly coming back to seven pathways of tracking identity and this is true I think with all the work I have ever done: myth, memory, history, fantasy, dream, family, desire. It occurred to me that these are all interrelated, they are all aspects of each other and they are really different. I can take an image and track it mythologically. I can track it through how it stimulates my memory, my dreams, how my family has socialized me. There are many ways you can look at representation to reflect on your identity. I coined these seven and I have used them mostly for teaching and just to map... see I am very analytical. I constantly need to come back to a map, but in the "Personae" project, I would use these seven as pathways to digitally track...

Douthat: Through HyperCard or Hypertext?

Cypis: Right. "Personae" would be a template for creating your own social personal history. I proposed to work with one individual along these seven tracks, through

images and text that she would bring to me. I would create a HyperCard interactive system where the player could move through any of these seven tracks into a presentation of her identity and then they could layer it in a way that they understood her. Whatever they did would be projected publicly so that somebody going into the gallery could see how a player interprets somebody else's identity, a private act made public. That is the conceptual structure for "Personae."

Douthat: So the template or the projections that are programmed have to be information about people who will allow you to do this with their existing portraits.

Cypis: Right, and the woman I have chosen is someone who participated in "The Inquisition." I worked with her over a period of three years. She's also an art historian, so she has quite an interest in deciphering life through images. But the suggestion would be that anybody could do this.

Douthat: Also, in recent years you've been working on what sound like very innovative education projects and some of them obviously must be tributaries from these portraits. How did some of this happen and how does it relate to your personal work or does it?

Cypis: "The Body and the Picture" became an educational tool. It didn't always end up in portraits. Sometimes it was a process I taught under the title "Photo Bodies" for photo students to enter their own images. It really became a strategy for asking deeper questions about looking. I am fascinated by projections, the psyche and the shadow, what's not revealed, dream time and all of the different characters living inside us that don't always get a voice.

Sometime after "The Inquisition," on my way to my studio, I passed a storefront drop-in center for homeless kids called Project OffStreets. I was first attracted to the name. I walked in one day and felt very compelled to work with these kids. I had no idea how. I looked at why. Why did I want to work with these kids? It had to do with identity... adolescence is like a stage between tadpole and frog. It's where the private meets the public, family meets culture, where youth meets adult and where a lot of distortion takes place between who we've been told we were, who we are and who we want to be. I was still interested in how notions of sexuality and desire are formed.

I walked in as a volunteer in the summer of 1992 think-

ing I would offer to teach "The Body in the Picture." I realized very quickly that it was a little too missionary, a little too white liberal desire to come into another land and offer my goods for their benefit. I had no idea who these kids were. Some of them were in jail and out of jail, had experiences as prostitutes, chemical dependency, eating out of dumpsters. Some were runaways because of abuse in their families, or they were kicked out because of dysfunctional parents, or on and on and on. I was totally overwhelmed! I didn't realize until a couple of years later that I felt like I was a homeless artist in this culture. I felt like I had been betrayed and abandoned. Also, my own family background as Jews surviving 20th century Europe, displaced from Russia to Poland, from Poland to Israel, from Israel to Canada and finally to the United States echoed homelessness. Witnessing the problems of the kids at Project OffStreets became an exaggerated projection of my own struggle and I, as a lost artist at the time, totally identified with their lost identities.

I hung out with them for six months. I went there once a week for about three hours in the evening and just talked with them. They started to trust me. They don't trust adults easily because they have been abused by adults, in the family, but also in the culture. There is no place for a sixteen or seventeen year old who doesn't belong to a family in this culture. They are not adults yet, they don't have legal signatures. For example, I took one of them to the hospital. She was very ill with walking pneumonia. It was after 10:00 at night. She had been walking around this way for weeks as a lot of them do. I took her through the administration. We went through all the procedural red tape and they finally asked her how old she was, and she said 16 and they said, "Oh, I'm sorry we can't take you in. You have to be over 17. You have to go to another department." So it's an edge that most of us aren't conscious of, of how the bureaucracy works and it's really hard for an adolescent. I felt like they were falling through like the way the culture was letting artists fall through. I thought, well hell, if the culture doesn't want what I have to teach them, and they don't want these kids, then I'm going to help these kids to be something in this culture.

I never for once thought that I was going in there with anything else but the mind of

an artist. It wasn't like sociology or social work. I realized that Project OffStreets, which is an amazing organization, helps them with getting off the street, getting off drugs, counseling and health, with teen pregnancy and sexuality and tries to get them jobs and get them through school. It's all survival stuff. Absolutely no energy or resource is left to inspire them, to massage their imaginations, to give them anything beyond survival. I thought, how can they live with only survival? It was the same

desire. I named us the Kulture Klub.

Douthat: How many kids are we talking about?

Cypis: In the beginning I was alone with four to seven kids.

Douthat: It was always a very small group?

Cypis: Oh yeah,... these kids are too intense to go out in large groups.

Douthat: O.K., so in the beginning it was simple in structure. You were using your contacts



Dorit Cypis, X-Ray'd (altered), 1989-92

question I was asking the culture. How can this culture not offer anything that inspires in life?

I realized that there was something really simple that I could do. I was an established artist in this city, I had contacts at all the theaters and all the art spaces, and with artists. I arranged to take them once a week to a cultural event. I scalped tickets, I got artists to come in and do presentations, I brought them to artists' studios, I took them to places where they could see that adults were not just there to beat them down, that there were some creative individuals out there, that they could also have some creativity in their lives and it wasn't just about getting through the next day, that they did have imaginations and that was what was going to help them survive in the end, beyond the physical. It worked. Kids were amazed and the staff realized it was working! In the beginning it was really easy for me because I could call up my friends at the Walker or at Guthrie Theater or wherever and I could get seats. I took them to events that weren't just about entertainment, they were art works that dealt with issues of identity, reflecting aspects of myth, memory, history, fantasy, dream, family,



Dorit Cypis, My Father's Nudes, 1995

and you were taking small groups of 16 or 17 year olds, was it under 17? What was the age limit?

Cypis: Thirteen to 19 was the age group. Most of the kids who came to Kulture Klub were older, 15 to 19 or 16 to 19. They were kids who could sit still long enough and had some more mature interests. Then I started to call the art foundations who had very generously supported my work locally over the years and told them I was working with homeless kids... could I get some assistance through their funding? This was a year for me to realize again how the art world, the art system was not set up to support artists living in the world. It was only set up to support artists who want to

live in studios and live with their visions turned inward. Foundations wouldn't support this work because, and several institutions said this to me: "It's not your work. It's not your *artwork*."

Douthat: And that's what they had supported in the past?

Cypis: Right...

Douthat: That's how they knew you?

Cypis: And I told them, it *is* my work. This is where I am putting my work right now. It is the same energy, it's the same person, it's the same background that's informing this work as informs my gallery and performance work. They are the same questions, the same ideologies. The product looks dif-

Douthat: It's interesting to me that at first it was so difficult for foundations. I thought that so much of the funding in the arts these days was going towards educational projects.

Cypis: Not in 1992. They all started rewriting their guidelines after 1992.

Douthat: So you were just a little ahead of the curve here? Even now, when institutions talk about putting more funding into educational projects, is it this kind of innovation or is it much more traditional outreach programming in museum education departments? Are you still on some kind of margin, or not?

Cypis: I feel like I am. It feels like a margin because I'm working with such an at risk population group and again, for me, the support

Douthat: Are any of them visual artists? Is there any way for them to physically produce work?

Cypis: To me it's really more about inspiring them in their thoughts and in their attitudes toward making creative choices in their lives. We're doing a photojournalism class right now. They'll be using cameras, but it will really be about how to look, not so much the final product. I've never been that interested in the final product. It always has to reflect the inner questioning more than a formal aesthetic, although form definitely plays a part. I've also had to let go of a lot of my more esoteric theoretical judgment about art and aesthetics because that's not their background at all.

Douthat: Maybe this is just a physical question about how they work. They don't have a darkroom. Are they shooting slides or is somebody providing a lab donation for them?

Cypis: Yes, we're looking for donations. I'm working with Kate Maxwell Williams, a local photojournalist, who works part-time at the *Star Tribune*. She got the newspaper to donate 40 rolls of film and processing and then I put in requests to different labs for printing. Target Center is donating some of the costs of the cameras. It's pieced together. I piece together my own work. It's the same thing except I call Kulture Klub social design—art of social design. I don't know what else to call it because it doesn't fit into "The Hungry Ghost" (a mixed media installation I presented at the Krannert Art Museum in 1995, that among other elements deconstructed some of the photographs from Garry Winogrand's "Women Are Beautiful" series), but it uses the same strategies. It doesn't matter to me what I call it. It's mattering less and less, which is a good thing.

Douthat: What do the kids in Kulture Klub think of you? How do they see you? Do you have any idea?

Cypis: I don't fit in at Project OffStreets. I'm not a social worker and I'm not a client. I think the kids also don't know what they are getting into, but something happens. They trust me more as the gatekeeper than as a "famous artist." Often, I don't talk about my other work, but... I want them to know that artists also live in their world and can interact in their world. We're not just on white gallery walls. I really want to affect the notion that people have about artists. I'm

just trying to live it. It's how I work. It's not theoretical.

Douthat: Because your earlier pieces were projections and more temporal.

Cypis: Much more temporal. So we'll see when the next opportunity comes for doing something like that again. There are several large interactive computer projects that I would like to do besides "Personae" that might generate objects, but my emphasis is working in space and time and movement. The Kulture Klub really is about space and time and movement. It's just that the players are different.

My recent project at the Walker Art Center was sponsored by their education department and we called it "Backstage at the Walker: an Archaeology of the Permanent Collection." I was commissioned by the Walker last year to design an interactive room in their education lab for school kids, K through 12. There, an art teacher works with them 30 at a time. I was asked to design an interactive installation for that space based on the Walker's permanent collection. I turned the lab into the wings and the backstage of a theater where all the props, images, lighting, scrims and backdrops were exposed and made possible for use. I spent several weeks photographing the collection and I accumulated slides of glimpses of paintings and sculptures, spaces in between and how they were installed in the galleries. I commissioned a scenic designer to work with me. We built a theatrical grid for lighting and for three rows of scrims and curtains—some transparent scrims, some opaque, that were huge backdrops of paintings from the collection, one of a Sigmar Polke, one of Andy Warhol. They were all on pulleys so they could be pulled open and shut. There were three tiers of them so you could layer them.

The room was painted black like a theater and on the walls were hung all manner of props, details from the paintings and the sculpture, masks, shadow sticks, costumes and props all displayed like in a prop room, archived and catalogued. There were two projectors so the kids could project the original images that I shot as backdrops for their own shadow plays. There were audio tapes based on the wall didactic in the galleries, where the curator contextualized the collection by referring to socio-cultural events mostly from the 1960s and 1970s. I turned them into sound bites and pulled snippets out of them. I got some snatches

from Dr. Martin Luther King speeches and radio recordings of the assassination of President Kennedy and made them available in the room. The kids could mix their own sound too. We installed lighting and their own dimmer board. We made seating out of huge cartons of Tide boxes, a la Warhol.

Thirty kids at a time came in and the art teacher divided them into groups of five and gave each one of them an image to work with. They had to come up with an interactive live performance based on that image, drawing from the props, lighting and sounds in the room. "Backstage" was installed for a total of eight months and was hugely successful, not just with the kids but with the gallery guides who took them from "Backstage" to the permanent collection or vice versa. It was extremely interactive and multi-disciplinary.

Douthat: Why did they take it down? Why couldn't they just keep it?

Cypis: Well they just put it back up. It's back up now through December, 1995. I recently proposed for them to act as agents or producers in selling the process and the strategies of "Backstage" to other museums to work with their collections, so we are going to be working on that this spring.

Douthat: One final question. We are all painfully aware of the devastating effects of conservative attitudes toward the value of art in our society. What is your response to the very different viewpoint that art without a definite political stance or social agenda is irrelevant?

Cypis: To me, it is a sad cultural statement that we would expect all "art" to fit within *one* agenda. That seems quite fascistic and full of fear. Expression is as varied as life itself. When we still expression, we still life. At the same time, artists must find ways to more fluidly integrate with other aspects of the culture. We must not fear each other. ●

Anita Douthat is a photographer, arts administrator and educator currently living in Alexandria, Kentucky. From 1985-1992 she was curator of the Photographic Resource Center at Boston University. She became acquainted with Dorit Cypis in 1989 while curating an exhibition and performance series, "Photography and Performance." In 1990 the PRC presented Cypis' "Threshold in Musical Time" at The Brattle Theater, Cambridge, MA.



Dorit Cypis, *Kulture Klub*, Loose Canon, 1995

ferent. I'm not signing my name to it any more. But I've always asked questions about authorship anyway, so what's the problem? They replied that it wasn't in their guidelines. I finally convinced The McKnight Foundation to pilot us. They funded me as an artist going into a social service organization and initiating a project from outside. I have a partner on the inside, a staff member from OffStreets, who works with the kids and works with me. I'm from the outside and he's from the inside. Last year we went to over 60 events, including them doing a performance at the Southern Theater. They're starting to do their own work. This year I've curated seven projects directed by seven different artists. Over the next half year the kids will learn different strategies and tools in the arts and creativity, work with an architect to make maps of how they inhabit the city, make symbols out of their own names, photojournalism etc. Kulture Klub is a tiny part of Project OffStreets, but it's the most consistently attended program. So I've become a networker between homeless kids, artists, cultural institutions, funding agents, social service organizations. It's like layering the projections.

net is really thin. The social service agency has taken about three years to really get what I am doing and to start to support it emotionally. I am doing all the fundraising. In fact, I'm paying them to use one of their staff people. They are paying into the project through in-kind with the use of their space and a van.

Douthat: So Project OffStreets could be slashed or does it have enough support?

Cypis: Yes, I think most of their funding is federal. It's easy to call the arts frivolous, but you can't really call an agency caring for homeless kids frivolous. I think that that kind of buck is going to have to be picked up and will be picked up, more easily by private foundations and state agencies than experimental arts.

Douthat: As these kids start to perform, are they writing their own materials?

Cypis: A lot of them have always written. A lot of them are incredibly creative and that's probably part of their so-called problem, that they don't fit in, that they're rebellious, that they're too unwieldy, even for their parents. Their creativity is unbounded. They have nowhere to put it. The culture does not provide a place for kids to use their creativity.

A Quiet Vision

The Poetics of Vision by John Dugdale
Houston Center for Photography,
May 17–June 30, 1996

DON BACIGALUPI

In 1987 I wrote a review of an exhibition of paintings and called it "The Triumph of Beauty," signaling the painter's obsession with creating beautiful images in the wake of his lover's death from AIDS.¹ The work seemed victorious at the time, and thus the title of my review was meant in earnest, without irony.

In 1996 I find myself stunned by the beauty of John Dugdale's photographs, and yet it is hard for me to think of them as triumphant. They seem quieter, subtler, almost in retreat. It is difficult for me to recall a moment in which art touched by AIDS could be thought of as "winning" or even "doing battle."² Perhaps another metaphor is needed at this late date.

"John Dugdale: The Poetics of Vision" provided a fine opportunity to view Dugdale's recent projects. The exhibition included two galleries of the New York artist's exquisite cyanotypes—still lifes, interiors, nudes, landscapes and portraits. The first room contained a number of Dugdale's bluish cyanotypes which, in their whitewashed wooden frames with rippled blown-glass glazing, were resplendent in their nostalgia. Although in hushed tones, they seemed lively and almost musical. In one, a mantle strung with celebratory garlands—at once giddy and elegiac—spoke of music silenced and good times past.

Gallery X contained a much quieter series of rosy, brown-toned cyanotypes, these a more somber and coherent body of work. One entered the darkened space through a gauze drape, the only illumination emanating from bare Victorian bulbs hanging from on high, distributed evenly between the ordered

pictures. One's eyes were required to make adjustments for the light. Everything slowed. Time itself momentarily seemed sluggish, the air stilled, and all sound evaporated. Dugdale's installation effectively forced the viewer to enter not only his pictures (for one had to lean in close to see), but the very world (or situation) in which they were made. The reflective states of a man facing his mortality, losing his health, relishing the beauty of life and its moments. These were apparent in the photographs. An astonishing cloudscape, equal parts misty abstraction and luminous landscape, slowly revealed the minute figure of the photographer on the distant horizon with an umbrella. The sublimity of one man's reckoning with the sheer weight of nature, life, and art history was contained in the tiny image.

Dugdale's photographs are more than merely beautiful. They are indeed all about beauty: its fleetingness, its timelessness, its silence, our inability to notice it, and our inability to hold on to it.

The artist's cyanotypes have an immediacy that belies their pre-Modern references. There are familiar compositions—familiar from the history of art, from beautifully illustrated books, from moments of beauty experienced and remembered by each of us.³ And they are about memory. All photographs memorialize. But Dugdale's photographs are, of late, memorials to his eyesight. As he has struggled and lost his sight to CMV (an AIDS-related illness), the photographer has had to rely on assistants to help produce his work.

According to Dugdale, this loss has, however, clarified for him the difference between sight (the mechanical process that he has lost) and vision (the artistic ability to know and to create a picture).



John Dugdale, *The Artist's Mother*, 1995 cyanotype print

He has continued to make his work, despite not being able to see, by constantly directing his assistants' movements (mostly family members). The division of labor between a film cinematographer and director comes to mind, a distinction our culture easily accepts.

Dugdale states that in his art he has tried to "unlearn" the rules of composition, to divorce himself from the burden of artistic tradition and aesthetics. He has tried to make images that are akin to the naive photographs of farmers' catalogs. He has removed the electricity and plumbing from the house in

upstate New York where he prefers to work, as if the very accouterments of modern life might corrupt this vision.⁴ Dugdale wants to produce something unaffected and quite simple.

He has not succeeded. His works are flawlessly constructed and composed, and informed by a wealth of historical notions of beauty. They may even appear somewhat affected because of their methods of presentation: nostalgic places and poses captured in an old-fashioned medium, framed in antique glass and wood, illuminated by obsolete lights. But none of this

reduces their impact, their ability to affect the viewer. They may not be called triumphant, but they do speak eloquently, if quietly, about the fragility of beauty and of life itself.

AIDS and aesthetics, beauty and death, vision and illness, photography and music. These things swirl through my mind as I look. And reflect. ●

Don Bacigalupi is director of the University of Houston Blaffer Gallery.

FOOTNOTES

1. Don Bacigalupi, "The Triumph of Beauty: James Hansen at Jack Shainman," *Cover/Arts New York*, 1987.
2. The metaphors of war attending the discourse of AIDS—best discussed by Susan Sontag in her book *AIDS and its Metaphors*—here encroach even on the artistic discourse.
3. Including those by Martha Stewart, for whom the photographer has worked.
4. This method of producing art while living in the style of another period has been practiced by, among others, David McDermott and Peter McGough, for whom Dugdale has printed photographs.

John Dugdale, *Farmhouse Inverted in Mark Isaacson's Venini Vase*



John Dugdale, *Self-Portrait in Rondout Creek*, 1993



GAZA

GAZA: Legacy of Occupation: A Photographer's Journey
Dick Doughty and Mohammed El Aydi
West Hartford, Kumarian Press, 1995

HENRY HORENSTEIN

GAZA belongs to that admirable tradition of photography books that combine images and text in more or less equal weight. Walker Evans and James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* comes immediately to mind. In fact, the Depression spawned many such projects—Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell's *Have You Seen Their Faces?* and Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor's *An American Exodus* were some of the best examples of the gritty documentary tradition of that rich era.

GAZA's subject is the experience of Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, in particular the 5,000 refugees stuck in Egypt after the Camp David Accord and not allowed to return home. Strictly speaking there is a single author—Doughty—who produced both the photographs and text for the book. (He generously shares authorship credit with his "guide, cultural consultant," and friend El Aydi.) Such double duty is no mean feat—the photographer needs to shoot and the writer needs to listen and ask questions—but Doughty carries it off with surprising success. It's rare enough to find a photographer who can write



Dick Doughty, *Friends and relatives grieve the death of Jihad Mustasa Jarboua after he was killed by an Israeli army patrol while shopping in the market at Kahn Yunis on March 22, 1993*

(and report) well or a writer who can make good photographs.

GAZA is not really a photographic book. It could have been more visually driven—many of the photographs merit more prominent treatment—but the design and production quality of the book aren't up to that. And this is my only real complaint. I want to see the photographs larger and reproduced more richly. This isn't an art book, however, but a book of journalism—solidly researched and showing great concern for detail and care for presenting all sides to the story.

Still, I was pleased to see small portfolios of photographs strung together at the beginning and end of GAZA. These include some of my favorite

images from the book—an isolated arm raised with clenched fist, a group of men huddled on the sidewalk, a hand reaching for a branch. Other outstanding images include a woman searching for her jewelry among piles of ashes, a couple of men peering out from behind a poster, a hairdressing class, a portrait of a bus driver looking through the front window (and many other portraits).

There's a lot of talk these days about who should be photographing who—whether different cultures, genders, races, whatever can be represented by an "outsider." I think we've gone a little far in such concerns; to me a good document almost always has value, regardless of where it comes from. Imagine that the white photographer

Frances Benjamin Johnston hadn't photographed the African American students of the Hampton Institute, for example. We would have lacked a skillfully made visual record of what that famed school was about. In a similar vein, if folklorist Alan Lomax had been more worried about being a white Northerner, we would almost certainly have been deprived of the great blues singer Leadbelly, who may well have rotted in jail, his great work unrecorded and unpreserved.

Doughty is more sensitive than I to these issues, carefully noting that he received permission to photograph the praying woman on page xxiii and making it clear in many other ways that his viewpoint is that of an outsider. "If I could speak more Arabic and understand what was happening culturally, I think, I'd be having a great time," he writes. "This is a fun evening, what's my problem?... I withdraw, saying I'm tired. But I'm a fraud: I can't sleep at all after three cups of cardamom coffee, something that never happens to Gazan men."

I think Doughty's being a bit self-depreciating here. Another thing that doesn't happen to Gazan men—thus far, at least—is that they don't go around recording the story of their people and their circumstances in words and photographs. Doughty did—and Palestinians and the rest of us should be grateful to him for his efforts. ●

Henry Horenstein is author of more than twenty books for adults and children, including widely used texts *Black & White Photography*, *Beyond Basic Photography*, and *Color Photography*. He teaches at Rhode Island School of Design.

Art That Is Not Just Photography



Robert Mapplethorpe, *Candy Darling*, 1973

Altars by Robert Mapplethorpe
New York: Random House, 1995

DAVID BURWELL PRICE

Whether interpreted as modern day icons on the cutting edge or as decadent, narcissistic looks at a microcosm of society, Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs continue to demand attention and in time may well be the window needed to observe the era in which he lived. Mapplethorpe's *Altars* focuses on his unique works and specially editioned prints, revealing a career-wide view of his art as originally seen in gallery and museum exhibitions. Presented in a slip-cased, full-color or volume are works ranging from collages and Polaroids made in the early 1970s to platinum and dye-transfer prints made in the late 1980s. The full spectrum of Mapplethorpe's subject matter is available: portraits, nudes, sex pictures, flowers and still lifes. He

moved from using appropriated images to producing the finest quality photographic prints from his own negatives with an unflinching and an increasingly refined eye for beauty.

Even the earliest works, a collage portrait of Andy Warhol and a group of homoerotic collages, post-date Mapplethorpe's arrival in Manhattan after spending his youth in suburban Floral Park, Queens. Set free by the spirit of the late 1960s and with his horizons broadened by his friendship with poet/artist Patti Smith, Mapplethorpe forged relationships with the Metropolitan Museum's John McKendry and curator/collector Sam Wagstaff that proved seminal to his artistic growth. The background in painting and sculpture he had obtained while a student at Brooklyn's Pratt Institute is evident in much of his work, as is his consistent creation of altar-like, symmetrical compositions. Mapplethorpe himself credited this bent to his early

Catholic upbringing, and its recognition has inspired Random House editor Mark Holbom and designer Dimitri Levas in their careful selection of images for this book. Having worked in the studio with the artist, Mr. Levas offers the benefit of an insider's eye, which affords us (as much as possible) Mapplethorpe's vision.

Unusual to this publication is that the plates include the specially designed mountings and framings, important because they show the entire works of art as conceived by Mapplethorpe. Such diverse designs as the black and red leather-covered frame for his 1973 *Self-Portrait* and the groupings of tinted plastic Polaroid film cases used to frame series of Polaroid portraits such as the 1973 *Candy Darling* are seen in his early work. More mature later works like the 1987 *Lydia Cheng* and *Thomas pallidum* platinum prints on linen with fine fabrics in a manner that seems to elevate the works to the sta-

tus of painting. What is clear throughout is Mapplethorpe's concern with creating art that is not just photography.

Edmund White's essay "Altars: The Radicalism of Simplicity" weaves Mapplethorpe's art into the fabric of recent history. By placing Mapplethorpe into a sociological framework, White elucidates his career and success in an art historical context: an artist on the edge and pushing it—in a place and time that did much the same. White, a brilliant essayist, not only was a friend who was on the scene for Mapplethorpe's rise, but also one who has survived to offer his point of view on the era in which he enjoyed artistic success. Gaining a proper perspective on the permissive, pre-AIDS 1970s in the light of the more cautious 1990s has proved difficult for many; perhaps in part by virtue of his expatriate status for the past several years, White shines a clear light on the specific point in time that embraced Mapplethorpe's sensibility because it reflected so perfectly the moment. Noting the danger of the memory of that moment being lost, White preserves it for us while making clear that many of the images Mapplethorpe is frequently criticized for today inexorably meshed with his audience and the mores of the time.

Altars is the second in a series of five volumes planned by Random House in conjunction with the estate of Robert Mapplethorpe. A comprehensive review of his flower photographs is expected to be published next. ●

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Rewriting Stieglitz

Alfred Stieglitz, A Biography

by Richard Whelan,

Little Brown, 1995,

662 pages and

Alfred Stieglitz at Lake George

by John Szarkowski,

The Museum of Modern Art, 1995,

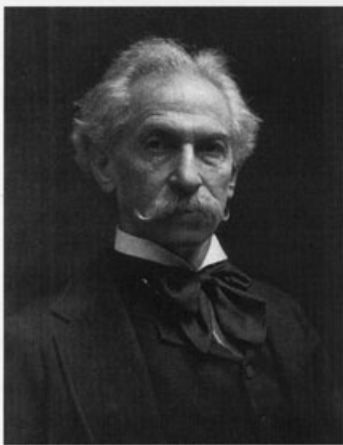
112 pages

PETER BROWN

It is well known that the energy and talents of Alfred Stieglitz helped launch a number of things—compelling photographs, the eventual acceptance of photography as an art form, modernism in America and with the help of Georgia O'Keeffe, one of the more successful art marriages in history. It is perhaps less known that these energies also launched factions, feuds, disciples, enemies, and, as John Szarkowski writes in his recent essay on Stieglitz, a million words and more photographs than we knew.

Two books, Richard Whelan's *Alfred Stieglitz, A Biography* and Szarkowski's *Alfred Stieglitz at Lake George*, (which serves as the catalogue for a similarly named exhibition from MOMA) contribute to a new understanding of this multi-talented, charismatic, generous and often irascible man. A page of adjectives could, and have been used to describe him, and most would, for particular moments in his eventful life, be ringingly accurate.

A few: he was at times brilliant, moody, stubborn, spiteful, dogged, romantic, cold, lecherous, bombastic, kind, ingratiating, vague, self-effacing, monomaniacal, pitiable, self-congratu-



Alfred Stieglitz, *My Father*, 1894, platinum print
Alfred Stieglitz Collection, © 1995 Board of Trustees,
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

latory, and of course contradictory. Each of these could to a degree, describe most of us, but Stieglitz, unlike most of us, seems to have played each facet to an extreme, and often in very public arenas. Unlike the imperially reticent Walker Evans, of whom a biography has also recently been published, with Stieglitz, it seems safe to assume that whoever was in his presence knew exactly where Stieglitz stood—although a year later, an opposing argument might be hammered out with equal conviction.

He was clearly a gigantic presence—utterly self-assured until physical col-



Alfred Stieglitz, *Equivalent E*, 1921–38, Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, given anonymously

lapse would repeatedly catch him—and Whelan has written a gigantic book, a historical biography that is laden with fact—a book running more than 650 pages, mercifully broken into sixty-nine short chapters covering the eighty-two years of Stieglitz's life (1864–1946). Surprisingly it is the first full life biography published.

It is, apart from a painstakingly thorough biography of Stieglitz himself, a fascinating cultural history (particularly of his early years in and around New York); a blow-by-blow account of the absurd (from our removed vantage point) factionalism in which the various turn-of-the-century photo groups, clubs, rings, societies, secessions were engaged. It is also a history of the rise of Modernism in America as seen through the prism of artists that Stieglitz championed and it is a look into his private life: the extended Stieglitz family, the sad first marriage to Emmy (of which Whelan is strangely dismissive), and of course the meeting of O'Keeffe and the bumptious dance of that marriage.

The strengths of Whelan's biography are many—but primary for me—and an indicator of one of the book's successes, is the well rounded and well founded sense one comes away with for Stieglitz himself. Out of a murk of genetics, family life and social interaction, emerges a portrait that becomes believable by virtue of Whelan's careful compilation of fact. It's a bit like a Chuck Close painting that from a few inches away is overwhelming, but from a considered distance pops into focus. The detail in this book can, at times seem too much—but the restive, contradictory creature Stieglitz became struggles out—anguished, excited, gesticulating, making his points, moving around the room in quite a lively fashion. And Whelan's writing is, for the most part, lively as well, pulling us from one altercation to the next.

Stieglitz was a welter of seemingly unrecognized contradictions. He was an independently wealthy man, who from a position of relative financial security, railed against professionalism and commerce; a committed and confident artist who yet seemed to take

each criticism of his work to heart—often engaging a critic on the other's suggested turf, by using say, the “more democratic” Kodak postcard paper for his cloud photographs, after being accused of being “elitist” in his choice of palladium; he was the confusedly devoted lover of Georgia O'Keeffe, who yet allowed himself, through an idealized vision of what universal love should be, to fall in love with Dorothy Norman and others, expecting all parties to live peacefully in a hermetic Eden of his own devising; and he was a man capable of changing his thought on the meaning of photography in the most basic ways without a backward glance or sense of inner contradiction (a point Szarkowski makes strongly as well).

The mass of detail and stories that Whelan has uncovered and ordered are impressive. Much was new for me. A few quick sketches: the young Stieglitz, as confident in his powers as a student, as he would become as an arbiter of national taste, doing complex mathematical problems in his head to the consternation of his teachers; the love-lorn romantic youth, rebellious and rejecting of convention, holding a detailed and fairly narrow definition of idealized “Woman”, yet marrying a woman he clearly despised for reasons of social propriety; the young, competitive athlete and aimless student passionately riding each late nineteenth century fad to boredom: walking, running, biking, until photography finally latches



Alfred Stieglitz, *Ellen Koeniger, Lake George*, 1916



Alfred Stieglitz, *Lake George*, 1932, Collection: The Museum of Modern Art, NY, The Alfred Stieglitz Collection, gift of Georgia O'Keeffe

hold of him for good; the technical prodigy—perhaps the first university trained “art photographer” outdoing himself and his fellow students in his obsessive technical experimentation (subject matter be damned), growing into a man whose ostensible reason for existence becomes the visual representation of the human soul; the impresario of art world factionalism, an indefatigable creator of societies, movements, exhibitions, magazines, galleries—a man in constant motion—giving up his own photography for years, in a confusion of art and politics; and the family man at Lake George neglecting his wife and daughter as he slowly changes his enclave from a *nouveau riche* playground into a workplace for art. And Whelan is superb on all this—balancing personalities, major events and the everyday in energetic, compelling ways.

The book is far more fact of life, than analysis of work and when Whelan does address the photographs, it is generally in the form of description. However, when he plunges into more than descriptive depth, his thought on the work often seems sexually reductive to me. It takes a tone from O’Keeffe’s

Yet finally, in the context of the book, these criticisms are relatively unimportant. Whelan does not set out to write a critical biography, but a historical one, and this has been accomplished. To my mind, the main things lacking in the book are the Stieglitz photographs themselves. A set of reference pictures, twenty pages say, two or three images to a page would have made a tremendous difference in the experience of the book. It seems self evident that such a selection should exist in any photographer’s biography—and it seldom is the case.

If Whelan’s book leaves few historical stones unturned, Szarkowski’s essay crystallizes fifty years of thought on both the work and the man, and as such, the two books complement each other in interesting ways. Szarkowski, as always, is a pleasure to read. He is clear, forceful and slyly good natured. There is a wink behind the meticulous scholarship and crackling prose—a reference to some two-headed dog or other idiosyncrasy that reminds one that Szarkowski was and is a photographer as well as a curator. His roving eye and intelligence are always at play as well as at work, much like, it might be said, the photographs he has discovered from Lake George.

in many of them the stern, authoritarian, moralizing Stieglitz gives way to a playful, if inordinately talented, family photographer. Pictures of people, architecture and undramatic events are caught on the fly—or re-photographed in differing light or seasonal conditions, much as Atget did. The Atget parallels also exist in the time capsule quality of this work. In the same way that only a small portion of Atget’s work was known until years after his death, we can hope that the work from Lake George is only the first of a number of exhibitions. From what we learn in Whelan’s biography, there still is much to see.

But these photographs are what we have now, and they are more than sufficient. Lake George represented a touchstone for Stieglitz, a place he returned to each summer from boyhood on. As Szarkowski says, “In his life at Lake George, Stieglitz was comforted by family and servants and dependable friends, and was insulated from the emotional risks that attended the competitiveness of life in the city. We might even guess that at Lake George not every word or even every exposure need be a statement *ex cathedra*, and Stieglitz could unbend a little, take chances, experiment with the idea of what an art of photography might be.”

And this happens, as Szarkowski points out, with Lake George itself becoming one of Stieglitz’s teachers. The photographs bear this out: marvelous, homey, unpretentious subject matter—stuff available directly from life. And it is work that is often technically difficult: shots taken from full sun into barn interiors say, or the clouds photographs.

And it is finally comforting, in an almost familial way to encounter these “art filled” sky images cheek by jowl with the truly erotic unplanned photographs of Ellen Koeniger climbing out of the frigid waters of Lake George, glowing with life and vitality. The visual music one might make of this *variety* (which occurs throughout the book), finally seems to me far more authentic and of the twentieth century than Stieglitz’s romantic attempt to discover Bach in the sky, as he of course professed to do.

In the book we encounter a mix of heart, head and visceral response that in its openness has the cumulative effect of humanizing a photographer who for too long has been kept alive in the narrowest and greyest corridors of art. The photographs extend the available warmth of the everyday, with even the campy pictures of O’Keeffe and friends yucking it up, becoming, in overall context, quite important: funny shots of shoes and garters, fun and games, high and low, head in the clouds, feet on the ground—serious fun. Stieglitz obviously enjoyed making these photographs—it shows.

It occurs to me that these two ambitious books may represent the beginning of a revision, in the truest sense of the word, of our thought on Stieglitz. If so, I think it’s appropriate. Even at this late date, there is more to be seen from him, and despite the million plus words now written, there is more still to be said. ●

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FOOTNOTES

1. Richard Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz, A Biography*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1995), p. 430.
2. John Szarkowski, *Alfred Stieglitz at Lake George*, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1995), p. 9.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 22.



Alfred Stieglitz, *Lake George*, 1922

painting that I don’t think is nearly as applicable to Stieglitz. There is an erotic charge to many of his photographs of course, but to limit them in the way that Whelan often does, I think constricts their true powers. See, for example, his thought on a few hanging apples and the peak of a house, *Apples and Gable*—a lyrical image, rife with possible interpretation if such is needed, and be bowled over by his certainty that an apple phallus is about to penetrate a vaginal window. Alternately, in the portraits, the readings often seem overlaid, the image used too much as evidence to buttress thought on the subject’s relationship to Stieglitz or situation in life. These are, after all, only split seconds of peoples’ lives, and much more is made out of expression, body language, background incidentals than seems warranted.

As he points out, “Stieglitz is famous, but his work is little known. No other major figure of photography’s modern era is known by so short a list of pictures... Stieglitz, whose life as a photographer spanned more than fifty years, has too often been anthologized from a standard list of half a dozen pictures, none of which was made during the last half of his working life.”

This situation came about as a result of protective controls that O’Keeffe instituted over Stieglitz’s estate, the unfortunate effect of which has been to greatly limit the audience the work has had.

In the publication of this book and accompanying exhibition, Szarkowski and MOMA begin to rectify the situation. Half of the sixty-four photographs have never before been published—and



Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O’Keeffe*, 1933, Collection: The Museum of Modern Art, NY, The Alfred Stieglitz Collection, gift of Georgia O’Keeffe

SCHAMA'S REPRESENTATIONS

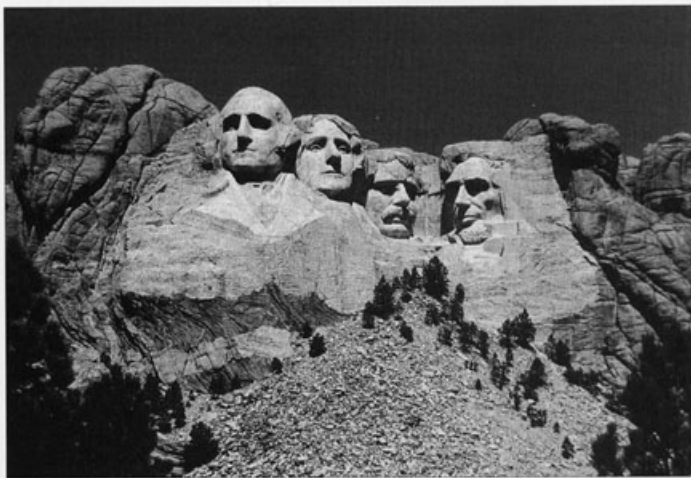
Landscape and Memory
by Simon Schama,
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995,
652 pages

TERRENCE DOODY

Simon Schama's sketch of Aby Warburg is as representative of *Landscape and Memory* as any single story can be of a book so long and copious. Warburg was an art historian and iconographer who played Dionysius to Sir James Frazier's Apollo. Frazier believed that the stories he gathered in *The Golden Bough* (1890) proved that the European Enlightenment had triumphed over the superstition and irrationality in early religious systems. Warburg, who was also a student of anthropology and social psychology, realized that the "primitive" wasn't primitive at all and persisted into modernity, he said, in nature myths that constituted a "social memory." When Germany collapsed in defeat at the end of World War I, Warburg himself collapsed into a depression that hospitalized him for five years. The irrational that he recognized as symbolically present had grown violently active, and he feared the destruction of civilization's ability to contain the Apollonian and Dionysian both. The sign that he had regained his mental health, in 1923, was a lecture he gave to the staff and other patients of the hospital on the Hopi serpent rituals he had studied years before in New Mexico. "The lecture," Schama writes, "must have been an astonishing moment: an affirmation to a clinic which presupposed the incommensurability of reason and unreason that they were, in fact, culturally inseparable."

Landscape and Memory is a deceptively simple, perhaps even misleading title for this vast collection of stories which, like Warburg's, have only a loose thematic relation to landscape and the kind of Wordsworthian memory landscape usually suggests. Warburg's story is moving, and Warburg is important to Schama himself, but he is obviously not a landscape. "Landscapes," Schama writes, "are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock. But... once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery." Schama divides his book into four sections, *Wood*, *Water*, *Rock*, and a finale that deals with pastoral utopias, which he calls *Wood*, *Water*, *Rock*. But he could have divided it into sections entitled *Writers*, *Painters*, *Sculptors*, and *Characters* because *Landscape and Memory* is a study of the representation of the natural world more than it is a history of specific places. Writers like Warburg, therefore, and sculptors like Bernini are important not only because they have articulated the myths and metaphors for their time and place, but also because they represent in themselves themes and ideas Schama wants to treat.

One of the most interesting of these artist-characters Schama discusses is Henry Hastings, a keeper of the New Forest. Hastings dressed only in green



Mount Rushmore National Monument, National Park Service (original in color)

broadcloth and entertained visitors in a chamber hollowed out of a large oak tree. In the great hall of his residence, Woodlands, he kept hunting dogs and live birds, cats, falconry paraphernalia, and venison aging for future dinners. The odor of the place was overpowering, of course, but to Parson William Gilpin, who wrote *Remarks on Forest Scenery* and formulated the principles of "the picturesque," Hastings was the very embodiment of the English greenwood, a kind of Arcadian prince. In actuality, Schama writes, he was as bloody, rebarbative, and incorrigible as Fielding's Squire Western; but the point is, the English social imagination needed a kind of aestheticized Robin Hood to represent its dream of the pastoral past, so it elevated Hastings's conception of himself toward the mythic.

Hastings did not shape his environment so much as he took it upon himself and became its metaphor. Claude Francois Denecourt, on the other hand, was an Arcadian figure who did shape the environment he inhabited and then opened it to the public. Denecourt developed the forest of Fontainebleau, which had been the scene of royal hunts under the Valois and Bourbon monarchies before it became, under the gaze of the Barbizon painters, the oxymoron of a bohemian Arcadia and then a great playground of participatory Romanticism. "How had he done this? Why, by an extraordinary invention, all his own: the woodland trail. For Claude François *le Sylvain*... had a claim to immortality. He was *The Man Who Invented Hiking*." He was also the man who invented the theme park.

Gutzon Borglum was the man who carved Mount Rushmore. His Mormon father had married two sisters; Borglum himself studied in Paris with Rodin; he deeply admired D. W. Griffiths, the Wright Brothers, and the similar "masculine magnitude" of Theodore Roosevelt. By the time he was carving Roosevelt's face into the mountain, he was also a member of the Ku Klux Klan. "A native fascist," Schama calls him. It is Borglum's own interpretation of the American Presidency that joins Roosevelt to Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln; another sculptor may have voted simply for the triumvirate. In fact, the way in which Schama presents

Borglum's story is by embedding it in the story of Rose Arnold Powell, who was not a sculptor, but who campaigned all her life for the inclusion of Susan B. Anthony on Rushmore's face. By securing women's suffrage, Anthony has had a far greater impact on American politics than Teddy Roosevelt has had. And her exclusion from the mountain, as well as the eccentricity of Borglum's vision, raises this question:



Tadeusz Rolke, *Puszcza Bialowieza* (original in color)

what difference to our "social memory" would her presence have made? What difference does Mount Rushmore itself make? Is it more implicated in our political mythology than the Hudson River Valley and the school of painters who developed its imagery into the American sublime? Have more people seen Mount Rushmore than have seen the paintings of Thomas Cole? Or of George Caleb Bingham, who gave the sublime its prairie lassitude?

In 1864, Lincoln signed a bill creating "the world's first wilderness park" in California's Yosemite Valley. It gave the state the right to hold the giant trees "inalienable for all time." The Big Trees, Schama writes, "were sacred: America's own natural temple." They were "some sort of living monument, or botanical pantheon," which many Americans who had never been to California saw in the heroic photographs of Carleton Watkins. The trees were a symbol of both American spirituality and the manifest destiny that constituted heroic nationalism; they represented, in other words, in 1864, all that the Civil War did not. And

unlike the Eastern forests, they were never thought to harbor Satan or, later, the native enemy of colonial expansion. This forest was pure, and its trees were huge—one was ninety-five feet in circumference—and all that they meant fits exactly Schama's formula that they were cultural symbols before they were simply natural phenomena because their purity and transcendence had been constructed out of a desire that was not only Arcadian, but highly conflicted. The sacralization of these trees, moreover, seems much more socially representative, much less personally eccentric, than the faces on Mount Rushmore.

Schama, however, is not always interested in differences like this in the stories he tells, differences which are not only determined by obvious differences in time and place, but also by the style, or means, or politics of the representation. More people have seen photographs of Mount Rushmore than have seen the sculpture itself, and this difference in scale is important. Bernini's *Fountain of the Four Rivers* is mythic sculpture too, but its four figures are now more meaningful to us as Baroque representation than they are as allegories of the four great bodies of

water. Fewer stories, perhaps, in more self-reflecting detail, might also have made Schama's argument easier to hold in mind. This is not a theme-driven book—narrow, insistent, repetitive—and one of its pleasures comes from the pleasure Schama himself takes in his own prose, in its energy and embrace. This allows him to make rapid connections and to dazzle us sometimes with their results, as he does in the story of how William Rush's sculptural *Allegory of the Schuylkill River* is transformed into Eakin's painting of *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* and their relation to Courbet's *The Painter's Studio* and his images of erotic grottoes. But this rush also means there are few places in the book where we any single part of it matches our sense of its whole scope.

One of these places, however, is in the book's first two chapters, in which Schama tells the story of the great, ancient forest of Lithuania. The royal bison of Bialowieza and the meaning of the forest itself are political stories of great complexity, but they can be epitomized in two quotations. The first

comes at the conclusion of Schama's account of the friendship between James Fenimore Cooper and the romantic-nationalist Pole, the poet Adam Mickiewicz, who across considerable distance recognized each other in their love of Sir Walter Scott "as kindred spirits."

"Both the *Leather-Stocking Tales* and *Pan Tadeusz* celebrate worlds their authors knew to be already extinct. But they also both hoped that the spirit embodied in their works of communion with the landscape, an enduring code of brotherhood, of wrongs redressed through selfless action, might somehow be transmitted to the national future. Even if the wild woods were reduced to dreary rows of obedient saplings,



Félix Nadar, Adam Mickiewicz, Musée Mickiewicz, Paris

grown only to be industrially harvested for the wants of the city, even if the great forest were to be cleared altogether, the memory of sylvan virtue could be preserved in their literature as the hidden heart of national identity." However, this is not what happened, exactly, to the Polish forest. For Nazi Germany attempted to redefine it in a way that Mickiewicz could not have anticipated.



Carleton Watkins, *The Grizzly Giant*, albumen print, 1861

"Two ideas of the primeval forest were at war in occupied Bialowicza. The goal of the German terror, once Jews had been eliminated from the scenery, was to use violence (mauling by retrained hunting hounds became a routine punishment) to dissuade the local population from taking to the woods as partisans or aiding and abetting those who might already be there. The woods became instead *their* colony of death, a place of mass executions.

Once its humans had been made docile, the forest could be prepared by dependable German foresters for its proper role as the Greater Reich's most splendid hunting ground. With its Polish-Lithuanian identity completely wiped out, it could be presented as a great, living laboratory of purely Teutonic species: eagles, elk, and wolves. And since a painting of a bison hung on Göring's wall at the Carinhalle, the most famous of the forest animals could, at last, be definitively reclassified as zoologically Aryan."

Schama himself never suggests that the "social memory" Warburg describes is a passive, enduring presence in the undermind of the folk. He illustrates in this passage, and in the Mount Rushmore story, that "social memory" is often a history of appropriation and violence. It is nonetheless possible to read *Landscape and Memory* and think, for long stretches, that it is proposing art history as all of history, that reinterpretations of the landscape amount to little more than a reordering of aesthetic conventions. Schama claims he is making an ecological argument in this book, against extremists like Thoreau who believe "history... [is] irreconcilable with nature." But by constantly proposing that the frontiers between "the wild and the cultivated," like those between past and present, are difficult to define and fix, he does not make this ecological case very clearly, just as he does not explore very aggressively the differences between different kinds of representation.

These decisions make the book more convivial than polemic, but it means in the end that *Landscape and Memory* flirts with the dangers Derek Walcott defines for himself in *Omeros*, when he says "Art is History's nostalgia."

Nostalgia is the motif of the final section on arcadias, which is the other section of the book that feels like its scope and our comprehension fit. This is also the most literary section of the book because Arcady is a state of mind rather than a historical place. It's not a literary theme I'm usually drawn to, but in being drawn to it here, I realized I also like this section because it is so *familiarly conventional*. I'm a real sucker for all of Schama's stories of sacred groves, Northern tree worship, and vegetable spirituality. In the great outdoors of my real life, I prefer the mountains to the woods any day and the seashore to either of them, but I am more used to reading pastorals and green-worlds. It's proof of his point that representational metaphors can become more real than their referents.

But only in the library, I think, which is the best place to read this book, in a straight hard chair, in a room chilly enough to keep you alert because *Landscape and Memory* isn't a picnic. ●

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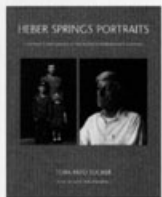
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compiled by Juan Garcia and Terry Truxillo

A Mussy Garment

Pleasures Taken: Performances of Sexuality and Loss in Victorian Photographs by Carol Mavor.
Duke University Press, Durham, 1995

REBECCA F. STERN

Pleasure, performance, sexuality, loss: the title of this first book by art historian Carol Mavor staggers a bit under the weight of theoretical connotation. Over the past two decades, each of these terms has amassed critical significance far beyond the ken of Webster's. Pleasure, for example, refers us to Roland Barthes, whose work on the erotics of reading is largely responsible for the birth of reader-response theory; to Jacques Lacan, the deconstructionist psychoanalyst whose notion of *jouissance* became critical fodder for a decade of French feminist thought; to Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and other French feminist critics who critique the phallogocentrism of patriarchal language and culture by calling upon, amongst other conceptions, a uniquely feminine category of pleasure. The other terms in Mavor's title are similarly freighted.

As this ought to suggest, *Pleasures Taken* is not a coffee table book; rather, it is an academic endeavor and an ambitious one at that. In her introduction, Mavor describes the claims that shape the pages to follow: she will insist that children have a sexuality that is as complex as anyone's" (the book as a whole, in fact, invokes various "taboo" sexualities including lesbian and onanistic desire) and challenge "the more obvious static nature of the photograph by reading it as also performative." ("What is no longer there," Mavor writes, "performs upon us and we perform upon it."). The "loss" of the book's title finds its definition in the death that photography both guarantees and subverts: the frozen moment of a photographic image may be present in emulsion, but it is certainly absent, gone with the passage of time. This flickering between presence and absence provides the photograph's non-static, "performative" aspect and enables it to enter into a dynamic relationship with the viewer. The "pleasures" here prove, then, to be double: Mavor explores the erotics of relationships between photographers and photographed subjects, as well as relationships between viewers and prints.

In reading *Pleasures Taken*, one often wishes that Mavor had focused on the former relationships exclusively. While a study of the latter might have been both important and insightful, in Mavor's hands reader-response theory becomes an occasion for self-indulgent reflections that seem to eschew astute observation, providing the reader with little more than voyeuristic discomfort. What in Barthes is both lyrical and critically useful is in Mavor masturbatory and critically inert. On Julia Margaret Cameron's photograph, *Holy Family*, for example, Mavor remarks, "I long to caress this picture, to run my finger in the printed crevice that marks Hillier as Cameron's own holy angel." Of a missing photograph of Hannah Cullwick replaced by a note, Mavor offers, "I am

drawn to this missing picture; it represents Hannah's invisible flesh. I want to touch it. I caress the place of her absence with gloved fingers." Of a particularly essentialist moment in Irigaray, Mavor writes, "This stuff makes me blush..." A plethora of comments such as these makes this so promising treatise ultimately frustrating.

The overall project, however, makes an important gesture towards advancing ideas about Victorian photography. There are few books that approach Victorian photographs from a theoretical perspective and, of those that exist, fewer still focus on works so disturbingly titillating as Lewis Carroll's photographs of young girls, so noncanonical as Cameron's dreamy photographs of Madonnas, so provocatively opaque as the portraits of maid-of-all-work, Cullwick, taken for her lover and "master," Arthur Munby. Mavor assembles a host of beautiful photographic images (thirty-nine in all), some of them rarely seen outside of their respective research-library housings, and places them alongside interesting historical material, critical theory, biographical information about the photographers and their subjects, as well as her aforementioned, less fortunate personal impressions. The photographs alone make *Pleasures Taken* a book worth looking at. From Lewis Carroll's photographic *oeuvre*, Mavor's selections include a petulant, wild-tressed Irene MacDonald in her nightdress, *It Won't Come Smooth*, Alice Liddell, the "real" Alice, knees splayed, gaze coquettish, alongside her sisters, Edith and Lorina, and a striking nude "paintograph" of Evelyn Hatch at six years old. Most of the Cameron photographs come from the *Overstone album*, a collection of the photographer's earliest works which, due to both Victorian and more recent critical denigrations of Cameron's "sloppy" technique in this period, are rarely anthologized. Cameron is far better known for her portraits of dead white men than for these fantastical images of mothers and children, both blessed and earthly. The portraits of Hannah Cullwick as a chimney sweep, as Magdalene, as a man, as a lady, are remarkable for the power of Cullwick's masquerading body.

With respect to commentary, the chapter on Carroll convincingly establishes an erotic life for the young Evelyn Hatch, Irene MacDonald, Alice Liddell and others of Carroll's subjects. The chapter on Cameron gives us a glimpse into the erotics of touch in Cameron's work, from kisses bestowed in photographic frames, to the photographer's unusual relationship with her model, Mary Hillier, to the smudged fingerprints on the photographic plates themselves; the latter, usually read as evidence of Cameron's sloppiness, are treated here as evidence of the sensuous disposition of Cameron's artistry. The chapter on Cullwick focuses on the erotics of dirt both in the photographs of Cullwick and in her diaries. Through this, Mavor attempts to restore the category of sexual pleasure to a woman whom most critics read as a victim.

Mavor's work on sexuality provides a wealth of information for the academic and secular reader alike, but various problems stymie her work throughout. For example, in the first chapter, Mavor juxtaposes the "paintograph"



Lewis Carroll, *It Won't Come Smooth*, 1863

of the nude Evelyn Hatch with a traditionalist account of the female nude, an interrogation of the Orientalist implications of the odalisque, and accounts of the Offenses Against the Person Act of 1861 (which deemed sex with a girl under twelve a felony) and the subsequent Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1865 (which raised the age of consent for girls from thirteen to sixteen). By arguing that the photograph of Evelyn Hatch is framed by an aesthetic history which Carroll referenced and a legal history which informed the status of both photographer and subject, Mavor subverts both the Victorians' and, she argues, our own ideological investments in imagining childhood a time of innocence. The critical argument is salient and the history provocative. However, in returning to the photograph after this protracted argument, Mavor offers only the following: "Her pose suggests that she has 'fallen' away from the Victorian Guardianship of middle-class girlhood. There were laws against such traveling. Possibly it is not the viewers who are embarrassed, but Evelyn herself. Her darkly painted face may be the result of covering up a blush." Given the wealth of material that Mavor assembles to inform her reading, one might hope for more than speculation, particularly when that speculation seems irritatingly tongue-in-cheek. Mavor's historical and aesthetic contexts are occasionally valuable, but her applications of these contexts are consistently weak.

The chapter on Hannah Cullwick provides another peculiarity in that Mavor leaves almost completely untouched the dynamics of sadomasochism that characterized Cullwick's relationship with Munby. Mavor focuses instead on examples of Cullwick's autoeroticism, making some interesting observations about the latter, but foregoing nearly entirely the erotics surrounding the slave strap Cullwick wore on her wrist and the heavy chain around her neck to which only Munby had the key. Both objects are visible in the photographs and both are mentioned, but Mavor eschews any extended discussion of masochism which, in a work on sexuality, seems very odd indeed.

Mavor's investment in establishing an autoerotic life for Cullwick may be a reflection of her investment in establishing an erotic space for herself within this text. I mention, above, the wealth of scholarly information within *Pleasures Taken*. The reader should

beware of the liberties 'dare one say pleasures?' Mavor takes in presenting her historical and theoretical material. In her conclusion, she writes, "I take part-objects from novels, and here I would include history and theory, which is more often than not based on the same narrative structure as the novel, in order to sew a text of my own.... I pursue small things, dislodged from the whole, like buttons popped." Her predilection for such "part-objects," often presented without any sign that they are "dislodged from the whole," makes for often-spurious representations of history and theory. For example, when Mavor argues that "Cameron's work feels particularly subversive when one considers how Victorian women 'lacked' their own narratives of difference, biological or otherwise," she offers examples derived from Harvard anatomical studies, British skeletal studies, doggerel verse, and dubious information about hysteria ("despite the confirmation that hysteria was not connected to the uterus, smelling salts were still used to chase [a woman's] wandering womb, her hysterical sexuality, back into place"). Harvard is in America, not Britain, doggerel verse was specific to members of those classes far below Cameron's echelon, and Mavor's easy parallel between the "wandering womb" and "hysterical sexuality" deliberately ignores the "confirmation" set out in the first part of her sentence. Only the skeletal studies are really relevant to Cameron. Mavor also "forgets" such powerful women as Caroline Norton, Harriet Taylor, Sarah Stickney Ellis and Dinah Mulock Craik, Victorian women who had varying attitudes towards feminism, but who were certainly instrumental in producing "narratives of difference, biological [and] otherwise." Furthermore, the critically-loaded term, subversion, receives neither theoretical contextualization nor qualification (a dynamic that recurs in Mavor's discussions of Levinas' work on the caress, of the Lacanian subject, and of performance in general; Mavor's use of the latter term suggests that she knows startlingly little about the performance theory she references). Cameron was a wealthy woman living on a private estate who did not begin her photographic career until her six children were grown; she was certainly a fascinating character, but she did little if anything to subvert popular ideas about femininity. The prevalence of such half-truths and mutations in this book suggests that Mavor is more interested in saying what she wants to say than in presenting a responsible account of Victorian culture. The text that Mavor "sews" of her "part-objects" does read one of a garment with "buttons popped," though probably not in the style she had intended. Perhaps Mavor would have done well to remember that an academic "garment" with "buttons popped" can sport unsettling gaps and is more likely to be sloppy than seductive. ●

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Before The Land

Continued from page 5

ing than alerting. It is as if Brown anticipates the viewer's association of his images with those of other photographers to play him/her like a yo-yo, only to bring him/her back to the neutral ground of his own work.

The architectural and the contextual portraits in "Great Plains" complete the eco-system of the landscape posing more questions than making definitive statements. There is tender irony in his handling of its denizens; as in *Sign Painter, Sabinal, Texas, 1982* and *Antler Garden, Green River, Utah, 1987*. Brown's peculiar brand of subjectively-provoked objectivity also permeates the architectural work. The green curtains of *Main Street, Sawyer, Kansas, 1992* are by no means a demeaning comment about kitschy decor, but a kind of reflection about the kind of "down-to-earth" mentality that settled the plains. For Brown the Great Plains are a habitat of incongruities; a place where we can sublimely forge the infinite in our imagination as well as intimately confront the ordinary world of its inhabitants. Seeking a balance between criticism and admiration, Brown writes about this project: "These things and events describe a landscape, and, in turn, a culture that seems metaphorically American to me: an energetic mix of openness, high spirits, tenacity, and care—coupled with more than occasional blindness, a chronic need for money, and a limited respect for the natural world."

The work of Enrique Carbo and Alfredo De Stéfano in "La Toma del Paisaje (The Taking of the Landscape)" exhibit, acknowledges the legacy of Ansel Adams somewhat irreverently. "Taking" in the title oscillates ambiguously between "the act of photographing," "appropriating" and "handling." Carbo, who—as a professor of the University of Barcelona—lectures on the history of landscape photography, shows works from two series expressive of two kinds of relationship with the landscape. In the series "A Forest to Last a Lifetime" (Un bosque para toda la vida), Carbo presents in large, 40-x-40" prints, forest vignettes reminiscent of Adam's *X* except that they are not of particularly beautiful or spectacular loci. Irreverently and meticulously, Carbo paints upon the image gilded code bars and numbers that give the geographic coordinates of each locus. The viewer, by the way, unless he/she is a psychic, has no way of knowing what the symbols mean unless the photographer or an extremely observant cartographer tells him/her. Thus, Carbo lays over a Romantic perception of the forest, its perceived commercial identity as inexhaustible resource. Carbo never reprints, all the images are unique for every forest locus with different coordinates. In this work the layer of straight landscape photography has been anteceded by the layer of manipulated image, yet both manage to coexist. Once again, we find the non-committal intelligence in this work that we found in Brown's.

A different kind of relationship with the landscape is expressed by the other series of Carbo "fictional Primitive Statues." If in the other series he alluded to the reductionist numerical identity a locus in the planet has for the exploitative mind, in the latter series Carbo confronts the inquisitive mind's



Alfredo De Stéfano, *Tiempo (Time)*, 1977

search for meaning in nature. Wind-eroded monoliths the world over have fascinated dreamers and even experts. Some rocks appear so sculptural that not few trained archaeologists have engaged in speculative theorizing about the hands that sculpted them. Once again boasting the unique print for dozens of such rocks, Carbo finds, produces, and reproduces these sculptures, placing his own marks, not on the image itself but on its supports. Thus he separates the marks with intentionality from those marks of causal significance. However, the marks (x's, handprints and circles) he himself makes on the support margins, occasionally bear some resemblance to marks found on rocks—thus leaving room for doubt as to the symbolic potential of natural objects. Carbo does present these cyclopean menhirs with a certain degree of reverence—as if suggesting that even if they are not intentional, they may still be symbolic. Some take that to be the paradox of the straight photographic image.

In spite of his Italian surname, Alfredo De Stéfano is a Mexican photographer from Coahuila, the Mexican state to which Texas once belonged. His current work on exhibit is from the series "Vestiges of Paradise." The intervention marks of De Stéfano on his huge color prints made from black-and-white negatives are less conspicuous than those in Carbo's work. Although his images are all of the northern deserts of Mexico, his titles do not make more specific the exact place, but rather establish the photographer's response to the landscape. *Viento (Wind)*, for example, conveys by small vectorial arrows the sound and direction of the wind not visible in the image. In a landscape of sky, clouds, faraway mountains, and sand dunes titled *Time* (which in Spanish means both "weather" and

"time"), arrows in the image indicate the reflection of the photographer upon the forces that move sand to shape it into familiar rhythms. The photographer portrays the desert as one who intimately coexists with it and not as mere traveler.

The images of "Vestiges of Paradise" are sublime in that late Eighteenth century sense that came to play such an important role in describing the West and in displacing beauty from twentieth century art. De Stéfano's landscapes are awe-inspiring and even ominous in a way beautiful things are not (Unless, forgetting that beauty is canonical, as is customarily the case, one applies the term licentiously). Moreover, De Stéfano's scribbled marks are at times scratched out of the negative itself—as in *Las rodadoras (Tumblers)*. In this ironic image of ephemeral passing carved out of a permanently-damaged negative, rootless migratory plants glide through the desert surface. Certainly, such a sacrilegious scarring of the negative would have upset more than one f64 photographer's aesthetic and even moral sense. For the latter, the impeccable radiance of the print goes hand-in-hand with the desire for pristine nature and is evidence of the intrinsic beauty of the natural world. Whereas in De Stéfano's work, beauty is a distraction and aims, rather, at what is extrinsic to nature; namely, the concepts with which we respond to it. Damage to things is, after all, less morally repulsive than damage to desert dwellers. Occasionally, the concepts are blatantly thrown at us not only in the titles but by writing them in the image itself as is the case with *Arena (Sand)*; written, in fact, where some weeds are depicted.

Morally, if you will, Rick Dingus' markings on his panoramic color prints in "Long Views" are much more conservative, because he does preserve the

integrity of its negative substrate. What Dingus' panoramic camera "sweeps" is also more dispersed geographically than in Brown's "Great Plains"; although one gets the impression that both photographers could have met at some backroad in the Panhandle. Although often Dingus' titles have the familiar ring of the photograph in the documentary mode, clearly it is not his intention to submit images as records. In fact, the thrust of his manipulative artistic enhancement of the image deflates its evidentiary role so that we are forced to reflect more on the mind producing the image than on its referent; or, on the interaction of both. Dingus explains it thus "In my layering of marks on photographs, and in the references provided by the places that I photograph, I'm interested in both participating in and observing the phenomenon of change by setting up a dialogue between inner experiences and outer ones."

Dingus' so called "color photodrawings" look painterly and "artistic" in the way some pictorialists meant. The pastel-like strokes on his works often resemble those of that Nineteenth century painter of battles, so revered by Dali, Jean Louis-Ernest Meissonier, in their ability to animate the grasses of battlegrounds and to organize the image by adding chaos. By adding an alien medium to the surface of the color print of *Scattered Ashes, White Rock, NM*, Dingus adds movement and mood, conceals, reveals, and camouflages. His darkened skies in both views of *Field House near Snyder, Texas* have the effect of making the house glow in the midst of an artificial darkness; giving the modest building a heroic presence in the landscape. The artist interprets his own photographic image by the way he chooses to intervene in it. In *Wind Blown Fence, Lubbock, Texas*, the fence that stops the paper debris is a metaphor for the photographic print with one side towards the referent (the invisible wind) and the other towards its producer and/or interpreter. It is as if nature blew objects towards the photographer and he stopped them with the grid of his artistic hand. The photographic image becomes a canvas on which the artist expresses his responses to the natural and cultural forces that caused an object or a landscape. *Tin Roof and Cattle, Spur, Texas* shows a land whose horizon bears the curvature of a globe. The conjunction is eloquent, the world looks small.

At the end of the Twentieth century, conceivably, we have grown more intelligent but also less capable than a hundred years ago. More intelligence may not be always worth rejoicing about, whereas being less capable of anything sometimes may. Perhaps a hundred years from now people will not be able to even guess our intentions and the distinction between kinds of photography will be determined only stylistically or by association with other objects found in the same stratum deep under the land. ●

Fernando Castro is a photographer and writer living in Houston.

EXHIBITIONS

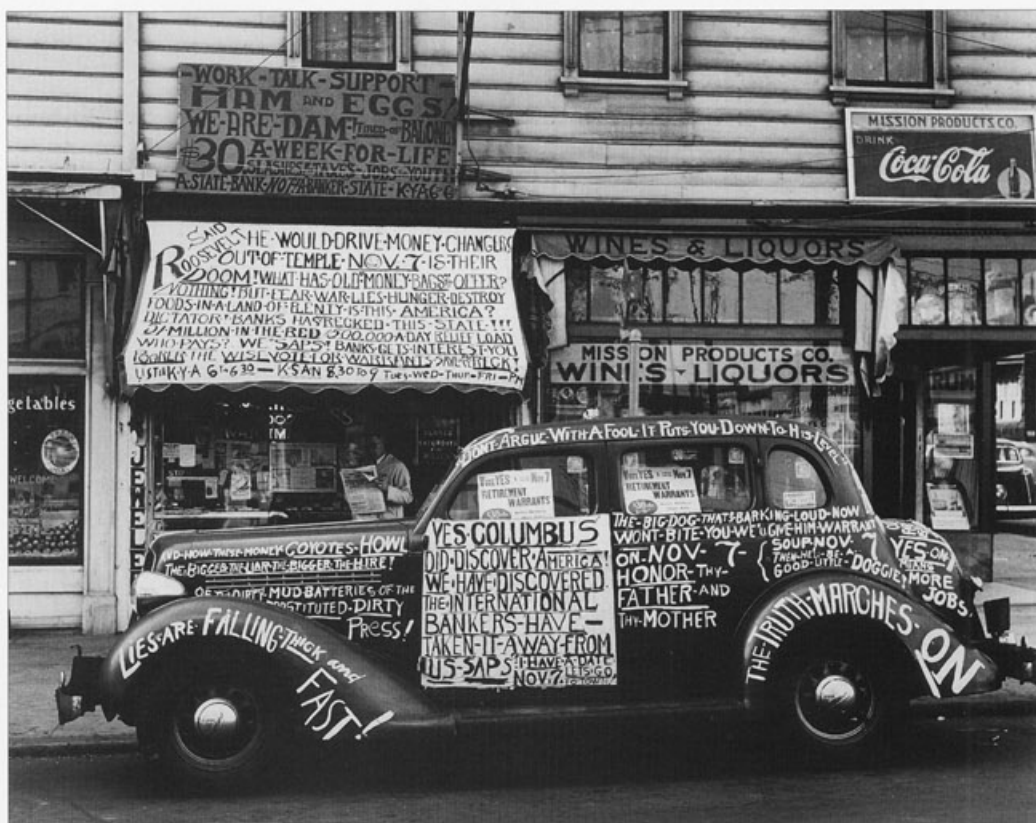
Points of Entry

Continued from page 11

framed the portrait of Washington between the American and Nazi flag, during a meeting of the German-American Bund, in 1938. The father of the American nation is once again the silent witness whose portrait is hanging on the wall of a classroom of Turkish-American high school kids photographed by Alexander Alland in 1942. The blackboard shows Turkish sentences, while the kids raise their hands and strain their attention towards their instructor. We don't see the instructor, but the portrait of Washington functions like a visual trait-d'union between the Turkish and the American language. This image raises further questions related to the complexity involved in the cultural translation. Which role does language play in the mutual understanding of cultures? Obviously an essential one.

A new language is like a new body, a new physiognomy, and a new facial expression: the immigrant experiences this dichotomy, "bearing within [himself/herself] like a secret vault, or like an handicapped child—cherished and useless—that language of the past that withers without ever leaving [him/her]."¹⁰ Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytical reading of the stranger's experience can help in deciphering the work of Gutmann, Palfi, and Alland: they all seem to find a cultural orientation in the language of the American vernacular. Their pictures remind one of Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, and most FSA photographers from the 1930s: one can trace a similar sharpness in their vision, and the indication of a difficult social condition. Yet, the immigrant adopts the verbal language with a deep awareness of his/her own interpretation. Oftentimes the written text grounds a context which the foreigner cannot interpret otherwise: the photograph becomes the ultimate sign of this process of semiosis. Marion Palfi in particular anchors her vision to both verbal and visual signs, as she tries to point to social contradictions. As one of her books' titles indicates, *Signs of Discriminations* [1946-49] are written on the back of a car, in public buses, and in the streets of Washington, DC. One finds similar "signs of discrimination" in Palfi's visits of the streets of Washington. In one image from *Suffer Little Children* [1946-49], she photographed black kids in the foreground, and the State Capitol in the distance: the kids stopped playing, and looked suspiciously towards the camera, indicating, through their gaze, a contextual ambiguity.

Ambiguity, displacement, and search for one's own identity are the leitmotifs of "Tracing Cultures." The twelve artists grouped in the show create a kaleidoscopic and attractive montage: the resulting effect does not necessarily trace anybody's culture, but rather a subjective state of mind. This show is about the traumatic experience of cultural dislocation. The fragments of one's culture are collected by a way of nostalgia or humor: Albert Chong, from Chinese and African descent, creates autobiographical reliquaries of an irretrievable cultural past, framing family snapshots and ancestral imagery inside large copper mats, onto which he writes short stories about his father and mother. Another artist, I.T.O. (Shigeki Ito), uses food as a sign to

John Gutman, *Yes, Columbus Did Discover America!*, San Francisco, 1938

retrieve his cultural memory. In his mixed-media installation from the series "Interculturism," 1990-95 a series of fake sushi avenges themselves against the American infrastructure by rotating in front of appropriated nineteenth century portraits of American generals.

The cultural signs cover a larger span in this exhibition: almost in a Proustian vein, taste becomes part of someone's memory trace. Sound too. The sound is not physically incorporated into the room, but it becomes tangible in the work of Carrie Mae Weems. In her series "Africa," 1993 I can hear the violent drumming of millions of Africans shipped from Goree Island to the United States. *Congo Ibo Mandingo Togo* creates a rhythmic sound, while architectural details photographed in the same island become symbolic fragments of African bodies. Once again, cultural signs are stretched into larger visual metaphors.

Sound and silence are evoked inside this exhibition. In a piece by Kim Yasuda, two drawers are decontextualized from her original installation "Hereditary Memories," 1991. When one opens the drawers one reads two words: "innate and appropriate". In this minimal (or post-minimal) installation Yasuda reflects on that "fluid" state of a cultural identity which is "(n)either/(n)or." Her piece is highly autobiographical, and deals with the absence of her own family, and her sense of adoption. The piece becomes recontextualized in the exhibition's larger theme of cultural retrieval. Yasuda's existential condition of living in-between two families—one absent but innate, the other one present but appropriated—is shared by all photographers in the show: Rubén Ortiz Torres, a Mexican living in Los Angeles, María Martínez-Canas, a Cuban living in Florida, Komar & Melamid, two Russians living in New York City, Young Kim, a Korean living in San Francisco. These artists, and a few more (the American Lewis De Soto, Gavin

Lee, and the Vietnamese Dinh Q. Le), cherish the richness of their multi-cultural origins. While the goal of the early immigrant to the United States was to be "assimilated," and accepted by the natives, the experience of the contemporary immigrant elicits creative potential for its fluid state in-between two cultures. Yasuda is aware of this potential when she writes that the foreigner "without an allegiance to known origins [has] the privilege of embracing a temporal heritage, one that is in a constant state of redefinition."¹¹

Can we then consider the contemporary state in-between as close to "perfection"? After all, these artists seem to share the entire world, while distancing themselves from their ancestors. Or maybe they have not quite settled in the new world: they are suspended in its distant regions, while they are looking back at their own past, and they are searching for an imaginary space where they can belong. As Kristeva's essay may suggest one more time, these foreigners are "ready to flee," as they are seeking "that invisible and promised territory, that country that does not exist but that [they] bear in [their] dreams, and that must indeed be called a beyond."¹²

Young Kim's narrative installation poetically illustrates what Kristeva calls the stranger's "beyond". Kim built her narrative with the sequence of twelve pieces. Each piece consists of a large plywood frame containing a small family snapshot and Kim's personal writing inscribed on the plywood. The installation is titled *Distances*, 1992. The last picture of this installation shows the *Ocean*. This unpretentious snapshot is cherished like a personal relic, encased into a warm plywood frame. Beneath this picture Kim inscribes: "Leaving my country was not a simple task. I now realize that I never really left nor really arrived."

These words suggest that the history of immigration is like an endless loop: starting from the immigrants' early settlements and their acquired sense of

pride, the story flows into the subjective experience of modern photographers, and it reaches the personal recollection of contemporary artists. At the end of this process, the immigrants look back at their original "points of entry." Thus, the "entries" become the exits to the immigrants' memories, and the "points" become the infinite parts of a continuous line. This line of exile can ultimately hold "the whole world," as indicated by Todorov. The whole story is extremely rich, but we are still far from "perfection" in witnessing it. ●

Maria Antonella Pelizzari is a writer based in Tucson, Arizona.

FOOTNOTES

1. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: the Question of the Other* (1982), New York, Harper & Row, 1984, p.250 (I am borrowing this quotation from Todorov, a Bulgarian living in France, who himself borrowed it from Edward Said, a Palestinian living in the United States, who found it in Erich Auerbach, a German exiled in Turkey).
2. The exhibition's major sponsor is the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. The traveling schedule in 1996-97 is the following: George Eastman House, Rochester, April 1996; National African American Museum, Smithsonian Institution, August 1996; High Museum of Art, Nexus Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, February 1997; Center for the Fine Arts, Miami, September 1997.
3. Arthur Ollman, "A Nation of Strangers", exhibition catalogue, University of New Mexico Press, 1995, p.9.
4. Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Framer Framed*, Routledge Press, 1992, p.51.
5. Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs* (1964), Braziller, 1972, p.4.
6. Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, Columbia University Press, 1991, p.15.
7. Kim Yasuda, Artist's statement in "Tracing Cultures," exhibition catalogue, University of New Mexico Press, 1995, p.74.
8. J. Kristeva, *Strangers*, cit., p.5.

Marie Theresa Hernandez, *Anayelit's First Communion*, 1995

Parting Shots

The photographs of Marie Theresa Hernandez and Fernando Castro were featured in the show at the O'Kane Gallery (University of Houston, Downtown Campus) August 28-October 13, 1995, although to be fair, it was the Spanish-speaking students at Poe Elementary School who were the true focus of "The Fragile Thread: Lives of Spanish-Speaking Children in Houston."

A teacher at Poe, Castro photographed each of his students at the beginning and at the close of the school year. The kids appear individually and assume informal poses in front of a neutral backdrop. If young people are notoriously photogenic, this group is especially—but refreshingly—so. And yet, situated as they are before the camera with the teacher positioned behind it, the resultant photographs also raise questions about power and vulnerability

in the relationships of teacher-student and photographer-sitter. What, in theory and in practice, are the real or imagined limits of friendship and trust in these relationships? Castro seems to hold strong convictions about such matters, but I was disappointed that he did not more thoroughly acknowledge or map the complexities of these (power) relations in his images.

Hernandez was also a faculty member at Poe Elementary when her images and relationships with students developed. Even more than Castro, she unsettles conventional boundaries between teacher and student, and between the personal and the political by photographing her students in their extracurricular and home environments. Capturing her subjects in moments of interaction, Hernandez wields her camera to describe perceived emotional and psychological relationships between her subjects and their family and friends; some of these were overly didactic. As with Castro's works, what I found most interesting about Hernandez's prints were the fissures where the relationship between subject and photographer

were accidentally glimpsed.

Although some might have found the sheer number of images included in "The Fragile Thread" overwhelming, I found it inspiring and affirming. And yet, as rich and extensive as it was, I left this exhibit wondering what the images would have looked like had the

Fernando Castro, *Yazmin*, 1995

photographer-sitter and teacher-student positions been reversed. Those photographs we might hang on the walls next year—or better yet, next semester. ●

Jo Ortel is a writer living in Wisconsin.

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