

SPOT

HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY • SPRING 1998 • \$5



Carlos Diaz, *Invented Landscape* #23-NY, 1997

- David Levinthal • Carlos Diaz • Eduardo Medici •
- Collete Gaiter • Ben Edwards • Carol Crow •
- Fazal Sheikh •

SALUTE TO FOTOFEST

HCP welcomes Photographers and Visitors to Houston for FotoFest '98, the 7th International Festival of Photography February 27-March 31, 1998

John Cleary Gallery

2635 Colquitt Houston, TX 77098
713-524-5070 FAX 713-524-4456
Tues-Sat 10-5:30



PAUL CAPONIGRO Forest, St. Marie-Oudenshore, Flanders, 1989

Paul Caponigro
John Paul Caponigro
Jeffrey Becom

in conjunction with FotoFest '98

February 19-March 21, 1998
Opening reception Feb. 28, 6-8 pm
Jeffrey Becom slide lecture March 1, 4-6 pm

HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

presents for FotoFest

CAMERA EYE VOYEURAGE

An installation by Melanie Walker and George Peters

CARLOS DIAZ:

Invented Landscapes

February 27-March 29, 1998



Houston Center for Photography
1441 West Alabama
Houston, TX 77006
713.529.4755

Get the Picture! Become a Member of HCP Today!

Houston Center for Photography relies on the support of individuals, foundations and corporations to deepen the appreciation of photography through its innovative exhibitions, publications, and community outreach programs. Join HCP today!

Membership Options

- ☐ \$35 Individual ☐ \$100 Donor
☐ \$50 Household ☐ \$20 Senior/Student

Benefits Include:

- Subscriptions to SPOT, HCP's internationally respected magazine, and CENTER, HCP members' newsletter
- Discounts on workshops and educational programs
- Invitations to exhibition receptions, special events, lectures and tours

Consider joining HCP's **Photo Op**, a special membership category with extra-special perks for you and a guest. Members receive all the above-listed benefits, plus:

- Studio tours and dinners with visiting artists
- Guided tours to local and regional photographic exhibitions
- And much, much more!

Yes! I want to join **Photo Op**!

- ☐ \$150 Photo Op

Make a real difference with your contribution and enhance your collection by participating in our **Collectors' Print Program**. You will receive all of the above-listed benefits plus:

- Any one selection from the *Collectors' Print Program*
- ☐ \$300 Friend
- Any two selections from the *Collectors' Print Program*
- ☐ \$500 Sponsor
- ☐ Benefactor (above \$500)
- I would like to make a gift of to be used for

Please indicate your **COLLECTORS' PRINT PROGRAM** selections.

- ☐ Jo Ann Callis ☐ Keith Carter
☐ Birney Imes ☐ An-MY LÉ
☐ Bastienne Schmidt ☐ Heidi Sherman

SEE ILLUSTRATIONS ON BACK COVER

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

HOME _____

WORK _____

FAX _____

E-MAIL _____

WEBSITE _____

☐ LINK TO HCP

- ☐ New membership ☐ Renewal
☐ My company has a matching gift program.
I have enclosed the appropriate forms.

- ☐ This is a gift membership.
Please send a gift card in my name:

Payment

- ☐ My check for \$ _____ is enclosed.
☐ Please charge to ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard
Expiration Date: _____

ACCOUNT # _____

SIGNATURE _____

• HCP WILL ADD 5% TO COVER CREDIT CARD PROCESSING COSTS
• INFORMATION ON DEDUCTIBILITY OF MEMBERSHIPS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Yes! Call Me! I want to volunteer for:

- ☐ Exhibitions ☐ Special Events
☐ Fundraising ☐ Gallery Support

► COMPLETE THE MEMBERSHIP FORM AND MAIL TO:

Houston Center for Photography
1441 West Alabama, Houston, Texas 77006
For more information: 713-529-4755, Fax 713-529-9248
E-mail: hcpphoto@insync.net
Website: <http://www.mediaplace.com/hcp>

More than
Meets the Eye



HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY



SPOT

SPRING 1998
VOLUME XVII
NUMBER 1

STAFF

EDITOR
Carol Smith

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Jean Caslin
Ed Osowski
Dick Doughty
Margaret Culbertson

DESIGN

TEBO Design

COPY PHOTOGRAPHS

LYNN BALDWIN

SCANS

NPL
SHARP IMAGING

SPOT is published twice a year by Houston Center for Photography; subscriptions are \$10 per year in the United States. SPOT is a journal of independent opinions published by HCP as one of its many services to the photographic community. The ideas expressed do not represent positions of HCP's administration or membership and are solely the opinions of the writers themselves.

Copyright © 1998
All rights reserved.
No portion of SPOT may be reproduced without the permission of Houston Center for Photography.

Houston Center for Photography deepens the appreciation and understanding of the photographic arts and supports emerging and mid-career artists and their audiences.

SPOT is sponsored in part by grants from Institute of Museum Services, Texas Commission on the Arts, and The City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County.

For details about membership or advertising contact HCP.

HOUSTON CENTER

FOR

PHOTOGRAPHY

1441 West Alabama
Houston, Texas 77006

TELEPHONE

(713) 529-4755

FAX

(713) 529-9248

hcp@photo@insync.net

http://www.mediaplace.com/hcp

Executive Director

JEAN CASLIN

Operations Manager

ANN SHAW LANCASTER

Development Manager

CAROLYN RICHARDS

Development Associate

HARLA KAPLAN

Program Associate

SARAH IRWIN

Web Coordinator

JUAN GARCIA

Assistant

KEOKI RABOTTTE

FEATURES

4 **Anachronisms of Social Testimony**

Johannes Birringer presents an overview of *documenta X* and the role of photography in this event.

14 **Eduardo Medici**

An in-depth interview by Silvia Mangialardi with Eduardo Medici, an Argentine mixed media artist who incorporates photography in his work.

MEDIA

6 **Diana and the Media: On a Collision Course**

Daniel P. Younger explores the role of the paparazzi and the public's fascination with famous figures

8 **The Media, The Funeral and Diana, Princess of Wales**

A first-hand account of Ben Edwards' work as a photographer on a day when photography itself was under great discussion.

EXHIBITIONS

10 **Carlos Diaz: Inventing Fantasy from Fact**

Anna Hammond reviews Carlos Diaz's intriguing approach to photography.

12 **Illuminating the Inner Life**

Anne H. Roberts describes the unique photographic work of Alain Gerard Clement.

15 **The Perfect Match of Craft to Idea**

Clint Willour and Anne Tucker offer a moving tribute to this beloved Houston photographer.

16 **Mein Kampf**

Charles Wiese writes a personal reaction to David Levinthal's *Mein Kampf* exhibit shown at the Houston Holocaust Museum.

17 **The Illegal Camera**

Doug Lawing critiques this exhibit of photography from the Netherlands during the German Occupation 1940-45.

18 **When Worlds Collide**

Tria Airheart-Martin and Nels P. Highberg collaborate in reviews of Collete Gaiter's *Space/R A C E* at Project Row Houses in Houston.

BOOKS

20 **Waste Land**

Peter Brown reviews David Hansen's photographs and essays on hazardous waste.

21 **A Sense of Common Ground**

Dick Doughty critiques Fazal Sheikh's book and comments on his portraits of the people of Kenya.

23 **Books Received**

Compiled by Terrance Truxillo

On The SPOT

22 **My Evening with the In Crowd**

Delight in reading Susan Kirchman's recounting of a once-in-a-lifetime gala opening of the Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

Cover: Carlos Diaz, *Invented Landscape* #23-NY, 1997

EDITOR'S NOTE

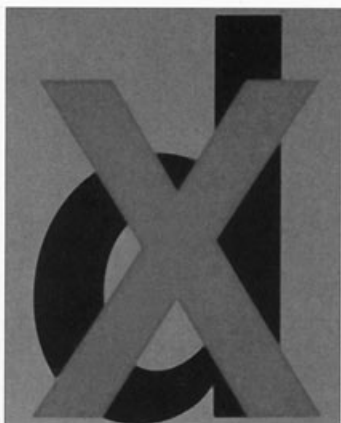
This issue of *SPOT* revolves around many social questions including the media and its multi-faceted revelations: coverage of the death of a much-loved public figure; exposing of the destruction of industrial waste; recanting the horrors of the Holocaust. Other stories reflect on influences of the Internet, difficulties of social injustice, the plight of refugees and a driving need to photograph Nazi activity during World War II.

The stories about Princess Diana give insightful new dimensions on complex issues concerning the role of photography and the media. These stories and photographs provoked strong memories of the events surrounding her funeral.

The strength of great photojournalism is to provoke thoughtful observation, insight and reflection. These powerful forces are apparent again and again throughout this issue of *SPOT*.

Carol Smith

DOCUMENTA X:



Kassel, Germany.
June 21–September 28, 1997

Johannes Birringer

Created after World War II to reconnect the destroyed German culture to modernist traditions and the international avant-garde, the documenta in Kassel celebrated its tenth edition of a 100-day festival of the visual arts in 1997. Most visitors traveling to this small town in the center of reunited Germany arrived with high expectations because past documentas gained an outstanding reputation for their curatorial visions and incisive thematic perspectives of contemporary art. However, the last documenta of the 20th century will be remembered less for the artworks it displayed than for the fervor of its intellectual conception. Curiously, photography played a major, if thankless, role in the implementation of a thoroughly historicist and polemical curatorial provocation to the viewer's imagination. I will try to address this provocation by first describing the orchestration of the event as a whole.

Since documenta 5 (1972), photography, film and multimedia installations had found an increased presence among painting and sculpture. Each time a curatorial theme and selection of artworks were announced in the past, documenta focused critical attention on how painting survived its reformulations in the modern and postmodern movements, its position in a competitive art market and its incorporation in ever more spectacular scenarios of display. The ninth documenta (1992) in particular proved immensely popular with the public and attracted more than 600,000 visitors enjoying the festival-like atmosphere and an abundance of works by well-known artists and promising young image makers.

But last summer Catherine David, the first woman curator appointed to direct documenta, clearly set out to undercut the festive mood. She shifted attention away from art objects and aesthetic categories, literally excluding painting and forestalling the experience of visual pleasure. She also antagonized the critics who questioned her choices and her ambitious program of 100 Days + 100 Guests which were daily lectures and debates by invited philosophers, architects, sociologists, filmmakers and cultural theorists. The controversy surrounding the French curator's stubborn, ascetic anti-aestheticism and her completely uncompromising emphasis on a contextual and political archeology of art production at the end of the century set the tone for documenta X's (dX) remembering of art engagé and the determining political crises of past decades.

Anachronisms of Social Testimony

The art exhibition as such, therefore, could be considered the pretext for a drama of ideological reflection, analysis and the recuperation of a radical left politics that linked the speakers' forum and the voluminous book. This book, *Politics-Poetics*, is the extraordinary 830-page theory-guide. This guide consists of a montage of essays, interviews and literary texts interspersed with documentary and artistic materials to critical art practices focused on the critique of institutions and on social content and political discourse. Not surprisingly, the documentary function of art and the conceptual interventions of performance and process-oriented art practice were emphasized; black-and-white photography, video, film and graphics were the preferred media. The historical role of the archive received significant attention in light of the preponderance of electronic technologies in today's expansive global context of capitalism. The archives of photographic realism assembled at dX, however, created a peculiarly ambivalent commentary on the fading of revolutionary politics or activist art itself because most of the work chosen for its recording of social content looked decisively dated, nostalgic and academic in the present context.

What, however, was the present context? According to David's emphases in *Politics-Poetics*, one of the leitmotifs for dX was the construction of Retroperspectives. This was mostly work of the 1940s, 1960s and 1970s devoted to delineate avant-garde art's critical relation to established aesthetics and to institutionalized perceptions of representation and the nature of art as well as of the political order. *Politics-Poetics* develops the retroperspectives along the historical axis 1945–1967–1978–1989 and with various references to crucial political events, significant theoretical texts, films, artworks and debates centered most comprehensively around themes of architecture, urbanism, postcolonial culture and globalization.

Yet David's parcours of exhibition sites intended to guide the viewer from the Kulturbahnhof (the old train station) along the pedestrian precincts to the Fridericianum, Ottoneum, documenta-Halle. Continuing down to the Orangerie and the beautiful baroque gardens made little coherent sense as an itinerary that could integrate historical relations between urban space, economic and social infrastructures, and artistic works here assembled to address political or cultural topographies. Some of the photo and installation works encountered in the underground passageways or shops (Suzanne Lafont's posters; Jeff Wall's *Milk* and Christine Hill's *Volksboutique*) could easily be mistaken for commercial advertising and were perhaps intended to be indistinguishable from the landscape of urban sounds and sights.

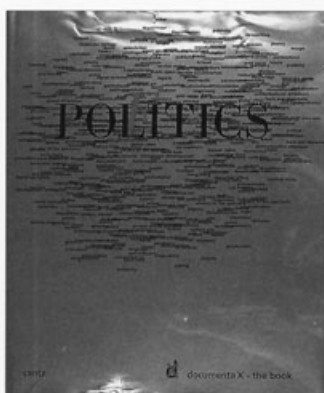
Intervention into the "society of the

spectacle," postulated by Guy Debord and the Situationists in the 1960s, appeared to have lost its edge by the end of the 1970s when countercultural movements fizzled out and pop art became as canonized as conceptual art's subversion of the museum. David used the term ambiguity to refer to works that knew their limits self-consciously, struggling to subvert the structures of production, display and distribution of art objects while recognizing their inability to destroy these structures. What's puzzling was David's concern with today's transcultural accumulation of global capitalism, vehemently addressed in many of the lectures, films, videos and Internet projects. At the same time her exhibition looked backward as if the avant-garde of the 1960s held any (ambiguous) truth or political promise to our cynical view of the world.

It does not, of course. The curatorial emphasis on distancing effects and critical intervention was felt in many of the works more traditionally exhibited in the transformed station and the other museums. This included, for example, Hans Haacke's notorious excavation of Manhattan Real Estate Holdings censored by the Guggenheim, and Gordon Matta-Clark's photographs of the South Bronx. But the transformed station itself defeated David's emphasis on analytical concept-art as it was given over to the decidedly playful and humorous construction of Matthew Ngui's food/communication system: "You can order and eat delicious poh-piah amongst other things." This pretentiously displayed the huge wallpapers of Rem Koolhaas's New Urbanism: Pearl River Delta project conducted in China.

Most of the works in the station that interrogated global ecologies, urbanization and social realities used the medium of photography and photocollage. Examples include Jean-Marc Bustamante's bleak photographs of vacant city lots and streets and Marc Pataut's unframed snapshots of a homeless community in Paris displaced by redevelopment. Lois Weinberger, more modestly and ironically, planted a few thistles and neophytes on an abandoned train track outside. His immigrant flowers from far-away places were easily overlooked, whereas on one of the platforms we were treated to a performance action by Brazilian artist Tunga in which the symbolism of emigration and arrival was rendered as gothic cartoon. A large straw hat dangled in the air and under it lay human arms and legs made of rubber; the Brazilian performers had carried them in their suitcases like contraband. If the critical ambivalence of conceptual art and performance in its questioning of aesthetic modernism served as a leitmotif, its political relevance for the late 1990s was barely rediscovered and brought to bear on our changed geopolitical conditions.

Inside the station, for example, the large object installations from the 1960s



by Michelangelo Pistoletto and Hélio Oiticica, together with Ngui's computer-aided cooking of "delicious poh-piah" and Koolhaas's photomontages set the tone for an uneasy confluence of retrospective and prospective visions: from arte povera to a new global art of urbanization and food consumption. As with the exhibitions in the other museums, the disparate composition of itineraries created many jarring moments of frustration while arousing a sense of intellectual curiosity. This was especially true in the Fridericianum where Gerhard Richter and Marcel Broodthaers were paired off against an immense display of small photos and utopian-socialist designs by architect Aldo van Eyck. Stimulated by the rich suggestiveness of Oiticica's performance parangolés (costumes) and relics of environmental actions which were so important for the 1960s and 1970s radical movement of modern art in Brazil, one wanted to

on centerstage. The transcultural political contexts of art in the Americas, Eastern Europe and the Far East were neglected, feminist and queer art disowned. The U.S. most likely was considered a lost cause although Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler were given a corner to put up a riotous installation of their experiments in a punk band, *The Poetics Project*. Also, New York veteran Nancy Spero and Chicago-based Kerry James Marshall were the only two painters allowed to interrupt the retroperspectives of social documentary (Walker Evans, Helen Levitt, Robert Adams, Ed van der Elsken, David Reeb, Garry Winogrand). Jeff Wall's new black-and-white hyperrealism, trite and unoriginal, dominated a whole room full of failed allegories. Outstanding, on the other hand, were William Kentridge's somber political film animation about South Africa, *The History of the Man Complaint*, and Johan Grimont's rivet-

lutionary upheaval, and anticolonial struggle since the 1940s.

But historical analogies between the chosen artworks from around 1967, 1978 and the late 1990s are not convincing if performance and live art today are not examined or today's popular music and sampling techniques in the context of global mass distribution are disregarded and if the formal composition, for example of the featured Jeff Wall photos or Reeb's *Let's Have Another War* looks derivative and anachronistic in the context of the World Wide Web. If we examined photocollages and staged tableaux side by side with contemporary electronic media and Internet projects (e.g. Hybrid WorkSpace, a collective new media studio installed at the Orangerie) or even more complex technoscientific projects such as Marko Peljhan's MAKROLAB, we would more directly experience the gap between the place of realism and

sources for his paintings which were not shown here. Richter called *Atlas* a work in progress (since 1962), and we can see them as documents of a painter's process of transforming sources of images, images of reality or memories. The impact of showing Richter's archive as if it constituted a separate, autonomous context is vexing, especially because the panels looked like a diary of personal and political events and conveyed little of the process of production or the qualities of abstraction in his paintings. They were irrelevant in regard to the paintings-not-shown, and yet they were in-between. Their immense accumulation moved them, propelled them away from the immanent document and the historical moment of the film still.

Richter himself paradoxically argues that he uses painting as a means to photography. Perhaps they will be seen as a genealogy of the tensions between the fictions



Gerhard Richter, *Atlas* (1962-1996), installation view



Jeff Wall, *Milk* (1984), underground passage, Kassel



David Reeb, *Let's have another war* (1997), installation view

Photos: Johannes Birringer

know more about the history of his and Lygia Clark's work with concrete objects and living social organisms. Deprived of their concrete context of activism, they look like ghosts, while Pistoletto's *Oggetti in meno*, clinging to a discredited aura of hand-crafted materials, provided an almost melancholy reminder of arte povera's lost battle against American pop art's cynical embrace of industrial mass production. Both work cycles raised serious issues about the disappearance of authenticity and the construction of subjectivity, but the cultural vantage points differed radically.

If the retroperspective on conceptual art of the 1960s was brought to bear on our conflicted experience of globalization, dislocation, postcolonial identities, and technomedia, then the choice of contemporary artworks at dX did not serve its premise well. This documenta did not want us to look at new and exciting artworks but to force us to think through the critical limits of representation, the presumed exhaustion of all formal aesthetic languages, and the challenge of locating critical, resistant processes or objects not already compromised by the corporate logic of museums and entertainment industries. Critical resistance to incorporation in art markets or aesthetic fashions of the West, however, implies a break with exhibition as such or at least a confrontation with non-objects and other spaces, with the "elsewhere" of other cultural and conceptual formations.

dX extended invitations to architects, filmmakers and young artists working in time-based media and digital art, and it presented many speakers from the Arab, Muslim and African worlds at its forum of 100 Guests. However, the dialog about current conceptual reformulations of artistic strategies seemed disappointingly largely generated by French/German/Italian critical and neo-Marxist philosophies with Gramsci and Foucault

ing newsreel collage, *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, ironically recapturing the history of airplane hijackings.

Among the social testimonies we found countless photographs of Harlem sidewalks, children and graffiti (Levitt), anonymous subway riders and ruined tombstones (Evans) and depressing vistas of suburban blight (Adams). The selection of black-and-white photography, then, especially with historical figures like Evans, Levitt and Adams rather than, say, Lorna Simpson, Nan Goldin, Zofia Kulik, Lyle Ashton Harris or Shirin Neshat, evoked a sense of melancholy recollection of transparent social testimony almost wholly inappropriate to our contemporary sensibilities. I cannot imagine why David's approach to documentary photography was so entirely misguided, especially because she alludes to Bertolt Brecht in her book.

In the 1960s I learned while in grade school that Brecht had warned against a naive trust in photography's distanced objectivity: "A photograph of the Krupp factory tells us nothing about the Krupp factory." The viewer is asked to reconsider the critical potential of documentary realism and neorealist film (Rossellini, Pasolini, Godard, Alvarez, Sembene) and the anti-institutional transgressions of conceptual and performance art (e.g. The Living Theatre) as they crystallized around the times of war, social and revo-

lutionary upheaval, and anticolonial struggle since the 1940s. Disturbingly, the crucial question of how artists today, in a world of electronic globalization, participate in global networks from different, and unequal, access points was barely addressed. Peljhan's MAKROLAB, a surveillance lab designed by independent artists to monitor the electromagnetic spectrum and intercept transnational data flows, garnered hardly any attention because it was deliberately stationed outside the documenta display sites and thus elusive to the stream of visitors following the parcours.

The elsewhere, it seems, lies somewhere outside of the categories of aesthetic form and familiar ideological critique. dX invited Internet artists but didn't provide on-line access to the visitors in the documenta-Halle. Marcel Broodthaers's brilliant, fictive *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (1972) with its taxonomic display of images of eagles, culled from the archives of art and advertising, is a poetic installation that mocks the logic and power of the museum but remains as inconsequential to our realities as a Dadaist joke or a Fluxus prank. Curiously, dX showed Broodthaers side-by-side with the life-long archival collection of photos, snapshots, polaroids and sketches in Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* — the



Walker Evans, *Subway Portraits*, 1938-41

(photography, painting) of representation, each incapable of portraying traumatic events, realities or memories. In Richter's case, the atlas implies the German postwar trauma and other traumatic geographies at dX included Northern Ireland, Vietnam, Algeria, Israel, Russia and South Africa. In this sense they provoked a considerable tension in our reaction to media or media images and their psychic and emotional relations to memory and perception. Richter's *Atlas* anchors our suspicion of the documenta's trust of photography's social subject matter. We entered the foyer of the Fridericianum to glimpse the shaky video of Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboye's *Homeward Bound* and ended in the last darkroom with Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's profoundly pathos-ridden *Cave of Memory* — an installation of 31 films/videos. We came away with a keener sense of David's accomplishment. Despite its massive contradictions, dX opened a necessary reinvestigation of how we will remember the differences and permanences between contemporary media and the spaces they travel in the histories we construct. The museum, like an outmoded train station of arrivals and departures, is no longer a stable place or model for the constitution of aesthetic objects. The ubiquity and interactivity of images today dissolves all traditional concepts of object, place, value, context and the real. Exhibitions of contemporary objects therefore, first of all, require the reorganization of concepts of the invisible, immaterial, mutable, provisional, contested and the barely remembered. Photography, conjoined with the ubiquitous photojournalism, our last ditch hope of testimony, will evaporate from the networks of the future as surely as Gramsci's and Foucault's theories will fade. •

Johannes Birringer is a choreographer/filmmaker based in Houston. His new book is entitled *Media and Performance: Along the Border*.

Daniel P. Younger

Notwithstanding the public rush-to-judgment against paparazzi following Diana's death, the widespread pleas calling for an end to the relentless pursuit of celebrities had merit. Such criticism — long in coming — had, of course, been uniquely focused by the unusual and tragic sequence of events on the night of August 31 in Paris. Still, one senses even in hard-hitting exposes a kind of lurid fascination with the lifestyles of the tabloid photographers and their aggressive and continuous access (if unwanted) to celebrity.¹

Perhaps the most memorable revelation of Sarah Lyall's *Diana's Hunters* is that Diana's "hard-core" paparazzi employed terms of physical assault and sexual battery to their practice of stalking and shooting: to bang, to blitz, to hose, to rip, to whack. The reporting of such unapologetic bragging rights by those practicing this profession, while titillating to some, were probably loathsome to most. This had the dual effect of bringing this aspect of tabloid journalism into some focus, and at the same time, oversimplifying the problem.

Paparazzi in the immediate hours and days following Diana's death were the primary, if not the sole, targets of public enmity. Not surprisingly, the same level of illumination has not been cast on the tabloid industry — obviously a much larger and more powerful target.

Focusing upon the most extreme elements of celebrity photography in the aftermath of Diana's death implies that the practice and the industry that supports it can be neatly contained. While itself complex, under-examined and untheorized, tabloid journalism must be understood not as an isolated practice, but one thoroughly imbricated in the currents of mainstream media, popular culture, communications commerce and technology today. Over the past decade, the increasing tabloidization of the mainstream media — the corporate, bottom-line emphasis on voyeuristic and even violent infotainment — has been noted and decried in many precincts.

Daniel Schoor, the senior news analyst for National Public Radio (NPR), noted last September 21 in the aftermath of Diana's death that sensational media incidents are increasingly the rule rather than the exception. Schoor cited a handful of news stories that may be characterized at best as a kind of cross-over between traditional news content and more tawdry topics. Many cater to a decidedly prurient interest. We can all name our own examples. Most are so obvious that they need hardly be mentioned: the O. J. Simpson murder case, the JonBenet Ramsey murder case and the Nancy Kerrigan and Tonya Harding incident. All of these assumed lives of their own in narratives that easily straddled the supermarket

tabloid and its counterpart, the television newsmagazine and so-called hard news outlets such as *Time* and *Newsweek* and national cable and network TV news programming.

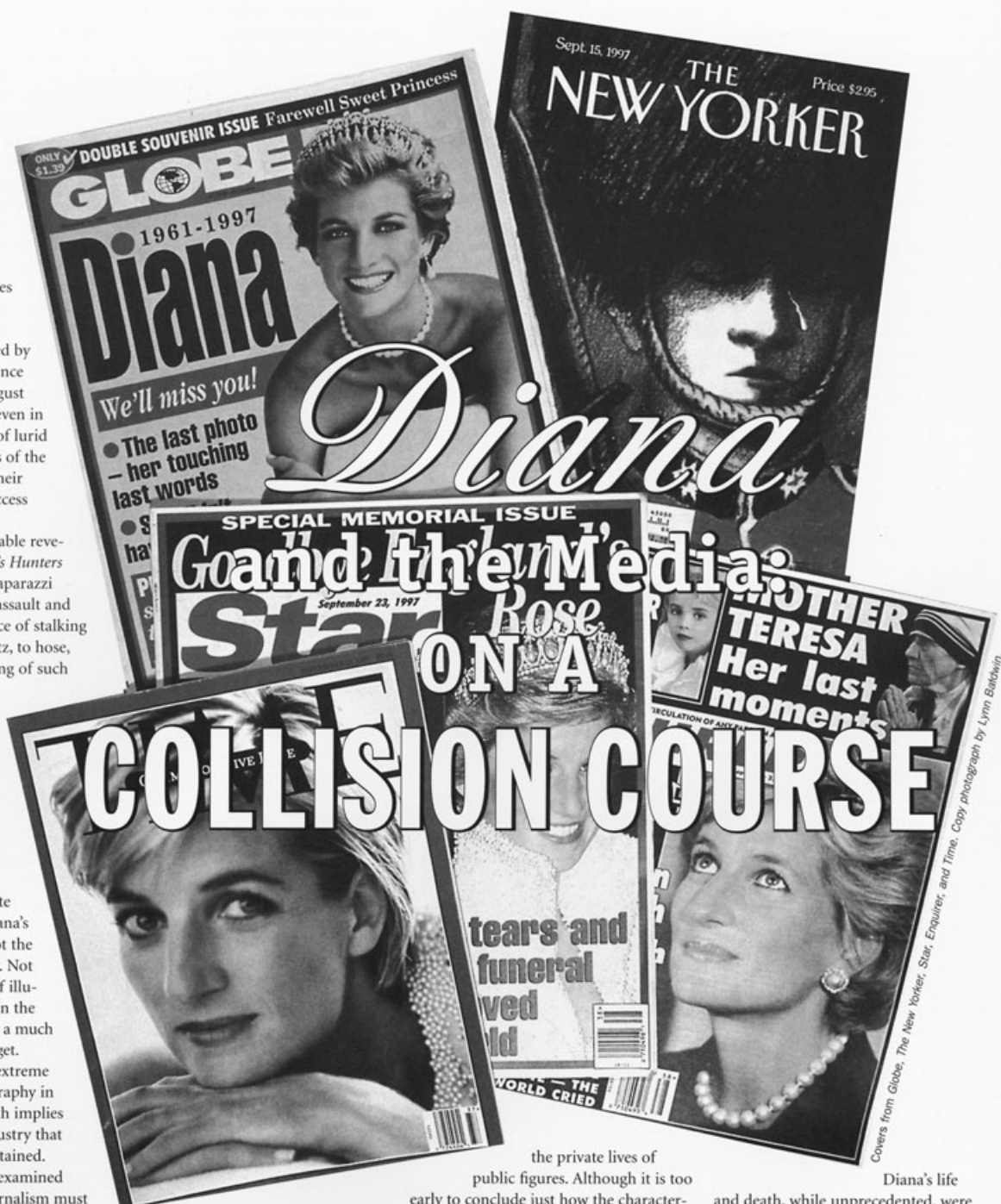
Tabloid or not, Diana's death was apparently a defining moment for the Internet. *The New York Times* reported on September 8 that major news organizations on the Web such as MSNBC, CNN and ABC all reported a significant increase in the volume of user page views. In the aftermath of Diana's death, "traffic ... almost instantly quintupled," said Jeff Gralnick, head of <ABCNews.com>, the network's Web site. The Web's infancy as a medium coupled with an event the magnitude of Diana's death is compared in this article by Todd Gitlin with broadcast coverage of the marriage of Queen Elizabeth in TV's earliest years. The *Times* also reported that chatrooms were deluged with people who wanted to talk about Diana. Dozens of Web users began assembling their own memorial pages. The Web's interactive capabilities may only encourage the public's long-standing adulation and vicarious participation in

the private lives of public figures. Although it is too early to conclude just how the characteristics of this new medium may play out, the contradictions for the personal user regarding the potential loss of personal privacy versus the gain in access to guarded information about others — both in and out of the public eye — are already apparent.

Discussions of the practice of celebrity photography growing out of Diana's death have been largely historical with a few notable exceptions: the observations this past fall of Doris Kearns Goodwin, a historian and frequent commentator on the PBS program, *The News Hour* with Jim Lehrer. What is wanted today is a historical tracing of the relationship of British royalty and the medium of photography back to its earliest 19th century roots. Then we might better understand the present condition and mechanism of desire, possession and emulation — a powerful monetary exchange that has taken place between consumers and public figures since the inventions and commercial applications of the wet-collodion negative and paper photography in the late 1850s and early 1860s. The global dimensions of public fascination with

Diana's life and death, while unprecedented, were foreshadowed in the era of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, a time when the royal family established a strong official link with the then new medium of photography.

Victoria's reign coincided with the mid-century fad for card photographs or cartes-de-visite. The queen herself embraced this new medium by example, collecting the hundreds, even thousands of celebrity photographs that suddenly flooded the marketplace. Significantly, the royal family made themselves newly accessible to the public via this new-age medium. Once Victoria and Albert commissioned and published portraits of themselves. Family albums commonly reserved equal space for photographs of the royals. Suddenly, with the imprimatur of the queen, royalty, statesmen, mercantile representatives, literary figures and theatrical personalities became known to the middle and working class alike — increasingly on the basis of their visage. In an age before photographs were printed in illustrated newspapers and popular journals, original photographs were mass-produced and published like newspapers.



Photographic studios became factories and were often unable to keep pace with the demand. Even at this early date, such photographic commerce gave privilege to class, dress, youth and beauty — what we have come to consider the modern hallmarks of media. While the nature of photographs manufactured for popular consumption has changed significantly since the 19th century, consumers engaged visually in the lives of the royals from the start — much as they do today.

Victorian studio portraiture was based upon aristocratic painted portraiture. This is a far cry from the proto-typical tabloid image of magazines, the Elton John *Candle in the Wind* CD and porcelain dolls. Similarly, the demand for portraits of the prince were unprecedented at that time. Approximately 70,000 were ordered within one week from one company. Moreover, the demand was not limited to Britain; one Paris print-seller claimed to have sold over 30,000 cartes of the prince in one day. Public sympathy for the queen translated into the sale of her portraits by the 100,000 — an astonishing number. Then and now, the ability of media to respond rapidly permits the public to memorialize and share in the grief of such tragedies.

Since the invention of the infinitely replicable photographic negative and paper positive, commercial printing, related lens-based technologies (film, TV and video) and now the digitally-based Internet have grown increasingly adept at the almost instant transport of images to an increasingly global audience. Photographs from the very start were a medium (superseding first-hand experience) for conveying nothing less than the full visual residue of human information, experience, value and emotion.

To assert today that we live in a world constructed of images is to state the obvious. However, in spite of our postmodern sensibility, we admit that a public figure such as Diana is a personage composed primarily of images fashioned by a media industry. Max Frankel, in his September 21, 1997, *Word & Image* Sunday *New York Times Magazine* column, *No Pix, No Di*, states that, "It was our relentless exploitation of her [Diana's] image and invasions of her privacy that made her the Idol of the People." Frankel goes on to say that "she was just the Princess of Wales, almost a Windsor ... merely a royal highness."

Throughout this editorial piece, Frankel verges on concluding, as his title suggests, that simply put, without images, without the intense attention of the media, Diana as we knew her would

not have existed. As a measure of our general confusion and schizophrenia regarding the position of the media, Frankel's underlying thesis may be read as patently obvious or as refreshingly iconoclastic — possessing the potential for an almost radical challenge to the media industry, coming from within its own ranks. But the writer misses this opportunity, choosing instead to turn the object lesson against Diana. She is cast as the foolish royal, undeserving of the public's adoration. And if blame is to be assessed for the media's frenzied attention to her personal life, Frankel implies that the blame resided with Diana. As Frankel would have it, her own series of "soapy revelations" explain and justify the relentless pursuit of her. Concerted critiques of the tabloid press, growing out of the spectacle of Diana's demise, have been scarce. Neither did a challenge to the tabloid industry emerge

from the WGBH-

Diana's complicit relationship with the media is cited throughout as justification for editorial and policy decisions within the tabloid industry throughout the 1980s. And her solicitation of the press leads the narrator to conclude bluntly over a shot of the funeral cortege, "She had played a dangerous game and she had lost."

If a lesson emerged from Diana's violent and tragic death and from her brother Earl Spencer's damning eulogy at the funeral service, an element of the media, namely the much-despised paparazzi and the larger tabloid industry, had gone too far in their pursuit of her private life. Although, at least some postmortems on Diana's life and death have been hardly so charitable. Celebrities' loss of privacy proves a special case that few of us experience. Certainly, the magnitude of Diana's relationship with the tabloid press was arguably unmatched by any other celebrity in history. Nonetheless, the cautionary tale that emerges from this episode may not be so easily confined to the celebrity category and to the

primary basis of our pursuit and intuitive understanding of Diana. Photography is also in one sense an example of one of the earlier of our current communication technologies — in fact the earliest, excepting movable type or printing.

Just a week before Diana's death, *Time* magazine (August 25, 1997) published a cover story, *The Death of Privacy*. With a cover photograph and illustrations by Matt Mahurin, featuring in common the element of the peering and disembodied eye, a hyperbolic subtitle reads, "You have no secrets. At the ATM, on the Internet, even walking down the street, people are watching your every move. What can you do about it?" The dilemma presented and the question posed in this article, strangely enough, mirrored Diana's own predicament. While focused primarily on privacy issues presented by a new technology, the Internet, the article suggests that through the surveillance cameras employed in the interest of security, most of us living and working in major metropolitan areas unwittingly submit to being photographed many times a day.

Of course, the last photographs of Diana and Dodi Fayed taken alive were taken by security cameras

at the entrance to the Ritz Hotel. Key ethical questions raised by this article — Who owns it? Who controls it? Who protects it from abuse? — pertain to public information about private lives and may, of course, be applied equally to current tabloid, or even more mainstream media standards for the representation of personalities. •

Daniel P. Younger writes frequently on media and culture. He is the interim director of the Olin Art Gallery at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, and the former editor of *Views: The Journal of Photography in New England*.



produced *Frontline* documentary that aired on PBS last November. *The Princess and the Press* opened with night footage of the smashed Mercedes being lifted onto a flatbed truck as numerous camera flashes momentarily illuminate it. Earl Spencer's charge that he "always believed the press would kill her in the end," is countered immediately by the narrator's claim that the "real story is far more complicated than first reported ... and so is the real story of her relationship with the press." Telegraphing its editorial slant, *Frontline* in the opening minutes of this 90 minute program, terms its documentary the "story of a beautiful, desperate woman."

The Princess and the Press is, in fact, the story of the growth of the tabloid press from the late 1970s to the present as told by the writers, editors, photographers and publishers who pursued Diana. In respectable, executive settings, the men who set the tone for the tabloids' coverage justify and naturalize their evolution of a no-holds-barred policy with respect to coverage of the princess and the royal family. The symbiotic relationship between the press and Charles and Diana — at least the media's own self-important perspective — is revealed when a representative of the tabloids takes credit for the royal marriage of Diana and Charles! Documentation of

peculiar dance of paparazzi and those in the public eye.

The loss of privacy, the blurring of boundaries between our public and private lives is a phenomenon increasingly affecting all of us. This loss is surely, in part, a product of the speed, volume and sometimes indiscriminate access to information afforded by interrelated communication technologies developed over the past 150 years. Printing, photography, telephone, audio recording, video and now the Internet all boast unquestioned salutary benefits to society too numerous to mention.

At the same time, the continuum of these technologies, particularly current advances in the digitalization of sound, image and text (the enormous storage capabilities and speed of conveyance of computer technology) have universalized access to information in ways that can often exceed our notions of the separation of the domains of public market-driven value of postindustrial revolution communication advances have long-superseded and outdistanced the establishment of ethical guidelines for their civic use and containment. Photography is the medium which had been the

Author's note: While any rush to draw a direct causal relationship between the pursuit of the paparazzi and Diana's death must remain spurious, it is interesting to note that initial sentiments courageously challenged the press and thus the status quo. It would appear, however, that subsequent efforts to establish a history of Diana's legacy — subject as it is to behind-the-scenes turf wars and the viability of a powerful tabloid industry — may be less than sympathetic, particularly since we now lack her own voice, and agents acting in her behalf are unlikely to possess the clout and money to counter a self-legitimizing, unapologetic bottom-line industry.

FOOTNOTE

1. The *New York Times*, 'Diana's Hunters: How Quarry Was Stalked' (preceded the day before by the *Times*' fawning article, *Fashion's Affair with the Paparazzi*).

The Media, The Funeral and Diana, Princess of Wales



All photos by Ben Edwards, originals in color

Ben Edwards

On Sunday August 31st the day started early at 5:00 a.m. as I was to race that morning at 7:30 a.m. near Cambridge. It wasn't usual for me to turn on the radio at that early in the morning, but on that morning I did.

The news was announcing the death of somebody important, somebody royal.

I thought it must be the Queen Mother, as she is very old. No, the news man was informing the rest of Britain that Diana, Princess of Wales, and Dodi Fayed had died that morning in a car crash in Paris. Details were scarce, though it was mentioned that the paparazzi were involved in some sort of chase.

The next seven days in London was an extraordinary period of time. The whole of London and it seems the rest of the world went into a form of hibernation. Recriminations over the press, discussions about the royal family, funeral arrangements, the business of life and death and of course the mass hysterical grieving.

At home the discussion gravitated toward Princess Diana and her life and now death. I was asked if I would be going to the airport or to Kensington Palace, Diana's home. Would I be going to the funeral? I still carry a police press card for the unexpected. I had never followed the royals or Diana. At this point I felt that I would not be recording the events that were to follow that week.

Prime Minister Tony Blair was interviewed, and he expressed his feelings that the funeral should be a state affair. This meant it was going to be enormous. Blair's words were that the funeral was what the general public wanted! From then on there was no turning back. This was going to be the biggest media event ever that the world had ever witnessed. The BBC had probably set up a plan of action realizing that this could be an enormous financial scoop to feed the news to all the networks worldwide. The news was now wholly devoted to the events that morning. Cameras had been set up at Balmoral where the royal family was taking its annual summer holiday. News teams were outside the hospital in Paris. Preparations were being made to televise through live coverage the coffin being transported back to England accompanied by Charles, the Prince of Wales, and the arrival of the coffin at the RAF Northolt near London. The press was mobilized like some huge army on the offensive — in place and ready for any eventuality. As she was in life, Diana was the center of news in death.

The BBC had canceled all regular programs for Sunday, and we watched the Prince of Wales leave Balmoral in Scotland, arrive in Paris and visit the hospital where the Princess of Wales had been taken. We saw the coffin wheeled out of the hospital, the hearse leave for the airport in Paris and arrive in RAF Northolt. This was "real time" drama. Very solemn and very real. It couldn't get any better. The viewing figures for Sunday were the best ever and would be even better on the day of the funeral.

Throughout the week the entire network services on television and radio were devoted to tributes. If you could not get through to the radio stations with your tribute, you could fax your tribute and they would broadcast it

and put it on the Internet. Life had really stopped as we know it.

By Wednesday I, too, had become bombarded. I felt that I really should do something to record the events of the week. Many alternatives scanned through my mind. All of them clichéd. The floral tributes, the personnel messages. None of these seemed comfortable. So I decided to take the 4" x 5" camera and Polaroid land film down to Buckingham Palace and do portraits of the mourners arriving with flowers. I spent three hours asking bewildered mourners if they would mind having their portraits taken. The end results were pretty disappointing, and I wished I had not had bothered. But I recognized that I was under some sort of professional obligation to do something that week.

Thursday at lunch time, *Focus*, the German magazine, was on the phone asking if I was free to work for them on the Friday and Saturday to record the media recording the funeral in London. This did seem appropriate and I agreed.

Friday lunch time I was armed with the latest Nikon automatic camera and two zoom lens and a quantity of film.

I set off for Buckingham Palace wondering what the next two days would reveal.

There was a plethora of media, television, stills, radio and print journalists from around the world. My metropolitan police press card seemed to give me good access. The ministry of information had erected raised stands for the photographers and camera crews. These were fixed positions and all the stands were taken. Be creative! I would not have wished a fixed position and was happy to take my chances being mobile which was much more of an interesting option.

Friday was a sunny warm, early September day, the sun was quite low and the light was good. One of my first visits was to a fixed position stand that was bristling with press photographers, claiming their positions, checking their equipment, chatting amongst themselves, chaining their ladders to anything that did not move. The guard at the entrance said I could enter and take a few pictures but I would have to be quick, as I did not have the relevant documentation.

My entrance to the stand raised no eyebrows. It was only when I started to take photographs of the other photographers that objections were raised. The photographers felt under threat; they felt the eye was being turned on them. The situation was reversed and they felt very uncomfortable. It is extraordinary after years of hounding and intruding into the lives of others that they had no idea how it felt to have the camera turned on themselves. It was as if they assumed an immunity from the public. After a few minutes I was requested to leave by the officials who were worried, as they put it, "for my safety."

Next I came across an old friend of mine from the photojournalist days. Keith is not your run-of-the-mill paparazzi, but a high quality documentary photographer, who has mainly worked for the color

magazines on stories of social importance. Keith was working for Gamma, and while setting up his position he was very careful not to disclose his identity as Gamma did allegedly have one of its photographers at the scene of the crash. What Keith was after was a one-position shot as other photographers from his agency were scattered along the route. In this respect, what I was attempting to do was fairly hit and miss as I had no accreditation except for my press card and was roving. I would have been terribly restricted to one location.

Keith's view on the whole affair was noncommittal. This summed up a lot of the feelings of the media, that while their bosses had requested this event was covered, it was really for the benefit of the media for the media that ultimately would make profit from the event.

At Westminster Palace I came across Arthur Edwards, chief royal photographer for the *Sun* newspaper and who had followed Diana around religiously for the

last 25 years and who had built his career on her. This was also the man who had wished he had taken the clandestine photos of Diana in the gym. I approached until I was within a few feet, raised my camera and was stopped by the exclamation by Arthur, "Don't you ask before you take people pictures?"

I did not argue but asked as he requested. I wanted his portrait though I did wonder how many

times Arthur had asked Diana, or anybody else, before he raised his camera.

Next on the agenda was the BBC central command office to photograph David Dimbleby, one of the BBC key anchormen, inevitably being photographed for BBC publicity. His position for commentary was spectacular, looking down on the entrance to Westminster Cathedral. The BBC had all their resources at central command. In fact, if you wanted to hire any broadcasting equipment in England that week, it would have been impossible as it was all here in central London.

Yet again I was reminded of the media working for its own ends. If our prime minister had not declared this to be such an important occasion and of national interest, would this be such a media event?

By 5:00 in the afternoon, the Mall leading down to Buckingham Palace was packed to capacity, and the diehards had claimed their plots and set up camp for the night. The media had predicted that millions would be pouring into London, and I suppose a lot of people had thought they would come on Friday and watch the funeral itself on television. It was getting too crowded, so I walked the two miles down to Kensington Palace and photographed the media photographing the thousands of mourners and the field of flowers that had grown to almost an acre. The scene was very solemn, hardly a noise, except for the muffled sound of the traffic passing. Even though nobody spoke, I felt as if I was being watched with accusing eyes.

Again a lot of the photographers gave me hostile looks and moved away, realizing they were the point of interest.

Around 11:00 I returned home for a bite to eat, change of clothes, a wash and three hours sleep before returning to Kensington Palace at 4:00 the next morning.

The taxi arrived on the dot, and the driver was worried that he would not be able to get through police lines. We made it. Candlelit vigils were all over the park below the palace. There was a man with a tame owl called Merlin. I realized this was going to be a good photo opportunity, so I brought this man to the attention of a German camera crew. They became very excited and ran over to get this spectacle on film. The man with the owl was saying he came down, as Merlin knew this was a special occasion.

The two mile walk back to Buckingham Palace was lined with people. The funeral itself was not very eventful. The cortege passed Buckingham Palace and everybody was wondering if the Queen would break with tradition and walk behind the coffin. She did not. The anchor women working behind me outside the palace was having a communication breakdown and was getting all the names wrong, cursing her crew and attempting to make this the most important event that has ever happened.

In Hyde Park a mile away, two gigantic video walls had been erected so that a quarter of a million people would be able to see the service live from the inside of Westminster Abbey. The scene was like a rock concert but without the noise.

The late Princess Diana's brother, Earl Spencer, used his speech, in some part, to pay homage to his sister though in a greater part to criticize the media for hounding his sister and also criticizing the royal family for not being very loving. The service finished, and coffin left by car for the long journey up to Northampton where Princess Diana would be finally laid to rest.

Focus, the German magazine, never ran the story as a few days later it was announced that the chauffeur driving the car was drunk, and the cause of the accident was moved away from the photographers. That's media.

Two days later I watched Elton John being interviewed, and he was asked the very common question of why he thought so many people mourned the passing of the Princess? His answer was one around her popularity. Acceptable, noncommittal.

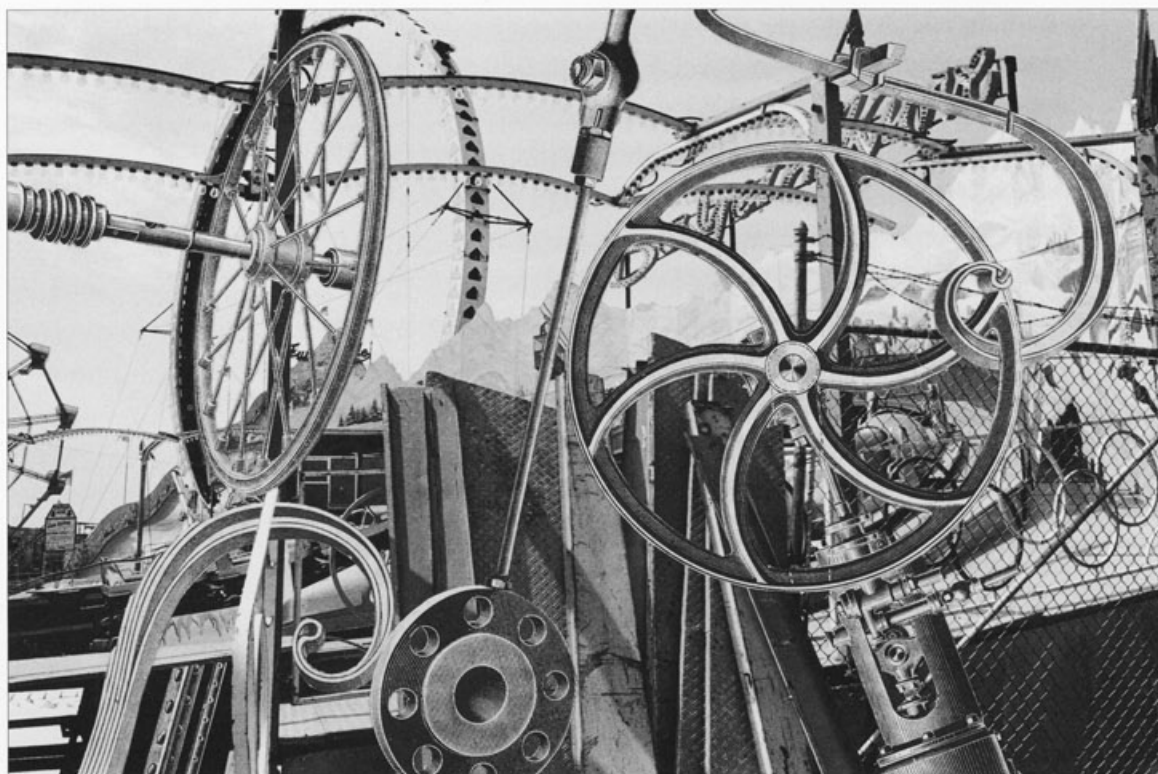
Diana was made by the media, otherwise how would we have known about her?

In stark reality, The late Princess of Wales was a fairy tale story. A modern day fantasy. Born into a long-established and powerful English family, married into royalty at the young age of 19, courted by the world media, and courted the media herself. Virtually cut off and spurned by the royal family and by her husband, Charles, for an older less attractive woman. Charity worker. Bulimic and open about it. This is what great fiction is made of. Yet, this is reality.

The world might have thought they were mourning Diana, though in reality they were mourning the passing of the dream. The glamour of the dream that they had learnt to depend on, as read in the papers daily. Diana's life was an ongoing soap opera, and we were distracted by this drama. Our mourning might well have been also for the lack of substance in lives today. Diana and the media offered this distraction. •

Ben Edwards is a photographer based in England.





Carlos Diaz, *Invented Landscape* #20-NY, 1997

Carlos Diaz: Inventing

Carlos Diaz: Invented Landscapes

at the Houston Center for Photography
February 27–March 29, 1998



Carlos Diaz, *Invented Landscape* #21-NY, 1997

Anna Hammond

In 1884, LaMarcus Thompson created the first mechanically powered roller coaster for Luna Park in Coney Island, New York. Its design was based on gravity powered coal cars which were used to take miners into the shafts. Thompson had visited an abandoned mine and found people paying for rides into the old tunnels and, from that, he built the Switchback Railroad, the first of many more elaborate and thrilling machines. These machines propelled riders out of their weekday experiences of working for service and profit and into a world of fantasy and amusement. The roller coaster quickly became the most popular rides at amusement parks; it was the transformation of a

machine of labor toward darkness into a machine of hilarity and leisure.

Late 19th century America was essentially culturally dominated by the elite, old-moneyed families who founded museums, art galleries, symphonies and libraries, places where leisure time could be spent in activities that edified the individual, places that could only be construed as improvements for society. Of course, society is the key word here because in the context of these edifying activities, there was only "high society." All formal cultural life reflected a philosophical attitude maintained by a relatively small number of individuals, people who could read, and who had the money for theater tickets.

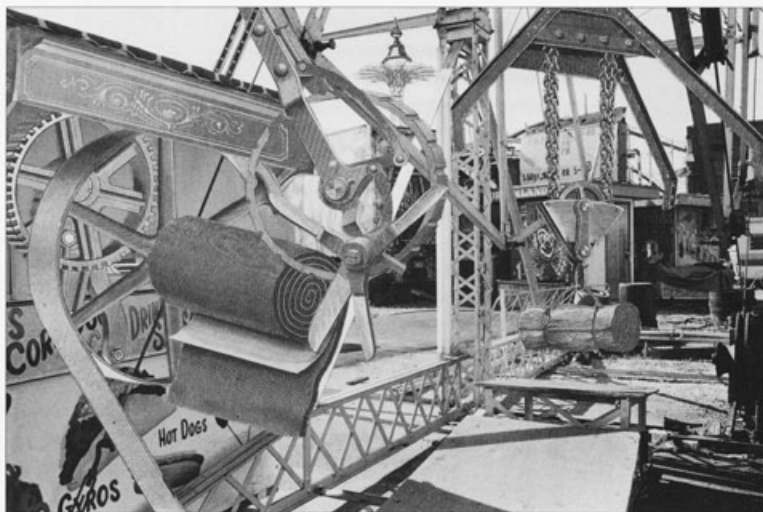
Until the industrial revolution, the

urban working class had little or no time for leisure activities. People worked six days a week, ten hours a day. Children worked for their families to afford the mere basics. In the simplest of terms, as society industrialized the working classes had free time. Coney Island provided the perfect respite: a place where relief from work as well as from social mores could be found instantly. Not only was it noisy and raucous, but it was beautiful, a wonderfully fantastic illusion of lights and music and painted scenery and freaks in sideshows. At Coney Island, the machines that led these peoples' lives were transformed into agents of pleasure.

Just as the industrial revolution created the mass production of commodities, it created a need for a mass market to

absorb these commodities. And the market was in direct relation to the people directly embedded in the processes of mechanization. The mechanized rides of Coney Island were in as parallel a juxtaposition to the industries they mimicked as computer games, surfing the Web and even dating are to the daily activities of most people in the workplace today. That is, the very machines with which we work are also the very machines with which we play.

Carlos Diaz, *Invented Landscape #22-NY, 1997*



The contemporary parallel between work and play makes the photographic collages of Carlos Diaz particularly poignant. In the tradition of collagists such as Hannah Hoch, John Heartfield and Raul Hausmann, Diaz creates black-and-white images of an abandoned Coney Island. He carefully attaches pieces and portions of steel engravings of machines he cut out of old patent books, magazines and journals to create seamless landscapes that at first appear to be believable and real but on closer viewing become ridiculous and absurd. Every scene is devoid of people though many of the inventions that Diaz superimposes on the Coney Island landscape were intended to further simplify peoples' lives — inventions that relate primarily to manufacturing, mining, farming and transportation. The engravings of these inventions often come from old editions of *Scientific American*, which, at the turn of the century came out weekly and illustrated the most important patents — everything from Mawlam's Railway Truck Coupler to Maxim's Electric Light Projectors for Land and Marine Purposes. Often, the inventions look more like amusement park rides than the rides themselves.

The crafting of Diaz's images is meticulous and the craft of the work allows the viewer to participate in a fantasy landscape without being distracted. Often, collage work depends on obvious absurd-

ity (a child's head attached to a man's body as in the work of John O'Reilly, for example) or the overt linking of the incongruous in order to make a clear point about the inherent disorder of politics and society (as in the work of the Dadaists previously mentioned). But in the mechanical landscapes Diaz has invented, the differences are indistinguishable between the mechanized rides of Coney Island and their counterparts in the superimposed products of industrial culture.

None of the work is bigger than 8" x 10." The ability to create a three-dimensional space on such a small surface comes from Diaz's training in mechanical drawing and engineering. Raised in Pontiac, Michigan, a center of automotive manufacturing and design, Diaz began working in the design and engineering profession through a program in high school. Later on, he worked for the General Motors Company in Detroit as a draftsman. Of all the automotive drawing jobs one could land, Diaz had the unusual task of working in the XM1 program which was the designing of an experimental tank prototype, "a tank of the future." The designing of experimental machines continued when he put himself through graduate school in fine arts while working for the KMF Fusion, a laser research company in Ann Arbor, Michigan, work he describes as having become "dull and uninteresting."

But, the transitions in the landscapes between one space and another are believable not only because they draw on the technical ability to construct three dimensions out of two, but because they draw on creating perfectly believable and inherently absurd mechanisms. Diaz admits that he is drawing on a technical and confining past he has long attempted to reject because of its orientation toward the finite and factual. In his invented landscapes, the technical aspect of the work is the basis for a believable fantasy world in much the same way as the technology of the coal mining cars was the basis or the roller coaster.

In broader terms, what is good and what is evil often look alike. Work that is banal and repetitive in one context can be completely magical and freeing in another. As much as the machines of Coney Island may have created a viscous circle of mechanized entrapment, they did in fact serve a purpose in amusing the masses. And in blurring the lines between what is really part of Coney Island and what is invented, Diaz forces us to question these paradoxes as much as he forces us to accept them. •

Anna Hammond is a critic for *ARTnews* and an editor at The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Fantasy From Fact



Carlos Diaz, *Invented Landscape #22-NY, 1997*

Alain Gerard Clement, *Tabernacle*, 1997

ILLUMINATING THE INNER LIFE

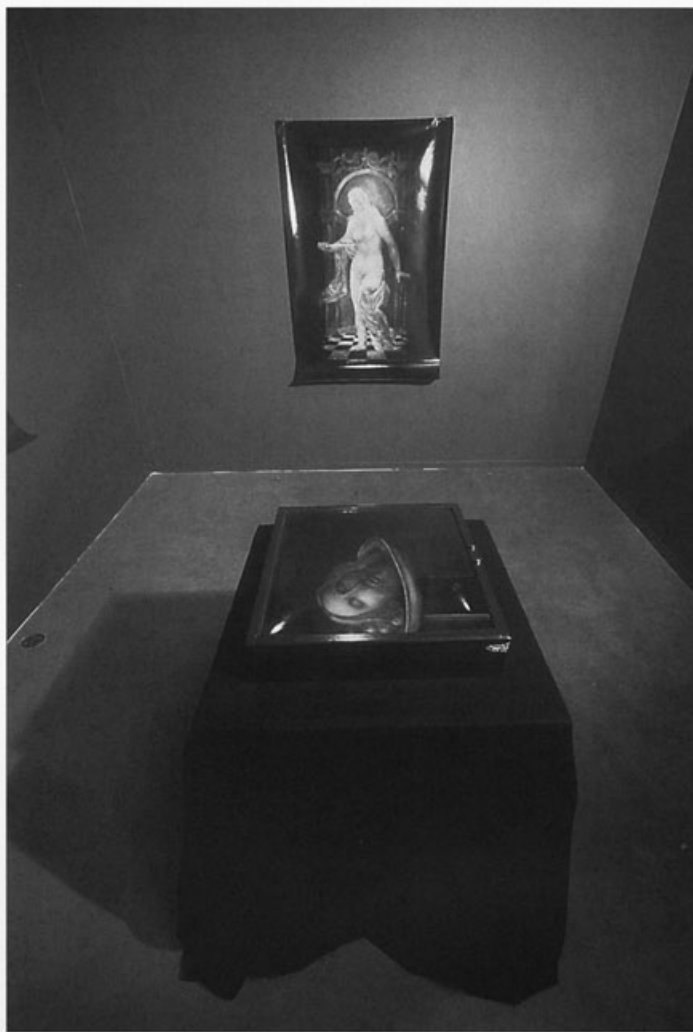
Anne H. Roberts

The unique photographic work of Alain Gerard Clement has for almost 20 years served as a vehicle for his exploration into the subject of the inner life — a spiritual search. Two recent exhibitions of his work give dramatic evidence of the development of this important contemporary artist.

In the exhibition *Classical Sensibilities: Images by Alain Gerard Clement and George Dureau*, organized by the Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in conjunction with FotoFest 1998, from January 8–March 8, 1998, Clement offers recent insights into his themes. Seven pieces of his new work are exhibited together as an installation titled *The Medici Chamber*, 1997. Within the enclosed room with darkened walls and focused lighting, the seven pieces in the installation radiate a spiritual power, the perfect blending of technique and subject matter.

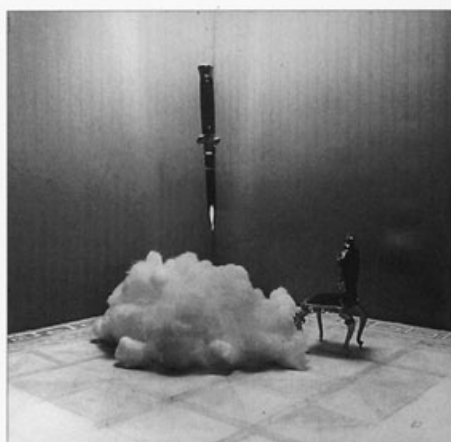
Although the photogram and photogenic drawing are part of photography's early history, Clement has so expanded upon the process, especially photogenic drawing that it could be considered his. Carefully rendered drawings on one or more layers of translucent paper become a negative which is placed on special treated paper and developed by the sun. The long process allows the image to slowly develop from what will become the dark ground as if it were "drawn by light." The pictures are then treated to a gold-toning which results in a sepia image within a rich mahogany-black background which is both unusual and intensely beautiful. Each image glows, seeming to radiate its own light, an effect which contributes to its spiritual power.

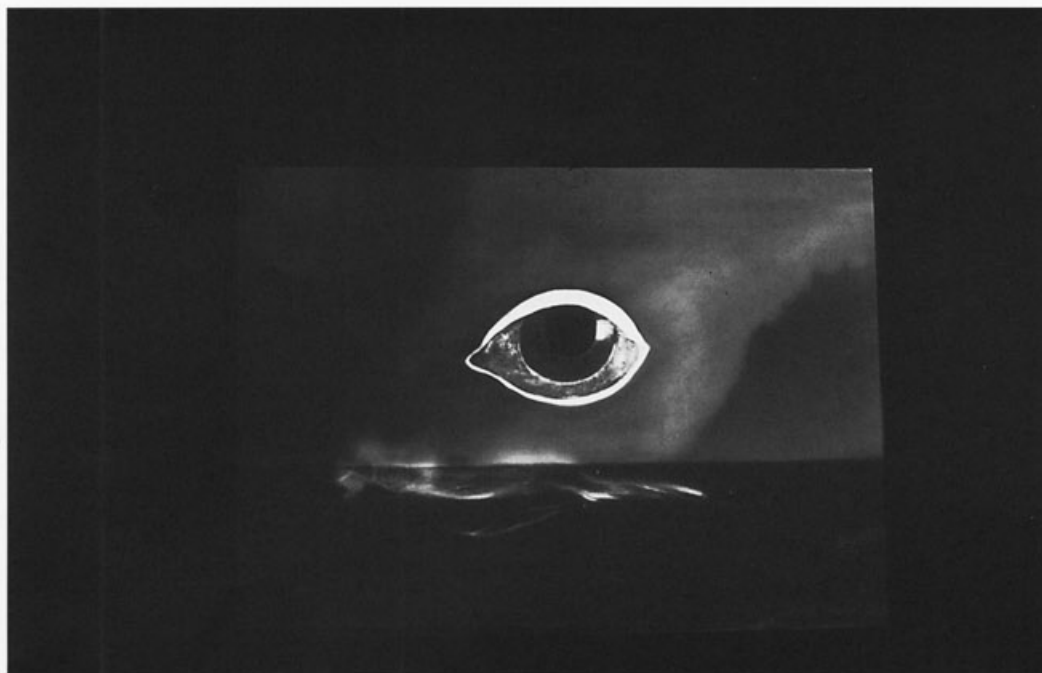
The essence of spirit or soul is difficult to explain — but it can be understood in symbolic imagery. As part of his personal

Alain Gerard Clement, *The Medici Chamber*, 1997, Installation photograph by Gary Retherford.

mythology, Clement is inspired by heroic figures, characters from universal myth revered for nobility of endeavor or personal integrity. One of these, *Lucretia*, after Jacopo Francia, 1997, and inspired by a Renaissance print draws the viewer into the Medici Chamber. This beautiful, classical nude is poised at a decisive moment, the end of her physical life. The power of this image lies not in

her method or history but rather in the transforming moment of the release of the spirit. *Head of John the Baptist*, after Guido Reni, 1997, expresses a similar idea, but transformation is complete. The figure is quieter, at peace. The battle for the soul, for enlightenment to use a term more suited to Clement's Eastern meditative practices, requires a separation between the body and the spirit — an

Alain Gerard Clement, *Untitled, Knife, Chair and Cloud*, 1982/83

Alain Gerard Clement, *Untitled*, 1986

actual forgetfulness of the physical and its connection to the world. Certainly there is no more apt symbol for this process than Clement's *John the Baptist*.

The sublime and beautiful image of the martyr is placed within a dark wooden box, covered by glass, resting on a black draped table in the center of the room, a soul freed, distanced completely from the physical world.

The drama of Clement's figurative pictures is balanced in the installation by five symbolic images on the remaining three walls. Indeed if there can be any fault to the installation, it would be that the image of *Lucretia* is too commanding for the small room, taking attention from the elegant objects on the adjoining and opposite walls. Each of these seems a suitable focus for meditation, a talisman elevated to veneration. While some of these images can be recognized within Christian symbolism, for example, *Tabernacle* and *Cross*,

they also reference a cycle of death and renewal, a universal myth common in the collective unconscious.

Clement's technique gives each of these objects a near tactile presence contrasting with an aura of immateriality. This effect is most apparent in *Cross*, and *Chalice*, both 1997. *Chalice* shimmers, the inner structure apparent but transparent. Light rays surround *Tabernacle*, but it seems to glow from within, a beacon, a Grail, leading the way. While each image is a distinct and separate work, being seen together magnifies their effect, inviting the viewer to make his own spiritual connections.

The second exhibition, *Alain Gerard Clement, Selected Works*, at James Gallery, Houston, January 29–February 21, 1998, displays images from earlier work, tracing the development of Clement's themes.

In the early 1980's Clement became a devotee of an Eastern meditative discipline and began to construct his images

in the studio as a way to better translate and control his mental pictures. When asked about his use of certain images, Clement told this reviewer that they just come to him and he follows his instincts. As he explained in an interview with Edward Lucie-Smith for *American Art Now*, 1985, "I prefer to construct images which are the reflection of those contained within my subconscious ... to reach ... the eye of the spirit." He began to construct miniature rooms containing objects personally symbolic. In photographs of these rooms, scale becomes an ambiguous element. *Untitled, Knife, Chair, and Cloud*, 1982/83, centers an ornate chair representing the material world in front of a cloud form surmounted by a suspended dagger. This dreamlike image seems concerned with the meditative process, the dagger representing a focused mind rising from a cloud of distraction. This work, later entitled *Haunted Chamber Series*, was to be

Clement's last use of the camera.

Subsequent compositions would be created by laying simple objects and paper cut outs directly on the photographic paper, eventually leading to the photogenic drawings, which proved to be the most effective medium for his developing ideas. The heroic, classic figures and warriors who people these images from the late 1980s and early 1990s refer to a time of grand mythic journeys. Clement sees the desire for an inner or spiritual life and the meditation practice used to attain it as a battle. This theme of a battle for the soul is still evident in the large and dramatic *Untitled*, after *The Battle of the Tritons and Sea Gods* by Mantegna, 1997, which appears in the Glassell show. However, this piece and those earlier are not narratives, but subjective explorations of thought processes and spiritual discoveries. In *Passage*, 1992, a helmeted warrior meditates upon three objects suspended before him, a pyramid, a boat and a circular universe, symbols for his mental journey. These symbols, especially the boat, often reoccur in Clement's work. *Journey*, 1989, shows a fantastic galley, suspended in a dark sea. Surmounting the craft is a glowing orb, a protector, or the manifestation of the idea behind the wanderer's search. In the smaller *Untitled*, 1989, from the same series, a single, floating eye is sus-

Alain Gerard Clement, *Chalice*, 1997

pended over a stormy sea, shadowy mountains in the distance. This work perhaps encapsulates the essence of Clement's message, life as a journey of discovery for the mind's eye, a spiritual journey inward to the soul. •

Anne H. Roberts is a Houston art reviewer.

Editor's note: This essay was inspired by Alain Clement's exhibitions at Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and James Gallery, Houston.

Alain Gerard Clement, *Untitled*, after *The Battle of the Tritons and Sea Gods*, by Mantegna, 1997. Installation photograph by Gary Retherford.

EDUARDO MEDICI

In early 1990, when he was already a recognized Argentine artist, Eduardo Medici incorporated photography in his work.

In Praise of Memory: Eduardo Medici November 13–December 7, 1997
Sicardi-Sanders Gallery, Houston

Interview by Silvia Mangialardi

How did you get involved in art?

Medici: My mother noticed when I was very young that all I did was draw, so she enrolled me in a neighborhood academy. I studied there from ages 7 to 14 even though it was not a school for children. I spent all that time copying illustrations and drawing from statues. All of this was then forgotten until I was 25 — an age when most painters are already famous by today's standards. Through Roger Pla, the writer with whom I was doing a literary workshop, I met Anselmo Piccoli who introduced me into the labyrinth of art.

Why did you choose the visual arts?

Medici: I think it had to do with a feeling of comfort. It was easier for me to paint than to write a story. There was a sense of pleasure in the image that didn't exist with words. The image sprouted while words seemed to get stuck making it a very difficult task.

Does one create for pleasure or to express something?

Medici: We might think of creating as an internal imbalance, an area of conflict that the artist will attempt to resolve within an image. As any conflict, it brings along with it angst and pleasure, which will then share the space on the canvas and will lead the viewer to interpret, in his own personal way, this battle of strengths taking place within the work. As the Spanish philosopher Trias would say, "The beautiful and the sinister must all live together in the work of art. Without the sinister, beauty does not reach the completeness or wholeness of its beauty, and without beauty the sinister provokes horror."

Should an idea be behind a work of art?

Medici: I believe there always is an idea: loose, weak, bad, strong, an idea nonetheless. That idea coincides with one's own world, with a vision of how that world affects us. I don't start out with an idea; I don't have it beforehand; I don't expect it of me. I trust that an idea is already there.

Is the creative process then an inquiry?

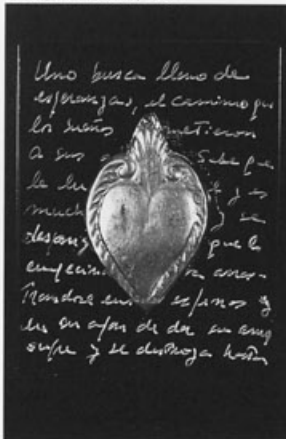
Medici: To me art is a process of investigation. One must search in such a way as to find the undiscovered within ourselves

to the point where we cancel out all the certainties and one does not recognize oneself within the finished product. That instant, full of angst, is what enables new small discoveries which can keep the work of art from being trapped in a static or stereotypical phase. Foucault said, "In life as well as in work, the most interesting thing is to transform oneself into something that we were not in the beginning."

There is a point when you began to incorporate photography in your work.

Medici: Yes, in 1992 I met Luis Martin and Alfonso Castillo. Their enthusiasm, mixed with conversations about photography, peaked my interest not even knowing that someday I would incorporate it (in my work). The final push came when I met Luis Gonzalez Palma. He came to Buenos Aires and stayed in my studio. We spoke a lot and he even taught me how to put emulsions onto textiles and canvases. However, a certain amount of time had to pass before I could feel tired of painting. This led me to use radi-

Eduardo Medici, In Praise of Memory series, mixed media, 1997



Eduardo Medici, In Praise of Memory series, mixed media, 1997

ographs, to produce installations, to use direct or manipulated photography negatives, to emulsify and to even take my very own photographs. I believe that at a specific moment that dissatisfaction between what we want to say and how we say it produces a break in the person. That is where it all changes and the elements begin to entice the eye of the artist.

In my case, I think photography came to me during that break: presence/absence, time/death ... all these themes relating to the body, mine in particular. A body that ceases to be mine to be incorporated in the work of art assuming the role of the other "one" that I am and I am not. This body that looks at me can be veiled and revealed (as in developed) and peers from another space as though I were the photograph and the other the real me.

What happened to the art market when you incorporated photography in your work?

Medici: Nothing special because the art market had not really existed for me. My work, generally speaking, didn't attract collectors. It was not easy to acquire even when I painted. The exhibition in Der Brucke is where I, more or less, synthesized what I had been doing with photog-

raphy. It was well received and got very good reviews. I am pleased with the results it generated.

What is your opinion about the legitimacy of appropriation?

Medici: Appropriation is one of postmodernism's postulates which is currently a little in disuse. I agree with Borges when he states, "We are incapable of creating without an idea that existed before." This means that we are always appropriating things from others. I believe that it is important/necessary to distinguish appropriation from plagiarism. Plagiarism would be the appropriation of other's concepts in their entirety, without any type of change or recombination, something that at times could seem to happen with appropriation.

It is said that your work is deeply autobiographical; however, I feel that it goes beyond that.

Medici: That was one of the criticisms

the work appears. One must realize in all reality that we are a faulty subject and that from these faults and cracks the work of art is made. If one sees oneself as a whole subject, one will never be able to produce a work of art.

It seems that we are speaking of life.

Medici: We are always speaking of life when we refer to art. That is very clear to me. To me, they are very joined. I cannot separate what I do from what I feel from what happens. It all relates; to look at a woman, to have a cup of coffee, to close the eyes of death ... in the person who makes art, it transforms and thus becomes that diary that is the work of art.

Therefore, it's about living?

Medici: I believe it is. At times the artist has an excess of things that he needs to get rid of. Much like a glass filled with water that spills over, that which spills is the work of art. Generally it is a little, the excess, the leftovers of everything that happens to him. That which he can sustain, he puts into the work of art.

And what about introspection?

Medici: To look, observe, live and feel. With all of these one elaborates conscious and unconscious strategies. I take from within; others might from outside. In the

end it all comes together and without realizing it, we create a small piece of life enriching our own life history.

made regarding my work. Some people felt that it was exceedingly biographical. That, however, does not scare me. I feel that the work of art is like a diary of ourselves which holds all, from dreams to the most innocuous and mundane occurrences. I work from the intimate, from that which is mine, but all of us are contaminated by

external forces. Some artists begin from outside; I do from within; I use myself as a reference. As Sartre said, "When one speaks of oneself, one also speaks of others." These themes belong to all; they go from person to person. I believe that my work essentially goes beyond the biographical because it is not a description of my life. If I were to give you an anecdote, then, it would be autobiographical. I work with broad subjects that touch me, parting from my sensations, my experiences and fantasies ... but we all have them.

What makes it easy to produce a work of art?

Medici: It is not a matter of producing a work of art. It has to do with having the work of art within yourself. It has to do with chiseling or breaking away until

What about education and craftsmanship?

Medici: I don't speak of them because I take them for granted. I don't think they are the most important values. Craftsmanship is one of the simplest aspects in any art form. The techniques, the tricks can easily be assimilated. It is a matter of applying oneself with discipline and study. In teaching, it is not craftsmanship that I think important to communicate but that which is between craftsmanship and life, that which comes from that the act of looking and is not vision. Not that which I am looking for but that which finds me.

What is it?

Medici: The living being of things. The only problem an art student has is that he doesn't know that he knows. The teacher's task is to make him realize that he knows. People cannot see that they have the work of art within. They fight and suffer thinking that to produce a work of art they must do what they suppose they have in their heads, to reproduce something perfectly. Making art is not doing what one wants. Gaston Bachelard states, "One can never communicate a secret, what he can communicate is an orientation toward the secret." A work of art is a secret. •

Silvia Mangialardi is the editor of FOTOMUNDO. This interview originally appeared in Spanish in FOTOMUNDO and was translated courtesy of FOTOMUNDO and Pan American Cultural Exchange.

The Perfect Match of Craft to Idea

Carol Crow: A Remembrance
Houston Center for Photography
January 10–February 15, 1997

Clint Willour and Anne Tucker

Carol Crow began to photograph at the age most people consider retirement. She had previous success as a sculptor making busts of children and of some famous adults as well as her friends. Her bust of John Steinbeck is on public display in California and that of Dr. Radoslav Tsanoff at Rice University. She also made busts of Angela Davis and Dr. Denton Cooley. She first studied photography in 1978 with Geoff Winningham and Peter Brown at the Media Center at Rice University, but she didn't really pursue her interest until the late 1980s when she studied again with Amy Blake-more at the Glassell School of Art. In the



Portrait of Carol Crow as a young woman.

They were arranged in vases or laid simply on seamless white paper.

Between 1991 and her death in 1997, in addition to flowers, she also photographed architecture, found objects and landscapes, but rarely people. She was drawn to the formal aspects of



Fannie Tapper, Portrait of Carol Crow, 1993

Vietnam, her pictures are more scenic and yet, still formal. At Angkor Wat she affirmed her love of sculpture by focusing on the receding lines of the stone gods. This work was partially funded by the Thanks Be To Grandmother Winifred Foundation.



Carol Crow, *Roses*, 1995. Collection of Louise Stude Sarofim.

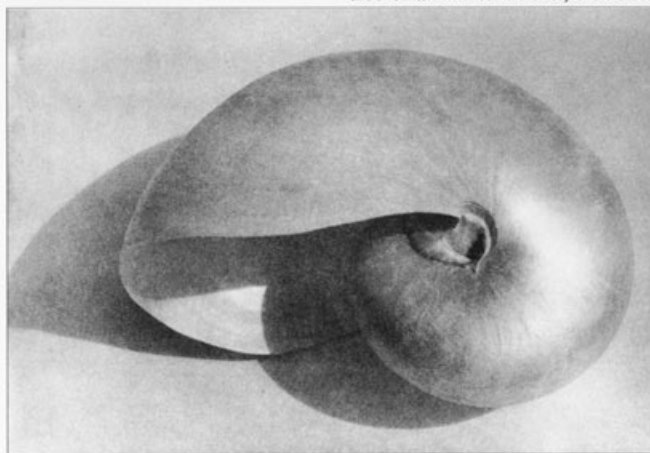
early 1990s, she discovered platinum printing. She took several workshops in platinum and palladium printing with John Dyes and Dan Burkholder. Most black-and-white prints are made with silver, but a print made with platinum or palladium or a combination of both yields much subtler gradations between each shade from white to gray to black. The prints are not as sharp or harsh as a silver print can be, but light can be more luminous and forms more subtly revealed. In platinum and palladium printing Carol found her true medium, the perfect match of craft to idea.

What she wanted was to make beautiful pictures and prints. Carol did not continue her interest in portraiture when she shifted from sculpture to photography. She told Fannie Tapper that after briefly photographing people, she realized that she would rather be in the park photographing roses. And photograph roses she did. Given her love of flowers, it is not surprising that she also had been president of the Garden Club of Houston. She photographed flowers both in their natural setting and in her home.

her subjects: the geometric precision of a stairwell, the repeating circles of a display of hats, the curvaceous spiral of a nautilus, the feafy lushness of a tropical forest in Ecuador, and the heavy velvet quality of rose petals. In her last pictures made at Angkor Wat in Cambodia and in

Carol's pictures were never intended to be truthful documents. She was not as concerned with the details of her craft as many other photographers can be. She only learned the essentials that she needed to transfer to paper the vision in her head. But she stayed with it, until she got that

Carol Crow, *Nautilus*, 1995. From the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Gift of Clinton T. Willour in memory of the artist.



vision. If her vision did not conform to how a picture was "supposed" to look, "too bad." Sometimes she flipped the negative so that two prints of the same subject were facing in opposite directions, sometimes left to right and once, even flipped top to bottom. She would also change the tonality so that an image that was light and luminous in one printing became richly dark in the next. Some of the roses are printed in such light tones they seem barely to emerge from the watercolor paper she choose for printing, and in other images the flowers are darker and more erotic. In the *Nautilus* print owned by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the object is floating in light, almost ghostly; in another print the shell takes on volume and substance.

Asked about Carol's personality, people first refer to her graciousness and to her spunk. It was the latter that allowed her to travel extensively in both the U.S. and other countries, with pictures coming from all of those trips. Everyone was amazed when at age 80 she decided to make the trip to Cambodia and Vietnam. She chuckled how the Asians were themselves amazed that a woman of her age was traveling alone in a foreign country. Carol was very proud of her energy. It takes a lot of energy to photograph. One must get to places and often get into odd postures to get the angle required. The camera equipment and camera bag with film and filters are heavy. The printing process she used required long, tedious hours in the darkroom. To make a platinum print one must make two sets of negatives, and exposures on the final print can last up to an hour. When in Ecuador she wounded her art and continued to work until a doctor could be found, rather than give up the trip.

In 1994, at age 79, she had her first solo photography exhibition at Hiram Butler Gallery in Houston. Before that she had been in group exhibitions at Rice Media Center, Glassell School of Art and Houston Center for Photography. Later she exhibited in group shows at Barry Whistler Gallery in Dallas and at the Galveston Arts Center and showed her photographs from Asia in a solo show at the Waco Art Center. She had another one-person show at Devin Borden Hiram Butler Gallery in 1996. The shows thrilled her; she loved the openings because she was such a social being.

Carol was also supportive of the careers of other artists. She often attended photography openings in Houston and rarely missed one at HCP, an organization to which she was devoted and on whose board she served. After her first stroke we remember her determination to see a show, leaning on her walker as she viewed each print. She was also repeatedly interrupted by the many who wished her a speedy recovery. This was not to be, and her gracious presence, talent and energy will be missed. •

Clint Willour is the executive director/curator of the Galveston Arts Center and curator of *Carol Crow: A Remembrance*. Anne Wilkes Tucker is the Gus and Lyndall Wortham curator of photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



David Levinthal, *Untitled*, from the series, *Mein Kampf*. 1994. Original in color.

David Levinthal

September 18, 1997–January 5, 1998
Houston Holocaust Museum
Houston, Texas

Charles Weise

I walked into the *Mein Kampf* exhibition at the Houston Holocaust Museum and spun about the room. I looked again; I didn't feel any better. So began my difficulties with this collection of photographs.

The *Mein Kampf* exhibition is composed of large color Polaroid prints that take their subjects from the Nazi era. The photographs are all very blurred.

I will start at the end. The last photograph is of a Menorah resting on a painted table, thoroughly blurred because the camera's plane of focus is placed several inches in front of it. It is a Hanukkah Menorah, not the seven-branched icon of Judaism. A curious photograph. There are no people in it; the candles are not lit.

MEIN KAMPF

I felt like I was looking into a dim alcove at something that was half-forgotten and half-lost. A bit of culture, bereft of membership in a living community. Where were the survivors? Candles are still lit today; Jewish history did not end with the Holocaust.

Where are the witnesses to the expressions of the Nazi state? Absent are those who experienced that history as it was being created. None who cried out in support or critique find their way into Levinthal's photographic frame.

The only witnesses are those like myself, wandering about the gallery. I feel I need to be a witness, but there were others whose presence must be remembered and acknowledged. So many were witness to the horrors of the Holocaust. That is an important detail I miss in Levinthal's images.

The rise to power and a sampling of the atrocities of the Holocaust are the mainstay of the exhibition. Again I am troubled by an absence. I look for the images of the decline of Nazi power and its defeat. These images are absent.

The photographs are grouped into segments. One is comprised of the fascist gestures of the Nazi state — the appeals of regimented posture, uniform and parade. Another is of the figurehead, Adolph Hitler in his various, distinctive poses. And yet another is of the collection and extermination operations of the Final Solution. Excepting the lone photograph of the Menorah, it ends there.

Levinthal often makes use of child-

ren's toys to stage his tableau photography. This series was directly affected when he discovered that the molds were used to produce tin toy playthings of Adolph

collecting circles of Europe. He discovered a surprising bit of history; as reward for service to the Nazi state, a person was made into a toy figurine.

Levinthal went to work with the large Polaroid view camera to produce his luscious color prints of the posturing toys. Viewed through the lens such small objects become immersed in a world of soft focus, everything a blur except the



David Levinthal, *Untitled*, from the series, *Mein Kampf*. 1994. Original in color.

Hitler and the Nazi elite. Levinthal was successful in adding casts found while ferreting about the ephemeral shops and

thin plane of critical focus, carefully placed. Levinthal spoke of becoming absorbed in that world where subtle shifts of focus or movement of the toys had such profound affects. Later when all the work was placed on a wall Levinthal finally saw his work in a collective sense. He said he found it depressing; his focus had always been on the individual frame.

Levinthal spoke of his study of the visual record that he examined; thousands of photographs were viewed as he worked on his project.

Levinthal chose beauty to seduce the viewer. He offered beauty as a solution to the difficulty that so many have when confronted with the documentary photographs of the Holocaust. Beauty is to provide the viewer a way into the imagery. Levinthal's diffused focus and lush color remove the gritty details of that history, leaving only their generalized trace, shimmering in the frame. The content of the imagery is now much easier to consume, confected.

I respond to the aesthetic and the anesthetic qualities of his photographs. Beauty is his anesthesia; he offers a heady brew of suffused color fields and blurred imagery. I would rather be sobered for viewing work concerning the Holocaust, a demanding subject. I look at the exhibition and wonder what Levinthal feels. I see only the formal project of blur, limited depth of field and color. I get no clues of anything else. The images strike me as visual averages. Each typifies a particular aspect of pageantry and dictatorship stripped of the specific details



David Levinthal, *Untitled*, from the series, *Mein Kampf*. 1994. Original in color.



David Levinthal, *Untitled*, from the series, *Mein Kampf*, 1994. Original in color.

of time and place except the prominent graphics of swastikas and distinctive color scheme invariably return the series to Nazi Germany.

The anesthesia doesn't make any sense anyway. The cultural body of late 20th century America is pumped full. The perpetually half-remembered past is confused with the nostalgia of the present. The present demands that I desensitize myself in order to survive. To contemplate the history of human cruelty and suffering of this century is enough, but to add to the list the threats of ecology, ideology and nuclear war, it becomes all too much. I see a need for something a bit more brash. Perhaps a splash of cold water to awaken my psyche, to see and remember the Holocaust in a startling new way, and to be more acutely mindful of that history than before the encounter.

It feels like aesthetic and anesthetic exploitation. The subject matter is exploited for the power it contains, and little is offered as compensation except its beautification. The existing photographic document is extraordinarily powerful. I see little service in anesthetizing it. The works of the propagandists have already explored the formal beauty of their subject. Perhaps if Levinthal examined the tropes of beauty as a tool of ideology — but no, I don't get any sense of that in his work.

I miss the specifics, the details that magnify the horrors of that time. They are an important part of the memory that is to be preserved. Attention to detail made the Holocaust a reality. The sheer magnitude of what was done required the Nazi state to plan their solution to the finest detail. Amplified with the application of technology, the plan proceeded with stunning rapidity. The details are important to remember, they make the history more personal, believable and unforgettable. The victims of the Holocaust were harvested for their eyeglasses, gold fillings, clothing and hair! I want an opinion, a reaction of some kind! I see only visual averages, images that contain

suggestions of the Nazi's rise to power and some of its abuses.

I know the look and feel of the generalized postures of the fascist state. Show me something new and yet unconsidered. The interceding decades have provided plenty of perspective on the complex history of the Holocaust and the subject is not exhausted. Many things are to be remembered and expressed, things yet unspoken and stories untold. •

Charles Wiese is a Houston-based photographer.

David Levinthal's *Mein Kampf* was published by Twin Palms Publishers, Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1996.

THE ILLEGAL CAMERA: Photography in the Netherlands during the German Occupation 1940–45

Holocaust Museum Houston
June 19–September 1, 1997

Doug Lawing

In June 1945, shortly after the liberation of the Netherlands from German occupation, a group of Amsterdam photographers exhibited work chronicling life in Amsterdam under German control. Entitled *The Hidden Camera*, the exhibition's duration was only ten days. It now, however, serves as the source for a much more exhaustive exhibition, *The Illegal Camera*, curated by Veronika Hekking and Flip Bool. Organized by the Netherlands Photo Archives, Rotterdam, the exhibition traveled to the Holocaust Museum Houston last summer after stops at The Jewish Museum, New York, and The Field Museum, Chicago.

Although not entirely illegal in the Netherlands under the Germans, photography was limited to only approved subjects and was restricted by a scarcity of materials and equipment. Despite the prohibitions and hardships, Dutch citizens in an obviously intentional, but unconcerned, effort documented events that the Germans considered to be undesirable — confiscation of goods, forced labor, arrests of Jews — as well as the resistance that was taking place among the Dutch. Consisting of over 50 images taken by 25 professional and amateur photographers, *The Illegal Camera* is a photographic record of life throughout the Netherlands from the point of view of the oppressed.

The photographs in the exhibition were effectively organized into sections according to subject matter and with little redundancy despite a large number of images. Succinct explanatory text at the starting point of each section placed the work in context. Warfare and Occupation included images of a German officer ominously passing by an Amsterdam flower

stand (Charles Breijer), German soldiers invading a small town (Neeltje Roelse) and the construction of the Atlantic Wall near the Hague (Menno Huizinga). The confiscation of local goods by the Germans as well as the forced emigration of young Dutch workers to Germany were documented in *Confiscation and Compulsory Labor*. In one photograph, Frits Lamberts, standing outside a police station window, captured his brother inside staring out into the darkness after having been arrested.

In the numerous images under *Persecution of the Jews*, the arrests of Jews for eventual deportation to concentration camps and the subsequent waiting period in round-up centers were depicted. Under *Resistance*, a group worked in a cramped attic space to produce illegal identification cards (Violette Cornelius). Four photographs taken from an upper story window evidenced weapons secretly being brought in and out of an address connected to the underground resistance (Fritz Kahlenberg). The cold winter of 1944–1945, which resulted in widespread starvation, was documented in *The Hunger Winter 1944–1945*. The photographs representing these months included men taking wood illegally from empty dwellings (Menno Huizinga) and children carrying pots to a soup kitchen (Emmy Andriess). Finally, under *Mad Tuesday and Liberation*, the mass confusion caused by an inaccurate report of the advance of the Allies and the eventual liberation of the Netherlands were depicted.

Despite the fact that the photographs included in the exhibition were taken by a number of photographers with varying skills, an aesthetic of the clandestine unites the work stylistically. To take a photograph of a subject deemed forbidden by the Germans was quite dangerous and, therefore, many of the photographs were shot quickly with little chance to compose. Some were taken from or in a place of hiding — from window ledges, from underneath overcoats or inside cramped rooms. Some of the resulting photographs were strangely cropped while others had the appearance of surveillance photographs. Though unlikely the product of aesthetic choice, the stylistic continuity of the images emphasized their significance as documentation of a hidden world. Additionally, these formal similarities identified the photographers not as detached outsiders but as participants in the realm of many of their subjects. As a result, the photographs suggested an additional component of the hidden world explicitly depicted.

Given the subject matter of *The Illegal Camera*, surprisingly few images shock or provoke. Out of context, many of the images might indicate the facade of a normal existence — people gathering, smiling, working. It is only when they are placed in the context of the German occupation (and in the context of the exhibition) that they fully carry meaning. In this respect, *The Illegal Camera* emphasizes the inherent weakness of an isolated photograph as pure document. Fortunately, the curators of this exhibition have realized the importance of gathering these images together and of presenting them in a way that effectively conveys their significance. •

Doug Lawing is the owner of Lawing Gallery in Houston, Texas.



Violette Cornelius, *Amsterdam*, 1942, production of false identity cards in the attic at 6 De Lairesestraat.

The space program's
real heroes are



individuals

BACK

Colette Gaiter, *Paradox*, from *Space/Race*, 1997

When Worlds Collide

SPACE/RACE

Project Row Houses,
October 1997–April 1998

Tria Airheart-Martin and
Nels P. Highberg

Authors' Note: As we viewed the newest installation by St. Paul artist Colette Gaiter, *SPACE/RACE*, at Project Row Houses, we realized how appropriate it was for us to be writing an article that raises issues generated by this work. Neither of us was born until just after the events of the 1960s that Gaiter focuses upon—the civil rights movement and the U.S. space program's efforts to put a man on the moon. However, we have had to grow up and live in a world greatly impacted by these historical battles and achievements. In 1986, we sat together in a high school English classroom and heard over the intercom how the space shuttle *Challenger* had exploded. We later attended college in separate cities but still watched the LA riots and the Hill/Thomas hearings on television while taking courses that asked us to examine the place of gender, race and sexuality in American lives. We know firsthand the importance of what Gaiter has to say.

Gaiter creates an interactive space that, in the words of her artist's statement, encourages "contemplation rather than conclusion." Using text and images in forms ranging from print on paper to CD-ROM, she prompts the viewer to reflect upon her or his own place in a society shaped by "space" and "race." Our discussion takes the form of two linked essays because the ideas

that struck each of us while in the exhibit space were different though clearly connected. The first essay is by Tria; the second is by Nels. Together, we hope our essays invoke the complex layers of meaning inherent in this interactive, multimedia presentation of the past.

Part of Project Row Houses, the setting of Colette Gaiter's *SPACE/RACE*, is a renovated row house in Houston's Third Ward. Upon entering the installation, I was first struck by the lack of space; although all the walls that once divided the place into rooms have been removed, the house's interior is conspicuously small. It is hard to imagine, yet impossible not to acknowledge, that entire families lived in such a confined space—indeed, many still do. The computer in the center of the house seems remarkably out of place, highlighting the disparities of race and class that are pivotal to the questions posed by the installation, which centers on the developments of the civil rights movement and the space program between 1961 and 1969.

By focusing on media representations and interpretations of events, Gaiter poses questions to viewer/participant rather than offering pat answers to these difficult issues. The interactive multimedia construction of this installation serves this purpose well, allowing viewers to respond to and question the works, the media, and themselves in the order to construct personal and meaningful versions of the installation.

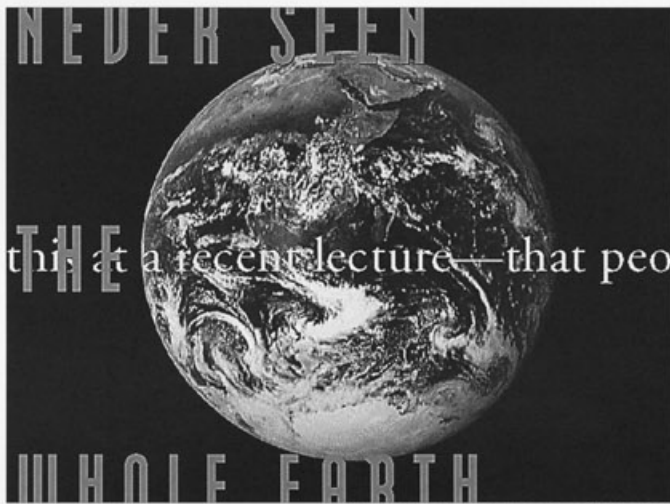
Because the space program and the fight for civil rights were both highly publicized, we often forget the private and individual aspects of these events; the domestic setting of the installation serves to make the questions it raises both local and significant to the individual viewer. It is tempting to imagine that this row house was home to people for whom civil rights was an immediate concern during the years discussed in its current contents; at the very least, it is a reminder of the economic and personal issues at stake for all disadvantaged groups in our country. The use of space through-

out the installation asks us to question the relationship between the public and private aspects of the issues and information it presents.

The first aspect of the installation that I viewed is the collection of window shades which are designed to remind the viewer of newspapers. In fact, the broad sheets of white paper are hung from the same sort of divided wooden rods that libraries use to keep current newspapers ready for readers. The text on these shades is printed in a two-column format that recalls newspaper columns, giving a timeline of public information from the years targeted by the installation. The occurrences described here are national, and because no sources are documented for them, they may be assumed to be common knowledge. The sunlight filtered through the shades illuminates their texts, offering a sort of literal enlightenment to the viewer as well as underscoring the "outside" nature of most of the events described. However, as the texts progress, the stories of individuals frequently come into play, forcing us to examine the nature of information which is formalized and validated through textual presentation.

kinds of events combined in the texts; standard fonts describe events, while the more playful font works with places. Here, however, the texts resist neat columns, overlapping at odd angles, depicting the overlapping themes in these events and alluding to the fact that issues become more complex and confusing the more immediately they concern us.

The texts are laid over computer-generated color collages, which most often represent technical products made for popular use such as kitchen appliances, cars and nylons. No attempt is made to hide the pixels in these print-outs, calling attention both to the technology used to produce them and that the viewer should see them as representations of objects rather than as the objects themselves. Kitsch is evoked in these pictures through the use of colors and images immediately recognizable as part of the pre-psychedelic 1960s, a time which is usually lumped in with the 1950s in the popular imagination. However, this sense of kitsch becomes ironic when overlaid with the serious subject matter of the texts. This was not as innocent an era as we like to imagine it to be, or as the popular culture of the time



Colette Gaiter, *Wholearth* from *Space/Race*, 1997

The viewer soon realizes that individual lives both shape and receive the events that make up the news, a fact too easily forgotten in the age of mass media.

I also noticed that the text on the window shades is presented in three different fonts; each font designates a different subject. A serif font, reminiscent of newspaper text, is used when describing civil rights issues; a sans serif font, which we often associate with technology, highlights occurrences in the space program. A playful combination of cursive and sans serif becomes the medium for the discussion of all other issues of the period, including pop culture and literary events as well as the Vietnam War.

Framed collage-like pieces alternate with the window panels. While the text in the windows is sourceless and national, the framed works focus on Houston, suggesting Houston itself as a frame for these events. The written texts of these collages are excerpts from newspapers and magazines, giving them further focus and immediacy. The walls of the house itself hold these works, emphasizing the "close to home" location of these occurrences. Frequent references to Houston landmarks, institutions and public figures further draw attention to the fact that these news stories belong not only to the nation, but to ourselves. Again, fonts differentiate between the

encouraged us to believe.

The nature of progress is a central question presented by Gaiter's collection of media. Space is discussed by many media figures in terms of a "blackness" that waits to be conquered and exploited in terms that disturbingly echo the treatment of African-Americans in the United States, as well as in terms of a utopia where equality still might exist. Paradoxically, because it resists the presence of humans space still holds the possibility of equality. Yet as this installation shows, many of the space program's advocates expressed in poetic terms the purity of the universe of equality that they hoped to enter through space travel. Civil rights, on the other hand, is seen as a struggle for inner progress, a time when our country was building character through painful and often less publicized events.

Tria Airheart-Martin is a writer who lives in Bryan, Texas.

Integration functions as a key concept for understanding this exhibition. Not only, as Tria describes, do public events converge with the private setting of the home or lines of text overlap with each other in the framed prints, but images, texts, and ideas collide on the computer screen in the center of the room.



Colette Gaiter, *Whitey on the Moon*, from *Space/Race*, 1997



Colette Gaiter, *Installation at Project Row Houses, from Space/Race*, 1997

Through CD-ROM, Gaiter brings images of marches and rockets, voices of activists and astronauts, and ideas of power and progress into a conversation with each other. Our thinking about these issues broadens because Gaiter forces us to see the connections between what we are often taught to believe are disparate events.

Highlighting connections is one of the key purposes of hypertext and hypermedia. Anyone who has ventured onto the World Wide Web understands the basic intention of hypertext where clicking on a highlighted word takes us to a different but related site. For example, clicking on the phrase "Michel Foucault" when his ideas are mentioned in an analysis of 18th century literature can point us towards a greater, more in-depth discussion of this particular philosopher's beliefs. While hypertext often relates to the electronic linking of written texts, hypermedia expresses a more complex integration of text, image and sound. In this case, clicking on Foucault could enable us actually to hear his voice reading from one of his own essays. As the Web grows in complexity, hypertext and hypermedia have become interchangeable, and one line of poetry could connect to fifty various sites ranging from popular culture to science to anthropology.

This electronic reworking of texts further alters the way we normally read. Instead of moving our eyes from left to right as we scan a page from top to bottom, we use a mouse to point and click and jump and leap from word to word and line to line. Hypertext also, as George P. Landow notes in *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*, "blurs the boundaries between reader and writer." We no longer

allow the writer to determine how and what we read. Instead, readers choose when and when not to move to another site or explore a further connection. In many ways, readers become the authors of what they read. Hypertext, therefore, is truly interactive. Gaiter highlights this interactive nature in *SPACE/RACE*. The viewer sits on a stool at the computer terminal in the center of the room and uses a mouse to maneuver through the world of the CD-ROM, simultaneously creating and viewing the exhibit. The starting screen depicts a dark, star-filled sky over a line of marchers, and clicking on some of the larger stars takes the viewer on an exploration of "space" and "race."

The larger title of the exhibition intentionally utilizes words with evocative connotations. There is the race to explore space, and there are the spaces in our country segregated by race. One section of the computer journey extends the analysis of the language used in these movements. Clicking on the words "crusade" and "mission" reveals how the astronauts were both on a crusade and a mission just as the civil rights marchers were on a crusade and a mission. Emphasizing other words expresses how landing on the moon and ending segregation were both over-due and inevitable. The space program and the civil rights efforts were presented by television and newspapers as two distinct yet important historical events; Gaiter shows how the underlying goals and beliefs shaping these movements were more connected than we may think.

Gaiter also accentuates the sexism that rests behind the notion of "one small step for man and one giant leap for mankind." In one area, full images of women are divided into separate shots of

heads, torsos and legs, allowing the viewer to attach different heads to alternate bodies. These images include Barbie and other shots of women in dresses, make-up and heels. Manipulating the photos encourages reflection on our conceptions and memories of how women were involved in these events.

Other sections allow Gaiter to shift from an exclusive focus on these two movements by also stressing their connections to larger American culture. A focus on television displays the influence of history on popular culture, an influence reflected, for example, in the popularity of *I Dream of Jeannie* where Larry Hagman's Major Nelson worked as an astronaut for NASA. And after clicking on the image of one particular television set, the eerie them song of *The Twilight Zone* plays, reminding us of a show that explored a strange world so different from and similar to our own.

One final section of the CD-ROM uses responses that Gaiter has received from surveys placed at the exhibition site (see sidebar). Asking people how they remember Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream* speech and Neil Armstrong's walk on the moon. This area reiterates the interactive nature of the entire exhibit by allowing the viewer to comment directly on the events at hand. Some of the comments come from those alive at the time these things happened, adding to the specificity and concrete reality of the exhibit. Other responses come from those of us not alive at the time but who still live with understandings of their historical influence, including the reply of one person who comments on how the picture of Neil Armstrong has been transformed into the television image of a man holding a flag that says MTV, an image prevalent on this cable channel in its initial broadcasts and that still appears on the statuettes given annually at the MTV Video Music Awards.

After sitting by the computer and playing with the mouse for a while, I looked around the room and became increasingly aware of the ironic nature of what I was doing. Computers are not supposed to be standard pieces of equipment in row houses like the one where this exhibit appears. People often banter around about how personal computers and the Internet signal the influence of technology around the world and throughout the society. It's supposed to be something that brings us all together. But does everyone truly have unlimited access to this resource? Or do some of us just like to think so, taking our own e-mail and homepages for granted? Gaiter not only forces us to reflect upon the past, but her materials and style of presentation heighten our consciousness of the present as well. •

Nels P. Highberg is a writer who lives in Columbus, Ohio.

As part of the exhibition, *SPACE/RACE*, Colette Gaiter asks viewers to answer two questions. She incorporates the answers into the CD-ROM portion of the exhibit. We present our responses below, hoping they inspire others to participate in this ongoing project. Answers can be sent to: Colette Gaiter, 1342 Simpson Street, St. Paul, MN 55108, or, colettegaiter@mn.mcad.edu

What comes to mind when you think of Martin Luther King's *I Have A Dream* speech?

Tria: "I have a dream ..." This is the only part of the speech I know by heart, the bit I've always seen cut from the rest, slightly out of synch with a grainy black and white screen. When I think of this speech, I first feel a remarkable sense of guilt for never sitting through the whole thing. It makes me sad to think I've only experienced it as a sort of historical cliché on television, a glorified sound bite. It's hard to recall a sense of it in any larger form; the rest of it floats somewhere in space, out of reach of our shortened attention spans. It seems as if it will always be available later if I want to hear it in full, but in the meantime it has become something else, a movement that affected millions truncated into a mere four words that are trotted out on special occasions, when we hope to prove to ourselves how advanced we are.

Nels: For some reason, the first thing I think of is *The Cosby Show*. I remember an episode around King's birthday where the family sat around and the grandparents discussed what it was like to attend the march and hear King give this speech. I remember feeling a big sense of togetherness as I listened to them. The mentioned the number of whites who attended the march, I guess so as not to alienate the predominately white audience. Not only do I only know this speech through its recordings, but my strongest memory is even further mediated by television.

The first landing of the lunar module and Neil Armstrong walking on the moon?

Tria: When I was in school, this was one of the tests of age — not "Where were you when President Kennedy was shot?" but "Where were you when Armstrong walked on the moon?" It was a test that separated generations, and one that I failed. I didn't remember us landing on the moon; I hadn't been born then. For years I felt a vague sense of alienation when the subject came up. I wanted to have this memory as my own, wanted to have experienced it directly instead of as a historical fact that precluded me. I wanted to have seen it on my television for myself, to have it be part of what defined me, to feel less like an afterthought. "We" landed on the moon, they said, and it was a "we" that I knew could never include me.

Nels: I was born two months to the day after the moon landing, so for me this is mostly a simple marker in time.



Colette Gaiter, *Small/Step*, from *Space/Race*, 1997

Waste Land

Meditations on a Ravaged Landscape

Photographs and Essays by
David T. Hanson, Preface by Wendell
Berry, Afterword by Mark Dowie
Additional Texts by William Kittredge,
Susan Griffin, Peter Montague and
Maria B. Pellarano, Terry Tempest
Williams New York: Aperture, 1997

Peter Brown

In these pre-millennial, harried, humdrum days, the primary way that we have come to experience our Houston landscape seems less involved with seeing, feeling and thinking, than with motion: the simple act of transporting ourselves, our families and friends from one familiar spot to another by car. Apart from vacation times (those bracketed circumstances in which we are primed to see and experience), we usually just hop in and drive, keeping an eye on the road, attending almost unconsciously to the other drivers. We'll listen to the radio or become lost in thought or conversation, and as the land rolls by outside as backdrop, the bulk of what we see drifts into haze, into a visual Muzak, into a landscape that has become so familiar, that it tends hardly to register at all.

We may notice differences — little blips and occasional disasters will wake us. We're aware that a new subdivision is beginning to emerge from a pasture that we think is owned by the Catholic Church. We're brought to emotional paralysis by the sight of a bulldozer slamming into a good-sized live oak. We will be energized by late afternoon light streaming through a rain-washed Texaco. A flock of migratory geese will bring visions of Canada, thoughts of clarity, the idea of prairie when suddenly — heading home from a long day, tuned in to local news, tired and for once complacent — an unbelievably acrid smell will work its way through our air conditioning, into the home ground of our car, and zap us.

What in God's name is that? We'll glance over at the collection of buildings on our right, wondering what Celanese is and what those strange containment mounds have been built to hold. Having no idea, driving fast, and unable to get a good look through the chain-link fence, we'll take a deep breath (Is this wise?), turn the air to max (sealing off the intrusion, we hope), and step on the accelerator, suddenly reminded of too many things, and just a little worried.

And even if we could see, even if we had a tour of that plant, what would it mean? And what would we know?

All of us know a comforting landscape when it surrounds us — or so we think, and all of us are appreciative of unexpected beauty — and appalled by its opposite. Yet as we watch the traffic and try in clumsy, episodic ways to take in the geography of our neighborhoods and country, we travel in a cloud that combines a befuddled innocence with an ignorance that seems resistant to enlightenment. We're not sure we want to know that these plants, pits, waterways and storage sheds are as dangerous as we think they are.

David T. Hanson has worked hard to assure us that we do need to know,

and his book *Waste Land* can serve as a primer for the miasmal plagues that lurk in the backyards and storage dumps of so many companies and government agencies — so many located so near to our homes.

Hanson grew up in Montana and lives on the east coast, but his photographs have taken him throughout the United States. This work, ten years of it, are collected in *Waste Land* — color images that as Wendell Berry succinctly points out, give us "the topography of our open wounds." *Waste Land*, even granting such an assessment, is a remarkably compelling book. Hanson is a talented photographer and, even on rudimentary levels these pictures are put together well. One notes the abstract and abstracted influences of two of Hanson's teachers,

tend to raise art object questions that are disruptive. We are engaged, yet are suddenly informed, in an odd way, that we are not getting the true product. The genuine stuff, it seems, is dressed up, and headed off on a guerrilla raid to gallery wall — which is legitimate. It just seems foolish to stress this in the midst of an argument that in the best ways, transcends the insularity of the art world. The work, to me, seems very much at home in a book.

The book is made up of four sections: the first on Colstrip, Montana, the home of one of the largest strip mines in America; the second on the Minuteman Missile sites housed under the Plains; the third on the Superfund hazardous waste sites that appear with randomness throughout the country; and the fourth on the endan-

incomprehensible architecture.

Hanson's grounded vantage point disappears in the three aerial projects that follow. Yet human touch is continued, in a wonderful way, through the writing of William Kittredge, Susan Griffin, Terry Tempest Williams and a joint essay by Peter Montague and Maria Pellarano. These short pieces bridge the gaps between Hanson's projects, and each has a particularity that drums home all that we are risking. Along with the animals, the ground and the water, we will lose ourselves as well: sentient, vulnerable, and, as these pieces indicate, sweet, whimsically brilliant people.

Hanson's second project concerns the Minuteman missile silos, thousands of which were dug throughout the Great Plains, and many of which are now decommissioned. They are utterly innocuous from the ground — and from the air seem plopped into pastures and wheat fields with military precision — the same size, the same look to each site — each missile at one time packing a bomb 100 times the power of the one dropped on Hiroshima. And there they are: almost pathetic, looking like small sanitized feed lots, nothing more.

There is a horror to them that resides in this understatement. So little to see and so much to consider. I remember at age 13 sitting in the front seat next to my father as we drove across South Dakota on a state highway — while in the distance, a huge black and white missile slowly emerged from the center of a wheat field. My scalp prickled as we talked about global power, a subject we had just studied in school, and a balance that was to careen into the Cuban missile crises a month later. There it was, this thing, this screamer of death, rising up before our family, rising up out of those amber waves of grain.

The bulk of the book, and to my mind the most interesting section, follows. *Waste Land* shows us the worst 40 of the more than 1,200 Superfund toxic waste sites — even this a condensation of the more than 400,000 sites that exist in the country. Hanson presents them in three ways simultaneously: first with a geodetic survey map; then with a short EPA description of the site; and finally with a color photograph of the site itself. One can bounce back and forth from the map (which shows the proximity of the



David Hanson, Fort Peck Dam Spillway, Missouri River and Irrigated Cropland, Valley County, original in color



David Hanson, Grand Forks Air Force Missile Site #Echo-41:321st Strategic Missile Wing, Edmore, North Dakota, original in color

Minor White and Frederick Sommer. Yet Hanson's photographs are his own. His use of color is seductive, and although, as Berry points out, we notice the beauty of this work at our peril, part of its power resides in the fact that we want to pour over these images. There is a rigor to their construction that makes ransacking them for information a guilty pleasure.

I do have one quibble with the format of the book, however. Given Hanson's art background, each of these projects initially existed as a set of photographs to be viewed on a wall. The book, in a way that seems unnecessary to me, first presents them as such: a reproduction of the piece to be installed, information on the etched glass, the rare type — all of which

gered animals of Montana and their shrinking habitats.

Hanson approaches Colstrip slowly, presenting it first from a distance and in a variety of weathers, then in more intimate closeness (the homes of workers and the inner workings of the plant), and finally, from the air. These aerial photographs give the work geographical context and allow our eyes to take in more than we have been given previously. The view also is new; few of us have spent time in small planes at low altitude, and fewer still have looked out a window on-to a strip mine and the waste fields that surround it. And the view is startlingly strange — an unearthly landscape ruled by gigantic machines and

site to towns, waterways and cities), to the EPA "governmentese" that describes the history of each place (a language again countered by the essays already mentioned) and then the photograph, the location of which can be found in the map, and an image of interest in its own right.

Altogether, Hanson's method makes clear what otherwise would be difficult to grasp. We are given the location, history and appearance of the worst sites in the country, with each site being particular. Each has its own sad, greedy, neglectful story. While many look as one might expect: weird colors, dissolving drums, dead trees, crusted over earth — others are deceptive. Love Canal, a place that we are all familiar with, now looks like a large football field. One of the worst spills (my favorite for insidiousness) is nestled beneath the Miami International Airport. More than a million and a half gallons of Versol, a petroleum solvent, float on top of the Biscayne Aquifer, locked in (one hopes), since the leak was discovered over 30 years ago.

Hanson's final section (one that would be most effective on a wall) describes habitats of endangered animals in Montana. It is entitled with an ironic twist, *The Treasure State: Montana 1889-1989*. Aerial photographs of various animal habitats are shown in framed glass boxes, with the name of each animal etched into the glass. This lettering then, with the addition of gallery light, produces an epitaph-like shadow of the animal's name directly on the land. In the book these names are difficult to read, which in a way is appropriate. But the names and the images that they conjure up are wonderful: Least Tern, Leopard Frog, Harlequin Duck, Bull Trout, Paddlefish, Whooping Crane, Pallid Sturgeon. At one time we cared enough for these animals to name them with precision and affection. And their habitats are now the dammed rivers, oil refineries, pulp mills, smelters, subdivisions, air force bases and the like that will no longer accommodate them. Again, the photographs are worth considering simply as pictures — and once again, Hanson's ideas are clear. Through them, one sees that the land, as ravaged as it is, is still a treasure — as vulnerable as the dwindling populations of animals that fight to remain on it.

Hanson writes well, and both his introductory essay and notes answer and provoke questions. Wendell Berry's taut preface has an eloquence that might be chipped from stone, and Mark Dowie's afterword puts Hanson's work and American conservationism into historical context with unusual clarity.

Waste Land is moving, alarming and eye-opening, a consolidation of appalling news that needed to be collected and delivered. David Hanson has done a difficult job remarkably well, and he deserves our thanks. •

Peter Brown is a Houston-based photographer and writer. His photographic work and writing on the Great Plains recently appeared in *DoubleTake*.



Fazal Sheikh, Kuot Chan and his bride Adhieu Pok on the final day of their wedding, Kakuma.

A Sense of Common Ground

Fazal Sheikh. *Scalo Publishers, 1996,*

Dick Doughty

In his two-page introduction, Fazal Sheikh describes his first trip to a Kenyan refugee camp, an experience which shaped his method as an American-based photographer sojourning in Africa. He flew out from Nairobi on a UN plane in the company of aid workers and photojournalists. He watched as the latter, guided by the former, homed in on the scenes of acute suffering and departed to meet deadlines.

As a Fulbright fellow, Sheikh did not have to move so quickly. As the son of a Kenyan father and American mother, the 27-year-old Sheikh watched with literally one foot — or perhaps one eye — in each world, "feeling a sense of unease, an inability to follow along and make the expected photographs." The camp, he



Fazal Sheikh, Mohamed Omar Gudie, Hussein Dahir Hassan and Abdul Rehman Ibrahim (miracle recovery patient), tuberculosis ward, Mandera.

found, had its share of acute sufferings, but mostly it was full of people trying to make sense of circumstance, struggling to regain a sense of normalcy amid great uncertainty and loss.

With his fellowship relieving him of the pressure of a stringer's deadline, Sheikh talked with the camp residents. He spoke the language and most importantly, he listened to them over days that became weeks and months. Gradually, over a series of subsequent trips, he began photographing using a large-format camera and Polaroid film that allowed him to give a peeled-off positive to the person photographed while he retained a reproducible negative. The bulky view camera insured that everyone in the camp knew what he was doing, and in his introduction he alludes to his images as "collaborations." No "grab shots" with a motor-driven 35mm; no poking into faces with a wide-angle lens; no fill-flash in the harsh African sun; no surprises to his subjects. His choice of photographic tools complemented well an approach based on cultivating relationships with people who, in one medium or another, are most often portrayed as passive victims, as "Other," or at least as people quite unlike the intended audience of the representation.

The results of his method elegantly reflect this rapport. These are soft pictures

of people who have been through hard times. The book is mostly black-and-white portraits unevenly toned (on purpose we presume) and published a bit preciously with the raw edges of the Polaroid film forming ragged frames (Would he employ such raw edges in portraits of wealthy, settled people?) Interspersed with the portraits are clustered photos of barren grave sites, sparse vegetation and a number of fold-out triptychs of group photographs.

Throughout, there is a disturbing absence of things — tools, possessions, food, buildings, evidence of any kind of economy however marginal. This barrenness, a consistent feature of the several camps he visited, shows clearly what anyone who has spent time in a refugee camp knows: that for many, desperation is born less of immediate danger than of ennui; that camp life is not so much frightening as it is devastatingly boring, and that yet on that stark stage there is, rather mysteriously, time for deep bonds to form among families and individuals who face a common adversity.

Sheikh saw all this, and his portraits are as complex as the individuals he photographs. The images are suffused with an inner calm, a strength that neither idealizes (a distancing technique) nor dwells upon trauma. Reflected here is also how Sheikh himself "marveled at the desolate stillness of the desert and the way in which it evoked a curious sensation of calm and solace mixed with a hint of foreboding." He is not out to shock the viewer, nor does he seek to inspire guilt — two more techniques that keep the subject's circumstances at a comfortable distance. Rather, Sheikh gets to us viewers simply and almost with innocence by getting inside the hearts of his subjects by just letting them be. His images are thus quite disturbing indeed, even shocking, but for nothing else than their ordinariness, their neighbor-next-door quality that transcends victimization. This makes the pain and heaviness, so apparent in many faces, all the more real, like these are things that could happen to any of us. These are people you could sit down and talk with right now, if only you could step through the page. Sheikh has given us a sense of the living presence of the subject, to a degree few photographs seem to be able to evoke anymore.

In his searching for an empathetic, collaborative relationship with his subjects, Sheikh engages in the search for the photographer's proper role and method, questions that have dogged the documentary tradition ever since the camera was employed for social and political reasons. He doesn't elaborate on just how "collaborative" each photograph really was: Who chose that pose, that setting, that gesture; who edited? Who really retains power here? How much does this matter? Still, there is no question of the subjects' consent, of their entirely willing engagement with the camera. There is no drama of mood-enhancing lighting here; most images are quite flat, even from place to place; and the distance between subject and camera is kept fairly standard. Formally, we don't notice Sheikh; but emotionally, he's all over every frame.

Though he is a visual soft speaker, his statement is carefully constructed. He knows the history of Western images of Africa including present-day newscasts. *A Sense of Common Ground*, even in its title, is thus also his rebuke of that history, his writing against that grain.

Sheikh believes "that by expanding our visual representations of Africa we can arrive at a level of understanding, empathy and commonality that will bring about changes in stereotypical perceptions." Nowhere does this become more clear than on page 49 when Sheikh describes an encounter with a doctor (ironically a Kenyan) who attributed the smothering of severely malnourished Somali nomad infants to "the essentially callous nature of Somalis."

The doctor's comment stands with centuries of stereotyping of Africans, and the eight pages that follow show pairs of Somali mothers and infants, sisters and brothers, husbands and wives, all of whom touch each other with elemental grace and gentleness. In this way Sheikh embraces a timeless, noble theme: the enlargement of the viewer's circle of humanity, the abolition of "Otherness." With this, his first book, he shows himself to be a sincere, intelligent unifier within the human family.

But sadly, he fails to engage the stereotype of African poverty. Sheikh does not make it clear why he focused exclusively on these several groups of destitute refugees as a subject for documentary work in East Africa. The choice seems almost taken for granted. Within the scope of victim-oriented documentary work, the choice could even be called conventional. Although he indicates that by 1996 many of the people he photographed had found some form of permanent settlement, his subjects are all caught exclusively at the moment of their greatest powerlessness. Despite the elegance of the images and his exemplary methods, these people have not always been in such circumstances. They had homes, farms, trades, professions, educations of varying degrees. By focusing only on the moment of dispossession, he feeds the stereotype of impoverished, literally brute Africa.

Portraits or other photographs that include even minimal evidence of refugee economies or longitudinal work that depicts former refugees in post-camp settings would have done much to this end. The dullness of camp life makes plenty of time for scheming, too: most refugees know friends or relatives who might help, and, so what of the hopes of the people photographed? Their losses are noted mostly by implication, but their futures are left blank and this is ultimately dehumanizing.

Because the book is the product of several years' work and repeated trips to the region, I don't think that it is unreasonable to ask for more such context. At the very least, the captions, which carefully note names, might have noted occupations, evidence of former social status or hopes and plans — anything to belie the impression of a blank future or to confirm it outright when appropriate.

These photos — and their real-life subjects — are too good to be underserved, as they are, by context. Despite this, Sheikh has clearly established himself as a photographer with a powerful, important voice. He shows us that even in this image-surfitted age, a photographer can still knit the human community a little closer together and give us reason to believe again that progress is possible, that our actions and attitudes matter, and that the world is indeed a better place when we listen more closely to one another. •

Houston photojournalist Dick Doughty is co-author of *Gaza: Legacy of Occupation - A Photographer's Journey* (Kumarian Press, 1995).

Fazal Sheikh: *Recent Photographs* was exhibited at the Houston Center for Photography, November 7–December 21, 1997.

My Evening With The In Crowd

Susan Kirchman

Editor's Note: On the SPOT is a new column. We will feature first-hand, often light-hearted accounts of the writers' travels and experiences all of which will focus on photography.

My first response to being invited to attend the black-tie sit-down dinner opening celebration of the new Getty Museum was, "Darn! I can't go!" The opening was to be December 10th, six days before the museum would officially open to the public. I didn't think I would be able to get out to Santa Monica in time because of my teaching schedule.

My second response was, "I can't not go!" I rationalized this with a big dose of, "I owe it to my students." Although I am not an architect, I teach photography in a college of architecture. My friend, Tom Linehan, has served on the advisory committee for the Getty Information Program, rated an invitation and asked me to be his guest. After two minutes of thought, I decided to attend the opening of the \$1 billion, six building complex, designed by Richard Meier, which overlooks the Pacific Ocean on a 24 acre hilltop in southern California.

I had no problem getting my formal attire together; luckily I had just attended a black-tie event the month before. Therefore, I had the dress, the shoes, the black hose, the jewelry, the jacket and the beaded evening bag which was just big enough to hold the digital camera that I had just purchased. I read the camera instruction booklet on the plane, and I was ready to take my first digital pictures at the new Getty.

The museum had been featured in every architectural publication I had read that month, and I was very excited about experiencing the architecture, the landscaping and, of course, the art.

As we arrived at the appointed time and turned into the entrance to the Getty Museum parking garage, I noticed that it looked a bit like a bank vault cut into the side of a hill. A covey of uniformed attendants exchanged the car for a ticket stub, and we walked the short distance to the tram. Tom looked very distinguished in his tuxedo, but we were but two of the fabulously dressed crowd. I felt fashion-security in my already-tested sleek black dress and accessories. I knew that even my shoes were comfortable in spite of their strappiness. This was important because I wanted to see as much as I could in all six buildings. It was 6:30 p.m. and the view as we rode up the tram was glittering with holiday lights in the surrounding suburbs of Brentwood, Bel Air and Century City.

We started up the grand staircase to the dramatic glass entrance of the main arrival plaza. It was then that I realized that something was amiss with... my outfit. I tried to take in the gorgeous drama of the night-lit scene but was distracted by the gnawing realization that my thigh-high stockings were acting like they would rather be anklets! Instead of



Susan Kirchman, *Tartare Before*, 1997

taking in the splendor of the scene, this monument to high culture, I found myself hobbling across the expansive foyer, obsessed with finding the closest women's room. Some sleek black dresses might be long enough to camouflage such a fashion faux pas but mine was slit-to-there on the left side. I made my way through the elegant crowd while grabbing and clutching my sagging hose, trying to keep them from landing around my ankles.

Passing the bevy of servers, each offering large silver trays filled with bubbling glasses of champagne, I finally found my sanctuary. Once inside the marble-fixture, many-mirrored women's restroom, I proceeded to chant a long string of profanity aimed at my decision to forego ordinary panty hose in favor of the more sleek-lined thigh highs. One of the other guests sympathetic to my plight offered to find safety pins. Safety pins in black stockings? So much for fashion

is suspended within the main entrance hall. Here the museum director stood to introduce the architect and other Getty dignitaries. I shot the first frame on my new digital point-and-shoot camera of Richard Meier making comments from his balcony. He moved too fast for the camera's shutter speed and is therefore a bit blurry; but I like this shot as a souvenir of my evening. To view the over 200 high quality color images of the Getty Center, log in to the Internet Web site at <www.reed.edu/gettyarchitecture>.

Later, someone introduced me to someone who looked just like Richard Meier. Realizing the mistake, the man said, "You must think that I am someone who I am not." It turns out that this person was the CEO of a major art book publishing company. This was, after all, a who's-who crowd. Actually I did meet the real Mr. Meier before the evening was over, so I was able to tell my students that I had the honor.

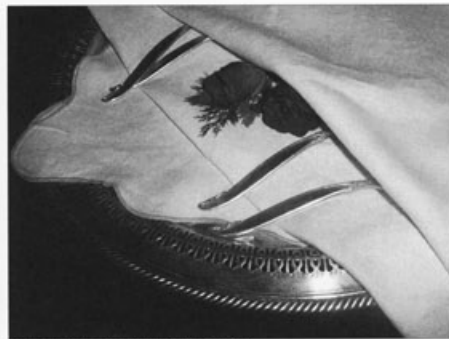
In retrospect I wish that I had studied the museum map and went straight for the art that I didn't want to miss. Instead, Tom and I wandered off in the direction of some of the galleries, enjoying the majesty of the building along the way.

The museum is made up of five interconnected pavilions that cluster around gardens, pools and fountains in a central courtyard. Each pavilion has two levels of gallery space. Each gallery was specifically designed for its collection by Thierry Despont who recently did the interior of Bill Gates' new home.

Each pavilion also includes interactive learning spaces where patrons can explore related materials. One of our first stops was the Masterpieces of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscript Illumination exhibition. This exhibit consisted of 42 manuscripts from the collection assembled by the Getty Museum since 1983 and spans the 10th to the 16th century. These exquisite books, painted with gold, silver and precious pigments, are magnificent and are wonderfully displayed.

The evening was unseasonably cold and very very windy. I had hoped to see the spectacular three-acre Central Garden created by California artist, Robert Irwin, but a gale was out there — way too cold for those of us in our slit-to-there evening attire.

The guests were led to the tent where long dining tables were elegantly set.



Susan Kirchman, *Tartare After*, 1997

Big tunnels of warm air piped in made the tent quite pleasant inside. The guests had all received envelopes with table assignments, and Tom and I had the impressive "Table One" inscribed in beautiful calligraphy. My table neighbors were one of the six Getty program directors and the director of a large San Francisco art museum. Needless to say the company was stimulating, and dinner was great — sea bass and lobster.

After dinner the guests were invited to the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities where many artifacts were presented for our perusal. This center is an advanced research center dedicated to the study of past and present cultures, especially as they are manifest through the visual arts. The Research Institute consists of the research library that includes a 7,000 volume collection of books, serials and auction catalogues, almost two million study photographs, and specialized archival and other rare materials on the history of art and the humanities. The Institute also has the scholars and seminars program that invites international scholars to the Institute to conduct research; a publications program, that publishes previously untranslated texts, new editions of classic works, current scholarly debate, and materials form the research collections; and public programs, which includes exhibitions, lectures, conferences and performances. Information on the collection is available electronically through the Research Institute's online catalogue, IRIS, that is accessible via the web site at <www.getty.edu/gri>. Click on Research Library.

After the viewing at the Research Institute, a dessert and espresso buffet was served — yet another culinary extravaganza! Tom and I left the Getty, having gained several pounds, two big safety pins and, of course, the unforgettable experience of being in this spectacular setting for this inaugural occasion. I am anxious for my next visit when I will wear sensible shoes (and hose) and map out my plan of attack to not miss certain things: the Central Garden, van Gogh's *Irises* and, of course, the fine collection of photographs from artists ranging from Nadar to David Hockney. •

Susan Kirchman is an installation artist who teaches photography in the college of architecture at Texas A & M University in College Station, Texas.



Susan Kirchman, *Richard Meier at the Getty Opening*, 1997

ion planning! Somehow the pins worked. My trauma averted, I was able to join Tom and the crowd who were enjoying hors d'oeuvres and drinks in the main entry pavilion.

The champagne was cold and delicious; the yellow fin tartare, served by a tag team, was fabulous! The first server held a silver tray arranged with linen and an array of silver spoons, each with one bite of delectably fresh fish with onion, ground pepper and olive oil.

After I popped the bite size morsel into my mouth, the other member of the server tag team appeared with a silver tray covered with linen and roses. This tray was designed for one to discreetly slide the used spoon between the layers of linen. I did the tag team routine several times; the fish was truly scrumptious!

A large sweeping staircase with a land-

Books Received

Armstrong, David. *The Silver Cord*. New York, NY: Scalo, 1997.

Barney, Tina. *Theater of Manners*. New York, NY: Scalo, 1997.

Brown, Susan. *Persona*. New York, NY: Rizzoli International, 1997.

Carlebach, Michael L. *American Photojournalism Comes of Age*. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997.

Fiddler, Claude. *A Vast and Ancient Wilderness: Images of the Great Basin*. San Francisco, CA: 1997.



Frank, Robert. *Flamingo*. New York, NY: Scalo, 1997.

Hart, Steve. *A Bronx Family Album: The Impact of AIDS*. New York, NY: Scalo, 1997.



Jeffrey, Ian. *The Photography Book*. London: Phaidon Press, 1997.

Keita, Seydou. *Seydou Keita*. New York, NY: Scalo, 1997.

King, David. *The Commissar Vanishes*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Books, 1997.

Lang, Kay. *Taking the Leap*.

Building a Career as a Visual Artist. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1998.
Lee, Jocelyn and John Moses. *The Youngest Parents*. New York, NY: DoubleTake Books, 1997.

Manley, Roger and Mark Sloan.



Self-Made Worlds: Visionary Folk Art Environments. New York: Aperture 1997.

Panzer, Marry. *Mathew Brady and the Image of History*. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997.

Purcell, Rosamond. *Special Cases: Natural Anomalies and Historical Monsters*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1997.



Schatz, Howard. *Passion & Line, Photographs of Dancers*. New York, NY: Graphis, 1997.

Shirahata, Shiro. *Majestic Splendor: A Portrait of the Rockies*. San Francisco, CA: 1997.

Stopddard, Seneca Ray. *Early Days in the Adirondacks*. New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997

HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY is grateful for the support provided by these sponsors

1997-98 CORPORATE

EXCELLENCE FUND

ARAMCO SERVICES COMPANY

COMPAQ COMPUTER CORPORATION

CONTINENTAL AIRLINES

COOPER INDUSTRIES FOUNDATION

DUKE ENERGY

ENRON CORPORATION

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

MAYOR, DAY, CALDWELL & KEETON, L.L.P.

MUNDY SERVICE CORPORATION

POST OAK COMMERCE CLUB

SHELL OIL COMPANY FOUNDATION

VINSON & ELKINS, L.L.P.

GAZER DESIGN GROUP

THE HOLLYFIELD FOUNDATION

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM SERVICES

INSYNC INTERNET SERVICES, INC.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

RANDALL CHARITABLE TRUST

SENSE INTERACTIVE

TEBO DESIGN

TEXAS COMMISSION ON THE ARTS

THE WORTHAM FOUNDATION

INDIVIDUAL SPONSORS

NANCY ALLEN

ED COOPER

DAVID ELLIOTT

ALEXANDER K. AND MUFFY McLANAHAN

JAMES E. MALONEY AND BEVERLY YOUNG

JOAN MORGENSTERN

ED OSOWSKI

LAURA MORRIS

EARL WEED AND DENA EDWARDS

OTHER MAJOR SUPPORT


THE ANCHORAGE FOUNDATION, INC.

THE BROWN FOUNDATION, INC.

THE CHILDRESS FOUNDATION

THE CITY OF HOUSTON THROUGH THE CULTURAL ARTS COUNCIL OF HOUSTON/HARRIS COUNTY

GAY BLOCK AND MALKA DRUCKER
PHILANTHROPIC FUND OF THE
ENDOWMENT FUND OF THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY CENTER



SINCE 1936 **SOUTHWESTERN CAMERA** 61 YEARS SERVING HOUSTON

"EVERYTHING PHOTOGRAPHIC"

H A S S E L B L A D

Mamiya RZ67 **Canon**

Leica

FUJI FILM **Kodak PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTS**

CONVENIENCE

QUALITY **SOUTHWESTERN CAMERA** SERVICE


500 N. SHEPHERD 880-2505 133 WEST BAY AREA BLVD. 332-5990 5371 WESTHEIMER 960-9904

Photography & Photo Imaging

Photocommunications Department
St. Edward's University, Austin Texas

FACULTY—
Sybil Miller
Joseph Vitone
Bill Kennedy

COURSES—
Black & White,
Color, History, Video,
Digital, Multimedia,
Studio, Seminar,
Photojournalism,
Internship, Directed
Studies, & more.




©1997 CAROLYN MOWAT, Class of '98
Original in color

PHONE: 800-555-0164
WEB: www.stedwards.edu/hum/phto
EMAIL: seu.admit@admin.stedwards.edu

NUEVA LUZ

photographic journal



© Rita Rivera, Elena, 1994/96

Subscribe to the only bilingual photographic publication devoted to contemporary U.S. photographers of African, Asian, Latino and Native American heritage. Since 1984, Nueva Luz has shared its vision with photographic communities across the nation. Commentaries are in English and Spanish by critics such as Andy Grundberg, Lucy Lippard, Deborah Willis and others. Critical Mass newsletter is now featured within its pages, brimming with exhibition, grant, job opportunities, residencies, and more.

Send an SASE for membership and subscription information:
En Foco, Inc.
32 East Kingsbridge Road, Bronx, NY 10468
Tel & Fax: 718/584-7718 • Enfocoinc@aol.com

Collectors'

Houston Center

Print

for Photography

Program

presents six fabulous photographs.



Keith Carter,
Charlie's Garden, 1996,
Gelatin Silver Print,
9 x 9



Heidi Sherman,
Valley House Pond,
1991,
Platinum/Palladium
Print,
4 x 5



An-My Lâ,
Hanoi, 1994,
Gelatin Silver Print,
9 x 13



Bastienne Schmidt,
Angel, Havana, Cuba,
1994,
Gelatin Silver Print,
15 x 15



Birney Innes,
Untitled, Winter, 1993,
Type C Print,
5 1/2 x 7



Jo Ann Callis,
Untitled, 1994,
Dye Coupler Print,
5 1/2 x 7

Join HCP or upgrade your membership at the \$300 level and, in addition to all the great benefits of membership, select a limited-edition print from one of these talented and generous artists.

Please call 713/529-4755 for further information.

CAMERA CO/OP

fine new and used photographic equipment



BUY • SELL • TRADE

3514 S. Shepherd Houston, Texas 77098 • (713) 522-7837
1020 FM 1960W Houston, Texas 77090 • (713) 537-COOP

PAUL'S

713-527-8495

ART FRAMING

2917 LOUISIANA HOUSTON, TEXAS 77006

SERVICE

Specializing in:

CORNER-RADIUSED
WOOD FRAMES

HAND-WRAPPED
FABRIC MATS

PLEXIGLASS &
FABRICATIONS

MUSEUM MOUNTING

HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY
1441 West Alabama
Houston, TX 77006

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1115
Houston, TX

