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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; recounting 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 provided 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
Anachronisms of Social Testimony

The art exhibition as much, 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 venomous book. This book, Politik-Poetik, is the extraordinary 830-page theory-guide. This guide consists of a montage of essays, interviews and literary texts interspersed with documentary and artistic material to critical art practices focused on the critique of social relations over politics and political discourse. Not surprisingly, the documentary function of art and the conceptual interventions of performer and performative projects. As critical art practice was emphasized. Black and white photography, video, film and graphics were the preferred media. The historical value 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 the exhibition, 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 emphasis in Politik-Poetik, one of the leitmotifs for DX was the construction of retro-political perspectives. This was mostly work of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s devoted to delineate avant-garde art’s critical relation to established aesthetics and its institutionalized perceptions of representation and the nature of art as well as of the political order. Politik-Poetik develops the retrogenealogical approach to 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 Kulturbrunnenbahn (the old train station) along the pedestrian promenades to the Friedrichstrasse, Oranienstrasse, 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, the idea to address political or cultural topographies. Some of the photo and installation works encountered in the underground passageways or shops (Suzanne Laffon’s posters; Jeff Wall’s Milk and Christina Hill’s Völckebeutel) 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 or the avant-garde. In 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. It was this diachronical 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, true to our critical view of the world. It does not, of course. The curator’s emphasis on distancing effects and critical intervention was left in many of the works more traditionally exhibited in the transformed station and the other museums. This included, for example, Hans Haacke’s notorious excursus of Manhattan Real Estate Holdings owned by the Guggenheim, and Gordon Matta-Clark’s photographs of the South Bronx. Between this self-defeated self-defense of David’s emphasis on analytical concept-art it was given over to the decidedly playful and humorous construction of Matthew Barney’s food-communication system: “You can order and eat delicious pooh-poo amidst 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 capitals, urbanization and social realities used the medium of photography and photocollage. Examples include Jean-Marc Bustamante’s bleak photographs of vacant lots and streets and Marc Patras’s unframed snapshots of a homeless community in Paris dislocated by redevelopment. Lois Weinberger, more modestly and ironically, planted a few thistles and nephews on an abandoned train track outside. His immigrant flower-fung of the pedestrian promenades was overlooked, whereas on each 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 performer had carried them in his suitcases like contraband. If the critical ambivalence of conceptual art and performance in its questionning of aesthetic modernism served as a leitmotif, its political relevance for the late 1990s was barely rediscoversion, and those who remained part of our changed geopolitical conditions.

Inside the station, for example, the large object installations from the 1960s
by Michielangelo Pistoleto and Hella Oiticica, together with Sganzerla's computer-aided cooking of "delicious posh-pah"- and Koolhaas's photocollages set the tone for an uneasy coexistence 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 anti-socialist designs by architect Aldo van Eyck. Stimulated by the rich suggestive ness of Oiticica's performance paragones (consumes) and reflex of environmental actions which were so important for the 1960s and 1970s radical movement of modern art in Brazil, one wanted to know more about the history of his inspiration and of his Clark's work with concrete objects and living social organisms. Depicted of his current context of action: they look like ghosts, while Pistoleto's Oggetti in menso, clinging to a discredited aura of hand-crafted materials, provided an almost melancholy rendering of arte povera's lost battle against American pop art's cynical embrace of industrial mass production. Both works cycled serious issues about the disappearance of authenticity and the construction of subjectivity, but the cultural vantage points differed radically. If the retrospective on conceptual art of the 1960s was brought to bear on our conflicted experience of globalization, dedication, postcolonial identities, and technocinema, then the choice of contemporary artworks at D+K did not serve its premise well. This document does 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. The Museum of Modern Art archit ect, filmmakers and young artists working in time-based media and digital art, and it presented many speakers from the Arab Spring and from African artists as well as the forum of 100 Guests. However, the dialog about current conceptual reformulations of artistic strategies seemed disappointing largely generated by French/German Italian critical and neo-Marsili philosophers with Gramsci and Foucault on centerpiece. The transcultural political contexts of art in the Americas, Eastern Europe and the Far East were neglected, feminist and queer art dismissed. The US. most likely was considered a lost cause although Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler were given a corner to put up a riotous installment of their experiments in a punk band, The Poretic Project Also, New York veteran Nancy Spore and Chicago-based Kerry James Marshall were the only two painters allowed to interrupt the retrospective of social documentary (Walker Evans, Helen Levitt, Robert Adams, Ed van der Elsken, David Beets, Garo Antreasian). Jeff Wall's new black-and-white hybrid realism, 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 Complaining, and Johan Grimonprez's revolutionary upsurge, and anticommunist 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 Rees' Let's Have Another Bar looks descriptive and academic in the context of the World Wide Web. If we examined photocollages and staged tableaux side by side with contemporary new 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 Feltman'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 Abar 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-be- tween. Their immense accumulation moved them away from the immediate document and the historical moment of the film still. Richter himself paradoxically argues that he uses painting as a means to photography. Perhaps we will be seen as a genealogy of the tensions between the histories.
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 tabloid photographs and their aggressive and continuous access (if not always their competence).

Perhaps the most memorable revelation of Sarah Lyall's Diana's Hunters is that Diana's "hard-core" paparazzi employed terms like "voyeuristic" and sexual betrayal to their practice of stalking and shooting to bang, to blitz, to hoxe, to rip, to whack. The reporting of such unapologetic begging by those practicing this profession, while titillating to some, were probably heartening to most. They had the dual effect of bringing this aspect of tabloid journalism into some focus, and at the same time, simplifying the problem.

Paparazzi in the immediate hours and days following Diana's death were the primary, if not the sole, targets of public exultation. 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 unauthored, tabloid journalism must be understood not as an isolated practice, but one thoroughly imbued in the currents of mainstream media, popular culture, communications commerce and technology today. Over the past decade, the increasing tabloidization of the main-stream media — the corporate, bottom-line emphasis on voyeuristic and even violent infotainment — has been noted and decried by many critics.

Daniel Schoor, the senior news analyst for National Public Radio (NPR), noted last September 21 in the aftermath of Diana's death, "the tabloidization of the mainstream media — the corporate, bottom-line emphasis on voyeuristic market and more tawdry topics. Many cater to a decidedly prurient interest. We can all name to 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 NBC 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 infan- cy 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 Princess 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 guard 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 pub- lic figures since the inventions and commercial applications of the collodion negative and paper photography in the late 1850s and early 1860s. The global dimensions of public fixation 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 photog- raphy.

Victoria's reign coincided with the mid-19th century for card photographs or carte-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, merch- ant 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 print- ed 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, each photographic commerce gave privilege to close-by youth and beauty — what we have come to consider the modern hallmark 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 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-tabloid tableaux image that comes to mind today: the invasive consumption that hot celebrities cavorting in semi-undress at exotic vacation spots. However, distinct parables are to be found in the scale of the commerce in images — in the mass desire created among the public for photographs of figures in the public eye.

The early and unexpected death of Prince Albert in 1861 provides a most direct parallel to circumstances today. The brisk commerce in Diana memorabilia is analogous to the issues 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 50,000 copies 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.

The modern ability of media to respond rapidly permits the public to memorialize and share in the grief of such tragedies.

Since the invention of the inherently 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. By now we have the instant instant replay of images to an increasingly global audience. Photographs from the very start were a medium (superceding 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 Pain, No Gain, 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 hysteresis."

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 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 to patiently 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 ascribed 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 "soaps 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 WCBIH.

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 the bad had lost."

If a lesson emerged from Diana's violent and tragic death and from her brother Earl Spencer's damaging eulogy at the funeral service, an element of the media, namely the much despised papa-razzi 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 hybridic subtle meta-narrative, "You have no secrets. At the ATM, on the Internet, even walking down the street, people are watching you 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 same technology that has emplaced 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 profiteers from abuse? — pertain to public information about private lives and, of course, are applicable equally to current tabloid, or even more mainstream, 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 WNET's The Journal of Photography in New England.

**FOOTNOTE**
1. The New York Times, Diana's Nurturing: How Quincy Was Shakafied (Predicted this day in the by the Times' famous article, Fashion's Affair with the Plasti-Covered).
The Media, The Funeral and Diana, Princess of Wales
Ben Edwards

On Sunday August 31st the day started early at 5.00 am. As I was to race that morning I had been up very late the previous night. 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 unannouncing the death of somebody important, somebody royal.

I thought it must be the Queen Mother. My thinking was very naive. It was the Queen Mother, according to my understanding. The newswoman was informing the rest of Britain that Diana, Princess of Wales, and Dodi Fayed had died that morning in a car crash in Paris. The news was not clear, the newswoman 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 hysterical overdrive. Discussions over the royal family, funeral arrangements, the business of life and death and of course the mass hysterical overdrive.

At home the discussion gravitated toward Princess Diana and her life and now death. I was asked if I would be going to attend the funeral at Buckingham 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 story of 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 monumental. Blair’s words were the only news of 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 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 residence. News teams were outside the hospital in Paris. Preparations were made to telecast the whole event live over the air and 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 Diana was the center of news, in death.

The BBC had cancelled all regular programs for Sunday, and we watched the events at Diana’s residence 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 “what I was watching” and “what I was seeing,” and very real. It could not 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 tributes, 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 1, too, had become bombarded. I felt that I really should do some research and find out the events of the week. Many alternatives scanned through my mind. All of them cliched. The floral tributes, the personnel messages. None of these seemed comfortable. So I decided to take the 4th & 5th camera and Poloread land film down to Buckingham Palace and do portraits of the mourners arriving with their tributes. I felt I had not bated. But I recognized that I was under some sort of professional obligation to do something that week.

Thursday at lunch time, Fervor, 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 here. The event had followed Diana around religiously for the last 25 years and who had built his career around this. This was also the man who had wished he had taken the clandestine photo of her 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 me 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’s main anchors, inevitably being photographed for BBC publicity. His position for coming was so important that I was lucky enough to get on the entrance to Westminster Cathedral. The BBC had all their resources at central command. In fact, if you wanted to hire a broadcasting equipment, in England for that week, it would have been impossible as it was all here in central London.

Yet again I was reminded of the media’s 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 whole thing was 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 reported 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 photogenic landmarks, the thousands of mourners and the field of flowers that had grown to almost an acre. The scene was very solemn, hardly noisy, except for the 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 got hostage 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. Someone had parked the car on the driver was worried that he would not be able to get through police lines. We made it. Cannellini vigil 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 Good Morning camera crew. They became very excited and ran over to get this picture on the man with the owl and Merlin. 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. A dozen or so cameras women working behind me outside the palace was having a communication breakdown and was getting all the names wrong, asking her crew and waiting to make this the most important event that has ever happened.

In Hyde Park a mile away, two gigan tic video screens were set up and a quarter of a million people would be able to see the service live from the inside of Westminster Abbey. They set up 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 loving. The service finished, coffin left by car for the long journey up to Northampton where Princess Diana would be finally laid to rest.

Jews, 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 one that came from the photographers. That’s media. Two days later I watched Elton John being interviewed and we had the very common question of why he thought so many people mourned the passing of the Princess. His answer was one around hunger and the world was one.

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’s man, and courted by the media herself. Virtually cut off and ignored by the royal family and by her husband; Charles, for an older less attractive women. 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 dreams that they had cultivated. This is illustrated by the papers daily, Diana’s life was an ongoing soap opera, and we were distracted by this drama. Our mourning might well have been for the dream and these in lives today. Diana and the media offered this distraction.

Ben Edwards is a photographer based in England.
Carlos Diaz: Inventing Landscape 

Carlos Diaz: Invented Landscapes  
at the Houston Center for Photography  
February 27–March 29, 1998

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 bare 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 side shows. At Coney Island, the machines that led these peoples' lives were transformed into agents of pleasure.
absorb these commodities. And the market was in direct relation to the people directly embedded in the process 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.

The contemporary parallel between work and play makes the photographic collages of Carlos Diaz particularly poignant. In the tradition of collagists such as Hannah Höch, 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 people’s 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 Mendelssohn’s Railway Track 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 absurdity (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 Pentwater, 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 Ivy 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 continuing post 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 of 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 vicious 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 paradigms as much as he forces us to accept them.
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 mythology, Clement is inspired by heroic figures, characters from universal myth revered for nobility of endeavor or personal integrity. One of these, Iacovia, 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 and to use a term more suited to Clement's Eastern meditative practices, requires a separation between the body and the spirit—an
actual forlornness 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 suspended 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.

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**E X H I B I T I O N S**

Alain Gerard Clement, *Chalice*, 1999

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* Houston Center for Photography *
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
Sieverts-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 forgoten 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 Arnaldo Picoli 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 Tras 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 create it, 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 static or stereotypical phase. Youcami 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 begin to incorporate photography in your work.

Medici: Yes. In 1992 I met Luis Martin and Allonzo Castillo. Their enthusiasm, mixed with conversations about photographs, quickly captured 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 our studio. We spoke a lot and he even taught me how to put emulsion onto textile canvas. However, a certain amount of time had passed before I could feel tired of painting. This lead me to use radiography, 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 redefinition, something that at times could seem to happen with appropriation.

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

Medici: That was one of the criticisms made regarding my work. Some people felt that it was exceedingly biographical. That, however, does not care 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 one myself as a reference. As Sarte 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 chucking or breaking away until

...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 not 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 that. At times the artist has success 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 leftovers of everything that happens to him. That 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 come 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.

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 technique, the tasks can easily be assimilated. It is a matter of applying oneself with discipline and study. In crafting, it is not craftsmanship that I think important to create but that which is between craftsmanship and life, that which comes from that 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 know what he knows. People cannot see that they have the work of art within them. 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 FOTO/MUNDO. This interview originally appeared in Spanish in FOTO/MUNDO and was translated courtesy of FOTO/MUNDO and Pan American Cultural Exchange.
The Perfect Match of Craft to Idea

Carol Crow: A Remembrance
Houston Center for Photography
January 16–February 15, 1997

Clint W illour 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 Tsvanoff at Rice University. She also made busts of Angola Davis and Dr. Denton Cooley. She first studied photography in 1978 with Geoff W inningham 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 Blakemore at the Glassell School of Art. In the early 1990s, she discovered platinum printing. She took several workshops in platinum and palladium printing with John Daves and Dan Burkholder. Most black-and-white prints are made with silver, but a print made with platinum or palladium is 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 reveal. 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 Tupper 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.

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 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’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 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 tones are printed in such light tones they seem barely to emerge from the watercolor paper she chooses for printing, and in other images the flowers are darker and more erotic. In the Naudius print owned by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the object is floating in light, almost ghostly; in another print she takes some volume and substance.

Asked about Carol’s personality, people first refer to her graciousness and to her spirit. 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 of 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 photographers’ openings and rarely missed one at HCF, 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 W illour is the executive director/curator of the Galveston Arts Center and curator of Carol Crow: A Remembrance, Anne Willour Tupper is the Gus and LentaUd Wortham curator of photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.
MEIN KAMPF

I felt like I was looking into a dim来回 at something that was half forgotten and half-lot. 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. There 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, Adolf Hitler in his various, distinctive poses. And yet another is of the collection and extermination operations of the Final Solution. Excluding the lone photograph of the Menorah, it ends there.

Levinthal often makes use of childhood 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 Hitler and the Nazi elite. Levinthal was successful in adding casts found while ferreting about the ephemeral shops and 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 figure.

Levinthal went to work with the large Polaroid camera to produce his luminous 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 thin plane of critical focus, carefully placed. Levinthal spoke of becoming absorbed in that world where subtle shifts of focus or movement of the tops 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, consoled.

I respond to the aesthetic and the anesthetic qualities of his photographs. Beauty is his aesthetic: he offers a heavy layer of suffused color fields and blurred imagery. I would rather be soled 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 propaganda and dictatorship stripped of the specific details.

THE ILLEGAL CAMERA: Photography in the Nether-
lands 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 occupa-
tion, a group of Amsterdam photographers exhibited work chronicling life in Amsterdam under German control. Entitled The Hidden Camera, the exhibi-
tion’s duration was only ten days. It now, however, serves as the source for a much more exhaustive exhibition, The Illegal Camera, curated by Veronica Hekking and Flip Boel, organized by the Nether-
lands 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, photog-
raphy was limited to only approved sub-
jects and was restricted by a scrutiny of ma-
terials and equipment. Despite the prohibitions and hardships, Dutch citizens in an obviously intentional, but unconfessed, 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 hiding place among the Dutch. Consisting of over 30 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. Sudden explanatory text at the starting point of each section placed the work in context. Warfare and Occupation included images of a German officer omin-
ously passing by an American flower stand (Charles Brejner), German soldiers invading a small town (Neecht Roede) and the construction of the Atlantic Wall near the Hague (Mennon Huizinga). The confiscation of local goods by the Ger-
mans as well as the forced emigration of young Dutch workers to Germany were documented in Confiscation and Compulsory Labor. In one photograph, Fris Lamberts, standing outside a police station window, captured his brother in-
side staring out into the darkness after having been arrested.

In the numerous images under Perse-
cution of the Jews, the arrests of Jews for eventual deportation to concentration camps and the subsequent waiting peri-
od in round-up centers are 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 into an address connected to the underground resistance (Fritz Kihlenga). The cold winter of 1944–1945, which resulted in wide-
spread starvation, was documented in The Hunger Winter 1944–1945. The photo-
graphs representing these months included men tending wood illegally from empty dwellings (Menno Huizinga) and children carrying pots to a soup kitchen (Emmy Andriesse). Finally, under Mad Tuesday and Liberation, the mass confu-
sion caused by an inaccurate report of the advance of the Allies and the eventual lib-
eration 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 dam-
ning does unite 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 lit-
tle 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 appear-
ance of surveillance photographs. Though unlikely the product of aes-
thetic choice, the stylistic continuity of the images emphasized their signi-
ficance as documentation of a hidden world. Additionally, these formal similari-
ties 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 oc-
cupation (and in the context of the exhib-
i tion) that they fully carry meaning.

In this respect, The Illegal Camera em-
phasizes 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.
When Worlds Collide

SPACE A C E
Project Row Houses,
October 1997—April 1998
Tria Alhearth-Martn and
Nels P. Hightberg

Authors' Note: As we viewed the newest installation by St. Paul artist Colette Gaiter, SPACE A C E, at Project Row Houses, we realized how appropriate it was for us to be writing on articles that raise 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 knew 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 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 Artist/Critic Emily Nolen. 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 A C E, 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 conspicuous 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 viewers/participants 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 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 settings of the installation serve to make the questions it raises both local and significant to the individual viewer. It is tempting to imagine that this new house was home to people for whom civil rights was an immediate concern during the years discussed in its current context at the very least, it is reminder of the economic and personal issues at stake for all disadvantaged groups in our country. The use of space throughout 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 was 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 a playful combination of carnivorous "outside" nature of most of the events described. However, as the stories progress, the stories of individuals frequently come into play, forcing the texts. This was not to examine the nature of information which is formalized and validated through textual presentation.

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 this 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 curved 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 the voices of the aire, 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 kinds of events combined in the text; standard fonts describe events, while the more playful serif fonts 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 collage colors, which most often represent technical products made for popular use such as kitchen appliances, cars and eyewares. No attempt is made to hide the pixels in these printouts, calling attention both to the technology used to produce them and to the viewer should see them as representations of objects rather than as the objects themselves. Kitto is checked in these pictures through the use of colors and images immediately recognizable as part of the pre-psychedelic 1960s, a time period when the space race was the focus of much of the popular imagination. However, this sense of kitsch becomes ironic when overlaid with the serious subject matter of the texts. This was not to examine an era as we like to imagine it to be, or as the popular culture of the time 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 in terms of a "blackness" that waits to be conquered and exploted in terms that disturbingly echo the treatment of African-Americans in the United States, as well as in terms of a utopia where equality might still exist. Paradoxically, because it resists the presence of humans space still holds the promise of equality. Yet while the 1950s in the 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 Alhearth-Martn is a writer who lives in Brown, 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, 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 and 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 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 SPACER A.C.E. 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 explores 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, making "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 *The Twilight Zone* and the reruns of *Star Trek*. For example, the 1960s "era of science fiction" (as it is sometimes received) is a way of expanding the idea of the black hole by allowing the viewer to comment directly on the realities at hand. 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 statuesque figure 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 e-mail pages for granted? Gaiter notes the CD-ROM as a reflection upon the past, but her materials and style of presentation heighten our consciousness of the present as well. •

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As part of the exhibition, SPACER A.C.E., Colette Gaiter asks viewers to answer two questions. She incorporates all 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.mn.edu

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

Tit: "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 sync with a graying 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 think and I 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 shortedien 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.

Neil: 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 the story. The mention of the number of whites who attended the march, I guess so as not to alienate the predominantly 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?

Tit: 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 from the event, 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 outsider. "We landed on the moon, they said, and it was a "We" that I knew could never include me.

Note: I was born two months to the day after the moon landing, so for me this is mostly a simple mark in time.
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. Pellerman, Terry Tempest Williams
New York: Aperture, 1997

Peter Brown

In these pre-millennial, harried, humid days, the primary way that we have to experience the 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 talk radio or music, lose lost in thought or conversation, and as the land rolls by outside as backdrop, the bulk of what we see drifts into hue, 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 are 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 sudden — heading home from a long day, tuned in to local news, tired and for once compliant — an unblemish-ably 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 glory over at the collection of buildings on our right, wondering what Celanese is, and what strange containerment 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 our?), turn the air to max (starting off the intrusion, we hope), and stop 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 to probe sudden, 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 rooted to enlightenment. We're not sure we want to know that these plants, pits, watery ways 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 miplacean questions 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 Montanta 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, and tends 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, trans- scends the insolatility 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-gered animals of Montana and their shrinking habitats.

Hanson approaches Colstrip slowly, presenting it first as a distance, then in a variety of weather, then in more in-timate 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 a trip and mine and the waste fields that surround it. And the view is startlingly strange — an unearthly landscape ruled by gigantic machines and incomprehensible architecture. Hanson's grounded vantage point dissolves to 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 Pellerman. These short pieces bridge the gaps between Hanson's projects, and each has a particular truthfulness that we are risking. Along with the animals, the ground and the water, we will lose ourselves: well sentient, vulnerable, and, as these pieces indicate, to the whimsically brilliant people.

Hanson's second project concerns the Minuteman missile sites, 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 scattered into pastures and wheat fields with military precision — the same size, the same look to each site — each missile at once is packed a bomb 100 times the power of the one dropped on Hiroshima. And there they are: almost palpetic, looking like small untiled 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 — in the distance, a huge black and white miasma slowly emerged from the center of a wheat field. My scalp pricked 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 crisis a month later. There it was, this thing, this scream of death, rising up before our family, rising up out of those amber waves of grain.

The bulk of the book, and so the mind the most interesting section, follows Hanson's investigation 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 doesn't mean to say the 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
A Sense of Common Ground


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 New York on a U.S. plane in the company of aid workers and photojournalists. He watched as the latter, guided by the former, honed in on the scenes of acute suffering and despair to meet deadlines. As a Fulbright fellow, Sheikh did not have to move so quickly. As the son of a Kensington father and an American mother, the 27-year-old Sheikh watched with literally one eye or perhaps one eye — in each world, feeling a sense of unease, an inability to follow along and make the expected photographs. But his approach based on his intimate relationship with the subjects he had found, had its share of acute sufferings, but mostly it was full of people trying to make sense of circumstance, struggling to regain a feeling of normality amid great uncertainty and loss.

With his fellowship relieving him of the pressure of a statistician'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 peeked-off positive to the person photographed while he/ she 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 photographs; tools complemented well an approach based on his intimate 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 (in 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 white, settled people? With such transparency, with the portraits are clustered photos of barren grave sites, sparse vegetation and a number of fold-out triptychs of gray photographs. Throughout, there is a disturbing absence of things — tools, possessions, food, buildings, evidence of any kind of economy however marginal. This bareness, a consistent feature of the several camps he visited, shows clearly what anyone who has spent time in such a camp knows: that for many, desperation is born low of immediate danger than of enuf that our world is not so much frightening as it is devastatingly boring, and that yet on that stark stage there is, rightly, timelessly, mystery for deep bonds to form among families and individuals who in a common adversity are bound together.\n
Sheikh saw all this, and his portraits are as complex as the individuals he photographed. The images are not suffused; the image is not inner calm; a strength that neither idealizes (a distancing technique) nor dwells upon tragedy. Reflected here is also how Sheikh himself revelled 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 his 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 to their own conclusions, their neighbor-next-door quality that transcends victimization. This makes the pain and helplessness, so apparent in many faces, all the more real, like these things that could happen to any of us. These three 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, and the photographer, free to try to make the 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 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 photographers' consent, of their entirely willing engagement with the camera. There is no drama of mood-enhancing lighting here; most of the cases, the subjects are quite flat, even weakly out of focus; and the distance between subject and camera is kept fairly standard. Formally, we don't notice Sheikh; but emotionally, he's all over the place, culturally and contextually.

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 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 understating, emulating the kind of understanding that bring about changes in stereo- typic perceptions. Nowhere does this become more clear than on page 49 where Sheikh describes an encounter with a doctor (a Kenyan) who attributed the smoothing of severely malnourished Somali nomad infants to "the curious face of famine photography."

The doctor's comment stands with centuries of stereo-typing of Africans, and the eight pages that follow show pairs of Somali noma and African infants and their mothers, handshakes and kisses, all of whom each other with elemental grace and gentleness. In this way Sheikh brings a much needed enlargement of the viewer's circle of humanity, the abolition of "Otherness."

With this, his first book, he shows himself to be a sensitive, intelligent umfolozi within the human family.

But sadly, he fails to engage the stereo- type of African poverty. Sheikh does not make it clear why he chose only on these several groups of destitute refugees as a subject for documentary work. In Africa theS on These of them, almost all have been abandoned. Within the scope of the images and his exemplary methods, these people have not always been in such circumstances. They have always been a home, rural, villages, professions, educations of varying degrees. By focusing only on the moment of dispossession, he feeds the stereotype of impoverished, literally bruto Africa.

Portraits or other photographs that include even minimal evidence of refugee economics, longitudinal data that depict former refugees post-camp settings would have done much to this end. The dullness of camp life makes plenty of sense in a climate where refugees know friends or relatives who might help, and, so what of the hopes of the people photographed? Their losses are about to be home, rules, but their futures are left blank and this is ultimately dehumanizing.

Because the book is the product of a series of one trip 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 occupa- tions, evidence of former social status and hopes and plans — anything to breathe the photographs with a blank future or to confirm it against what it is.

These photos — and their real-life subjects — are too good to be under- estimated. We need more people like this; Sheikh has clearly established himself as a photographer with a powerful, important voice. He shows us that even in this time of the instant, the picture- maker can still knit the human community a little closer together and give us reason to believe that again that progress is possible, that our actions and attitudes toward it that the world is indeed a better place where we listen more closely to one another.

Houston photomontagist Dick Doughty is co-author of Gaze of Legacy — A Photographer's Journey (Ecmom Press, 3595)

Fazal Sheikh: Recent Photographs exhibit at the Houston Center for Photography, November 7 — December 1, 2001.
My Evening With The In Crowd

Susan Kirchman

Editor's Note: On the Spot is a new column. We will feature first-hand, often eye-bleeding 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, "Damn! Can I go?" The opening was to be December 1, and the museum would officially open to the public on the 14th. I didn't think I would be able to get out to Santa Monica in time because of a teaching schedule. My second response was, "I can't go!" I rationalized this with a big dose of, "I owe it to my students as much as I owe it to an architect; I teach photography in a college of architecture. My friend, Tom Liehman, 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 11 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 a 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 beded 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 has 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. The tram rode very slowly in his tuxedo, but we were both of the fabulously dressed crowd. I felt fashion-security in my black suede dress and black shoes and accessories. I knew that even my shoes were comfortable in spite of their strapiness. This was important because I was sure that we could in all six buildings. It was 6:30 p.m. and the view as we rode up the tram was a glinting 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 life scene but was distracted by the growing realization that my thigh-high stockings were acting like they would rather be ankleless. Instead of taking in the splendor of the scene, this monument to high culture, I found my self babbling across the expansive foyer, obsessed with finding the closest women's room. Some deck black dresses might be long enough to camouflage such 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 sopping hose, trying to keep them from landing around my ankles.

Passing the row of servers, each offering large silver trays filled with bubbling glasses of champagne, I finally found my sanctuary, inside the marble-fitesse, many-paned women's rest room. 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 high highs. One of the other guests sympathetic to my plight offered to find safety pins. Safety pins in black stockings! So much for fashion being 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 on to the museum site at <www.reed.edu/gettrichtench/>. 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 the anecdotal fact that I did have 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, 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 favorite pavilions was the Masterpieces of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscript Illumination exhibition. This exhibit consisted of 12 manuscripts from the collection of the Getty, recently acquired by the Getty Museum since 1983 and spans the 10th to the 16th centuries. These exquisite books, painted with gold, silver and rubies are magnificent and are wonderfully displayed. The evening was unseasonably cold and very windy. I had hoped to see the spectacular thirteenth century Central Garden created by California artist, Robert Irwin, but a gale was out there — way too cold for those of us in our sit-to-there evening attire.

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