

SPOT

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Dornith Doherty • David Douglas Duncan

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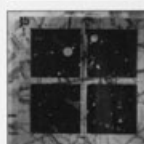
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**HOMES AND GARDENS:
DOCUMENTING THE INVISIBLE -
IMAGES OF KOSOVO**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
MELANIE FRIEND
HOUSTON CENTER FOR
PHOTOGRAPHY
SEPT. 19-NOV. 1, 1998

Dick Doughty

British freelance photographer and sometime BBC radio reporter Melanie Friend has been visiting the Balkans since 1989. The region that gripped her at once, well before it began to make headlines, was Kosovo, whose autonomy was revoked by the government of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic that same year. Friend became familiar first-hand with the tactics of the Serbian police, who rapidly spread fear through the predominantly non-Serbian, Albanian Muslim population. As a result, her visits were generally brief and a bit clandestine, always subject to film confiscations and surveillance that put anyone who helped her potentially at risk (yet she won the confidence of many who went out of their way to help her).

She faced a dilemma that photography, dependent as it is on that which can be seen, is poorly suited to address: How do you photograph something that, within the bounds of reasonable safety, you cannot witness? Abductions took place quickly and at night over a geographically diffuse area, and there was no possibility of photographing in Serbian jails. Beatings and searches were random. Although certain areas would be closed off by the police — strong evidence that violence of some kind was being perpetrated — these events were carefully orchestrated to take place out of sight of anyone who might document it. Deprived at every turn of what journalists call "access," she was unable to extract the kind of familiar, shock-based images of conflict, which usually depend upon the juxtaposition of signs connoting the conflicting parties, that are the daily grist of war photography. Nor was there much visual evidence that could give her material for post facto images: scars, burned homes, bodies and so on. She found a society characterized by fear, and the imminent threat that once the Serbian military forces were finished in Bosnia, they would turn to the expulsion of non-Serbs in Kosovo — a fear that was to prove justified. But for Friend, the question remained: How does one photograph such a state of affairs? And given the humanitarian urgency of the situation, how does one do so in a way that can interrupt the visual monologue of news images and generate some measure of outrage to stop an atrocity?

HARROWING TRANQUILITIES



"...when I got in the house, everything was broken and my 67 year old father was beaten almost to death. He was hit on the head with a truncheon and in the back with guns. My father died less than a year after this. He was very disturbed after what happened and never recovered."



"Every day we hear of terrible new happenings...every minute we are afraid that they may come back, and every time the bell rings, the kids get frightened and ask me to open the door. Any time this happens they jump and say 'Mum it's the police, come to take Daddy away.'"



"My husband was in Austria visiting our son, when the police came here. There were about seventy, kicking the doors, chasing around my mentally handicap son. They asked 'Where is your husband?' My husband has a permit gun; I brought the gun and one policeman hit me hard in the face. I fell to the ground and was unconscious for three hours. Later I was told that everyone was screaming, my two boys were beaten in the yards and were left with bleeding hands. When my family said they must send me to hospital, the police said 'It's nothing if an Albanian dies.' Now I have hypertension and high blood pressure and at night I have nightmares of my sons being beaten. The police thought they'd killed me so they didn't stay more than an hour."



"...The police searched everywhere looking for my husband and then left. Immediately I made the beds thinking that they had really gone. I got my little two year old daughter and changed her diapers, when suddenly they came back and three of them came in. They started searching all over again and they were swearing and shouting at me..."

She was certainly not the first photographer to face this question, but her response to it was one of the most imaginative and thought-provoking I have seen.

"In the summer of 1993 I interviewed an elderly Albanian man in Kosovo who had been beaten up by Serbian police on the floor of his living room. A reproduction of Constable's 'Haywain' hung on the wall, and sun streamed through the window onto sheepskin rugs. His son, a farmer, had also been beaten up. The police had pinned him against the wall of the house and threatened him with machine guns. As I left the house with its trimmed garden lawn and colorful flower beds, its deck chair on the verandah, I was reminded of English lawns and English gardens. In the village I saw several houses which had been abandoned by their owners, who had fled abroad. Even as far back as 1993, the Albanians I spoke to called this 'slow-motion ethnic cleansing' by their rulers, the Serbs. I never forgot the sharp contrast between the beauty of that village and the terror of what I had heard. When I returned to the village in 1994, again for an all-too-brief visit (owing to the daily police patrols), the old man was dead. He had never recovered from the brutal blows he had received around the head, and in the back, with guns."

Friend built on that irony of the orderly domestic interior in which an obscene act had taken place, the rape of the family refuge, by photographing exclusively the interiors of homes and their immediate, private environs and juxtaposing them with transcribed testimony describing the abuses suffered under the Serbian police. She amplified the visual impression of serenity by photographing her scenes during full daylight, without artificial lights and in medium format, in which the square boundaries of the frame give the

image the repose of symmetry. There are no people: To show a face, she says, would have exposed the person to potential harm. Yet she turns this limitation to her advantage by choosing photos of homes in which the tracings of individuals are more visible in the resident's absence, for in such images the viewer relies on the decor, the furnishings and the personal knickknacks that are as idiosyncratic as one's own. Friend printed her images small (12" by 12"), and framed them in unfinished wood without mattes or other borders. There are 16 images in the show, and although they are arranged linearly they are not in any way sequential. They are in a sense cells of a larger visual body, which is a meta-image that is the whole of the show. Altogether, *Homes and Gardens* is about as low-key and understated as photography gets, let alone war photography. It is an antithesis. Friend is pointedly rejecting the overworked visual values of news photography and calling attention to her subject by the sheer distance she goes in that rejection.

What gives the show its subtle, ominous power is the viewer's knowledge that these photographs are not at all what they seem: These are crime scenes. The absence of the literal representation of the violent act or anything — or anybody — relating to its immediate consequences, the depiction of which virtually defines war photography, throws all that violence back onto the viewer's imagination. This is of course far more fertile ground, and it is cultivated by Friend's several layers of verbal contexts: her diminutive, thoughtful catalog could be utilized to good effect in any course on photojournalism and, most centrally, her live tape of interviews with Albanian residents of Kosovo speaking about their troubles, sometimes in English, sometimes in Albanian, each identified on a gallery transcript only as "woman, age 37" or "student, age 18."

Their unassuming but often tense voices collapse distance and turn the *Homes and Gardens* from a photo exhibit into a politically charged installation. The anonymity of the voices and the lack of a literal connection to the photos — we are not told whether or not the interviews relate to one or more of the homes photographed — generalize the images, making them Friend's metonyms for Kosovar experience: "This is where we live; this is what is happening to us; we would show you our faces if we could."

Beyond the immediate strength of the installation, *Homes and Gardens*' very success stimulates broader questions about the conventions of photo-documentary in conflict situations. If one accepts the premise that photographing and exhibiting the immediate suffering of others is morally acceptable only if the intent of both photographer and viewer is to collapse a sense of "other-ness" that leads to ameliorative effort (without this one is left with voyeurism, "war-nography"), then has "straight" documentary photography — and particularly the news-oriented 35mm variety — become an exhausted medium whose visual tune has become a drone? If not, then why, with ever more photography of conflict to be seen, and the consequent opportunities for "awareness" ever more, that it is, with notable exceptions, so ineffective? Or is the problem that viewers are presented time after time with only victims — as we are, obliquely, in *Homes and Gardens* — for which no amount of empathy can aid in developing the practical understanding of the victimizers' motives, which might help us understand the root, rather than the fruit, of the problem? (Many photojournalists are keenly aware of this, but there is a methodological problem, particularly for those on a publications deadline: The perpetrators of violence hold power in the situation and often control access to their acts, whereas the victims are eager to have their situation literally "exposed" in hopes of alleviation by those capable of checking the perpetrator.) Yet it is further possible that the problem lies neither with the medium nor with the methods of its practitioners but rather with its two main sets of users — publishers who too often fear challenging

readers, and readers content to pay for drivel, both of whom on the mass scale result in news publications that with few exceptions exhibit bovine reliance on the most basic, iconic visual tropes. Now, if these are not relevant questions, then why is Friend's presentation and contextualization so methodologically refreshing and intriguing, so moving?

Early this year, when the onset of NATO's bombing of Serbia led to the increased Serb repression that virtually emptied Kosovo of non-Serbian Kosovars, *Homes and Gardens* passed from current events to history. Now, just as Friend forces us to imagine what happened in the interiors she depicts, so we must also imagine what has happened to these homes and families. This brings up two ironies. First, as Kosovars return to their lands and what is left of their homes, it is the Serbs in the province, those who collaborated actively or passively with the brutality about them, that now fear retribution from the neighbors they thought had been driven out for good. The line between justice and vengeance may be blurry, yet in the coming years it is hardly inconceivable that there may be cause for a Serbian version of *Homes and Gardens*, as the centuries-old Balkan cycle of abuse enters a new phase. Secondly, because *Homes and Gardens* is specific to its historical time, it can be viewed more easily as a work-in-progress in Friend's ongoing documentation in the Balkans. This year, she has made two trips to photograph and assist her friends who were among the refugees — not necessarily in that order. She was shooting in the refugee camps of Macedonia in May and June, again in medium format. Yet the situation has inspired something of a forced inversion of her subject matter: With the Kosovars stripped of the domiciles that appear in *Homes and Gardens*, she has turned to the portrait — the very type of photograph she longed to make but could not so long as her subjects lived under Serbian authority.

It is easy to succumb to the popular myth that communications and imaging technology are making the world ever more accessible to being contained in words and images, as if quantity of representation might threaten to seduce us by sheer volume into believing that no stone remains unturned. *Homes and Gardens* reminds us of the limitations of our conventional representational strategies while thoughtfully pointing to expanded possibilities for documentary media.

Photojournalist, writer and editor Dick Doughty is co-author of *Gaza: Legacy of Occupation — A Photographer's Journey*.

SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH: The Making of Robert Frank



All photographs copyright Robert Frank, courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Robert Frank, *Trolley, New Orleans, 1955-56*

R. Eric Davis and Tracy Stephenson

It is difficult to sum up the work of Robert Frank in a few hundred words. In a career spanning six decades, the Swiss-born American photographer has made thousands upon thousands of photographs and over 20 films and videos. More than a dozen books have been privately and commercially made about his work. This article, therefore, considers the period leading up to and discusses his seminal works, *The Americans*, *Pull My Daisy* and *Me and My Brother*.

Robert Frank served his first apprenticeship in 1941 with Hermann Segesser, a photographer who lived in the flat above his parents. It was with Segesser that Frank began to develop his technical prowess. His photographic style developed and technical skills refined further by serving two more apprenticeships with commercial photographers through 1944. During these years Frank also began his filmmaking experience by serving as a still photographer for the film *Landammann Stauffacher* and as assistant to Walter Weller, the still photographer on *Steibruch*.¹

After the end of the war, Frank traveled to Italy and France. His first sojourns helped him begin to see the possibilities in the world at large. These opportunities, of course, were leading him, and many others, toward America. So, in 1947, reacting to what he considered the stifling, narrow mindset of his native country, Robert Frank went to the United States. Along with letters of recommendation, Frank took along with him a copy of his first photo book, *40 Fotos*, containing spiral bound photographs that would serve as a visual introduction to his exceptional technical skills and ability to create diverse imagery.

Almost immediately he was hired by Alexey Brodovitch, art director for *Harper's Bazaar* and *Junior Bazaar*. Brodovitch was becoming well known

for his cutting-edge layouts and for nurturing young talent. At the time Frank was hired for \$50 a photograph, Brodovitch also had Richard Avedon, Diane Arbus and Louis Faurer on staff.²

Despite Brodovitch's willingness to accept somewhat experimental work to give *Harper's* a very contemporary look, Frank became increasingly disillusioned with the controlled nature of the commercial photographs he was creating. Still seeking a way to expand upon photography's intellectual capacity led him to leave New York and begin exploring. He spent six months traveling in South America and doing work for himself. In his words, he "didn't think of what would be the correct thing to do; I did what I felt good doing."³

The years 1949 through 1954 were ones that would have a large impact upon Frank's intellectual consideration of photography. After returning from the freedom of photographing what he wanted in South America, he began to divest himself of doing only fashion photography and looked more to doing freelance work. He found these years to be a "training camp" where he "tried out things. I learned about life. ... I entered into a more conscious period where I knew more about what I was doing and what I wanted."⁴

During these intervening years, Frank's personal life would take a turn. He met and ultimately married Mary Lockspeiser. Their first child, Pablo, was born in 1951. A second child, Andrea, was born in 1954. Between 1951 and 1953 Robert, Mary and Pablo, spent a great deal of time in Europe. It was during this time that Frank's stylistic manner began driving

him toward *The Americans*. The family spent time in Paris, Valencia, London and Wales. While in Europe, Frank produced photographic essays on bankers in London (1951), bullfighting in Spain (1952) and a Welsh miner (1953).

After finishing the Welsh miner series, the Frank family returned to the United States where the artist underwent something of an intellectual transformation. He decided that life had become too complicated to produce a single all-encompassing masterpiece — one picture that summed up his experience. As a result of his various trips abroad where he photographed as a foreign "observer" of life, Frank resolved to turn this power of observation into a "visual study of civilization," a look

inward at his adopted homeland, America.⁵ He was encouraged by, and given references from, Walker Evans, Alexey Brodovitch, Meyer Schapiro, Alexander Liberman and

Edward Steichen to apply for a Guggenheim Foundation grant to pursue his newfound mission.

In his application to the Guggenheim Foundation, Frank stated that he would not be attempting "the photographing of America" as that would be a literally absurd undertaking.⁷ He had in mind an "observation" of America from the point of view of a naturalized American. He was particularly interested in "things that are there, anywhere and everywhere."⁸ This more pragmatic endeavor, in Frank's opinion, would provide a catalogue of such things. His vision included "a town at night, a parking lot, a supermarket, a highway, the man who owns three cars and the man who owns none, the farmer and his children, a new house and a



Robert Frank, *Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1955*

warped clapboard house, the dictation of taste, the dream of grandeur, advertising, neon lights, the faces of the leaders and the faces of the followers, gas tanks and post offices and backyards ..."⁹ Frank applied to the Foundation in October 1954 and received a one-year grant in April 1955. He later applied for and received an extension to bring the project to fruition.

The Americans is a penetrating visual tale. It has everything: death, despair and cynicism, but also images of palpable energy, a perception of truth, happiness and hope. This is America. The past, present and future coexist in these pictures. This is not civilization lost and found. This is America.

Frank's photographs of America are about more than a physical place. The images are not so much pure social documentary as they are, in many ways, entries in a visual diary — an interpretation and explanation of a foreign life in a foreign land, even for those who inhabit said land, now looked upon as post-modern *vanitas*. It is a constructed, perhaps even fictional, reality, but never unfaithful.

In Frank's America, like many Raymond Carver short stories, life is roughly carved out. Chances present themselves and choices are made. It is the type of place where, in the blink of an eye, everything can change. Frank finds a startling beauty in this mystery of the uncertain, unnoticed and unexpected. This is the Land of the Free, Home of the Brave. We know these people ... we are these people. This was and is America. This is a land we only think we understand.

The Americans was first published in 1958 in France because Frank could not convince an American publisher of its importance. In 1959 he was finally able to get the American company, Grove Press, to publish the book with an introduction by the Beat poet, Jack Kerouac. Despite the initial criticism of the book, it has gone on to be reprinted many times in several languages. It is an artistic icon of a time gone by. Jack Kerouac perhaps best summed up the images and resulting book. He said, "What a poem this is, what poems can be written about this book of pictures some day by some young new writer high by candlelight bending over them describing every gray mysterious detail, the gray film that caught the actual pink juice of human kind. Whether 'tis the milk of humankindness, Shakespeare meant, makes no difference when you look at these pictures. Better than a show."¹⁰

Robert Frank moved from photography to filmmaking when he felt he had to tell a story. Concerned that he would repeat himself if he remained a photographer, Frank turned to motion pictures when his preoccupation with his own life moved him away from the single image toward the narrative-driven format of film. Friend and filmmaker Rudy Wurlitzer said that Frank "constantly resurrects himself like a phoenix ... he reinvents himself again to find out how to look at things ..." with each new project.¹¹

Most of Frank's filmography is autobiographical and completely personal. His life is so deeply connected to his work there is little separation between what he does and who he is. His courage to share details about himself with audiences makes his films difficult to categorize. His persistent method of combining documentary and fiction within the same narrative framework is often difficult for viewers to discern. Pioneer underground

filmmaker Jonas Mekas describes Frank as an artist who "seeks the truth ... and one who reminds us not to forget the challenges in our own lives."¹²

Since 1986, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston has served as the archive and distributor of films and videos by Robert Frank. Currently 18 titles are available to universities, film festivals and cinemas across the United States and Canada. In the past, Frank's films have appeared as part of the cinema history curriculum at the Harvard Film Archive and Columbia University, honored at international film festivals, and featured in recent retrospectives in New York and Los Angeles. Frank's newest works include *The Present* (1996), in which the artist contemplates his relationships, the anniversary of his daughter's death, his son's mental illness and his work from his homes in New York and Nova Scotia. *Flamingo* (1997) is a seven minute poetic diary recording the construction of a new foundation for Frank's Nova Scotia home, and *I Remember* (1998), a reenactment of Frank's visit to the home of photographer Alfred Stieglitz.

The American independent cinema was in its infancy when Robert Frank's *Pull My Daisy* appeared in 1959. Co-directed with painter Alfred Leslie, the film was quickly acknowledged as a small masterpiece and is now credited, along with John Cassavetes' *Shadows*, as the point of origin for American avant-garde cinema. In 1996, the film was named to the library of Congress's National Film Registry and released on video for the first time.¹³ Premiering at the same time the groundbreaking photography book *The Americans* was published in the United States, *Pull My Daisy* is based on the third act of Jack Kerouac's un-produced play, *The Beat Generation*. Unfortunately for the filmmakers, MGM had copyrighted the title *The Beat Generation* and, in 1959, released a B/exploitation movie of the same name. A new title, however, came from an erotically charged poem written as part of a jazz-styled jam session by Kerouac, Neal

Cassady and Allen Ginsberg, called *Pull My Daisy*. The title refers to the term for the removal of a stripper's G-string. The poem was rewritten and subsequently scored by the composer David Amram. The resultant piece became the theme song to the film, which was sung by Anita Ellis. Much to the chagrin of both Kerouac and Ginsberg, some words were changed for the recording.¹⁴ The film focuses on a visit from a bishop to the New York City loft of Milo (painter Larry Rivers) and his family. It is based on an actual incident that took place while friends Kerouac, Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky were visiting Neal Cassady in California. *Pull My Daisy* alternates between chaotic action and filmic order. Ginsberg states that the film is respectful of the actors as poets, and has the quality of "playing for eternity while at the same time being right there in time."¹⁵

The film is shot silent; so Kerouac's improvised narration becomes both a freewheeling commentary on the action

premiered at the San Francisco International Film Festival and was released on video the same year. *Me and My Brother* explores society's reaction to mental illness by incorporating fictional and documentary cinematic devices to tell the story. The film also raises questions concerning voyeurism, exploitation, acting versus real behavior and the illusion of truth. After spending years in a New York State hospital, Julius Orlovsky is released into the care of his brother, who lives with fellow poet and lover, Allen Ginsberg. His condition is diagnosed by doctors, romanticized by psychiatrists and medicated by professionals. At one point, Peter Orlovsky forgets to administer Julius' medication and his brother disappears during a California poetry tour. Julius' deliberate stare, detached behavior and silence makes filming a movie about him difficult to complete; his disappearance complicates matters even more.

The problems Frank encounters while filming *Me and My Brother* over a three-year period become a metaphor for the struggle to bring truth to the screen. Julius' lack of cooperation in the making of the film and his disappearance become a symbol of Frank's struggle to control his subject matter. In *Pull My Daisy*, he uses improvisation, narration and real people acting as themselves to challenge the limitations of fiction. In *Me and My Brother* he expresses the difficulties onscreen, constructing

a film-within-a-film to comment on the medium's reliability. Frank decides to hire an actor to play Julius: Joseph Chaikin mimics Julius' gestures and behavior in front of a movie screen with images of Julius projected on it. Chaikin's image eventually replaces Julius' projected self and the actor becomes the "character" of Julius. Addressing issues of acting versus real life with this technique emphasizes the alienation Julius must feel in his own life, and underscores Frank's statement on the "unreality" of film. He reinforces that even documentary footage is unreliable because, as the audience sees it, what appears onscreen is only an interpretation of the subject matter.

Me and My Brother returns to the real Julius after he is found in a Napa Valley hospital. As Peter Orlovsky discharges his brother, who has undergone shock treatment while hospitalized, Robert Frank's awareness and understanding of his part in the voyeuristic project becomes clearer. From behind the camera, the audience hears Frank question Julius about how he feels being the subject of a documentary.

JULIUS ORLOVSKY: Well, the camera is a, uh ... seems like a, uh ... a uh ... a uh ... a uh ... a uh ... a uh ... a uh ... uh, a reflection of disapproval or disgust or, uh... or disappointment, or ... uh ... unhelpfulness ... ness, or, uh, unexplanation — unexplaining ... unexplainability ... inability ... unexplainability ... ability ... ability ... to, uh ... to, uh ... disclose any real real, uh, truth that might, uh, possibly exist.

ROBERT FRANK: Where does the truth exist?

JULIUS ORLOVSKY: Inside and outside the world. Outside the world is ... well, I don't know¹⁷

The viewer comes away from the film cognizant that in life there is no screenplay and that Frank questions himself and all others whose lives seem to always be part of a performance. He has emerged with a better understanding of his own limitations in seeking the truth on film.

Robert Frank shows detailed, unsparring scenes of his relationships with the people around him in his film projects. His technique has set the course of his film career: no rules, constant experimentation and subjects close to home. At times he stands in front of the camera, as a reflection in a window or a voice on the soundtrack, and the scenes become like pages from a journal. "I'm always doing the same images. I'm always looking outside, trying to look inside. Trying to tell something that's true. But maybe nothing is really true. Except what's out there — and what's out there is always changing."²¹⁸

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FOOTNOTES

1. Both German language dramas were made in Switzerland. Leopold Lindtberg directed *Landmann Stauffacher* (1941). Sigfrid Steiner directed *Steibruch* (1942).
2. Patricia Bosworth, *Diane Arbus*. New York: Avon Books, 1984, p. 166.
3. Sarah Greenough, "Fragments that Make a Whole Meaning in Photographic Sequence," in *Robert Frank: Moving Out*. Washington, D.C./Zurich: National Gallery of Art/SCALO, 1994, p. 104.
4. *Ibid.* p. 105.
5. The children's presence would weigh heavily in Frank's later projects including the film, *Conversations in Vermont* (1969); the video, *Home Improvements* (1983-85); and several photographs. Andrea died tragically in an airplane crash, at the age of 20, in 1974 in Guatemala. Pablo, who had long been treated for mental illness, committed suicide in 1994.
6. Anne Wilkes Tucker and Philip Brookman, editors. *Robert Frank: New York to Nova Scotia*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, and Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1986, p. 20. Quotes for notes 6 to 9 are taken from the reproduction in this exhibition catalogue of Frank's application for a Guggenheim Foundation grant.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. Robert Frank, *The Americans*. Revised edition, Millerton, New York: An Aperture Monograph, 1978. Introduction by Jack Kerouac, pp. 6-7.
11. *Fire in the East: A Portrait of Robert Frank* (1986). Directed by Philip and Amy Brookman. Produced by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Houston Public Television (KHUT), United States. Videotape, b/w and color, 28 minutes.
12. *Ibid.*
13. The National Film Registry annually adds films of historic and aesthetic importance to celebrate film's legacy and to encourage cinematic preservation.
14. Jack Sargeant, *The Naked Lens: An Illustrated History of Beat Cinema*. London, England: Creation Books, 1997.
15. *Fire in the East*.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Me and My Brother* (1968). Directed and Cinematography by Robert Frank. Produced by Helen Silverstein. United States. 35-mm, b/w and color, 91 minutes.
18. *Home Improvements* (1985). Directed and produced by Robert Frank. United States. Videotape, color, 29 minutes.



Robert Frank, *Convention Hall, Chicago, 1955-56*
All photographs copyright Robert Frank, courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York and
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

and the voice of all the characters. The poets talk to the bishop (Richard Bellamy) about religion and the meaning of life while Milo's wife (Delphine Seyrig from *Last Year at Marienbad*) attempts to restore order in the loft. As the evening progresses, discussion turns to nonsense and drunkenness. Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie edit Kerouac's narration from different takes and add the original jazz soundtrack composed by David Amram.

Robert Frank loved looking at the response of people to the filmed disorder of his debut film. With *Pull My Daisy*, he successfully conveyed the growing tensions between the Beat generation and the middle class American values involving family, religion and the work ethic. Filmmaker Emile de Antonio states that the film contained "what everyone was hiding in the 1950s: drugs, homosexuality, a different view of the world [That was all part of] the Beats: total indifference to everything that would make the Westchester matron's jaw[s] drop."¹⁸ *Pull My Daisy* is a revelation of what the world was about to be — all of the political, sexual and general upheaval that was represented in the 1960s.

Me and My Brother also examines life on the margins of society. Between 1965 and 1968, Frank worked with Sam Shepard, Allen Ginsberg and Julius and Peter Orlovsky on the 35mm feature concerning the complex nature of the relationship between Beat poet Peter Orlovsky and his institutionalized brother Julius. Incidentally, Frank re-edited this film in 1997 as a tribute to his late friend, Allen Ginsberg. The new version of *Me and My Brother*

FILMOGRAPHY

- Pull My Daisy*, 1959, b/w, 28 min.
The Sin of Jesus, 1961, b/w, 40 min.
O. K. End Here, 1963, b/w, 30 min.
Me and My Brother, 1965-68 (re-edited 1997),
b/w and color, 91 min.
Conversations in Vermont, 1969, b/w, 26 min.
Life-raft Earth, 1969, color, 37 min.
About Me: A Musical, 1971, b/w, 35 min.
Cocksucker Blues, 1972, b/w and color,
90 min.
Keep Busy, 1975, b/w, 38 min.
Life Dances On, 1980, b/w and color, 30 min.
Energy and How to Get It, 1981, b/w, 28 min.
Keep Busy, 1975, b/w, 30 min.
This Song for Jack, 1983, b/w, 30 min.
Home Improvements, 1985, color, 29 min.
Candy Mountain, 1987, color, 91 min.
Run, 1989, 5 min.
Hunter, 1989, b/w and color, 36 min.
C'est Vrai! (One Hour), 1990, color, 60 min.
Last Supper, 1992, color, 52 min.
Moving Pictures, 1994, b/w and color, 16 min.
The Present, 1996, 27 min.
Summer Cannibals, 1996, 5 min.
Framingo, 1997, 7 min.
I Remember, 1998, color, 5 min.



CONTACTING THE SPIRIT WORLD



Clockwise from top left:
Bill McDowell, *Bathroom light fixture*, Maplewood Hotel, 1994
Bill McDowell, *Kitty Osborne Meditating*, 1993
Bill McDowell, *Robert Shatzel Holding UFO Photographs*, 1996

BILL MCDOWELL
BANNER OF LIGHT:
THE LILY DALE PHOTOGRAPHS
HOUSTON CENTER
FOR PHOTOGRAPHY
MAY 7–JUNE 20, 1999

Michael Odom

The source and setting for this intelligently interconnected series of photographs is a small town in upstate New York, Lily Dale, that was founded in the 19th century by practitioners of Spiritualism, a loosely religious movement devoted to contact between the living and the spirits of the dead. For more than a century, Lily Dale-sanctioned mediums have offered believers guidance, advice and especially the reassurance that those who have died are not truly dead but have only passed on to another plane of being. Seances are regularly held as are private consultations and workshops on various aspects of spiritualist belief. In short, Lily Dale is a place where one can seek proof of continued well-being beyond the grave and attend classes with titles like "Ascension 101."

William James (to whom McDowell sometimes refers when discussing these images) once observed that a person's

predilections can affect religious experiences profoundly; Catholics are much more likely to see visions of the Virgin than are Muslims, for example. For a hard-headed skeptic like me, the residents of Lily Dale present simple targets of opportunity. A few of the Lily Dale photographs allow my skepticism to bloom evilly. *Kitty Osborne Meditating* (1993), the image of a middle-aged woman sitting with eyes closed in front of a house whose roof sports a huge satellite dish, suggests a coldly ironic disbelief about mediumistic practice — at least to me — as it nourishes my latent sarcasm. Meditation on the beyond? Yeah, right. Trinitron transcendence is more like it. It's a fierce association of mutually exclusive modes of communicating with the Great Beyond, this apparent conflation of mysticism and electronic engineering.

But McDowell brings an understanding generosity and a notable patience to his task, a sympathy born of familiarity with his subject. Eight years elapsed between his first visit to the community and his first photograph there, and five more years passed before the project was done. The very deliberate pace offered ample time for the town's atmosphere of spiritual yearning to saturate the images and the picture-maker alike and for the photographer to finely tune his understanding of the unfolding project.



Bill McDowell, *Discarded Notebook Paper, Message Service Site*, 1996

Consequently, McDowell's work is not as simple as it might first appear. He proceeds from a genuine affection for his subjects and a tolerance for their foibles born of his own sometimes positive experiences with Spiritualism. So in the context of the whole photo series, Osborne's dish loses any meaning I might read into it at first.

And therein lies much of the power of these pictures. McDowell describes this work as turning on the "odd relationship between document and metaphor," which is as concise a formulation of the problems of reading an image as one is likely to find. Complexities of modes of interpretation, the relationship of what we see to what we might see, pulse through the series as a whole.

The special aura of Lily Dale was the original context for these photographs. The light that exposed the film reflected off the skins of people and the surfaces of objects in a particular New York village at

where. Particularly in the later pictures, the idea of context shifts markedly away from social and geographical location to an internalized, self-supporting system of interlocking meanings and gorgeous formal relations that is much more akin to poetry than documentary reportage.

The visual congruence of the rings of Saturn as represented on placemats as in *Hilda Wilkinson discussing astrology at her dining room table* (1994), in a mobile, *Planets mobile*, Wilkinson house (1996), with a couple of old ceiling lights *Bathroom light fixture*, *Maplewood Hotel*, (1994), and *Light fixture and window*, *Lewis apartment* (1996) constitutes more than a lovely formal exercise. Crossing the all-important frames of pictures with visual rhymes like these asserts a continuity of content and form that posits the photographic series itself as the primary context for their interpretation. Even though each image can stand alone on some levels, pictures that claimed their individuality too assertively were edited out of the series, according to the artist.

Spirit paintings — paintings alleged to have been made by the spirits of the dead and thus to provide powerful evidence of the continued presence of departed souls among the living, according to the Spiritualists — often appear



Bill McDowell, *Spirit Painting*, *Maplewood Hotel*, 1996

photography, smooth and shiny, made as if by magic in a darkroom. Not coincidentally, McDowell reshot several Spiritualist photographs at Lily Dale, too. Three pictures from 1996 lovingly show an elderly man's hands holding snapshots of UFOs, a baby leprechaun and unnamed spirits.

The latter image is identified as fraudulent in the caption, suggesting the absence of fraud in the other two.

Regardless of the (to me, highly doubtful) facture of spirit paintings and photographs or their truth value, their inclusion in the Lily Dale pictures presents a particularly resonant observation about the act of reading images in general to the extent that one's point of view profoundly informs their power to embody meanings. Like a Spiritualist looking behind the surfaces of ordinary states of affairs for evidence of an unseen world, I find myself looking at these photographs as carriers of poetic signification. I might call my system of analysis critical and semiotic and the Spiritualists' superstitious or even gullible, but there remains between us a common urge to seek meanings somehow embedded in the mute images before us. We want a deeper truth than we trust the surface to offer.

Yet photography records surfaces; it produces precise documents of the skins of things without regard for the relative value of its subjects, attending equally to trash and treasure. Much of the strength and the beauty of the Lily Dale photographs derives from McDowell's

ability to invest his images with a preternatural calm even if the overt subject is essentially unimportant. Over the course of his project, McDowell came to notice that unlikely observations and seemingly minor snatches of advice he got from the mediums (e.g., "Your fruit trees need pruning" from someone who ought to have no knowledge of his home at all, much less his fruit trees) carried much more significance for him than purport-

edly weightier pronouncements. These little lessons formed what he calls a "white crow" experience, borrowing from William James' characterization of an experience unexpected enough to alter one's habits of thought: Once you see a white crow, your concept of crows in general is forever changed. In such circumstances the commonplace can take on extraordinary meaning, as it does in McDowell's photographs. Images of a light fixture, a bit of note paper on the ground, an empty chair take on poetic power as their concrete particularity is made to contain more general ideas within the context of the photographic series. Their surfaces reflect more than light.

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Bill McDowell, *Hilda Wilkinson discussing astrology at her dining room table*, 1994

a particular time. The results are thus documents of a place and a time like no other in texture and detail. But McDowell has discarded the conventions of documentaries if he ever held to them. Having steeped himself in the village and its culture, he jettisoned signifiers of the place in these photos, relying on his sense of the subject instead. In a sense these images could have been made anywhere, even if it is quite doubtful that they would be made else-

either as background elements or primary subjects in McDowell's photographs. The paintings' apparent lack of overt brushwork constitutes proof of their non-corporeal origins for believers. It is interesting to note both the congruence of this idea of brushwork with the common Modernist notion that expressive gestures are signs of the artist's material "presence" in the painting and how nicely the lack of an artist's mark fits as a description of



Top: Bill McDowell, *Robert Shatzel Holding Spirit Photograph*, 1994

Above: Bill McDowell, *Robert S. with Fraudulent Spirit Photograph*, 1994

Photographic Narrative & the Imagination

WILLIAM EGGLESTON
PHOTOGRAPHS: THEN AND NOW
 THE MENIL COLLECTION
 HOUSTON, TEXAS
 MAY 28–SEPTEMBER 12, 1999

Kathleen Ottervik

"Bill Eggleston's stuff sure didn't strike me at first as 'good' photography. I mean, everything isn't always in focus, the 'subject' isn't always in the center (it's sometimes chopped off!) and the framing sure ain't what they advise in the Kodak manual. And, to top it off, unlike a lot of 'documentary' pictures, one can't even tell what some of the pictures are about. Isn't a picture supposed to be about something? Isn't it supposed to be telling us something? But I kept going back to look at them. More and more of them. As if by staring long enough I might penetrate their mystery and understand why they mess with my mind like they do."¹

William Eggleston has long been touted as the quintessential photographer of the banal. The commonplace is the subject he explores, challenging the notion of what is appropriate subject matter for photography. Yet, his images are anything but ordinary. A bare light bulb, kitsch objects, the contents of a freezer are the stage-sets for the narratives Eggleston constructs. These narratives are never clear cut. Eggleston invites the viewer to complete the story, imagining continued action beyond the confines of the photograph's frame. Often concentrating on a seemingly insignificant detail within the composition, Eggleston implies that the most important elements exist within the imagination. He successfully interweaves a sense of menacing oppression and wry humor, tapping into the fears and wit of his audience. Color, perspective and distance act as stage directions, leading the audience through Eggleston's "novel."²

One must be careful, however, not to

become overwhelmed by the photographer's seductive invitation to create a narrative. Because of the absence of explicit action, the photographs convey a sense of quiet, even emptiness. This stillness of subject acts as a foil for a cacophony of texture, pattern and line. These photographs, especially those from this year, are penetrating studies in form, surface detail, and color. Eggleston masterfully distracts the viewer with narrative possibilities, while insisting on a highly complex investigation of the nuts and bolts of aesthetics. John Szarkowski has argued that "In photography the pursuit of form has taken an unexpected course. In this peculiar art, form and subject are defined simultaneously. Even more than in the traditional arts, the two are inextricably tangled. Indeed, they are probably the same thing."³ In Eggleston's photographs, they are definitely the same thing.

The exhibition of Eggleston's photographs at The Menil Collection offers an excellent opportunity to explore this duality of subject and formal elements in Eggleston's oeuvre. *William Eggleston: Then and Now* includes 18 photographs, which illustrate the breadth of his career, while highlighting the strengths of the Menil's holdings. Thirteen photographs, ranging in date from 1972 to 1984, are drawn from the Menil's collection. Five photographs from 1999 were selected by the artist for this exhibition.

Eggleston was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1939. He attended Vanderbilt University, Delta State College and the University of Mississippi. He began to experiment with color photography in the late 1960s, presenting his work to John Szarkowski at the Museum of Modern Art in 1967. Walter Hopps has noted that, "With his unique vision of the real world, particularly the American South, Eggleston developed the color photograph as a singular medium and maximized the potential of color as a fundamental feature of perception."⁴

Eggleston is the recipient of the 1998 Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography, which celebrates "exceptional photographic achievement." He is the first to be honored for work in color photography. Past winners include Henri Cartier-Bresson, Irving Penn, Susan Meiselas and Robert Frank. The Hasselblad Center and Scalo



William Eggleston, *Elvis and Kennedy*, 1984

have issued a book of Eggleston's photographs to accompany the Hasselblad exhibition. The catalogue includes a brief introduction by Hopps, Curator and Founding Director of The Menil Collection; an essay by Thomas Weski, Curator of Photography and Media, the Sprengel Museum, Hanover; an interview with the artist by Ute Eskildsen, Director of the Department of Photography, Museum Folkwang, Essen; and 112 color reproductions. While both the Hasselblad catalogue and the Menil exhibition do not introduce groundbreaking perspectives on Eggleston, they do provide a very good introduction to his oeuvre and an opportunity to examine his recent work. As there has not been a comprehensive retrospective of the artist's work in the United States, the Menil show and the Scalo catalogue are valuable for newcomers to Eggleston's photographs.

The layout of the Menil show is not strictly chronological. Instead, thematic groupings articulate Eggleston's primary subject matter: interiors, landscapes and "everyday" objects. The first wall features two images from the 1984 *Graceland* portfolio. *Grave, Elvis and Kennedy*, along with *Neon Flag* (from the *Troubled Waters* portfolio, 1980), play on the notion of the banal through the use of iconic imagery. Like fellow artist Jasper Johns (born 1930), Eggleston challenges notions of content and form in art by concentrating on familiar symbols and objects. Eggleston invites the viewer to question meaning,

while, at the same time, he employs these "known" subjects as a forum for an exploration of color and surface texture. For example, in *Grave* the somber subject is contrasted with a panoply of vibrant colors and overwhelming surface activity of pattern and line.

The second wall of the exhibition more explicitly introduces Eggleston's transformation of the "most mundane and uneventful [to] the most riveting and ominous."⁵ Each photograph is drawn from the *Troubled Waters* portfolio and their dominant theme seems to be fear. The cautious glances of *Black Children in Field* echo the furtive gaze of the dog in *Dog in Shadows*. The seemingly ordinary *Freezer*, although well stocked, suggests poverty and lack. Eudora Welty has observed that, "What is there, however strange, can be accepted without question; familiarity will be what overwhelms us."⁶ These ostensibly innocuous subjects creep under your skin, leaving you unsettled and wanting another look. Through exceptional compositional skills, dramatic use of perspective and distance and affecting color, Eggleston transfigures the ordinary, capturing the extraordinary.

The ominous pervades the main wall of the exhibition, which features photographs primarily drawn from *William Eggleston's Guide*, edited by John Szarkowski and published by the Museum of Modern Art in 1976. Here, the photographer's virtuoso use of color and implication of extended narrative action high-



William Eggleston, *Memphis, Woman Seated by Post with Chain*, 1972

William Eggleston, *Freezer*, 1980

Eggleston successfully interweaves a sense of menacing oppression and wry humor, tapping into the fears and wit of his audience.

light Eggleston's declaration that he is "at war with the obvious."¹ *The Red Ceiling* suggests some titillating narrative with its garish red walls, exposed light bulb and pornographic posters in the lower right corner. One feels that something tawdry is being exposed; yet it is absent. Eggleston states, "*The Red Ceiling* is so powerful that, in fact, I've never seen it reproduced on the page to my satisfaction. When you look at a dye-transfer

print it's like it's red blood that is wet on the wall ... The photograph is still powerful. It shocks you every time."²

Through highly effective placement, the photographs on either side of *Red Ceiling* take on similar narrative effects. *The Blasted Tree* suggests a spotlight night crime scene and the *Old Man with Revolver* appears rather ominous, if still somewhat humorous. *Woman Seated by Post with Chain* suggests a dark theme

of unhappiness and burden. Through manipulation of distance from his subjects, Eggleston conveys a sense of oppression or, alternately, alienation. The girl in *Little Girl and Playhouse* is dwarfed by her playhouse, our distance from her increasing a sense of loneliness and detachment. Again, however, the strength of narrative possibilities should not overshadow Eggleston's exploration of formal elements. For example, the Menil installation exploits Eggleston's interest in the play of line against dark backgrounds as seen in the electrical wires in *Red Ceiling*, the old man's watch chain and the ridges of *The Blasted Tree* against the night sky.

Dynamic surface patterns animate the final five photographs, on exhibition for the first time. Eggleston continues to play with the notion of the idol as subject, highlighting the irony of religious "kitsch" objects. Yet, this most recent work seems to be Eggleston's most overt celebration of the dance of surface textures. The brilliant surfaces of *Chrome Jesus* and *Barbie Angel* beg the eye to explore the play of light and shadow. *Church Gift Shop* inundates the viewer with the interplay of text and shapes. Thus, in his most recent work, Eggleston continues to utilize the camera to explore the effects of pattern, line and texture, while celebrating the strange and the ordinary.

David Byrne's initial struggle to engage with Eggleston's photographs seems to be common. Weski argues that, "The ingenuity behind the pictorial language of his photographs, which are definitely not snapshots, is not immediately clear, and we must take a closer look before we finally grasp it."³ *Then and Now* affords one the opportunity to look closely at Eggleston's photographs. The new monograph allows extended contemplation and capitalizes on the photographer's emphasis on the sequencing of his photographs in book format. The Menil exhibition and the Hasselblad catalogue are excellent ways to "penetrate the mystery" of Eggleston's photographs.

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FOOTNOTES

1. David Byrne, quoted in *William Eggleston: Ancient and Modern* (New York: Random House, 1992), p. 56.
2. Eggleston has argued that his photographs are "parts of a novel [he's] doing." In *William Eggleston: The Hasselblad Award 1998*, Göteborg, Sweden: Hasselblad Center, 1999, p. 6.
3. John Szarkowski, *William Eggleston's Guide*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1976, p. 7.
4. *William Eggleston: Then and Now*, Exhibition brochure, The Menil Collection, Houston, May 1999.
5. *William Eggleston: Then and Now*, Press Release, The Menil Collection, Houston, TX.
6. *William Eggleston: The Democratic Forest* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), p. 10.
7. *The Democratic Forest*, p. 173.
8. *Ancient and Modern*, p. 28.
9. *The Hasselblad Award*, p. 10.

William Eggleston, *Barbie Angel*, 1999William Eggleston, *Morton, Miss.*, 1969-70

Human Existence and the Natural World

WORK BY DORNITH DOHERTY
THE LAST GALLERY
CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS
DENTON, TEXAS
FEBRUARY 20–MARCH 26, 1999

VOICES: RECENT WORK BY
DORNITH DOHERTY
UNIVERSITY GALLERY
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-COMMERCE
COMMERCE, TEXAS
MARCH 10–31, 1999

Sara-Jayne Parsons

Philosophical questions posed by inquiry into the complex relationship between human existence and the natural world proliferate concurrent exhibitions of work by photographer Dornith Doherty.¹ Bringing to light an area of investigation that has occupied the photographer since the mid-1990s, the photographs exhibited in Commerce and Denton explore fantastic peculiarities that occur as a result of human presence in nature. This scrutiny of idiosyncrasies also highlights the roles that myth and science have played in humankind's attempts to understand and control nature.

With iconography encompassing portraiture, still-life and constructed landscapes, Doherty's combined works intriguingly weave together signifiers of surreal human narrative influenced by Latin American Magical Realism and also attempt to assess more empirically inclined investigation of the human species in the tradition of Charles Darwin. This enigmatic duality is grounded through Doherty's beguiling method of straight photography involving the layering of iconic objects such as live plant specimens and dead insects with manipulative projections. The result is a series of challenging visual metaphors that feature the delicious metamorphosis of mundane objects that enable the spiritual and the tangible to coalesce.

The foundation for Doherty's recent work dates back to 1994. Upon receiving a William J. Fulbright Lecture/Research Fellowship, Doherty was able to spend time teaching and photographing in Mexico for several months. With an academic background in Spanish and French literature coupled with time spent working and studying in Brazil, Guatemala, Peru and Spain, it seems natural that Doherty would expand her literary investigation of Magical Realism through photography. Indeed she became particularly interested in aspects of Magical Realism that she perceived in everyday Mexican life, most notably in the use of animal and insect masks in agricultural festivals.²

Inspired by this notion of the transformation of human identity into totemic animal form, Doherty expounds the allegorical power of masks in *Ramphastidae* (1995) which in simple terms is a symbiotic portrait of man and a toucan. Through the combination of a frontal pose (man) and the profile (toucan), the two share identity through an eye that produces a delectably sinister appearance that is unfamiliar and larger than life. This exoticism in juxtaposition, achieved through a projection of images, is uniquely characteristic in the paradigm of Magical Realism where small facets of objects are converted

into symbols that achieve mythic proportion. Indeed myth subverts pragmatism as a vehicle of communication. Consider the implied symbolism of the "eye" as a portal of knowledge with reference to the use of masks. The wearer of the mask can "see" but can not be "seen." In *Ramphastidae*, the human form takes on a discomfiting ghost-like presence when infused with the identity of the toucan. Although essentially masked, the man ironically can still be seen in a new form. For the viewer, classification of the man-bird is not easily attained. The title, *Ramphastidae*, the Latin name of the toucan, is a puzzling dichotomy. It unravels only the material part of the mystery.³ The man-bird as signifier points to spiritual kinship between beings that can only be understood in the sphere of legends; a realm where the real and the fantastic are united.⁴

In contrast to *Ramphastidae*, where man and toucan appear to physically merge and share vision, in the still-life *Roentgenogram* (1995) Doherty assembles objects to compare decaying flower blooms with an old X-ray of a hand. The metonymic power of this image revolves around the subtle use of backlighting to highlight the similarity of the hidden structure of flower petals and a human hand.⁵ This indexical illumination of patterns of order found in nature hints towards the value of scientific scrutiny. Doherty exposes an epiphany of investigation of the seen and unseen in the natural world, an area of exploration that unfolds in later works.

Roentgenogram also reinforces the tenet that human experience of consciousness is bathed in knowledge of the past and the present. The delicate transparency of the petals and the X-ray can therefore be understood as icons of transformation, metaphors of the transitory nature of organic forms. The color and appearance of the wilting flower petals suggests wrinkled or mummified human skin. Small, dark, round blemishes on areas of the hand on the X-ray indicate the alarming presence of buckshot and underline the historic role of scientific machinery in the effort to control human physical trauma and indeed sustain life.⁶ Indeed the overall tone of *Roentgenogram* is a refined combination of fragile self-realization and poetic sadness.

Doherty's continued inquiry into the relationship between humans, science and the natural world takes on new meaning in her most recent series of photographs.⁷ These constructed landscapes present fresh challenges in seeing due to their sheer size (4' x 5') a new venture for Doherty. Direct presentation of simple forms on a magnified scale invites viewers to consider unseen details. Again Doherty's carefully chosen fragments



Dornith Doherty, *Roentgenogram*, 1994

of plants, insects and other natural detritus point soberly toward knowledge of the spiraling process of evolution and the ephemeral nature of all life. This series of photographs indicates Doherty's move away from the iconographic influence of Magical Realism and reflects perhaps a less mythical inquiry of the natural world, a focus on the human desire to document, classify and comprehend through scientific endeavor. This slight shift in Doherty's approach is maybe best exemplified in two photographs she created in 1998: *Forbidden Landscapes* and *Wipe Out*.

Akin to the style of presentation found in herbariums or journals of a Victorian botanist, *Forbidden Landscapes* is a microscopic view of a selection of lavender-colored lupines placed on a surreal, vibrant green plane of parrot feathers. A taxonomist's dream, this photograph compliments the notion that botanical work requires observation and accurate description.



Dornith Doherty, *Untitled*, 1998

in the larger scheme of the natural world. The astute onlooker may also construe *Forbidden Landscapes* as somewhat of an homage to the history of photography in the employ of science. Certainly it is worth recalling that William Henry Fox Talbot's photogenic drawing experiments, in which he used simple plant forms like lupines, were probably as much about his consuming passion for botany as they were about his desire to develop paper photography.⁸

In *Wipe Out*, scientific classification of a species appears in a literal sense as fragments of butterflies and other insects are superimposed on a grid. Beneath this layer there exists an image of a flat, Texas landscape, punctuated only by a pick-up truck and electricity poles. Like Doherty's previous use of plant specimens, the butterflies point to the fragility of balance in nature. Here this equation is exaggerated all the more so by the blurred shadows created by the insects surfing on a breeze, suggestive not only of the flux of metamorphosis but also of momentary existence. The very title of the photograph, *Wipe Out*, begs the question of whether a species can be recognized, categorized and an effort made to avert extinction at all. It is also no accident that *Wipe Out* playfully intimates the sport of surfing, as the art of wave riding is based on a surfer's athleticism and sensitivity to the environment at a given moment. Human presence, or



Dornith Doherty, *Wipe Out*, 1998

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FOOTNOTES

1. Born in Houston, Texas, Dornith Doherty is associate professor of photography at the University of North Texas. She received a BA in Spanish and French language and literature from Rice University and her MFA from Yale University. She has had solo, two-person and group shows in the United States and in Mexico. Doherty's photographs are included in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Milwaukee, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Her work is represented by James Gallery, Houston.

2. This series of photographs formed the basis for the exhibition *Voices: Recent Work* by Dornith Doherty, March 10–31, 1999, University Gallery, Texas A & M University - Commerce, Texas.

3. It is interesting to note that Doherty's use of Latin simultaneously reveals and masks the compound of the man-bird. The traditional, scholarly classification of the toucan, by way of an out-moded or dead language, is not easily deciphered by the average viewer. Therefore, the image is named, but not necessarily understood.

4. This uneasiness or inability to decipher real and ethereal in human characters is emblematic of Mexican Magical Realist literature, for example in the fiction of Elena Garro and Juan Rulfo.

5. A challenging dialectic between a natural object and a man-made object with a scientific function is also established.

6. The X-ray itself is antique, dating from the late 19th century to early 20th century period.

7. This series of photographs formed the basis for the exhibition *Work by Dornith Doherty*, February 20–March 26, 1999, The East Gallery, Center for the Visual Arts, Denton, Texas.

8. H.J.P. Arnold's attempts to highlight Talbot's contribution to scientific development in 19th century Britain should be noted. H.J.P. Arnold, *William Henry Fox Talbot. Pioneer of photography and man of science*. London: Hutchinson Benham, 1977, pp. 217–267.

All original photographs are in color. All photographs courtesy of the artist and James Gallery, Houston.



Dornith Doherty, *Ramphastidae*, 1995

survival in nature, in this instance, is literally a relationship based on balance and synchronicity.

In a period when human's comprehension and control of nature have led to the creation of a new species of tomato, animal cloning and experiments in cultivating human tissue, Dornith Doherty's photographs emerge as utopian visions—testaments to the belief that harmony and respect for the natural world is key to the survival of the fittest. Do not be fooled. These are not romantic visions. They are suggestions that scientific study can accommodate poetic thought. As metaphors of human presence in nature and the connection between myth and science, Doherty's photographs serve as sober reminders of how the "seen" and "hidden" must merge in the investigation of the natural world. Science alone can not perhaps provide all the answers we seek.



Dornith Doherty, *Forbidden landscape*, 1999

The Art of Illusion

MARIO CRAVO NETO
SICARDI-SANDERS GALLERY
HOUSTON, TEXAS
MAY 13-JUNE 27, 1999

Ileana Marcoulesco

Born in 1947, Mario Cravo Neto is a native of Salvador de Bahia, Brazil. His training started early as his father instructed him in sculpture and later offered him the visual experience of Europe in the 1970s.

The artist then travelled to New York and studied for a year at the Art Students' League. This was the glorious epoch of Abstract Expressionism in painting and minimalism in sculpture and the influence of Morris, Claes Oldenburg and others was keenly felt.

New York City in 1969 to 1970 offered this artist a vitally formative experience not only because of the pressures — both cultural and social — of the city, the extraordinary density of artistic life but also because of the fundamental solitude of the man in the metropolis. Solitude did not induce an extroverted turn in Cravo Neto; to the contrary, it made him even more bent upon inner reflection.

It took physical strength to survive afterwards in Bahia. Cravo Neto developed an art that is attempting to halt the acceleration of chaos and entropy universally threatening us from all angles and sides — an art that is about arresting the chaotic flow of time that will inevitably gobble us up.

Saturno (1992) is a Goyesque, staged image of a giant white Chronos (a self-portrait?) devouring the minuscule dark figure of a young man: a symbol both of the cannibalistic acts by which a civilization historically feeds on another and of the inexorable cruelty of Time. The classical myth of Icarus is carried by an impressive photograph of flying-falling.

By his utter subjectivity, elevated by simplicity and avoidance of all accidents to an essential approach to things and events, the artist as thinker seems to inscribe himself in a phenomenological type of experience and perception.

Concerning Time, his concept is almost directly lifted from T.S. Eliot's *Quartets* but strongly, if indirectly, resonates with the phenomenological-existential view of the plenitude of the now.

In fractions of seconds, Mario Cravo Neto avidly appropriates events which he freezes or half-freezes on film. The transitions from objective to subjective and vice-versa are both fragile and compelling. It is a *va-et-vient* of the subtlest kind, an art of allusion and infinitely reverberating auras of connotations which would give the lie to Benjamin's famous aesthetic *pronunciamento*: in fact, in the era of mechanical reproduction, the aura of the work of art is enhanced rather than diminished.

Man with Two Fish (1992), possibly the most precious piece in the show, exceeds in poignancy and shine many a famous painting with a similar subject including canvases by Matisse or Braque for both of whom ichthyology was tempting. In Cravo Neto's photograph, the back of a man is present, as a curved surface striated with blood; the fish look alive,

scared and ready to bite. Light contrasts are so well managed as to literally burst your eyes open ... It is hard not to be haunted by this image; it has a movement of its own, as if rapidly receding into the distance, and yet at the same time staying with you.

The two portraits, *Tinho* (1990) and *Head and Eyes* (which should have been juxtaposed in the exhibition for the added strength of the "double"), draw attention to the shiny shaved skull; in *Eyes*, there is an upturned look and a wrinkled forehead as a result. *Head* — just a skull collecting light with somewhat protruding ears — is as striking as a Brancusi's *Egg*. Elsewhere Cravo Neto segregates backs, necks and collar bones overhung by an upturned head with unambiguous smiles (Sátiro).

The *Voodoo* series achieves equally magic secrecy through a combination of statuesque postures and white speckled transparent black veils. The symmetry of the nude in *Voodoo Figure* (1988) is disturbing. *Voodoo Child* (1988) is a relatively small (18" x 18") piece, quite essentially combining greys, blacks and whites in a musical-tactile whole. In other images of sacrifice, the immaculate white of the bird is intertwined with the ebony of wiry hands and arms in a magical embrace. Sacrificer and sacrificed are one. The artist does not have to "depict" scenes of ritual sacrifice, but only point to them allusively in order to rouse a "sacred awe." Explicit is, as far as I am concerned, the attachment to an aesthetic of hieratic gesture, to verticals intimating threat and violence pointed towards the above and to the sacred acts of conjuring forces of war or death. But mostly, as any accomplished modernist, Cravo Neto would look at — and transmit to us — the plenary beauty

of these sacrifices whose significance he doesn't need to penetrate, leaving the explicative task to the ethnologists who might write scholarly tomes about them without ever reaching bottom.

Escriba (1992) emphasizes the titanic effort of a sculptor trying to inscribe some message in the stone. Stone as a photographed medium is frequently present, in the strange cult objects (a polished fetish in a cucumber shape that serves as ear stopper in *Silence* (1992) — a large very impressive rendition of this inner state) and appears in other magical connections as well as, e.g. in the half-humorous, half-pathetic literality of the rugged *Heart of Stone* (1991), gingerly carried by two hands that seem to make a religious offering of it.

Says the Brazilian critic Paco Baragán in *Nexus*: "... his images are very dual, given that they show a strong tension between the spiritual and the erotic." Cravo Neto agrees with the characterization. Nevertheless, he subordinates this tension to a preexisting, objective and permanent, vertiginous swirl. It is a vertigo that may well be a cosmic apperception rather than the trite assertion of a duality between spiritual sublimation and the corporeal-erotic pull. Yet both appear as a corollary of cosmic turbulence and chaos.

The artist refuses to practice any mimetic theory of art, and this is everywhere evident in the work. I can't think of Cravo Neto's photographs as depicting anything, the way, more or less figuratively speaking, Ansel Adams' depicts Mt. Whitney or an orchard in the Santa Clara Valley or even a Cézanne perspectively depicts the Mt. Ste. Victoire. Cravo Neto's subjects are not famous and

recognizable as Man Ray's are: figures that patently existed in the mundane consciousness before his camera focused on them. Much like the Japanese artist-photographer Nakaji Yasui in the 1930s, the human dimensions (including ethnic characteristics) are powerfully expressed. This is due, however, to the strict pursuit of form, the mastery of contrast, the stylized rhythms we face not subjects in themselves, waiting to be uncovered and rematerialized, but are dealt essentially the human drama, the live encounters, the felicitous occasions for the artist's appropriation, the supports for his aesthetic vision. In what the late Heidegger described as "the event of Appropriation," Time and Being come together; the artist's sending (e.g., of the art work) in the destiny of Being (*viz*: into the world at large) may be characterized as a giving in which the sending source keeps itself back and thus withdrawn from unconcealment (the openness of truth). In this appropriating space-time expanse, that is the work of art, Being gives itself without division or opposition.

A different kind of approach to criticism imposes itself therefore when photography is neither reporting on historically recognizable events, nor doing portraiture, nor trying to fix on paper a landscape — urban, rural, microscopic or astronomical. Such criticism does not have to be necessarily formalistic. Even when our artist focused on the growth of plants in a terrarium, the aesthetic object far overstepped the boundaries of the natural process. Hence "describing depiction" misses the point. There are certainly in Cravo Neto's panoply some classically recognizable, even though unconventional, takes — for



Mario Cravo Neto, *Sacrifice V*, 1989

instance, the portraits of *Lucia, Mother of the Artist* (1993), the portrait of *Mario Cravo Neto, the Father* (1993) and of *Lukas* (the artist's son; as recent as 1997) all profoundly imbued with parental and filial piety. But don't they concentrate, rather than on a flatly recorded similitude, on intentional objects — viz on what he loves, on that which excites and inspires his aesthetic and ethical papillae? It is only through this prism that the well-known features will appear. Alone perhaps Lukas's swan neck in a favorite foreshortened position discloses a shade of expressionism. Elsewhere, too, the artist relishes in capturing curves ideally graceful which elevate the tonus of his pictures almost to symbolic heights.

Neto's art, at least in its black-and-white variants, is predominantly abstract, for he does not present or represent an optical retinal view of his subjects, does not imitate, emulate or simulate objects of our everyday visual universe, does not lay claim to anthropological, ethnographic, psychoanalytic, ideological or political truth. If truth there be, it is of another order.

The black-and-white set of Cravo Neto's photographs shows a moving, if sad, paradise of birds; snow white or speckled, young and silky, strangled or on the verge of being killed, always poised in a meek, sacrificial posture, hostages to men's dark hands, never soaring, never free.

His photographs are relatively large (38" x 38" for the largest; 18" x 18" for the middle ones; and 15¼" x 15¼" for the smaller ones). As is the case with any artistic "perfection," it is hard to substantially reduce their size without losing the originally intended effect. Rothko said once: "I paint large in order to be intimate." It seems that by involving us in his big images, Cravo Neto achieves something similar; we are drawn close to the palpable textures of the objects which, in turn, envelop us in their subtle drama of sacrifices, magic rituals, alert us to the mysterious significance of sacred objects and people officiating with hieratic gestures. This is one, if not the main, procedure conducive to the emotional impact of Cravo Neto's art.

So far, we have seen in Houston only about one hundredth of Cravo Neto's oeuvre. The little that was made available, however, by the judicious choice of Maria-Ínes Sicardi, compensated in kind and quality our huge gap in information. There is this enormous body of work in color that includes definitely closer historical-anthropological perspectives,

portraits of people at their daily trades, the life of the shanty towns as well as the famous Portuguese baroque style of buildings.

At the present stage in his life, Cravo Neto relishes in the potential of electronic media. The computer, he says, not only helps him build mock-ups of portfolios and catalogs but also serves as the best tool for videos and installations. Obviously he is able to dominate the beast; and we certainly hope that it will not overpower his deeply spiritual and innerworldly message.

However, this is by far not the only message. An inner epic of people and clusters of peoples in this part of the world, of their lives, beliefs, moments of contemplation and self-reflection, the austere beauty of the human environment in its unshakable historicity, are present in this search that one may call implicit narratives or stories; however, this dimension remains cryptic; its impact on us, one may say, refers to the continuum of a collective unconscious, if the notion were not so fuzzy and abused. One thing ought for sure to be left out: the sterile hunt for Freudian symbols — at the same time facile and unnerving.

Most of the issues involved in this artist's work have to do with an evaluation of modernism today. Is modernism dying? Modernism is alive and well in Mario Cravo Neto's vision and treatment of his subjects. Once appeared on the world art-scene — whether drawing on ancient, prehistoric, and the so-called primitive, little explored cultures, relatively exotic — it is here to stay. Not perhaps as mannerism was within the Rococo period — a minor of a major style. Speaking through its best representatives in the concert of thinking, not to say philosophizing, literature and music, modernism has infiltrated the consciousness of many viewers, readers and neophytes in art appreciation; semantic or ideological misunderstandings notwithstanding, Mario Cravo Neto's impeccable modernity will invariably stir up the frisson of emotion that great art produces from Brancusi to Man Ray.

Yet his work is not congealed at any given stage of modernity. Rather, it appears prototypical of an opera *aperta*; all diachronic barriers and signs collapse, and the "tale" becomes part of a continuum painting-poetry, immutable in its flow that preserves the inner circuits of motion, allowing at the same time an openness to dream, projection, fantasy and interpretation.

Ileana Marcoulesco is a freelance philosopher and art critic in Houston, Texas.

Salvador



Mario Cravo Neto, *Africa II*, 1991

EDITED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY
MARIO CRAVO NETO

TEXTS BY PADRE ANTONIO VIEIRA,
JORGE AMADO AND WILSON ROCHA
ARIES EDITORA, SALVADOR, BRAZIL,
1999

Anne Wilkes Tucker

Founded in 1549 as the capital of the Portuguese colony of Brazil, Salvador rises on a steep peninsula that overlooks a deep natural harbor on one side and the Atlantic Ocean on the other. The city is famed for the beauty of its colonial Baroque architecture especially its churches. As a major center for the African slave trade, it has one of the largest concentrations of black and mulatto populations in Brazil. Mario Cravo Neto draws on the mystical and religious energies of the indigenous, Portuguese and African populations and cultures that co-exist around him. He is known internationally for black-and-white photographs of staged "ceremonies" that poetically evoke the bi-racial cultures of northeastern Brazil. Frequently employing members of his family and his extended family of friends and artists, he merges the influence of these cultures with his own personal mythologies.

In the last two decades, Cravo Neto has also photographed in color and recently gathered selections of this work into two books. One is reviewed here, and the other (tentatively titled *Lése Orixá* or *At the feet of the Orixá*) will be published in France and Brazil next year. Both books focus on Salvador, where he was born and lives. The first book is large scale. After only a cursory review, it might be mistaken for a coffee-table offering because it succeeds in making one want to be in Salvador. I am enticed by pictures of crystal waters flowing over bare skin, glowing late afternoon light illuminating Baroque buildings, and the city's evening lights twinkling from across the harbor. However, this is a very personal book. Many aspects of the city are missing that would appear normally in a travel book. For instance, there are relatively few photographs of Salvador's white citizens and none of upper class society. Also, there are images that would not appear in more commercial books, including a three-page foldout of bones, Voodoo ceremonies, a statue of a graphically bleeding Christ and a naked prostitute on her bare mattress. The book is more poetic, and less informative, than might be expected.

The pictures are carefully sequenced with distinct rhythms and recurring motifs. The book begins and ends with stunning images of the ocean. Then Neto introduces humans, rising from the water with a burst — rising in fact, and as metaphor. Water is the source of life. Salvador is a harbor city, dependent

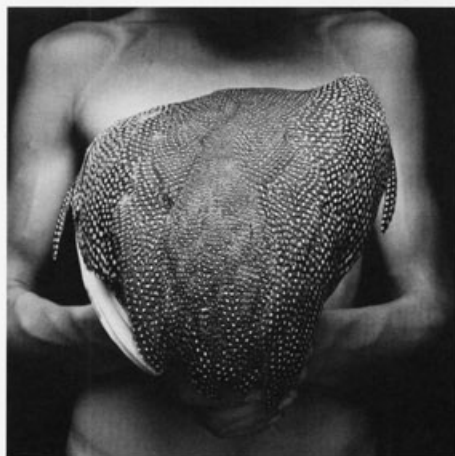
on the shipping trade and vulnerable to the furies of the ocean. The first section of pictures also introduces the luscious growth that characterizes and surrounds a tropical city. As in the black-and-white series, animals and plants are prominently featured in his color work as being integral to Salvador and essential to Cravo Neto's vision of life there. He described the rainy season to me with the same rich flow of imagery as he establishes with pictures in the book. "Ocean waters rise up, waters drop from heaven, waters weep over our feet," he wrote. "The growing luxurious nature of this tropic depicts man in a struggle to survive."

Another major theme is the presence of art throughout the city. Cravo Neto features the marvelous carvings on colonial buildings, the ornate gilt interior of a vast church, and examples of his own father's sculpture commissions throughout the city. He also assembles portraits of the city's intellectuals and artists including Jorge Amado, a contributor to the book, and Pierre Verger, a photographer and mentor to whom the book is dedicated. I wish the index had identified the other sitters for those of us unfamiliar with Brazilian culture. Is the statuesque woman on page 170 a Voodoo priestess? Is Daniela Mercury a dancer? Why didn't he identify the other woman who poses at the back of Ms. Mercury's chair? Full of character and intensity, their faces contribute to the strength of our impressions of the city's vitality.

Anyone familiar with Cravo Neto's work will not be surprised by the photographs on Voodoo rituals. Images of frenetic dancing and glimpses of animal sacrifice are intermingled with photographs of churches and Christian sculpture. In both religious environments, he gravitates toward examples of intensity and sensuality. At Carnival and on the beach, where masses of bare, or nearly bare, bodies congregate and dance, he identifies the same qualities that apparently permeate the most sacred and mundane activities in the city. (His next book focuses more fully on Carnival. These pictures of writhing, decorated flesh threw me back into the film *Black Orpheus*. Forty years ago world-wide audiences were mesmerized by the film's retelling of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and shot during Rio's Carnival. Cravo Neto's Carnival photographs in both books evoke the unceasing beat of tambourines and steel drums that drove the film to its tragic climax.)

The final image in *Salvador* silhouettes a lone figure against the city skyline. The figure is a tiny, but distinct and pivotal element. Two other versions of this image appear earlier in the book. Also seen from a great distance, the other two solitary figures stand on rocks jutting from the sea. The figure represents Cravo Neto, who has been our guide to his homeland. Describing his vision, he wrote, "I see the city of Sao Salvador de Bahia de Todos os Santos as a bowl of ethnic and religious mixtures in the process of experience. We Bahians are able to survive in a multi-colored rainbow symbolizing the serpent in a continuous circle tightening the earth for it not to fall apart."

Anne Wilkes Tucker is the Gus and Lyndall Wortham Curator of Photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



Mario Cravo Neto, *Voodoo Child*, 1989



"... and everyday a fabulous life"

DAVID DOUGLAS DUNCAN: ONE LIFE, A PHOTOGRAPHIC ODYSSEY
HARRY RANSOM HUMANITIES
RESEARCH CENTER AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
AUSTIN, TEXAS
MARCH 6, 1999—JANUARY 2, 2000

Rick Williams

"Duncan ... it's much easier to start than to stop."

Thus Pablo Picasso admonished David Douglas Duncan as the maestro studied the portrait of Jacqueline he had just completed. Though he was speaking of an artist's ability to stop when the painting is finished, with a little twist, the maestro's wisdom is an apt metaphor for Duncan's own career in photojournalism. While Duncan clearly knows when he's got the picture, he's not about to stop now. At 83 he is working simultaneously on three books and traveling repeatedly from his home in France to the new, permanent home of his \$15 million archive in the Photography Collection of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at The University of Texas at Austin.

Duncan, perhaps the world's best known photojournalist and, certainly,

one of the pioneers and most prolific practitioners of 20th century photojournalism, donated his extensive archive to the HRC and began shipping it in 1996. The last crate, for now, arrived in May 1999. Duncan is an archivist's dream. He has saved and recorded nearly all of his negatives, notes, cameras, lenses, essays, book layouts (he has published about 30 and did most of the layout and editing himself), contact sheets, photographs, gifts (of which there are many), Marine and war memorabilia (of which there are more), cablegrams, letters and light meters. Much to his credit, and to our gain, he has saved virtually everything that chronicles his 60 years of photography, beginning at home and continuing with the U.S. Marine Corps, then as a staff photographer for *Life Magazine* and, later, as a freelance photographer. Since the first crate arrived in 1996, archivists have catalogued more than 150 artifacts and 200 document boxes, each containing the equivalent of approximately 700 pages of manuscript or 500 contact or negative sheets. To date, there are 1,300 rolls of black-and-white film, some 40,000 images, for the *Life*

work alone. According to HRC archivist Liz Murray, it will take two archivists another two years to catalogue the entire collection.

But it has already been three years, and two more was too long for HRC senior curator of photography and film, Roy Flukinger, to wait to unveil the historic and artistic contents of the treasure. Working together, Flukinger, Murray and Lisa Roysse, curator for the LBJ Library and Museum, pulled off the seemingly impossible. They began in September 1998, with only the agreement that they wanted to exhibit a comprehensive retrospective of Duncan's work. Less than six months later, on March 6, 1999, the three co-curators cleared the way through the LBJ Library as a Marine color guard opened ceremonies and USMC Brigadier General William Whitlow presented Duncan with the Distinguished Public Service Medal to open the exhibition, *David Douglas Duncan: One Life, A Photographic Odyssey*.

"The hardest part was figuring out what to eliminate," said Flukinger. "Still, we ended up with over 400 images and artifacts that cover 2,500 feet of wall space. It was the first time we had worked on a major project with the LBJ Library and things couldn't have been smoother," Flukinger continued. The exhibition is free and open to the public.

One of the most significant and insightful aspects of the exhibit is the integration of artifacts with the images. At first one wonders why an individual would save so many things. But as one takes in the work it becomes clear that the exhibit is about people and about relationships. It is not simply a disconnected observer's

pictures of something happening out there. The images reflect what was happening between the photographer, the subject and the world in which they were immersed together. Duncan did not go anywhere just to look. He went to live. In that regard, the artifacts — the notebooks, letters, cameras, medals, gifts, shoes, rings, suitcases, book mock-ups, notes — are as important as the images if we are to truly understand, as closely as we can, the real meaning of the work in its context. Duncan was not an observer. He was a participant who knew, loved and cared about and for the people he photographed.

That is why he saved all of these artifacts — because they are not artifacts to him. They are memories of life and people. In that regard, they tell the story behind the images in ways that nothing else could.

Like his life, David Douglas Duncan's retrospective is a fascinating odyssey. It begins as one wanders from an immense marble hall into a constructed room — not a large room, but the first of a labyrinth within a labyrinth. Juxtaposed from right to left are an ornate Arabian burnoose that was a gift from His Royal Highness Al Saud; several large images, including a color image of Picasso gesturing poetically; a column of weary soldiers in a freezing winter landscape, an enlarged *Newsweek* cover from March 6, 1999, featuring Duncan's famous portrait of a gaunt Marine and a mural-sized image of another forlorn, battle-worn Marine who stands, staring back at you with eyes nearly closed in fatigue. The mind struggles to find the continuity among these diverse images and artifacts. The viewer is drawn into the labyrinth beyond this introductory collage by curiosity and by familiarity, yet incongruous and muted sounds bouncing off marble walls behind and above and below. Through a surreal blend of the sounds of exploding bombs, shells and machine gun fire, mingling with the deep, recorded voice of Duncan saying, "not so fast, slow down, slow down now" and the slow, soft voice of Lyndon Johnson talking about his friends and his policies, the viewer moves on.

Images and personal effects from Duncan's high school and college years include his Boy Scout sash and Eagle medal and a 39 cent camera, a gift from his sister. This camera sits beside an early photo the young Duncan unwittingly took of John Dillinger outside of a burning hotel in 1934. Above this is the *Netcaster*, the photo that won Duncan the amateur division of the Kodak National Snapshot Contest. This sits beside a letter to his parents that he sent after his graduation from the University of Miami in 1938 announcing, "That's it ... except I intend to be a photographer."

From this point in the exhibition, the images and artifacts weave like a trail through a jungle through the life and friends of Duncan. In World War II, among the images and memorabilia the wanderer encounters again the mural, the haunting image of the same standing, slender soldier, unshaven, hands black with days of dirt. In his right hand,

the Marine holds a rifle loosely, as if it might drop from his fingers at any moment. In his left hand he cups a pack of cigarettes. Most distinct is the stare; eyes nearly closed in exhaustion, but still looking, wondering, waiting. Here, in this image, is the connection among all of these images, artifacts and lives. This Marine is Second Lieutenant David Douglas Duncan. He has just returned from action with an elite group of Fijian guerrillas fighting behind Japanese lines on the Island of Bougainville in 1944. The photo credit is "Lt. Richard M. Nixon." On the next wall is the story about the Fijian warriors that ran in *National Geographic* in January 1945.

From the U.S. Marine Corps and the South Pacific in World War II, Duncan made an abrupt move to *Life Magazine*. The day after Duncan was interviewed by *Life's* legendary executive editor, Wilson Hicks, he was called into Hicks office and greeted with a



Photos, from top: David Douglas Duncan, Soldier in Trench at Con Thien, Vietnam, 1967

Photograph by former President Richard M. Nixon, USMC Lt. David Douglas Duncan on Bougainville, 1944

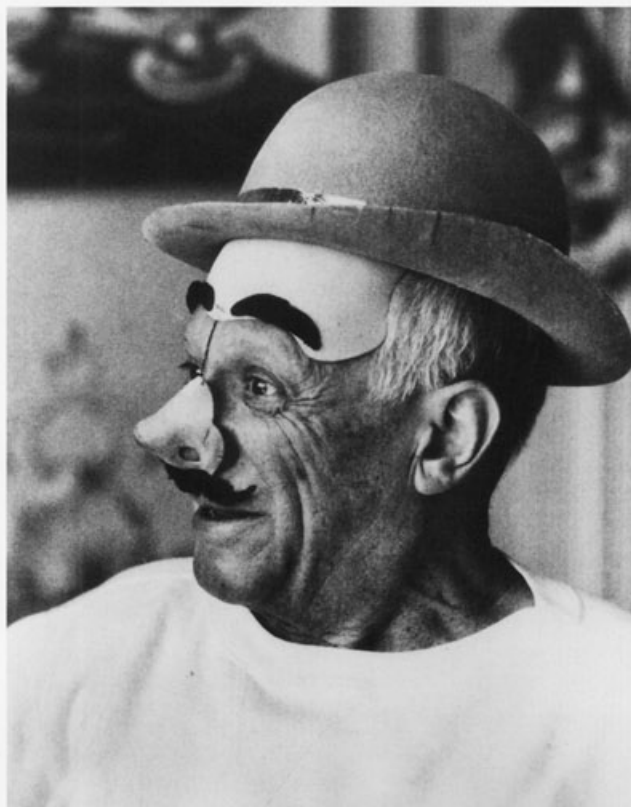
David Douglas Duncan, *Turkish Cavalry in the Snow*, 1948

question and a statement from Hicks. "Can you be in Persia this weekend? You are our latest *Life* photographer." In the next 10 years, shooting for *Life Magazine*, Duncan lived and worked all over the world, including Persia, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Korea.

When Duncan left *Life* to freelance in 1956, he had already covered the Korean war, landing in Korea before the first Marines. Though he came and went as deadlines demanded, when he was in the

EYEM GOING BACK THIS TIME TRYING GIVE YOU STORY WHICH IS TIMELESS, NAMELESS, DATELESS, WORDLESS STORY WHICH SAYS VERY SIMPLY QUIETLY "THIS IS WAR"

Displayed with the cablegrams, his freelance work for *Life*, *National Geographic*, *Colliers*, *Holiday*, *Look*, *The Saturday Evening Post* and others, the cameras, compasses, knives, boots, notes, hand-made awards and jokes are many personal letters, chosen from many

David Douglas Duncan, *Picasso and Clown's Mask and Derby*, 1957

field, Duncan was a soldier among soldiers. In 1950, he accompanied troops on the 39 day trek out of the Chosin Reservoir, fighting all the way under freezing conditions. In a cable to editors about his work in Korea, Duncan eloquently and painfully stated his working ethic as a preamble to his groundbreaking book, *This is War*.

written to Duncan by the parents of fallen Marines whom he had photographed in *This is War*. With his usual grace and generosity, Duncan made every effort to respond to such passionate requests for information and photographs. He also donated all of the profits from *This is War* to the Navy Relief Society.

In his war images Duncan wanted to touch the individual with "revelations about warfare that embraced the universal." He wanted to show what war did to

a man. In order to do so, he had to know those men. So, when he went to war again in Vietnam, freelancing for *Life* and for ABC News, Lt. Colonel Duncan fought his battle of conscience along side his comrades at Con Thien and Khe Sanh. It was this misguided war that became the subject of one of his most profound books, *I Protest!* This book chronicled the lives and deaths of his fellow warriors while challenging the reasons behind the war itself. It was after the publication of this book that Howard Chapnick, then president of Black Star, remarked about Duncan, "You get the feeling he's inside the war." Again, in the images and recording of this war, Duncan reveals that relationships and the revelation of relationships are the core of his quest to explore and reflect life. He states that two of his greatest treasures are a cartoon portrait on the back of a C rations box and a hand-made award from the 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines declaring Duncan, "One of Us."

From Vietnam Duncan and the exhibition move to another form of war in the streets of Chicago. NBC network president Reuven Frank commissioned Duncan to provide still "photo essays of the air" for NBC News each night after the Democratic and Republican conventions. For the first time in his career, Duncan shot a professional assignment in his native America. Here again Duncan remained true to his creed. He moved in close, either physically or with a special Leitz 400mm lens, to capture the character and presence of the individuals.

Even though Duncan met Picasso in 1957, it seems appropriate that the labyrinth of this odyssey wait until now, beyond the wars and the politics, to wind its way to its end in the final room where we can celebrate life with Pablo, Duncan and Jacqueline. In this room and the one just before it, we see the light and the laughter that we knew was there all along. Here we see the Duncan who worked with Nikon to design a fanciful prismatic lens to photograph everything in multiple forms on the same negative. Upon seeing a distorted, multi-image portrait taken of himself with this lens, Picasso exclaimed "Duncan, finally you've learned to photograph." Here we find the Duncan who publishes books like *Sunflowers for Van Gogh*, *Thor*, *A Secret Garden*, *Magic Worlds of Fantasy*, the loving tribute to his friend, *The Fragile Miracle of Martin Gray*, and seven books on Picasso.

We learn that Duncan met Picasso when Jacqueline led the photographer straight into the bathroom where the maestro was bathing. We also see the photograph of Picasso in his bath and learn that it was from there that he first told Duncan, "This is your house."

Here we see the fanciful crayon drawings and sketches that Picasso did for and in jest of Duncan, including the crayon drawing on the front and back of a \$10,000 royalty check that Duncan sent the great painter. Here we see the core of the warrior transcend war and emerge from the pain to live and dance in friendship. It is the same Duncan; the same principles. But here the relationship endures in awe of creativity

rather than destruction. And here Duncan leaves us to discern the difference for ourselves. The only way out is back through the labyrinth and the war. Beyond the friendship of Picasso, beyond the rhetoric of political conventions and the Vietnam war, near the images of soldiers on the freezing retreat from Chosin Reservoir and the impassioned letters from grieving parents we remember Duncan's advice to war photographers: "Keep your head down. Get in close, close, close and keep the image simple."

This retrospective is but a small portion of what David Douglas Duncan has given to humanity through his life and work. Though UT purchased Duncan's archive, the photographer gave the funds to the HRC to endow a program supporting photojournalism. The archive and its endowment will help fund exhibitions, provide inspiration and guidance to students of photojournalism and life and serve as a resource for scholarly research into photojournalism and humanity for posterity.

In his own words, Duncan's "battlefield is a world of final simplicity: you live or you die. But Duncan's life has hardly been simple. Though focused on war it has not been centered on death. Though far from romantic or sensational, Duncan's images are powerful in their revelation that life is everywhere within relationships, even on the battlefield. How else could he proclaim:

"Some days a damned good business ... and everyday a fabulous life."

Nowhere is this more evident than in the exhibition's juxtaposition of his images of young Marines dug in at Con Thien and Khe Sanh with the sounds of war and his own soft, but steady voice, recorded for ABC News. Amid the sounds of the explosion of shells and machine gun fire his voice soothes the nerves of young Marines:

DUNCAN: "Not so fast, slow down now, slow down. It's just silly running around out here in the dark. Don't you see?"

"You're the only Marine I've seen who has a guitar and sings. Why don't you sing a song now?"

MARINE: "Oh, I don't know. Don't much feel like a song now."

DUNCAN: "Well, maybe it would help."

MARINE: "Oh, I just don't know."

DUNCAN: "You know, just a little."

MARINE: "Well, OK then. Maybe just a little. A spiritual might be good. Yea, just a little spiritual."

Austin photographer Rick Williams is a visual communications theorist and educator.

David Douglas Duncan, *Surrender of Japan, U.S.S. Missouri*, September 2, 1945



AMY BLAKEMORE: TEN YEARS
INMAN GALLERY HOUSTON, TEXAS
MAY 21-JUNE 26, 1999

Bill Davenport

Amy Blakemore's work is a photography of isolation. Searching for faith in Lourdes, searching for childhood in Oklahoma or searching for natural beauty in New Zealand; Blakemore's photographs show us over and over an approach to authentic experience denied at the last moment by self-consciousness. Blakemore chooses subjects that have strong, traditionally assigned meanings (children, pilgrims) and interrogates their traditional meanings, skeptically re-examining the proposition that picture-taking can reveal the sublime. Blakemore's photographs present objects and situations that we feel ought to mean something, but somehow their meaning stands always just out of reach. As if taunting us, the figure in *Girl and Hedge* gives us a teasing, catch-me-if-you-can grin as she ducks through the gap in the hedge we can never enter.

Blakemore's low-tech cameras produce a characteristic blurring and vignetting that she uses with a remarkable fluency to communicate a variety of emotional messages. The mistiness of an ecstatic religious vision in *Light*, the hostility of a surveillance camera in *Ladies Room* and the telescopic vision of nostalgia in *Yard* are all created using the same palette of effects.

Blakemore's early photographs of children focus on the eerie ephemerality of childhood, using blurred action to create a sense of the fleeting moment passing and often hinting menacingly at a dark future.

In *Boy and Men*, a small (frightened?) boy turns to look at the camera, excluded from the dark wall of suited men's backs behind him. In *Girl and Game*, a kneeling girl throws a Whiffle ball into a set of shadowy gaping jaws, making a game of a threat with unconscious irony. In *Wall* a child jumps up to get a glimpse over a rough stone wall at some dark trees. In many of the images featuring children, the narrow area of focus recalls both the circumscribed world of a child's perceptions in which adults appear as a forest of legs and the backyard as a whole world to explore and, at the same time, the selective focus of memory.

Blakemore's pilgrimage photographs examine the places and situations surrounding the mystery of religious faith, defining an unbridgeable gap between sublime, subjective experience and objective reporting. Blakemore's photographs could easily present a sentimental expression of personal faith, or a satirical lack thereof, but instead occupy an unsettling middle ground that positions the viewer as a sympathetic spectator of other people's religious faith, yet not a participant.

In *Gates*, Blakemore uses darkness as a symbol for the unknowable, as Rothko does in his paintings in the Rothko Chapel in Houston. A black opening is framed by four waiting figures, each holding a tiny lantern that

casts just enough light to emphasize the surrounding darkness. The sense of mystery in the almost black photograph is that of a presence, or an image, about to appear. What will be revealed in that central black square? In both a literal and spiritual sense, the camera cannot say.

In *Light*, a trio of figures in the middleground look up towards a fuzzy light that could be God, a street lamp or a UFO. Blakemore's photo asks the question: Is that a holy light? If so, how is one to tell? One gets the sense that Blakemore wants to see the light as holy but is separated from the believing figures in the photo by a conceptual distance succinctly rendered in the photograph as physical space. Their cropped figures turn their backs to the photographer, excluding her from their experience.

Many photographers make portraiture a social activity. Blakemore's portraits are antisocial: the ultra close-up faces of Steph and Patrick yearn to be friendly but are trapped behind a blurry screen. Some of Blakemore's strongest colors further depersonalize them into formal abstractions. Blakemore's style is directly opposite that of artists who use a pseudo-casual, snapshot style to create a sense of immediate personal involvement with the subjects. Wolfgang Tillman's photographs of his hipster friends or Richard Billingham's photographs of his dysfunctional family have a sense of privileged insider-ness that couldn't be further from Blakemore's isolated detachment.

Two images of adult women emphasize a less personal loneliness. In *Old Woman in Wales*, a dour woman in a checked suit stares at us. Square and tough, she seems to have no illusions and no hope. The hazy focus enforces a sense of her isolation and introspection. Long-suffering, the woman is unaware that a small boy is leveling a bazooka-like telescope at her from behind, in a wry parody of the photographer's intrusiveness. *Woman on Street* shows an anonymous woman from the back, looking down an empty street with a Cindy-Shermanish theatricality. Unlike Sherman's *Film Stills*, whose essential subject is glamour and role playing, here the character is less important than the implied event we are waiting for.

Some of Blakemore's first color images are almost monochrome squares of landscape texture. The green square of *Apples* or the blue square of *Sky* are both overlaid with a veiled angst that contrasts sharply with their pleasant pastoral subjects. The apples that dot the pleasant lawn are rotting, wasted. The cloudy square of blue sky is scratched by bare winter branches.

Blakemore's 1997 New Zealand landscapes are more ambiguous. A comparison of *Sky* (1995) and *Sky* (Nelson) from 1997 illustrates the difference: the earlier narrative melodrama of the scraggly branches against a winter sky has given way to a blank serenity. Seemingly dispassionate, almost disinterested, each of the New Zealand photographs sets a different emotional tone: a serene *Sky*; a darkly turbulent *Sea*; some abject,

fuzzy *Pools*; and a fiery *Glowing Tree*. Typically ambivalent about the possibility of genuine emotional content, their extreme, almost subjectless formalism invites the viewer to project an emotional flavor onto them while maintaining a pretense of random casualness.

Bill Davenport is a Houston artist whose quirky objects have appeared in many shows everywhere. His next show at Inman Gallery includes termite-eaten wood, mystery novels and Pueblo pottery.

All photos by Amy Blakemore, courtesy the artist and Inman Gallery

top to bottom

Child, 1990

Boy and Men, 1991

Feet, 1992

Wall, 1992

Three Girls, 1989





Journeys and Voyages

VICKI RAGAN'S VISITOR'S CENTER
HOUSTON CENTER FOR
PHOTOGRAPHY
HOUSTON, TEXAS
MARCH 26-MAY 2, 1999

Michael DeVoll

I'm laying down in the back seat with my head on the armrest, my brother's legs resting against my arm. I can hear the radio, which Dad has up only just loud enough for him to hear; there is a baseball game on, but the signal fades in and out as we drive. As I look out the window, I can see the streetlights pass by — the rhythmic punctuation of darkness and light. We're on the nine-hour trip home from Grandmother's house. It's another annual summer visit and school will be starting again soon. I can remember many similar car trips as I was growing up. Trips to see grandparents, family vacations, moving to a new town (again). Part of this was the nature of my dad's job as a preacher. Part of it was the geographic nature of living in small towns for most of my childhood. But I can always remember Dad taking out the maps and drawing

a straight line from where we were to where we were going. Then he would plot a route that was the most direct. That was the purpose of the map: to show us where we were, where we needed to go, and how to get there. These are all memories that were brought to mind from viewing the work of Vicki Ragan.

You Are Here

Ragan, a visual artist from Atlanta, Georgia, uses the map as the foundation for her work. *Visitor's Center* was an installation on view at HCP. This installation started as a dollhouse-sized diorama of a room covered entirely with maps. The wallpaper of the room is the Rocky Mountain National Park; a small framed picture shows a section of northeastern Colorado; the furniture is covered with states in the Mountain Time zone; the door is an aerial map of New Mexico. For the installation, Ragan photographed the back wall of the diorama and enlarged it into a single photographic print measuring 14' wide by 9' high. This image, loosely hung on the wall with grommets and nails, serves as a backdrop for life-size reproductions of the furniture, which have been decoupage with the specified maps. The table holds the original diorama and a lectern is covered with the original Rocky Mountain National Park map.

Legend

Text on the wall gives you the background from which Ragan works.

My mother and I could never read [maps] without a struggle, and it drove my dad, a naval veteran, crazy. Mother would hold them upside down. I remember my parents driving along outside Wagon Mound, New Mexico, on vacation. They were lost, Dad was driving, and Mom couldn't read the map. He got so frustrated with her he just started screaming.

This informs you of the significance of the maps that have been used in the installation. The ashes of her parents' remains have been scattered in Rocky Mountain National Park; the park and her hometown of Greeley are both located on the map of northeastern Colorado; the other maps are from various family travels.

Scale in Miles

Ragan says maps have long been a source of "curiosity, aesthetic pleasure and emotional conflict." Part of her fascination comes from the paradox of the view they provide; at the same time "so concrete and real yet so abstract." She sees in her work a tension between "the undeniable history, autobiography, commerce, facts, things—and the mysterious or improbable myths, make-believe, intuition, dreams, poetry." In the installation, the colors of the maps have been made subtler through generations of reproductions. The words and other markings of the maps are texture until they are viewed on closer inspection. Then they take on the nature of lines on an aging person's face; you know that

there are stories of a life there, but it will take time, memory and reminiscences to learn those stories. You can see the abstract miles of the journey made, but you have only an indication of the actual journey made.

Points of Interest

If you look for the core of artistic expression, it might be boiled down to the artist's exploration of her or his place in the world. Ragan has skillfully taken this idea and represented it graphically with the map. As individuals, I believe that we each search for our place in the world. The map can be used on both ends of this "journey." Before the journey begins, a map can help us know where we want to go and show us the best path to get there. Remembering that the map is only an abstract representation, however, reminds us that our plans may not be borne out in reality. After the journey is complete (or at least the most recent leg in an ongoing voyage), the map can serve as a souvenir; a reminder of where we have come from and the lessons we have learned along the way. Ragan has shown us a glimpse of the souvenirs of her journey while providing us with an evocative catalyst for our own memories of journeys past and expectations for voyages yet to come.

Michael G. DeVoll teaches video production and media literacy at a private high school in Houston. He recently began pursuing a M.Ed. in Counseling and should complete this leg of his journey in three years.

Top: Vicki Ragan, *Visitor's Center*, 1999
Installation photograph by Lynn Baldwin



THE POSSIBILITY

ON THE PLAINS
PETER BROWN
DOUBLETAKE BOOKS AND
W.W. NORTON, 1999

Gregory Spaid

I want to approach Peter Brown's latest book, *On the Plains*, from the point of view of a photographer. In fact, I am a photographer who has also been inspired to photograph on the Plains and feels a strong kinship with Peter Brown's project. I should acknowledge here, also, that Peter Brown is a friend of mine, which has made this writing both more compelling for me and more difficult, and is the reason why I will refer to him from now on as Peter.

The American Great Plains presents an extreme pictorial challenge to any photographer who wants to give the audience an accurate sense of this unique place. Put simply, how do you photograph a nearly vacant space and make it interesting for more than a few images? In its most severe form there is nothing but the ruler-straight edge of the horizon, the sky above and the flat earth below. Above the horizon — if the photographer is lucky — may be a theatrical sky, a few cirrus clouds, perhaps, marching east in formation. Below the horizon there may be the geometric rows of wheat freshly planted or recently harvested. Peter gives us a dramatic version of this type of scene in *Plowed field, west of Levelland, Texas* (1992). What makes such a scene so compelling, though, to any traveler who stops the car and chooses to notice — as Peter has done often over many years — is more than the eye or the camera can see. A big part of it is the silence, which can be almost perfect and unbroken for impossibly long periods. There is the oceanic panorama that defies being framed by the camera. The ruler edge of the horizon doesn't simply divide the frame top to bottom, it also travels 360 degrees encircling you and defining the bottom edge of that infinite dome above that is the sky. Then there is — sometimes for me, at least — the discovery that I am utterly alone. Between me and the horizon, at every point of the compass, I share this awesome place with no one else. How do you photograph that? In *On the Plains* Peter has chosen to

take us into this awesome place as we might enter it on a road trip by car, which, he tells us in the book's Afterword, is the way he first experienced the Great Plains as a young boy traveling with his family from California to the family's summer home in Massachusetts. These were the days before air conditioning or a completed interstate highway system, when his family made the round trip across the country each summer. The experience of these trips was vivid for a boy of thirteen or so, and the memory strong enough to become the seed of imagination that is the foundation for this book.

Something similar happened to me. When I was five my family moved to McCook on the southwestern plains of Nebraska so that my father could take a job as editor of the town's daily news-

interval required for watering steam engines. They contribute to American slang the condescending term, "jerk-water town." A trip east or west across the Plains is a continual process of entering and leaving these small towns. Peter has chosen to use this experience for the structure of his book. First, we experience the open spaces of the land; then we enter a small town; then a somewhat larger town; and, finally, we go back out into the wide-open spaces again. This structure gives the book a beginning, middle and end, and the sense of a cycle that returns us to where we began — out on the plains.

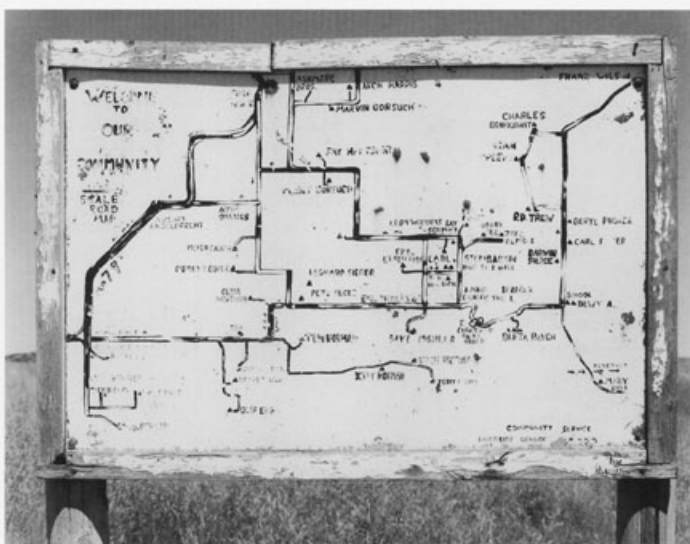
The question of how to treat the people who live on the Plains was, I suspect, another major photographic and conceptual challenge of this work. Without showing people directly, the first two

live. The Riverside Grange of Buffalo Gap sponsors this one as a public service. But the map is aging. The paint is fading and peeling. Some names are barely readable, others not at all. For me, these first two images announce a theme: people are here on these plains, but they are hard to find, not often seen, and they are disappearing. This is consistent with the demographics of the region. Larger and larger farms worked by fewer farmers and less opportunity for young people, among other factors, have caused the population of many parts of the Great Plains to drop dramatically, sometimes to levels below that of a hundred years ago.

Peter's treatment of people in this book suggests their scarcity and their struggle. Of the 87 photographs in the book, only 14 show people at all, and only seven of those are what we might call portraits. Even in those there is no sense of intimacy. Typically, Peter photographs people from a long distance, emphasizing their relationship with the environment that surrounds them more than revealing their individuality or expression of emotion. In *Yard sale, Waterflow, New Mexico* (1987), for instance, we see a boy in the doorway of a mobile home, but the subject of the photograph is not the boy, himself, but instead, the relationship of the boy to the space that surrounds him, the place we presume to be his home that includes a yard full of the items of a permanent yard sale. While this approach to photographing people does not lead to a sense of intimacy with people, it does reinforce the sense that Peter's subject is the place itself, the Great Plains, and not individuals who live there. This approach may be the most honest one Peter could take. He is, after all, just traveling through, as he has been doing repeatedly since he

was a boy. He is not from this place he photographs so affectionately, nor does he live there now. In this way Peter's perspective on his subject is quite different from that of Kathleen Norris who writes the introduction to *On the Plains* from an insider's point of view as a current resident of a small town in western South Dakota.

Although Peter has chosen to photograph directly very few people, the book is full of evidence of hard lives lived on the Plains. For example, in the last photo-



Peter Brown, *Community Map, Buffalo Gap, South Dakota, 1993*

paper. We lived in McCook for only one year before my father moved to a larger newspaper, but my memories of living there are indelible and have shaped my current fascination with the Plains, motivating me to return there often to make photographs.

Anyone who has traveled east or west across the Plains off the interstate knows there is a rhythm to the trip, a rhythm determined by the regular spacing of small towns. These towns were constructed along the railroad at the necessary

images of the book imply that people are here, even community. The first image, *White road, west of Utleyville, Colorado* (1991), is of a mailbox beside a long dirt road that trails over the horizon, a common scene on rolling plains, suggesting someone must live way out that road beyond sight. The second image of the book, *Welcome to Our Community, Buffalo Gap, South Dakota* (1993) is of a publicly-posted hand-painted map along the highway. These maps are often erected on the Plains to help locate where people



S OF E MPTINESS

graph of the book, *Prairie grave, western Kansas* (1992), the prairie vegetation that is reclaiming the land almost totally obscures the evidence of the grave. The prairie grasses have done to the grave what the weather has done to the community map at the beginning of the book, suggesting that human habitation on the Plains is temporary, at best always a struggle, and ultimately, perhaps, in vain. This is a theme well developed in literature by O. E. Rolvaag in his classic novel, *Giants in the Earth*, and by Willa Cather in *O Pioneers*. The theme was revisited in actual events by the Farm Security Administration photographers during the Dust Bowl period of the 1930s, especially in the work of Dorothea Lange and Arthur Rothstein.

While the photographs in this book may evoke some themes of Farm Security Administration photographs, they certainly would not be mistaken for them. This is work of a new and different order. One of the biggest differences is that these photographs are in color, and in a particular style of color that Peter has perfected over the years. This is subtle color that is almost pastel; so subtle, in some cases, it is almost not there at all. Some of my favorite photographs in the book fall into this category, like *Road leaving town, Marathon, Texas*, (1988) and *Railroad sheds, Newcastle, Wyoming* (1995). I find the color here to be exquisitely minimal, yet evoking a kind of longing and sense of decay, like the muted beauty of dried flowers that today remind us of a more vivid past. Elsewhere, Peter's colors are somewhat more pronounced, yet they never reach the dense saturation we might imagine, for instance, in a *National Geographic* article on the Great Plains. His are quieter colors, consistent with a place that gives itself up slowly to the eye. In her wonderful meditation about the Plains, *Dakota, A Spiritual Geography*, Kathleen Norris writes about the visual experience of the Plains in a chapter titled *Seeing*. She says, "Here the eye learns to appreciate slight variations, the possibilities inherent in emptiness." Clearly, Peter has learned that lesson well. And later, she writes: "A person is forced inward by the sparseness of what is outward and visible in this land and sky. The beauty of the Plains is like that of an icon; it does not give an inch

to sentiment or romance."

Something about small towns on the Plains reminds me of the toy buildings that go with model trains. Signs on these buildings, especially the commercial ones, declare what they are boldly and generically. The bank is just the "Bank." The beauty salon is "Beauty Salon," the "Senior Citizens Center," the "City Hall," "Community Pool," and "Bakery." No need to say more on the fronts of these humble buildings, because there is only one bank or bakery in town. Peter has photographed several of these characteristic buildings and presented them frontally and symmetrically to emphasize their iconic nature. These are portraits, in a sense, of buildings, and they serve to express something of the life and culture of the Plains. On one spread in the book we see an architectural version of good

way may seem curious, but on the Great Plains the vast space that often frames a building tends to concentrate and amplify the building's ability to be read as an icon. These buildings — usually inspired by European building styles, rather than native American — often create a strong vertical counterpoint to the pervasive horizontality of the land. For that reason they pop out of the landscape, expressing ideas of overcoming the forces of nature rather than molding to those forces. For me, at least, these buildings seem defiant.

One way to measure Peter's success in describing the Great Plains in this book is to ask what he may have left out that is important. I can think of only a few things worth mentioning. We don't encounter in this book the monster machines that now roam the Plains: the tractors and planters, sprayers and

tion.) All this new, complex and expensive technology is changing both the physical appearance of the Plains and the culture, and many observers feel the change is not for the better.

I would also put in a word for the cafes, coffee shops and senior citizen centers that are a common fixture of almost every Plains town. Usually these are the places where the action is, where people — mostly older people — gather daily to maintain what remains of community and traditional Plains' culture.

But this book is not intended to be exhaustive. The Plains is too big a place to be covered comprehensively. This book is much more a personal interpretation of a place that stirs Peter's creative juices, a place that touches him deeply and motivates him to share his experiences with us in these photographs, and also, in his beautifully written Afterword.

The Great Plains is not a place for everyone. Some people even experience an intense visceral anxiety when faced with so much space filled with so little distraction. This book is like the Plains. It offers the reader repose, a sense of calm and quiet, an opportunity to pause and find meaning and beauty in the commonplace seen clearly. The experience is very much like an extended drive through western Kansas, perhaps, with an experienced and perceptive guide who knows exactly where to point.

Gregory Spaid is a photographer working on a project on rural America, a writer and assistant provost at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio. His work is in various public and private collections including the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian Institution and the J. Paul Getty Museum.

All photos courtesy of Harris Gallery, Houston, from the book, *On the Plains*, by Peter Brown. Originals in color.



Peter Brown, *Yard Sale, Waterflow, New Mexico*, 1987

and evil: a white gabled back of a humble church in Champion Corners, Colorado, with its simple cross painted in red, is set against the image on the opposite page of the rusticated stone facade of a jail in Claiborne, Texas, with bars on the windows. The church is light and ethereal, while the jail is heavy and earthen. Yet both buildings express a kind of resolve, as though they have stood up to the ravages of weather and time on the Plains and declare their survival with some pride. Talking about buildings in this

combines that make it possible for one person to farm thousands of acres of row crops. We see no pivot irrigation systems that bring wetland farming to arid zones and create the wondrous quilt of circles within squares we see when we fly over much of the central United States. (These irrigated circles are the subject of some of Emmet Gowin's recent work on the Plains, which he photographs from the air in black and white, evoking simultaneously their orderly abstract beauty and their potential for environmental destruc-

All photos by Peter Brown, from top left
Gospel Church, Champions Corners, Colorado, 1995
White Road, west of Utleyville, Colorado, 1991
Jail, Claiborne, Texas, 1994
Railroad Sheds, Newcastle, Wyoming, 1995
City Hall, Allensville, Kansas, 1989
Road Leaving Town, Marathon, Texas, 1988

Going Gentle Into That Good Night



HOSPICE:

A PHOTOGRAPHIC INQUIRY
JIM GOLDBERG, NAN GOLDIN,
SALLY MANN, JACK RADCLIFFE
AND KATHY VARGAS
LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY, 1996

EXHIBITION AT BLAFFER GALLERY
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
OCTOBER 16–DECEMBER 19, 1999

Michael Lieberman

Some years ago Willie Sutton, the famous Boston bank robber, was asked why he robbed banks. His answer was simple and direct, "That's where the money is." My suggestion in approaching this book of photo essays by Jim Goldberg, Nan Goldin, Sally Mann, Jack Radcliffe and Kathy Vargas is to put aside the written preface, the introduction, and even Marilyn Webb's fine article, *Death and Dying in America*, and go directly to the photographs. Nan Goldin's photograph of *Grace and Carl at Home*, a plain picture of a middle-aged couple holding each other, and Kathy Vargas's handcolored photo-collage, entitled *Don and Bill: Don in His Apartment*, tell us what this book is about.

Hospice, A Photographic Inquiry is at the same time profound and matter-of-fact. The book is filled with the central contradiction of dying — how incredibly frightening it can be and how joyful at the same time. It is a book about gains and losses, about pain — physical and emotional pain, and how that pain can be lessened — and about resolution. There will be few readers who will not be engaged and moved by this book with its jolting mixture of despair and tenderness. In Houston, we are fortunate to be able to see the original photographs from the exhibition that began at The Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington in March of 1996 and is currently at the Blaffer Gallery on the University of Houston campus. In fact, it will be the Blaffer's first show in its newly renovated gallery space.

The news media have depersonalized death and dying by bombarding us with images that are remote from us. Documentary photography, news reels, and television have depicted the Holocaust,

Vietnam, massacres in Africa, rebel wars in Latin America, bombings, shootings, accidents, natural disasters and fires, as if death and dying were the outcome of atrocity or accident. Surely the intent is to make the distant suffering of others personal to us. However, we also need to know what it means to die an ordinary death in the presence of family and friends, what it means to die in context, in an American context, to die the way most of us will die. The five photo essays that are the substance of *Hospice: A Photographic Inquiry* force us to think about the inevitable — we and those we love are going to die. The hospice movement has provided the most extensive repository of vicarious experience available to us on the subject of dying.

The five photographers have approached the topic of hospice in radically different ways. Jim Goldberg's contribution is a photo memoir of his own father's death. Jack Radcliffe captures many different patients — especially their faces — while Sally Mann has chosen a more symbolic approach by depicting events and landscapes that are meaningful to hospice patients. Nan Goldin's work blends these two treatments, and Kathy

Vargas has employed sweeping, collage summaries of how death touches relationships. Oddly, although this book is designed to highlight hospice care (and is cosponsored by the National Hospice Foundation), for me this book is more about what it means to die in late 20th century America than the hospice movement or hospice care.

In a wonderful, insolent way the book has outgrown its boundaries — what

must have started as an ingenuous, well-defined project has become something much larger: a record of how we live at the end of life and a recipe book for those of us who have not faced these problems. Art is supposed to be messy, to spill out over prescribed limits, and in this respect the book is a stunning success.

Art is also supposed to help us understand living — and dying. One of the most famous comments on the role of



the visual arts was made by the poet W. H. Auden. His poem, *Musée des Beaux Arts*, begins, "About suffering they were never wrong/The Old Masters." This extraordinary poem by a cold-eyed realist instructs us that we must not ignore suffering, that all of us must bear witness and act to prevent it. Now, in this collection, Jack Radcliffe's work captures Auden's imperatives visually. The faces of men and women dying of AIDS and their partners, families and caregivers go beyond words. They remind us of the importance of our own humanity in the face of the suffering of others, and they speak to the courage of both the dying and the living. His photographs demand our attention, even as we want to turn away. It is easy to snap off the TV if death becomes too graphic; the impersonal nature of that medium allows easy "ons" and easy "offs." With Radcliffe we are held. His people are bound to us with such intensity because we recognize the possibility of ourselves. We may turn away, but his work draws us back. We are compelled to look. Radcliffe's photographs also remind us of why we need art in trying to make sense of our lives and our deaths.

Sally Mann's approach is metaphorical, combining images — a dog sprawled on a lawn, a damaged footbridge over a creek — with evocative text and quotations to expand our understanding of how we leave this world and what we knowingly leave behind. Kathy Vargas evokes a similar sense with collages of photographs of people and meaningful objects from the lives of hospice patients. Jim Goldberg, whose focus is the death of his father, includes the original typescript of a letter from his dying father. These approaches help us to understand connectedness — how the dying are connected to this world and to us and how we are connected to them. They are also a documentation of health, the health of the visual arts in late 20th century America. Each contribution is at once unique and imaginative, and all manage to avoid the clichés that are so common in treatments of death and dying.

Dylan Thomas instructed us: "Do not go gentle into that good night/... Rage, rage against the dying of the light." That is not the message of this book or the hospice movement. Rather, in the presence of the love and care of family and friends, we can go gentle into that good night.

Michael Lieberman has published three collections of poetry including *Praising with My Body*, *A History of the Sweetness of the World* and *Sojourn at Elmhurst*. He is now working on a collection of short stories. In another life he is a research physician and chairs the Department of Pathology at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. He is on the board of the Hospice at the Texas Medical Center.

All photographs are from the exhibition *Hospice: A Photographic Inquiry*, Courtesy of the Corcoran Gallery of Art

Photos from top to bottom, left to right

Nan Goldin, *Amalia, Amanda, and Jennifer*, New York City, 1994

Sally Mann, *Untitled (from Joan's Patients)*, 1995

Kathy Vargas, *Hospice San Antonio (detail)*, 1995

Jack Radcliffe, *Jimmy with Jody and Jimiel*, March 3, 1995

Jim Goldberg, *August 17, 1993 (detail)*



Communal Culture

HUTTERITE: A WORLD OF GRACE
KRISTIN CAPP
EDITION STEMMLE, 1998

Sarah Valdez

"Attracted to the light and spare backdrop of this remote, low desert landscape," the artist Kristin Capp moved to rural, eastern Washington state to make photographs. Her curiosity was peaked by local lore about Hutterite settlements in the region, and she followed verbal directions to a remote colony not registered on the map. She and her camera were instantly welcomed by a Hutterite woman by the name of Janet Walter, who served as the subject of a good many of Capp's images as well as the liaison to the notoriously insular community, known for, among other things, its wariness of outsiders. The result of Capp's encounter, *Hutterite: A World of Grace*, is a large volume (13 1/4" x 13 1/2") of square-formatted black-and-white photographs that intimately portrays these rarely seen people and gives a view of their way of life.

For those unfamiliar with their history, the Hutterites descended from a contingent in Zurich that was persecuted, beginning in the early 1500s, for their belief in adult, as opposed to child, baptism. Thousands died horrific deaths as martyrs for this cause, and, others in defense of their belief, migrated in search of freedom, mostly to Romania, Poland, Hungary and the Ukraine. In 1533, a charismatic and authoritarian hatter, Jakob Hutter, organized what had become a dissent-ridden community of religious exiles in the Moravian town of Austerlitz. Hutter instituted the Hutterite Bruderhof, or communal farm system, which remains in effect to this day. The entire Hutterite population (then around 1,200) crossed the Atlantic to come to the U.S. between 1874 and 1879. Testament to their successful, self-imposed segregation, the Hutterite lingua franca remains the Austrian dialect they brought with them.

Capp does more than simply document this group of people as they are living today. She masterfully employs texture, line, light, shadow and focus to create visually pleasing images. Her technical ability is accompanied by a knack for recognizing and capturing things and people symbolically evocative of tradition and community, as well as the smaller, sensual things that make the Hutterites' way of life palpable. There is some resemblance between Capp's work and, for



instance, that done by Dorothea Lange for the Farm Security Administration documenting migrant farm workers during the mid-1930s. Although the viewer does not "know" the people and culture being looked at in any definitive sense, there are implied characters and narratives (usually pertaining to individual's place in the family, i.e., beautiful mother, proud grandmother, aging spinster, plucky young sons) that anyone might recognize.

Hutterite culture, being communal, also often has large quantities of the same thing in one place — a quality that Capp astutely noticed can make for strong compositions. A pile of potatoes provides a punctuated background on which Hutterite women sit; the shiny stainless steel silver vats and counter tops of their communal kitchen function as gleaming geometric forms reflecting light for an image that functions abstractly as well as literally. Trucks in a line, a gaggle of ducks

in profile, trenches of tilled earth, dead chickens in a large wagon and a load of ears of corn in a large vat are all subjects of separate compositions, each of which sensitively records the formal sense that is sometimes to be found amid the chaos of the untranslated visual world.

Another genre of photography in Capp's book is that of women working. As one can surmise from Capp's photographs, there is an overarching similarity among Hutterite women: fair skin; conservative, old-fashioned dress, generally involving an apron; and a severe, pulled-back hairstyle and complicated yet simple-looking braids and twists. One such female is portrayed carrying two round cabbages, holding one in either hand as sunlight streams romantically behind her silhouette and the wind blows her skirt at a diagonal that provides balance against the horizontal horizon behind. A woman with a kerchief on her head and a plaid apron around her waist is pictured harvesting corn, the path between the rows of corn stalks forming a solid counterpoint to the hill sloping at a 45-degree angle from the upper right-hand corner of the square image. Similarly, elegantly recorded, we see a woman harvesting tomatillos; two women harvesting watermelon; a woman surrounded by loaves of bread she has baked; another squatting amid flowers in her garden.

These images bring to mind the art historian Linda Nochlin's observation that: "... nowhere is the work of ideology more evident than when issues of class join with issues of gender in the production of female imagery. In the case of the peasant woman, the association of the rural female with a timeless, nurturing, aesthetically distancing realm of nature serve(s) to defuse her potentiality."

There is a persistent visual romanticization of the Hutterites' way of life that, indeed, comes through most clearly in Capp's images of demure, hard-working, down-to-earth women. These photographs, like the rest of Capp's body of work, embody nostalgia for a lifestyle unfettered by the emphasis on individuality and isolation from means of production that characterize contemporary capitalist culture. More than a monumental document or necessary historical lesson on the Hutterites, the tetric point of the photography seems to be a yearning for a tradition-filled "world of grace."

There is a strange disjuncture between the photographs' aura and the accompanying essays written by Sieglind Geisel and Rod Slemmons, both of which focus on Hutterite history and how remarkable it is that Capp managed to gain access to their insular and never-before-documented world with her camera. Capp's work, if neither educational nor pioneering, stands on its own, and does not need the justification found in the essays. The book is most likely to be appreciated by those who instinctively relate to the visual harmony of an image, the power of heritage, or the simple beauty of a fresh-scrubbed face.

Sarah Valdez is a writer living in New York City.

FOOTNOTES

1. Linda Nochlin, *Women, Art, and Power*, Visual Theory, ed. Keith Moxey et al., Polity Press, 1991, p. 30.

Photos from top: Kristin Capp, *Carol, Janet and Deborah Walter, Lamona Colony, Washington*, 1994
Kristin Capp, *Carol Walter, Moses Lake, Washington*, 1994

Off the Map

CREATURES
HENRY HORENSTEIN
POND PRESS
1999

JOHN CLEARY GALLERY
HOUSTON, TEXAS
JUNE 5-JULY 3, 1999

Jill Waterman

"In the days when superstition dominated reason and magical powers suppressed common sense, animal spirits infested the world of our ancestors. Endowed with supernatural qualities like our own, the animals we encountered filled us with awe."

Desmond Morris, *The Animal Contract* p. 17.



Since the time of the cave paintings at Lascaux, animals have been invested with mythological significance. They exist in a world apart from our own, as evidenced by their distance from the controls of human language. Our relationship with animals has evolved through the centuries from fear and wonder to possession and scientific analysis. Details of behavior and physiology are now plotted to establish the importance of these primal beings to our civilized human world.

The capture of animals in photographs has been put to the test in recent years, due to a variety of conditions that manipulate reality and problematize truth. The decimation of natural habitats, the co-opting of wildlife into socialized environments, an insatiable appetite for viewing animals as entertainment and an expanded arsenal of image-making tools are all factors that politicize the representation of animals in photographs. Yet, the degree to which animals influence the image-making process by interaction with humans (and with the camera) is rarely discussed. This issue is especially relevant to the socialized creatures who connect with our lives through a measure of captivity. One photographer likens the wildlife inhabiting game farms to animal soldiers:

"In a war you have people who die to save democracy. These animals, who are not suffering, are also playing a very important role. Without pretty pictures, would there be the same affection for them?"¹

Given the proper conditions, a socialized animal in a well-designed habitat is likely to respond to an attentive viewer with the grandeur of a performer on stage. Such interactions, however, are always conditional. As such they are

subject to the personality and ritual habits of an animal as well as the duration and intent of a viewer's attention. The comfort level provided by an enclosure's design is another contributing factor. The relationship between animals and viewers at the Bronx Zoo's new Congo exhibit was recently described in the press by John Gwynne, Wildlife Conservation Society's Director of Design: "We expected the gorillas to be much more comfortable here, but we didn't expect them to be interacting as much as they are. People have asked if it's one-way glass — it's not. If it were, the gorillas wouldn't be so close. They're coming in to see us," as quoted in *The New York Times*.²

A new book of photographs by Henry Horenstein explores this relationship in elegant, iconic animal portraits. Horenstein is perhaps best known to the world of photography as the author of a best-selling darkroom text. That he is also a photographer of creative vision is apparent from this book. This series of images, made during the past four to five years, is the continuation of a life-long interest in the animal world. Over the span of his career, Horenstein's work with animals has ranged from personal investigations to commercial assignments produced for zoos and aquariums.

This current selection is a thoughtful arrangement of creatures suspended, like artifacts in amber, by close-up detail and limited depth-of-field. The book opens on a reptilian eye pointing toward the turning page. The next image echoes the shape of this eye, yet belongs to the mouth of a marine creature whose face is obscured by distance. From this introductory section, one is immersed in an artfully choreographed progression where visual associations create meaning through decisive image pairings. Some

examples include the following: the buoyant grace of a beluga whale is eclipsed by the tightly clenched jaw of an alligator; the pained expression of an orangutan is augmented by the ponderous weight of an elephants' foot; the patterning in a flamingo's plumage echoes the cluster of a school of carp; the vampiric embrace of a flying fox is countered by a comic greeting from a cownose ray.

One is informed of each animal's species and genus by captioned thumbnails in a four-page index at the back of the book. This section offers a glimpse at the mechanics of the editing process as a narrative sequence unfolds across each page. The story presented here is one of similarity in diversity. We are witness to odd strains of inheritance in an evolution back to myth.

Horenstein has had a multi-faceted career as an author, educator, commercial photographer, editor and book packager. He has gained an intimate knowledge of publishing through past books spanning the subjects of instructional texts, children's titles and documentary photo essays. This wealth of experience has led him to release *Creatures*, his first self-published project. Paul Langmuir, art director, and Thomas Gearty, editor, worked closely with Horenstein to design page layouts that achieve both formal beauty and conceptual punch. Decisions about picture sequence and image size are orchestrated with placement on backgrounds of black or white to direct the pace of the reader's progress. These choices work along with the subtleties of the photographs to convey a sense of each creature's unique traits.

All of the images from this project were shot on Agfa Scala black-and-white



transparency film. Agfa materials were also employed in the publication of the book. The manufacturer became an integral part of this project, providing scans and film separations for publication. The book was printed in Vermont by Stinehour Press, using a tritone process to render subtle nuances of color and contrast. Exhibition prints are made with the Ilfochrome (formerly Cibachrome) process to obtain rich black tones with a wealth of detail. Seven images from this series are also available as limited-edition platinum prints.

Henry Horenstein's book, *Creatures*, published by Pond Press, is available in most bookstores. An exhibition of images from this series was on view during May at the Robert Klein Gallery in Boston and in New York at Ligne Roset. During the month of June this work was exhibited at John Cleary Gallery in Houston, Texas. Horenstein's platinum imagery is available through The John Stevenson Gallery in New York. In autumn 1999, Harcourt Brace will release, *A is for — A Photographer's Alphabet*, a children's book of Horenstein's animal images. Further information about this work is available from the galleries mentioned above or through the following Web sites: www.pondpress.com or www.horenstein.com.

A fine art photographer living in New York City, Jill Waterman works as a photo-editor for the stock photo agency, FPG International. She is also senior picture editor and contributing writer for *Fotophile*.

FOOTNOTES

1. Joe McDonald in *The Problem with Wildlife* by Bill McKibben, Doubleday, Fall 1997, p. 52.
2. *The New York Times*, Friday, July 2, 1999, — *Family Fare*, A Rainforest in the Bronx, by Laurel Graeber, p. E40

Photos, from top to bottom, starting upper right
Henry Horenstein, *Flying Fox*.
Pteropus mearnsi, 1998
Henry Horenstein, *Cheetah*.
Acinonyx jubatus, 1995
Henry Horenstein, *Common Carp*.
Cyprinus carpio, 1996



Lewis Carroll, Amateur

C.L. Dodgson, *Xie Kitchen*, 1876

Photographs courtesy of Gernsheim Collection, HRHRC, The University of Texas, Austin.

REFLECTIONS IN A LOOKING GLASS:
A CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF
LEWIS CARROLL, PHOTOGRAPHER
BY MORTON N. COHEN,
APERTURE, 1998
AFTERWORD BY ROY FLUKINGER.
POSTSCRIPT BY
MARK HAWORTH-BOOTH

David L. Jacobs

The word "amateur" evokes distinctly negative images: painters who glory in fields of bluebonnets, photographers who get off on New England barns and otherwise sane individuals who warble their way through Gilbert and Sullivan. Amateurs lack competence, if not commitment. They are untalented, unfinished and naive. Professionals, on the other hand, have mastered the technical aspects of their art. They are serious practitioners who perform — rain or shine — and get paid for it.

The word "amateur" comes from a Latin word meaning lover, and it is that sense which dominated the mid-nineteenth century notion of amateurism — a notion which was entirely free of our modern negative connotations. Many of photography's inventors — Wedgewood, Talbot and Herschel, among others — were well-rounded gentlemen of the industrial revolution who pursued numerous pursuits out of love and a sense of duty. They were enthusiasts from start to finish: amateurs who loved the medium they helped to create.

Charles Dodgson, a.k.a. Lewis Carroll, in many ways was the epitome of the Victorian amateur. Carroll brought energy and intelligence to a broad range of interests. He was an Oxford don who taught mathematics and logic. He was deeply involved in the theater, as well as various sciences and medicine. He wrote political tracts. He was an ordained deacon in the church, and, of course, he was the author of the Alice books. He also found time, as did many of his peers, to write voluminous correspondence — nearly 100,000 recorded letters in the last 35 years of his life.

In addition, Lewis Carroll took up photography in 1856, in his mid-twenties, and he continued to photograph for the next 25 years. He publicly exhibited his images only once, in 1858. As an amateur he felt little need for a wide audience, much less widespread acclaim. At the same time, he held very high technical standards, as reflected both in the brilliance of his prints, and the polite disdain he felt for Julia Margaret Cameron's soft, unfocused pictures. Carroll was not into photography for money, glory or fame but rather for the love of working with the medium, and the simple pleasures he took in making pictures of family and friends.

Reflections in a Looking Glass is a handsome production. The reproductions capture the subtle tonalities of the original prints, the hand-colored photographs and Carroll's whimsical sketches. Beyond the

C.L. Dodgson, *Xie in Chinese Dress*, 1873

lavish plates, the book is noteworthy for allowing Carroll to speak in his own voice. Two of his best known writings on photography — *Hiawatha Photographing* and *A Photographer's Day Out* — are reprinted in their hilarious entirety. There are also well-chosen quotes from Carroll's letters

and other writings that suggest the range of Carroll's inquisitive mind as well as the spirit of his times. Carroll's images have been difficult to find for many years, so *Reflections*, with its gorgeous reproductions, is most welcome.

If there is one disappointment in this book, it is Morton N. Cohen's biographical sketch of Carroll. Cohen's essay is well-written and informative on many aspects of Carroll's life and diverse interests. Like many biographers, however, Cohen is in the thrall of his subject, and he comes across as a die-hard Carroll defender. This is especially evident when Cohen turns to the topic of Carroll's photographs of and relationships with pre-pubescent girls and again when Cohen raises the issue of whether Carroll's photographs would be of interest to us had they not been made by the author of the Alice books. In both cases

Cohen's arguments are abbreviated, glib and unpersuasive.

Despite their occasional stiffness, Carroll's photographs are intimate images of subjects that were close at hand. In this respect Carroll resembles many 20th century snapshooters, for whom the subjects of the pictures — friends, family, acquaintances — also serve as the primary viewers of the finished work. The photographer, the subjects, and the audience are privy to the relationships and circumstances that lie behind the pictures. They know, in other words, the contexts — personal and photographic — out of which the pictures originated, and this knowledge allows these viewers to animate the images in unique ways.

It is for these reasons, in part, that many of Carroll's photographs seem like inside jokes that only Carroll, those young girls, those heavily bearded gentlemen and those elaborately coiffed women might have fully comprehended. We, on the other hand, might appreciate the surfaces of the pictures but can only guess at what was really going on. Looking through Carroll's photographs is not unlike coming across an old family album at a flea market. We look at pictures that were made by and for people who are irretrievably lost in the past. It is likely that no-one alive knows or cares who they were — otherwise, how could these once-treasured albums end up in a place like this, open to the scrutiny of strangers, with a price tag stuck on the inside cover? There is pathos in Carroll's images and in many family albums as well: a pathos born of lost contexts, and of what they portend for us and those images we hold closest to the breast.

David L. Jacobs is a professor of art at the University of Houston.



Photo: Marcia Boxman

Morrie Camhi 1928–1999

Morrie Camhi, an internationally renowned photographer, died on September 1, 1999. He was 71. Camhi was well-known for his photographs that covered many subjects including prisoners, farmworkers and Greek Jews.

Camhi was born in New York City. While attending UCLA he earned his tuition by working as a commercial photography lab technician. After graduating with a degree in English literature, he worked as an advertising photographer.

Camhi left the advertising business in 1969 so he could pursue his personal interest in photography. He began to teach photography at San Francisco College in 1972; at this same time he began photographing the difficulties of farmworkers. In a lecture earlier this year, he referred to his mission as a photographer by stating, "If I feel a sense of hopelessness, why shouldn't I memorialize that in the photos? I'm trying to deal with veracity in my photos."

Camhi will be remembered not only as a great photographer but also as a devoted teacher.

BOOKS

BOOKS RECEIVED

The Houston Center for Photography receives review copies of books from publishers around the country. These books are available to visitors during gallery hours.

Bernhard, John. *Nudes*. Houston, TX: De Frog Gallery, 1999, 50 pages

Contains Bernhard's five portfolio series: *Overview*, *Stone*, *Wood*, *Transformation* and *Skindream* — a compilation representing six years of work.

Capp, Kristin. *Hutterite: A World of Grace*. Zurich: Edition Stemmler, 1998, 144 pages

Portrays the Hutterite religious community of eastern Washington.

Carr, Carolyn Kinder. *Hans Namuth Portraits*. Washington: The Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999, 166 pages

Contains a biographical essay about Namuth and 75 of his photographic portraits taken between 1950 and 1989.



Coleman, A. D. *Lloyd Ullberg: Modernist Photographer*. Petaluma, CA: Singer Printing Company, 1999, 26 pages

Presents some of Ullberg's best prints depicting his investigation of both the U.S. and European models of modernist thought.

Corzo, Miguel Angel, ed. *Mortality Immortality? The Legacy of 20th-Century Art*. Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1999, 192 pages

Consists of 34 essays illustrated with more than a hundred photographs focusing on five topics: *Is Contemporary Art Only for Contemporary Times*, *Present and Future Perceptions*, *The Challenge of Materials*, *The Ecosystem*, and *Who Is Responsible?*

Courtney-Clarke, Margaret. *Places in the Sand*. New York: The Monacelli Press, Inc., 1997, 128 pages

Consists of 64 photos of desert places in Africa, where the photographer spent her childhood and adolescence.

Covington, Michael. *Astrophotography for the Amateur*. Second edition. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 331 pages

Covers various aspects of astrophotography, including stars, galaxies, the moon, the sun, comets, meteors and eclipses, through the use of materials and equipment that are readily available.

Deal, Joe. *Between Nature and Culture: Photographs of the Getty Center*. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1999, 126 pages

Consists of 122 photographs documenting the construction of the Getty Center and its relationship to the natural environment.

Elogio de la Pasion. Mexico City: Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 1999, 78 pages

Presents the work of six photographers Michael Ackerman, Antoine d'Agata, Marcos Lopez, Eustaquio Neves, Marta Sentis and Daniel Weinstock exploring the limits of the individual, identity, iconography, the exotic and near abysm.



Enyeart, James L. *Land, Sky, and All That Is Within: Visionary Photographers in the Southwest*. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1998, 126 pages

Includes the work of such artists as T. H. O'Sullivan, Adam Clark Vroman, Ansel Adams, Laura Gilpin, Eliot Porter, Russell Lee, Edward Weston and Paul Strand, who worked in the Four Corners area between 1870 and 1970.

Fardon, George Robinson. *San Francisco Album: Photographs 1854-1856*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999, 176 pages

Consists of the earliest photographs of San Francisco, dating back to 1856, including such sites as downtown, a rural South Park, the Merchants' Exchange on Battery Street, Fort Vigilance and City Hall.

Flukinger, Roy. *David Douglas Duncan: One Life, A Photographic Odyssey*. Austin, TX: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, 1999, 20 pages

Commemorates Duncan's work and presents images of a wide geographic and chronologic range from Viet Nam to the Kremlin and from political fights in Miami to battle scenes in the Pacific.



Gascon, France. *Clara Gutsche, The Convent Series*. Musée de la Civilisation, Joliette, Quebec, 90 pages.

Horenstein, Henry. *Creatures*. Boston: Pond Press, 1999, 80 pages

Presents a collection of images of various creatures including fish, reptiles, mammals captured in zoos, in aquariums and in the wild in locations all over the world.

Jones, Carolyn. *The Family of Women: Voices across the Generations*. New York: Abbeville

Contains portraits and accompanying stories of women — grandmothers, mothers and daughters sharing a common bond.

Kalli, Susie. *Amy Blakemore: Ten Years*. Houston, TX: Inman Gallery, 1999, 36 pages

Includes a selection of Blakemore's photography about specific things and memory.

Koemptgen, Catherine. *Connections & Reflections: Mothers and Daughters in their own light, In their own words*. Duluth, MN: Pfeiffer-Hamilton Publisher, 1998, 141 pages

Presents 65 intimate mother/daughter photoessays exploring the relationship between mothers and daughters.

Langenheim, Henning. *Mordfelder (Killing Fields)*. Berlin: Elefant Press, 1999, 139 pages

Consists of 68 black-and-white photographs showing the sites of German annihilation in the Former Soviet Union: Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania and the Ukraine. Bilingual text written in German and Russian.

Light, Michael. *Full Moon*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999, 234 pages

Re-creates the Apollo missions through a selection of 56 black-and-white and 72 full-color photographs from NASA's 32,000 photos taken by the lunar astronauts. Includes an essay about the Apollo program by Andrew Chaikin and an essay about the photographs by Light.

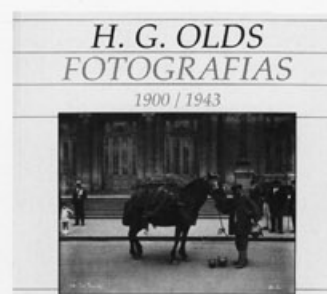


Mario Cravo Neto. Houston, TX: Sicardi-Sanders Gallery, 1999, 8 pages

Consists of two essays by Anne Wilkes Tucker and Fernando Castro and six of Neto's photographs.

Milburn, Douglas. *The Elusive City: Photographs of Houston by Paul Hester*. Houston, TX: The Rice Design Alliance, 1998, 46 pages

Includes a wide range of photos of Houston as far back as 1978 and as recent as 1996, of buildings, city streets, night clubs, schools, churches, hotels.



Olds, H. G. *Fotografias, 1900-1943*. Buenos Aires: Fundación Antorchas, 1998, 107 pages

Consists of a series of photographs organized geographically — the first part being about Buenos Aires and its environs and the second part about the provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe and Córdoba.

Sieff, Jeanloup. *Dance*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999, 46 pages

Consists of 46 duotone images taken between 1953 and 1994 focusing primarily on dancers who have performed with the Paris Opera Ballet.

Silverthorne, Jeffrey. *Photographs*. Stuttgart, Germany: Galerie A, 1993, 38 pages

Presents a series of photographs focusing on "sexuality, mortality, privacy, and life at the outer edges" [text in English and German].

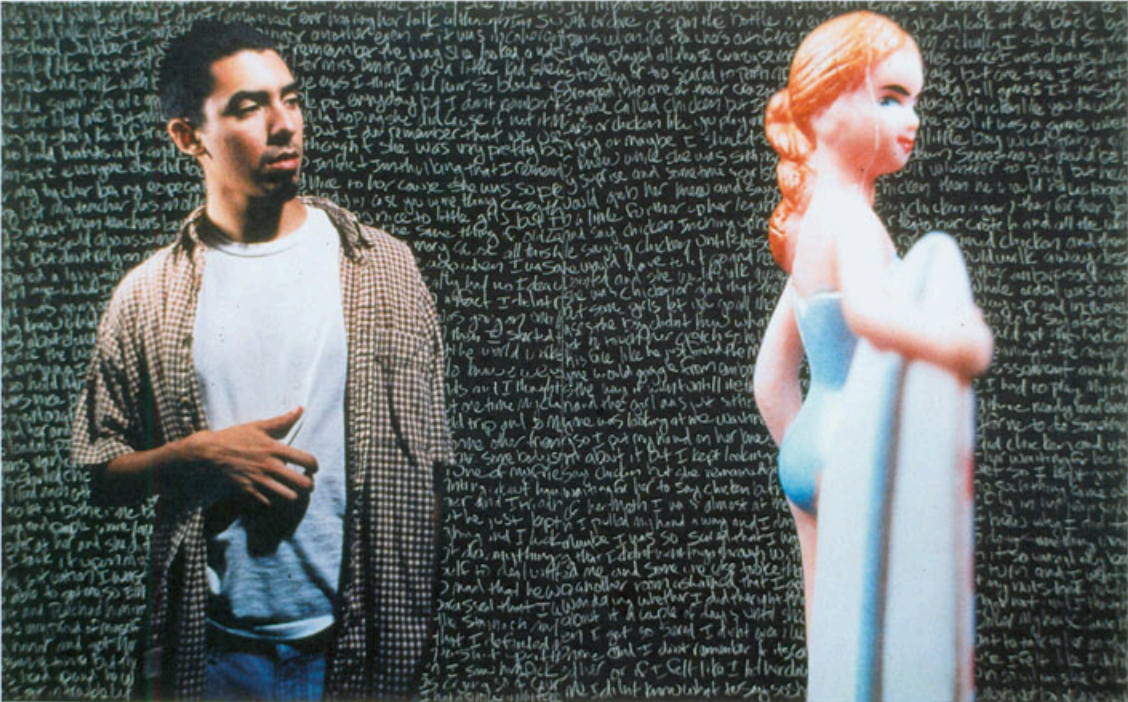
The Southern Quarterly: A Journal of the Arts in the South. Barbara C. Ewell and Bruce Gentry, guest editors. Hattiesburg, MS: The University of Southern Mississippi, 1999, 328 pages

Compiled by Otilia Sánchez

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Jimmy Castillo, *Untitled (Say Baby)*, 1999, Type C print

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Osamu James Nakagawa
Cover-Up, 1996
Type C print, 8 x 10



Alain Gerand Clement
Untitled, 1985-86
toned gelatin silver print, 5 x 7



Anita Chermewski
Casablanca Lily, 1987
gelatin silver print, 15 x 10.5



Jeffrey Becom
Pink Pig and Painted Walls, Mexico, 1992
Type C print, 7.5 x 11.5



Robert Bruce Langham
Feeding Crow, 1994
palladium print, 5 x 7



Kristin Capp
Schoolroom, Espanola colony, Washington, 1996
gelatin silver print, 9 x 9

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