



HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

FALL 2007



\$7.00 U.S. / € 5.00 Europe



Fall 07

INTERVIEW
2 Tracey Snelling: Behind Closed Doors
Chuck Mobley

6 Txt Me L8r
Michelle White

INTERVIEW
8 Reality Interrupted: Carlos and Jason Sanchez
Anne Wilkes Tucker

PORTFOLIO
14 360° Portraits
Chuy Benitez

EXHIBITION REVIEW
18 Documenta 12 and the 52nd Venice Biennale
Miranda Lash

EXHIBITION REVIEW
22 Kelly Nipper at the MFAH
Leah DeVun

BOOK REVIEW
24 Stephen Shore
Peter Brown

BOOK REVIEW
25 JoAnn Verburg
Miranda Lash

PORTFOLIO
26 Almost Safe
Anthony Goicolea

IN CLOSING
30 Our Faves
Mary Magsamen & Stephan Hillerbrand

32 Recently Acquired Books
Rachel Hewlett



Contributors

Chuy Benitez is a first-generation Mexican American. Chuy received his Bachelor's in Art in 2005 at the University of Notre Dame and is in his final year of MFA candidacy at the University of Houston.



Peter Brown is a founding member of HCP. He teaches at the Glasscock School of Continuing Studies at Rice University and his books are *Seasons of Light* and *On the Plains*. A new book *West of Last Chance*, a collaboration with the novelist Kent Haruf will be published this February by W. W. Norton.



Leah DeVun is an artist and writer living in Houston. Her photographs and drawings have shown in galleries in New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, and throughout Texas. She writes for a number of local magazines, including *Artlies* and *Glasstire*, as well as national magazines such as *Wired* and *Venus Zine*.



Anthony Goicolea's photography has garnered critical acclaim and international exhibition. The winner of the 2005 BMW-Paris Photo Prize, he lives and works in New York City.



Miranda Lash is a Curatorial Assistant at The Menil Collection. She received her B.A. from Harvard University and her M.A. from the Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art. Her recent writings are published in *Frida Kahlo: 1907-2007*, *Homenaje Nacional*, and *Baroque Tendencies in Contemporary Art*.



Mary Magsamen and Stephan Hillerbrand are a collaborative artist team working with photography and video. They met at Cranbrook Academy of Art and their work has been in international exhibitions and screenings. They live and work in Houston with their two children. Their "favorite" website is www.maryandstephan.com.



Chuck Mobley is San Francisco Camerawork's associate director in charge of exhibitions and publications. He is editor of *Camerawork: A Journal of Photographic Arts* and has written for *Sculpture* and *Contemporary* magazines.



Michelle White is Assistant Curator at The Menil Collection, Houston. She is a frequent contributor to *Art Papers* and a regional editor of *Art Lies*, *A Contemporary Art Quarterly*.



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



Fall 2007
Volume XXV No.1

Editor in Chief
Madeline Yale

Managing Editor
Miye Bromberg

Editorial Board
Peter Brown
David Crossley
Jeff DeBevec
Patricia Eifel
Paul Hester
David Jacobs
Miranda Lash
Mary Magsamen
Toby Kamps
Ebony Porter
Paul Zeigler

Design
Antonio Manega, Gazer Design

Printing
BeachPrint

SPOT is published twice yearly, in conjunction with the fiscal year of the Houston Center for Photography.

Subscriptions are free to members. *SPOT* is a journal of independent opinions published by Houston Center for Photography as one of its many services to the photographic community. The ideas expressed do not represent positions of Houston Center for Photography's administration or membership and are solely the opinions of the writers themselves.

Copyright 2007. All rights reserved. No portion of *SPOT* may be reproduced without the permission of Houston Center for Photography.

HCP's mission is to increase society's understanding and appreciation of photography and its evolving role in contemporary culture. HCP strives to encourage artists, build audiences, stimulate dialogue, and promote inquiry about photography and related media through education, exhibitions, publications, fellowship programs, and community collaboration. Houston Center for Photography is supported by its members and, in part, by Texas Commission on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts; City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance; Houston Endowment, Inc.; Eleanor and Frank Freed Foundation; Charles Butt; Cemo Family Foundation; Antonio Manega, Gazer Design; QUE Imaging; Haynes and Boone, LLP.

For details about membership or advertising, contact Houston Center for Photography.

Houston Center for Photography
1441 West Alabama, Houston, Texas 77006
Telephone 713.529.4755, Fax 713.529.9248
info@hcponline.org, www.hcponline.org

Executive Director and Curator
Madeline Yale

Executive Assistant
Miye Bromberg

Education Coordinator
Rachel Hewlett

Program Coordinator
Ebony Porter

Finance Administrator
Sean Yarborough

Weekend Gallery Manager
Paul Elhoff

Volunteers / Interns
Matt Adams, Matt Brajot, Kraig Emmert, Paul Kim, Sandy Moberg, Michael Moya, Kristy Peet, Clay Robins, Louis Smith, Robert Wachira



Benefactor
Charles Butt

Sponsors
Cemo Family Foundation
Drs. Patricia Eifel and James Belli

Patrons
Anonymous
Haynes & Boone, LLP
Baylee and Kal
Gardere, Wynne, Sewell & Riggs, L.L.P.
Gazer Design Group
Que Imaging
Continental Airlines,
the official airline of HCP

Donors
James Maloney
David McClain and Jane Schmitt
Andres Pereira
SINAPPS

Supporter
Anonymous
Julie Brook Alexander
and Drew Alexander
Randolph Allen
Robert and Grace Cavnar Foundation
Susan and Patrick Cook
Jeff Debevec
Betty and Frec Fleming
Charlie Gerhardt
Patsy Graham
Lillian and Robert Warren

cover: Carlos and Jason Sanchez
Rescue Effort
Montréal, 2006, Digital C-Print
42 x 74 inches
Courtesy of the Artists and
Christopher Cutts Gallery (Toronto)

In this Issue

Red ut perspicatis unde omnis iste natus error sit voluptatem accusantium doloremque laudantium, totam rem aperiam, eaque ipsa quae ab illo inventore veritatis et quasi architecto beatae vitae dicta sunt explicabo. Nemo enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt. Neque porro quisquam est, qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit, sed quia non numquam eius modi tempora incidunt ut labore et dolore magnam aliquam quaerat voluptatem. Ut enim ad minima veniam, quis nostrum exercitationem ullam corporis suscipit laboriosam, nisi ut aliquid ex ea commodi consequatur? Quis autem vel eum iure reprehenderit qui in ea voluptate velit esse quam nihil molestiae consequatur, vel illum qui dolorem eum fugiat quo voluptas nulla pariat.

Enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt. Neque porro quisquam est, qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit, sed quia non numquam eius modi tempora incidunt ut labore et dolore magnam aliquam quaerat voluptatem. Ut enim ad minima veniam, quis nostrum exercitationem ullam corporis suscipit laboriosam, nisi ut aliquid ex ea commodi consequatur? Quis autem vel eum iure reprehenderit qui in ea voluptate velit esse quam nihil molestiae consequatur, vel illum qui dolorem eum fugiat quo voluptas nulla pariat.

Nemo enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt. Neque porro quisquam est, qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit, sed quia non numquam eius modi tempora incidunt ut labore et dolore magnam aliquam quaerat voluptatem. Ut enim ad minima veniam, quis nostrum exercitationem ullam corporis suscipit laboriosam, nisi ut aliquid ex ea commodi consequatur? Quis autem vel eum iure reprehenderit qui in ea voluptate velit esse quam nihil molestiae consequatur, vel illum qui dolorem eum fugiat quo voluptas nulla pariat.

Madeline Yale
Executive Director & Curator
Houston Center for Photography

Tracey Snelling: Behind Closed Doors Interview by Chuck Mobley

Tracey Snelling's mash-up of mediums and genres culminates in a wildly diverse pastiche. Intricately assembled installations of vaguely familiar themes, places, and objects designed to elicit visceral response also disrupt the mainstream equilibrium. Audiences are obliged to consider their complicity in the communal voyeurism that is popular culture. To understand our relationship to contemporary American paparazzi, news media, and reality television culture, one can refer to the meta-narratives of the 20th-century conventional film industry. In the following brief exchange, Tracey and I attempt to draw a broad outline of the conceptual drive that underlies her art practice.



Tracey Snelling
Another Shocking Psychological Thriller
2004, 3-channel synched video installation
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Brown Bag Contemporary (New York, NY)

Chuck Mobley: What drew you to the cinematic, or more specifically to film noir?

Tracey Snelling: I grew up on movies. When I was young, my father and I would watch horror films together. There was a television program called "Creature Features" that would play films such as "Count Yorga" and "Mothra." I would watch almost any movie that came on television, from *Midnight Cowboy* to Kung Fu in 3-D. In university, I was able to take film history classes in place of some of my art history requirements. One of those classes was Film Noir. I found it fascinating that in all of these films, the hero or heroine always had some major flaw. I liked the idea that nothing was cut-and-dried, and the "good guy" was still bad. I also liked the power of the "femme fatale" figures. They seemed to show strength through making choices that broke the stereotype of the 1950s woman, who was often seen in films in a dress with an apron, bringing drinks to her husband and his business associates.

Is this part of what allowed you the freedom to explore working with video, sculpture, installation, and performing for the camera?

TS: My view of the world as a complex place that doesn't fit into nice little boxes probably has an influence on how I work. There's a sense of freedom that comes from knowing that there are few,

if any, absolutes in life. With my work, I feel that the different mediums are just tools that are available to an artist to express his/her viewpoint.

Sometimes I use different media out of necessity. When I used myself as the character in part of *Another Shocking Psychological Thriller* and some photographs, it was because I couldn't find the right film clip or image and had to come up with another way of making it happen. Conceptually, it wasn't important that the woman was me. I was the most available person, and since I knew what I wanted, I didn't have to direct someone else. Another reason I use different media is that I became more interested in immersing the viewer in my work. Visual aspects, with sound, movement, and even smell affect many more senses, and tend to affect people on different emotional levels.

Could you elaborate on your strategy of immersion – in particular the importance of verisimilitude with regard to the installations?

With my work it's important that the sculptures have a sense that they are "real." Something has to separate them from being dollhouses or models. When I add video (usually clips from films) and sound (music, clips of conversations), it brings in another

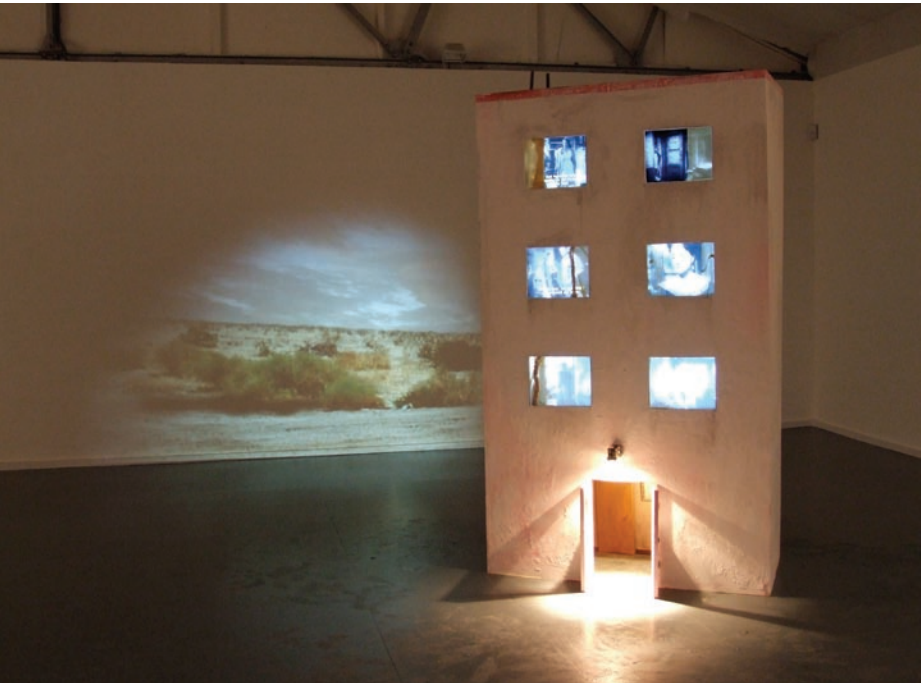


Tracey Snelling
A Little Mystery
2004, chromogenic print
14 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and
Brown Bag Contemporary (New York, NY)

right: Tracey Snelling
Last House on the Left
2007, mixed media with dvds and soundtrack
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and
Tache-Levy Gallery (Brussels)



Tracey Snelling
Zaragoza y Obregon (detail)
2007, mixed media with dvds and soundtrack
20 x 42 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Wedel (London)



Tracey Snelling
Big El Mirador
2007, mixed media with 6 channel synched dvd
installation
84 x 48 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Wedel (London)

level of reality and context that takes the pieces even further from the idea of a dollhouse. For instance, in *Zaragoza y Obregon*, a sculpture of a few blocks in Los Cabos, the top window in the hotel shows a clip from *Y Tu Mama Tambien* in which the older woman and younger man are having sex. The choice of film clips can change the idea of a whole piece, and adds another layer of meaning on top of the layers of sound and visual construction. By adding scenes and conversations that are part of daily life – from the mundane to the extreme – it seems to add contrast to the sometimes “sweet” idea of a miniature. The more layers of meaning that I can add to a sculpture or installation, the closer it comes to capturing the reality of life, which is never one-dimensional.

How do you begin to form a narrative via your selection of appropriated film clips? Typically you install these within the sculptures and one gets the sense that they are not meant to be watched, but rather seen. Do they serve as a sort of punctuation to your overall idea?
It really depends on the piece. For *Big El Mirador* a 7-foot tall hotel sculpture with six video windows, I wanted to use old Spanish-language Bunuel films. So, I rented all the ones I could find, and started watching and saving clips on my computer that were interesting and dramatic. Since there were six different videos in the piece that would play at once, I make six video tracks in my video program on the computer, and start filling them in like a puzzle. It’s really fun, and often a challenge. Sometimes, when starting to build a sculpture, I already have certain films in mind. Other times, I will know I want a certain type of scene, such as a

bathtub scene, so I’ll do a search on the internet movie database, rent lots of DVDs, and scan them for an appropriate scene. Depending upon the sculpture or installation, the films can act in one of two ways – sometimes there is a storyline, and other times the clip just shows a commonplace scene of everyday life, meant to add another layer to the whole piece.
For the most part, my work is about people and place. The addition of film clips and soundtracks helps add life and motion to the work. As for the sculptures and installations that relate more directly to film, it depends on the piece. They are usually more like explorations of film or a genre of film than critiques, although sometimes that works its way in.
Would you allow then that your work is a critique of cinematic tropes?
In some aspect of *Another Shocking Psychological Thriller* the role of women in 1950s films is critiqued. Also, I recently did an installation in Brussels of four different houses from horror films. It’s called *Last House on the Left*. The houses line up along a street and look rather calm and serene. Yet when looking in the houses, they are disturbing. Blood is everywhere in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* house, screams and an attack in the closet can be seen in the *Halloween* house, birds attack people in *The Birds* house, and the priest is swarmed by bees in *The Amityville Horror* house. The installation is both a celebration of horror films and a critique on the over-the-top violence found in these films and in our culture. It’s also about the idea that one can never be sure of what’s happening behind closed doors on a quiet, seemingly peaceful tree-lined street. 🏠

by Michelle White I wonder what Marshall McLuhan, the godfather of media studies, might say about the blurry photographs that we take with our camera phones. A form of shorthand image making, and an even quicker way to transmit data than the abbreviated language of text messaging, they epitomize technology's continual influence on how we see and understand the world via the way we encounter and use images. As the theorist famously wrote to articulate how the medium is indeed the message, "With telephone and TV it is not so much the message as the sender that is 'sent.'" Yet it is still easy to ask if the format of those grainy shots of my friends in bars that I never know what to do with, or my cousin's kid doing something cute when a "real" camera can't be found, matter. Waiting to be historicized, or even critically analyzed, they spend most of the time living in the limbo of a phone's memory.



The other screen showcased the assignments guests were asked to complete on their own phones that night. At the entrance you were handed a cellular task. "Take a photo of people kissing," was one. Other instructions requested that you capture an image of a funny dance move, the interior of someone's handbag, the trash, someone who looks like a celebrity. After taking the mobile photo, you sent it to a flickr-uploading site. The images were projected as a slide show in the middle of the gallery and the site was continually refreshed as contributions came in throughout the evening. People got into the groove, and the

The event came only weeks after the release of the iPhone. Some exceptionally (and suspiciously) crisp photos slipped into to the show. Prophetic of the advent of yet another obsolescent technology, their clarity and lack of magical and unintentional low-fi effects that comes from technological magnificence, was boring. I was suddenly nostalgic for a medium I always thought was superfluous, and that I suddenly learned to love. 📺

*Txt Me L8r was on view at HCP from August 24-26, 2007.
For more information on Aurora Picture Show, visit
www.aurorapictureshow.org.*

right: The big screen at SPIN3: Txt Me L8r.
Courtesy of Sopheavy Than

Born in Montreal and growing up in the suburbs, Carlos Sanchez (b. 1976) and Jason Sanchez (b. 1981) began collaborating in 2001, shortly before they received their first grant from the Du Maurier Arts Council. A second Du Maurier grant allowed them to end their respective studies at Concordia University in Montreal in 2003 and work “seven days a week” on their art. Actually, the collaboration began earlier, with Carlos behind the camera and Jason and his friends serving as models for a series of staged color works. But the works for which they have become known and which are exhibited now at the Houston Center for Photography began when both moved behind the lens. Their first solo exhibition was in 2002 and they’ve produced and exhibited steadily since, publishing their second book in 2007.

They spend several months in pre-execution: researching the topic, refining the concept, planning and building sets, acquiring or building props, hiring necessary technical staff, and carefully determining the color palette of each scene. Their models are largely family and friends. Shooting a picture can take hours. Mostly, they shoot exteriors or build sets in their studio, which requires many skills other than those necessary for the photographs, including set designing, carpentry, lighting, stage directing, etc. Post-production is done digitally. Each image is produced in contemporary sizes – 42” x 74”, 24” x 96”, 60” x 76” – and limited editions of five or six. [Interview by Anne Wilkes Tucker](#)

Reality Interrupted: Carlos and Jason Sanchez



Carlos and Jason Sanchez
Descent
Montréal, 2003, Digital C-Print
46 x 72 inches
Courtesy of the Artists and
Christopher Cutts Gallery (Toronto)

Anne Tucker: Do you sketch a scene, create a preliminary sketch in a computer, or is the “stage” also your sketchpad?

Carlos: Neither of us is very good with drawing When we are planning a set we like to go into the studio and take out our 4 x 8’ panels and place them how we think the room should look. This is much simpler for us because a drawing might look nice on paper, but in the end, it might not convey the “reality” we seek. So, placing the panels in our studio and making a rough room design is what we find most affective.

Jason: We sometimes use elements from various reference shots found in external sources to help conceptualize and visualize our scenes.

Interior sets are constructed in your studio, which is located in your uncle’s warehouse. For instance, once you had found the right desk for the picture *Principles* (2002), did you put that specific desk into an existing sketch or do you actually put each prop as it is acquired into place on the evolving set?

CS: *Principles* was shot in a building belonging to McGill University in Montreal. All that was there was the painting and the wood wall. We went to prop houses and got everything else that was needed to create that set.

You spoke of multiple versions of the “lamb” piñata in *Easter Party* (2003). I presume matters of scale relative to the room and to the young man swinging the bat are as much of a concern as having the piñata bleed when struck?

CS: We had a back-up piñata made in case the main one was damaged. We also thought that we would change the piñata before each image was taken, but in the end, we let the piñata “bleed” for 5 or 6 takes before having to refill it with new blood.

JS: There were many logistical concerns when making a solid piñata that wouldn’t break after multiple beatings from the children as well as one that would bleed to our liking. *Easter Party* was the first of many shoots that involved working with a special effects company in Montreal called *Cineffects*.

Occasionally, such as with *Motive for Change* (2004), you create the final image from multiple negatives, but usually, there is one basic shot that may then be modified in the camera. This greatly increases the pre-production work and the exactitude of your staging. What considerations drive that decision to make the event happen, i.e. blood pooling below the piñata, rather than create it digitally?

CS: For the blood from the piñata, the thought of creating it digitally never crossed our minds. Wherever possible, we create the desired action in camera. We have never really *created* anything digitally. Digital tools are mostly used to bring multiple pieces together seamlessly or tweak colors, contrast etc...



above: Carlos and Jason Sanchez
Easter Party
 Montréal, 2003, Digital C-Print
 46 x 72 inches
 Courtesy of the Artists and
 Christopher Cutts Gallery (Toronto)

left: Carlos and Jason Sanchez
Principles
 Montréal, 2002, C-Print
 40 x 49 inches
 Courtesy of the Artists and
 Christopher Cutts Gallery (Toronto)

JS: It can be risky business to leave too many elements to be adjusted in the post-production stage. Photoshop is an amazing tool, but it definitely has its limitations. The rewarding aspect of creating images comes from getting our hands dirty, figuring out what is needed, and getting it done.

Catherine Somzé wrote “inspiration draws on stories passed on by word of mouth, items found in the news or personally lived experiences.” Has the weight of those sources shifted in the time you’ve been making these photographs?

CS: These days my inspirations come mostly from what’s going on around me. It can also come through the news, the radio, Internet, a book, etc. Anything that catches my attention and continues to interest me might become the source of an image.

JS: I’m still pulling inspiration from my surroundings – things I see, feel, hear, and read.

We are only talking about seven years of work, but it seems to me your earlier works largely center on young people and that frequently a child or an adolescent is afraid or in some kind of physical or developmental risk. In *Pink Bathroom* (2001), a wet, naked boy anxiously peers around a pink tile wall with the torn shower curtain to his left. This is one of your earliest works. What was its source of inspiration? Was it an event or a feeling?

CS: When we started making the early images, our process was more freestyle. We would often find interesting locations, and then find a way to construct an image in them. In the case of *Pink Bathroom*, we were looking for a location to shoot another image when we came across this actual pink bathroom. We liked the space and created a scenario that would work well with the location.

JS: In our early work we were very interested in creating images that could have been considered as film stills. We liked the idea of creating a fragment of a longer narrative, allowing the viewers to fill in the gaps and create storylines in their minds. We no longer think about our work the same way we used to, although some people may feel that our images do resemble film stills. Instead, we focus the content of our images to portray the emotional and psychological sides of the subjects we work with.

Two of the most often reproduced of your pictures are *Easter Party* (2003) and *The Baptism* (2004), both of which feature family moments, religious themes, and a disconcerting appearance of blood where none was expected or is even seemingly perceived by the adults. Do you discuss symbolism?

JS: The blood in both images is symbolic. In *Easter Party*, the young protagonist is participating in a tradition in which the children of his family symbolically sacrifice a lamb to God by making a lamb shaped piñata and hitting it with a wooden axe until it tears open and expels its candy filled insides. In biblical times the actual sacrifice of a lamb was performed to obtain forgiveness for the sins of the families who performed the act. The boy in our image is aware of the underlying spider webs of truth that exist within his family and is acting for their wellbeing by imagining that he is sacrificing an actual lamb.

In *The Baptism*, I feel the blood foreshadows the child’s future. We, the viewers, are privileged to catch a glimpse of this moment while his entourage marvels at the baby’s initiation into the Christian faith.

Often there are multiple possible meanings. As Catherine Somzé observes, “In *The Baptism*, is it the contact with the crown of the child that causes the water to change into blood? (Is the child cleansed of his original sin?) Or is it, on the contrary, the water running down his crown that wounds him and brings the blood gushing forth? (Would sin here then be the true act of baptism?) ”

Do you discuss issues such as these? Are you pleased or indifferent to speculations such as these?

CS: I am always pleased when people make up their own stories about the images and about their meanings. I actually find it most interesting when their take on it differs from mine.



above: Carlos and Jason Sanchez
A Motive For Change
 Montréal, 2004, Digital C-Print
 60 x 75 inches
 Courtesy of the Artists and
 Christopher Cutts Gallery (Toronto)

right: Carlos and Jason Sanchez
Pink Bathroom
 Montréal, 2001, Digital C-Print
 40 x 50 inches
 Courtesy of the Artists and
 Christopher Cutts Gallery (Toronto)



JS: It is not important for me to discuss and give my interpretation on every element of my work. I prefer leaving certain things ambiguous allowing room for interpretation. It is more important to me that the viewer has their own experience when looking at our images and not one influenced about what we think that they should think or feel.

In the newest works, the focus is less adolescence in the familial realm and more situated in a broader societal context. In *Masked* (2007), we can’t know the age of the young man admiring his newly created stocking mask, with the scissors that cut the eyeholes dropped on the rug. In fact there is less and less that we can know in these new pictures. In *Identification* (2007), we ask: Who is dead? Why are these people in a morgue? What is their relationship? I can think of a host of other questions. Are you intentionally pushing ambiguity?

CS: We like to be subtle, but give clues that are not necessarily in your face. I find an image to be much more powerful when it doesn’t spell out the whole meaning for you.



Carlos and Jason Sanchez
Identification
Montréal, 2007, Ink Jet Print
53 x 67 inches
Courtesy of the Artists and
Christopher Cutts Gallery (Toronto)




JS: It is important to create images that don't reveal too much upon first viewing. Like any good movie or music album, the more you focus on the material, the more you get out of it. It is our aim to create work that has a similar effect.

Given the parallels to cinema in your work, it is not surprising that you made *Between Life and Death* (2006), an installation that places a holographic video of a woman's near-death experience inside the carcass of a bus that actually crashed. Are you planning more installations and use of moving images?

CS: We have talked about it and have ideas about what we would do, so yes, I believe that we will definitely use moving images again.

JS: I feel that film is one of the strongest and most powerful mediums of expression, one that I am definitely interested in pursuing.

AT: Your titles are important. Sometimes, it may state the obvious, such as *Overflowing Sink* (2002), but in this case "overflowing" is an understatement. Deluge might be a more accurate description. Sometimes, words are directive, such as *The Hurried Child* (2005), which actually refers to psychologist David Elkins book of the same title. The subtitle of the book is *Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon*, and your photograph of the child in tart's make-up reminds most viewers of Jon Benet Ramsey. In the case of *Principles* (2005), the title plays with meanings in similarly sounding words as the scene portrays a school principal, sitting with whiskey and a cigar and a student-age girl roughing his hair. At what stage do titles enter the process? Is one of you better than the other with words? Do titles morph as the project evolves?

CS: I would say that most the time the title of the piece is often known before we shoot the work. If during the pre-production or production stage when a title is not yet determined, we will use a working title while we are making it. For example, we referred to *Identification* as the morgue shot. Usually, the title is finalized during post-production. As for who makes up the titles, if one of us comes up with a better name, we use it, and that usually is how it works. 

Reality Interrupted: The Cinematic Work of the Sanchez Brothers is on view at HCP from November 2 – December 23, 2007.



above: Carlos and Jason Sanchez
The Baptism
Montréal, 2003
Digital C-Print
40 x 49 inches
Courtesy of the Artists and
Christopher Cutts Gallery (Toronto)

left: Carlos and Jason Sanchez
Masked
Montréal, 2007, Ink Jet Print
60 x 75 inches
Courtesy of the Artists and
Christopher Cutts Gallery (Toronto)

right, top: Carlos and Jason Sanchez
Overflowing Sink
Montréal, 2002, Digital C-Print
40 x 49 inches
Courtesy of the Artists and
Christopher Cutts Gallery (Toronto)

right: Carlos and Jason Sanchez
The Hurried Child
Montréal, 2005, Digital C-Print
60 x 76 inches
Courtesy of the Artists and
Christopher Cutts Gallery (Toronto)



Leaders of Houston Cultura, by Chuy Benitez. This portrait series provides a photographic index of the previously undocumented Mexican-American and Spanish-speaking cultural leadership of Houston. The series takes environmental portraiture to its extreme: each subject is depicted within a fish-eyed, 360-degree perspective of a space that s/he has chosen to represent his/her personality. Thus far, Benitez has made 30 of a projected 100 portraits of cultural leaders – political activists, environmental activists, college professors, literary authors, musical talents, and successful entrepreneurs. The series is on display through January 20, 2008 at Project Rowhouse in Houston.

360° Portraits



Chuy Benitez
Angie Moreno,
2007, Ultrachrome Print
17 x 36 inches

For Angie, Nuestra Palabra, Houston's Latino literary organization, has been an integral part of life. She has been the group's head of public relations for several years and has also helped to promote other cultural events and artists through Nuestra Palabra's KPFT radio show.

Juan is an environmental activist, community leader, and the founder of Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services (TEJAS), an environmental justice organization committed to the promotion of environmental rights in communities of color and low-income populations in Texas and Louisiana.



Photography at Documenta 12

and
the 52nd
Venice Biennale
by
Miranda Lash

It's 2007 and the dominant theme for the two largest international art exhibitions this year is a plea for no theme at all.

Guy Tillim
Followers of Etienne Tshisikedi, calling for a boycott of the elections, burn a Kabila election billboard, central Kinshasa, July 2006
Archival pigment ink on 300g cotton paper
Paper size: 91 x 133 cm
Image size: 81 x 123 cm
Courtesy of Michael Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town



In their catalog for Documenta 12, spouses Roger Buergel, artistic director, and Ruth Noack, curator, proclaim, “the big exhibition has no form.” Indeed, they readily admit that the “radical formlessness” of Documenta is likely to “challenge” most people. Yet out of this formlessness, they hope, comes freedom. Omitting the artists’ nationalities from the object labels, the viewer is liberated from preconceived expectations. Appropriately post-modern in their acknowledgement of “local histories” in art, Buergel and Noack’s seemingly post-post-modern faith hinges on viewers reaching “a plateau where art communicates itself and on its own terms.”

At the 52nd Venice Biennale, *Think with the Senses—Feel with the Mind. Art in the Present Tense*, the curatorial statement of the artistic director, Robert Storr, strikes a similar chord. “This exhibition is not based on an all-encompassing ideological or theoretical proposal,” he explains. Each work carries its own distinct message: it is, in Storr’s words, “there to speak for itself.” The correspondences his visitors draw between the works will drum up a diversity of thoughts and emotions that echo the very diversity from which the art comes.

How then, should a sore-footed gallery trotter approach works of photography at these two massive exhibitions? In singling out photography I should clarify that this medium was not segregated in the exhibitions from other mediums. One can argue, however, that purported “themelessness” of this year’s Documenta and Venice Biennale influenced the choices of photography on display. Beginning with Storr, Buergel and Noack’s premise that in order for the exhibitions to succeed, art must be communicative, the resulting selections of photography are overwhelmingly representational and documentary in nature. Most photographs are presented as testimonies of “what it looks like *there*” and the “there” presented is usually a politicized location.

Take for example Gabriele Basilico’s photos of bullet riddled buildings in Beirut from 1991 or Elaine Tedesco’s photos of sentry boxes or *guaritas* in Brazil from 2005 (both shown in the Biennale). In both cases a crystal clear image transports us to another place, a guarded place, and in the case of Basilico, a violated place: places that should arouse our concern. In Lidwien Van de Ven’s full-room installation at Documenta, large-scale prints of Jerusalem and Qalqiliya were chosen for their resonance with ongoing conflicts between different religious groups in the Middle East. Meanwhile Guy Tillim’s photographs, also at Documenta, depict the Democratic Republic of Congo in turmoil. Political billboards are shown burning while presidential candidates walk closely flanked by bodyguards.

Using photographs as indexical documents is an age-old practice, one that fosters a connection between the viewer to that which “must have been,” as Roland Barthes wrote in *Camera Lucida*. In her Biennale piece *Material for a Film*, Emily Jacir collects and makes photographs relating to her interest in the Palestinian writer Wael Zuaiter, who was killed by Israelis in Rome in 1972. Fascinated by Zuaiter’s desire to translate *A Thousand and One Nights* from Arabic to Italian, Jacir retraces Zuaiter’s life through old photographs (among other documents). To this she adds her own photographic records of the exact streets and buildings where he lived. The images act as links of evidence in her investigation of his life: “Where were the Mossad agents hiding?” she wondered while snapping the shutter. Back at Documenta, the historic actions of an entirely different group of intellectuals were commemorated through the photographs taken and collected by Graciela Carnevale. Having locked her visitors into an art gallery in 1968, Carnevale’s image captures a woman in Rosario timidly emerging through the broken glass of a storefront window. An early member of the group of Argentinean artists who visited the Tucumán province in the


“The media might manipulate and overwhelm us with images,...”

1960s to document the poverty caused by the closure of the sugar mills, Carnevale collected their photographs, newspaper clippings, and posters. These were used to recreate parts of the 1968 exhibition *Tucumán Arde*. Translated as “Tucumán is burning” the protest exhibition was the final stage of a project in which artists used film and photographs to document the deplorable conditions of the province.

My qualm is not with realist photographs that are used in the service of a political agenda. My concern, rather is that neither of these exhibitions of contemporary art put much effort into exploring how the medium of photography is also a contingent, malleable, and experimental medium of persuasion, manipulation, and selectivity. In our time it is easy to point to the treachery of the media in contorting and filtering information. The media might manipulate and overwhelm us with images, but these photographs, Bruegel, Noack, and Storr, imply, are honest truths, made all the more honest because they come from an artist. “The crisp legibility” of Jan Christian Braun’s photographs of kitschy decorated tombstones, Storr writes, makes him guiltless of any “condescension.” Braun is simply recording (in an aesthetic way) what it looks like there, in a New York cemetery.

There were, of course, multiple exceptions to my complaint. The Biennale’s darling, Sophie Calle, featured both in Storr’s Padiglione Italia and the French Pavilion, as usual had some tricks up her sleeve. Calle’s piece on the death of her mother, *Couldn’t Capture Death*, admittedly contained a video, but was nonetheless a stunning commentary on the function of photography. The

screen featuring Calle’s mother during the hours preceding her demise captures a motionless sleeping face, which appears at most moments to be a back-lit photograph. Occasional hands feeling her pulse are the only indication that the image is a recording over time. The tragic stillness of the image, taken at the junction between life and death, evokes Barthes’ idea of the “little death” in photography – the death of a moment that will never come again. The actual death of Calle’s mother signals the transition of a living being into an entity visible only through photographs.

The more playful, theatrical side of photography is explored in Calle’s installation *Take Care of Yourself*. The title is borrowed from the last line in her ex-lover’s break-up letter. In an attempt to make sense of her ex’s cryptic missive, she asked over a hundred women, all of different professions, to interpret the letter in their own way. The blown-up letters appeared alongside photographs of the women reading the letter. “Captured” in their most native environments, the women assume a deliberate pose of deep reflection. The planned, performed moment depicted emphasizes the process of interpretation and empathy. The objective presentation of a spontaneous reality is rendered as questionable as an impartial reading of a love letter. 

Documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany was on view from June 10 through September 23, 2007. The 52nd Venice Biennale, Think with the Senses–Feel with the Mind. Art in the Present Tense runs from June 16 through November 21, 2007.

1. All quotes from Documenta 12 are cited from the following publication: Robert Buerger and Ruth Noack, *Documenta Kassel 16/06 – 23/09 2007*. Cologne: Taschen, 2007.
2. Text from free brochure *Think with the Senses–Feel with the Mind. Art in the Present Tense*, Introduction by Robert Storr. Venice: Fondazione La Biennale de Venezia, 2007.
3. Text from wall label for Emily Jacir, *Material for a Film*, 2005-ongoing.
4. Robert Storr, *Think with the Senses – Feel with the Mind. Art in the Present Tense*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 2007. Page 38.

2008
FOTO
FEST
CHINA
TRANSFORMATIONS

THE TWELFTH INTERNATIONAL BIENNIAL OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND PHOTO RELATED ARTS
MARCH 7–APRIL 20, 2008

FOTOFEST2008, dedicated to **CHINA** and the related theme, **TRANSFORMATIONS**.

City-wide exhibitions of classical photography, new media work, installations, film and video curated by FotoFest.

Over 100 other exhibitions of photography throughout the city at museums, non-profit and commercial galleries, corporate, and retail spaces.

The idea, an entire city devoting an entire month of attention to photography... FotoFest has proved its mettle.
—Newsweek

For additional FotoFest programs, see www.fotofest.org

FOTOFEST2008 OPENING NIGHT CELEBRATION

MARCH 7, 2008

Celebrate with FOTOFEST2008 – CHINA and the Houston Press at the official kick-off party for FOTOFEST2008. Open to the public with food, drink and live music at FotoFest’s Downtown Headquarters at Vine Street Studios.

INTERNATIONAL FINE PRINT AUCTION

MARCH 11, 2008, THE DOUBLETREE HOTEL DOWNTOWN

Over 100 contemporary international and national artists are featured in FotoFest’s Eighth International Fine Print Auction with public Preview Exhibit at Gremillion Fine Art.

THE 2008 MEETING PLACE PORTFOLIO REVIEWS

MARCH 7–20, 2008, THE DOUBLETREE HOTEL DOWNTOWN

Portfolio reviews for artists and open portfolio evenings for the public to meet the participating artists.

FOTOFEST2008 WORKSHOPS

MARCH 11 & 16, 2008, THE DOUBLETREE HOTEL DOWNTOWN

Public workshops on *Making a Career in Photography* and *Publishing Photography Books* with renowned artists and professionals.



ARTIST TALKS, EXHIBIT TOURS and FILM/VIDEO PROGRAMS

open to the public schedule throughout March and April 2008

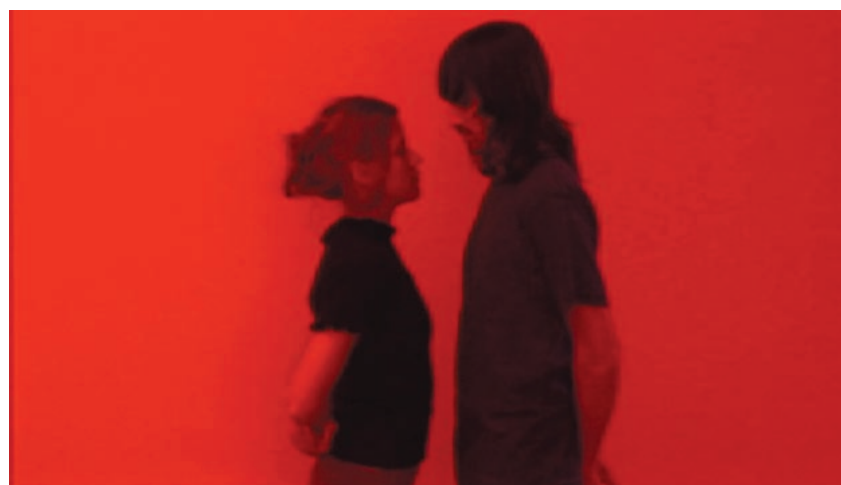
COLOR YOUR WORLD

PRINTS ✂ POSTERS ✂ BANNERS

1201-F Westheimer • Houston, TX 77006
713.528.1201 • www.houstoncopy.com

Perspectives 158: Kelly Nipper

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston by Leah DeVun



I had high expectations for *Perspectives 158*, Los Angeles-based artist Kelly Nipper's first solo museum show in the United States, on view at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

Nipper has so far created a promising body of work focused on the themes of time, space, and continuity, which she explores through "experiments" testing the limits of human perception and control. Her photographs, videos, and performances are often complex affairs involving professional dancers, months of preparation, and intricately-planned scripts. But this sparse exhibition at the CAMH is a poor introduction to the artist's work and at odds with the high-quality shows that audiences have come to expect from the museum.

The leitmotif of *Perspectives 158* is an ice-coated wire mobile that appeared previously in *Bending Water into a Heart Shape*, Nipper's show-stopping four-channel video featured last year in Houston as a part of "Girls' Night Out" at the Blaffer Gallery. In *Bending Water* (not on view at the CAMH), a dancer performs a figure-skating jump at an excruciatingly slow pace. Rather than manipulating the speed of the video, Nipper records the dancer in real time as she executes the jump over the course of an hour, a feat requiring enormous mental and physical control (and apparently extensive training in a form of martial arts called Ba Gua).

The dancer's exertions are obvious from her facial expressions and her missteps as her muscles fail during extended poses. The video also includes the wire mobile, which is hung with beads of ice. As the ice melts, the mobile is thrown momentarily off-kilter, resulting in unpredictable movements that resonate with the dancer's halting performance. The videos suggest the spontaneous moments of imbalance that interrupt periods of sustained elemental, physical, and mental stability. It's a lovely work.

In *Perspectives 158*, digital screen grabs of the mobile from *Bending Water* are recycled as *Weather Center*, and the same mobile makes a guest appearance alongside recording equipment in *Love with the Sound Technician*. Nipper views the mobile as a bridge between her older work and her new series, but the connection feels forced, and any sense of transformation that the melting ice might have expressed is absent. As a result, these flat and static photographs lack the dynamism and humor of *Bending Water*. Nipper's complex, research-fueled concepts are among the strengths of her art. But when no explanatory labels are present to explain the story behind the pieces, her work can be rather inaccessible to viewers. Such is the case with a diptych of a girl and a thermometer (also part of *Weather Center*), which suffers from a lack of context. In this respect, Nipper

left: Kelly Nipper
Weather Center, 2006
Framed chromogenic print
22 1/2 x 30 1/4 inches
Courtesy francesca kaufmann, Milan.


center: Kelly Nipper
An Arrangement for the Architect and a Darkroom Timer, [detail], 2005.
Two-channel video installation, 60 minutes
Color, sound, installation dimensions variable
Courtesy francesca kaufmann, Milan.

right: Kelly Nipper
Evergreen, 2004 (B)
framed chromogenic print
48 5/16 x 65 inches
Courtesy francesca kaufmann, Milan.

exemplifies a trend in contemporary photography in which the concept is as important as – if not more important than – the visual impact of the images. "I'm more interested in the process of making the work than with the outcome," Nipper said in an interview with SPOT.

The show has highlights too. The video *An Arrangement for the Architect and a Darkroom Timer* recalls Nipper's earlier structured yet spontaneous tests of mental and physical endurance. *An Architect...* records the profiles of two strangers, a man and a woman, as they are forced to stand very close to one

another for an hour. Their initial flirtation gives way to increasing discomfort and even hostility under the strain of such proximity. *Evergreen* takes place on the soundstage where Barbra Streisand and Kris Kristofferson recorded a song of the same name for the movie *A Star Is Born*. The four photographs show an empty stage on which a sound technician sometimes appears, and they point to the missing yet crucial moments between frames within a sequence. Both the video and photographs are concerned with the measure or stoppage of time, and they play with continuities and discontinuities associated with physical presence and absence.

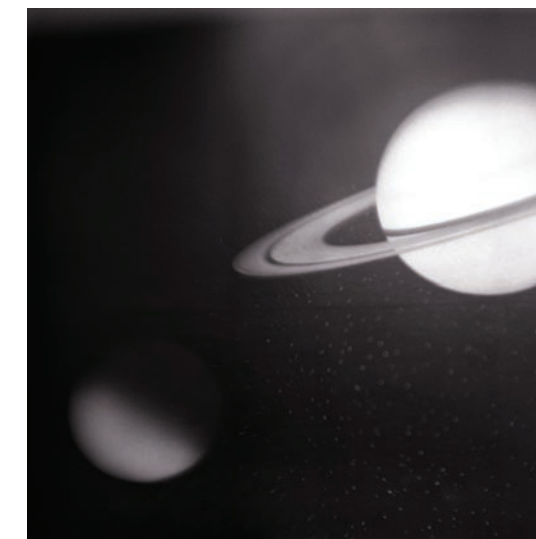
Nipper is an emerging artist who is feeling her way through some big sets and big ideas. Her best projects enlist multiple performers who submit to months of training, and Nipper cites a range of impressive-sounding influences, from the choreographer Rudolf Laban to the occultist Aleister Crowley. Yet this show seems small. A complicated installation called *Circle Circle* was proposed as a part of *Perspectives 158* but was not included for various technical and budgetary reasons. Perhaps that piece would have injected some drama into the gallery and connected the other works. As it stands, viewers are left to experience a rather less pleasant feeling of absence than Nipper dreamed. 

KEITH CARTER

Under Saturn

FotoFest 2008

February 16 - March 15



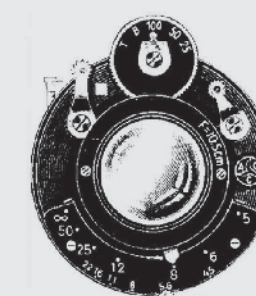
also represented by MCMURTREY GALLERY:

Kate Breakey
Dornith Doherty
Diana Dopson

MCMURTREY GALLERY

3508 Lake Street, Houston, Texas 77098 713.523.8238

WWW.MCMURTREYGALLERY.COM



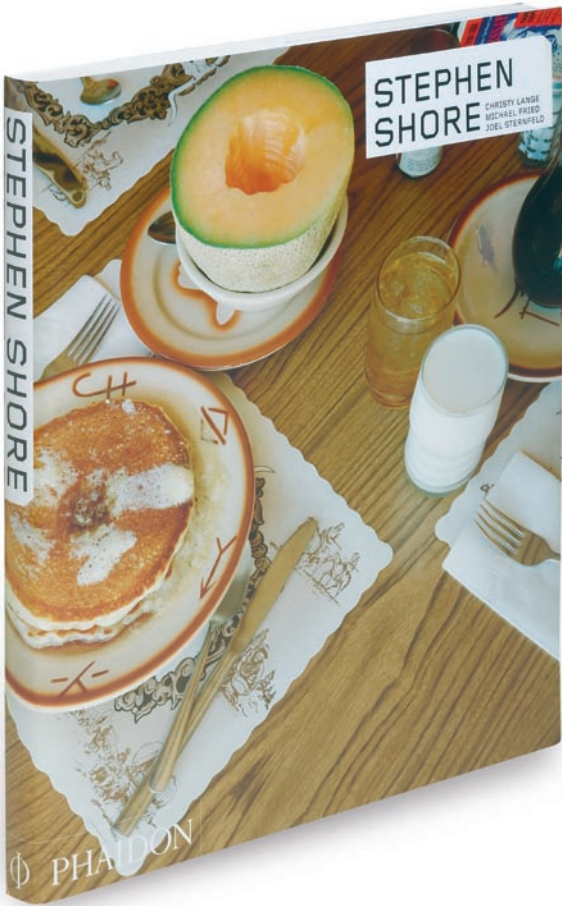
Camera
Co/op

Film, Digital and
Darkroom Supplies

801 Durham
Houston, TX 77007
713-522-7837

M-F 9:30 to 6:30
Sat 10:00 to 5:00
Closed Sunday

Stephen Shore
The Nature of Photographs
A Primer
Phaidon Press Limited, New York, 2007
136 pages, \$35



The photographer Stephen Shore (*Uncommon Places*, *American Spaces*, *The Gardens at Giverny*) has written an unexpected and interesting book, which he subtitled *A Primer*. It's a photographic grammar of sorts published initially in the mid-nineties by Johns Hopkins Press. Last May, Phaidon reissued it in an expanded and updated edition.

The book itself is subtle, beautiful and useful. It is relatively small; its cover understated; its typewriter-like font unassuming and its pages filled with a gallery of astonishingly well-reproduced photographs. These pictures both illustrate and in some ways run counterpoint to Shore's analytic text. The book's design includes a good deal of white space, and the images (which run from anonymous pictures, to Watkins, to Evans, to Struth) breathe easily – both as stand-ins for ideas, and resonant in their own right.

John Szarkowski's 1966 book *The Photographer's Eye* apparently inspired the idea for *The Nature of Photographs*, and there are certain parallels. The book's initial purpose was relatively simple: to introduce Shore's students to the qualities photographs inherently possess. And as an introduction to the basic properties of photographic images, I know of no book published recently which compares. It deals with a body of thought conventional photographic texts gloss over, and it would make sense to publish a paperback edition for classroom use.

Although clearly written, *The Nature of Photographs* is not light fare, and I often found myself rereading passages. The prose is spare and unemotional and the book does often come across as a primer. Succinctly, Shore thinks of photographic images as possessing three distinct levels: *The Physical*, *The Depictive* and *The Mental*. Although these particular terms would not have occurred to me in this context, they serve well.

In Shore's lexicon, The Physical Level refers to the actual stuff of the photograph – the kind of print, the backing, whether it's black and white or color, the size – the object itself. The Depictive Level refers to the photographer's decision making process, as well as the viewer's interpretation of these decisions: vantage point, framing, timing and focus. The Mental Level comes into play with the transition of the image on the wall or on the page – wherever the photograph is encountered – to its new residence in a viewer's mind. While all of this may seem a bit self-evident, the detail that Shore goes into is not, and there is much to consider.

He is clear about what the book is and what it is not. He does not deal with content or meaning – which for most of us is central to the enjoyment of a photograph. On the contrary, he plays his own responses to the images in the book remarkably close to the vest. "The aim of this book," he writes, "...is not to explore photographic content but to describe physical and formal attributes of a photographic print that form the tools a photographer uses to define and interpret that content."¹ Within these boundaries, the book is clear and often illuminating.

It would be fascinating to see Shore take on a second book, one that might parallel Szarkowski's *Looking At Photographs* – a classic in speculative content. I'd be interested to hear what Shore has to say about the reading of images, about photographic narrative. Perhaps he feels, as some do, that photographs should stay word free – luxuriating in silence. In this case of course there would be little to write. But, either an essay debunking interpretive thought, or a second beautifully illustrated book, would find many readers.

1. Shore, Stephen, *The Nature of Photographs*, Phaidon, New York, 2007, p. 12.

Susan Kismaric
Present Tense: Photographs by JoAnn Verburg
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2007
184 pages, \$50.00

Time and rupture are central themes in the work of JoAnn Verburg. In her diptychs, triptychs, and series of photographs, a story is told in the gaps between each picture. In *3 x Jim* (1989), for example, we are given three portraits of the same man, each seemingly reflecting a distinct moment in his thought process. Each portrait has the ability to function independently, yet they are unified into a single composition. The division of this moment into three frames emphasizes the time spent as the eye moves over the scene, resting on different snatches of reality, while the brain formulates an overall impression. The result is an experience that teeters between a narrative and a fragment of memory. This sense of rupture, Susan Kismaric argues, comes not only from the breaks between the picture frames, but from the distance emphasized between the viewer and the interiority of the sitter. The pauses, she claims, echo our inability to transcend our "fundamental aloneness" (26).

In her exhibition catalog *Present Tense: Photographs by JoAnn Verburg*, Kismaric, curator of photography at MoMA, focuses on three series by Verburg: black and white portraits from the early 1980s, still lifes and portraits of her husband Jim from 1991 to 2003, and photographs of olive trees from 1995 forward. Taking the reader through Verburg's biography, we learn that time and rupture were central concerns in her artistic development. Her MA thesis exhibition at George Eastman House, entitled "Locations in Time," incorporated work by photographers, including John Baldessari and Aleksandr Rodchenko, who dealt with temporality through serial frames. In her "Rephotographic Survey Project" done in collaboration with Mark Klett and Ellen Manchester in 1977, Verburg retraces the steps of the American landscape photographers William Henry Jackson and Timothy O'Sullivan. Taking pictures at the same locations as her predecessors, the irreversible effects of settlement in the West become clear through comparisons between Jackson and Verburg's photographs.

Kismaric, using ample quotes from the artist, does an admirable job of probing Verburg's ruptures, as they relate to types of personal disconnect, and as they pertain to Verburg's interest in "a world outside the frame" (28). The plates in the catalog also play with Verburg's idea of repetition and interruption: they offer multiple views of the same work, views of the work installed, and large details spread across the book binding. What could be probed further, however, is how Verburg's depictions of everyday moments are arguments in themselves about how reality can be selectively represented and even heightened. Kismaric makes a key mistake in arguing that Verburg's "ultimate subject" is "the creation of non-theatrical space that functions as a threshold to experience" (12). In *First Day Back in Italy (Pisa)*, 1998, Verburg's attention to composition, accomplished through the startling closeness of fruit and crumpled paper, accents of color, and the positioning of the sitter in the background, evokes a theatre tableau. Verburg's life-size prints, figure poses, and sharp, vivid focuses, convey, but also poeticize human experience. Through her subject matter is quotidian, her technique elevates the moment into something exceptional.

The corresponding exhibition is on view at The Museum of Modern Art July 15 through November 5, 2007 and at the Walker Art Center January 12 through April 20, 2008.



top: Courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art.

center: JoAnn Verburg
3 x Jim
1989, Three gelatin silver prints,
each 24 1/2 x 19 1/16" (62.2 x 48.5 cm)
Courtesy of The Family of Man Fund
and the Museum of Modern Art

bottom: JoAnn Verburg
First Day Back in Italy (Pisa)
1998, Chromogenic color print
11 3/4 x 16 1/8" (29.9 x 41 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and
the Museum of Modern Art

Almost Safe by Anthony Goicolea. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum quis nostrud exercitation.



Anthony Goicolea
Sky Lift
2007, black and white photograph
mounted on aluminum and laminated
with non-glare Plexiglas
45 x 73 inches
Courtesy of Postmasters Gallery, New York

Anthony Goicolea
Smoke Stack
2007, black and white photograph
mounted on aluminum and laminated
with non-glare Plexiglas
55 x 60 inches
Courtesy of Postmasters Gallery, New York



Anthony Goicolea
North Bank
2007, black and white photograph
mounted on aluminum and laminated
with non-glare Plexiglas
72 x 94 inches
Courtesy of Postmasters Gallery, New York



Anthony Goicolea
Deconstruction
2007, black and white photograph
mounted on aluminum and laminated
with non-glare Plexiglas
72 x 117.5 inches
Courtesy of Postmasters Gallery, New York

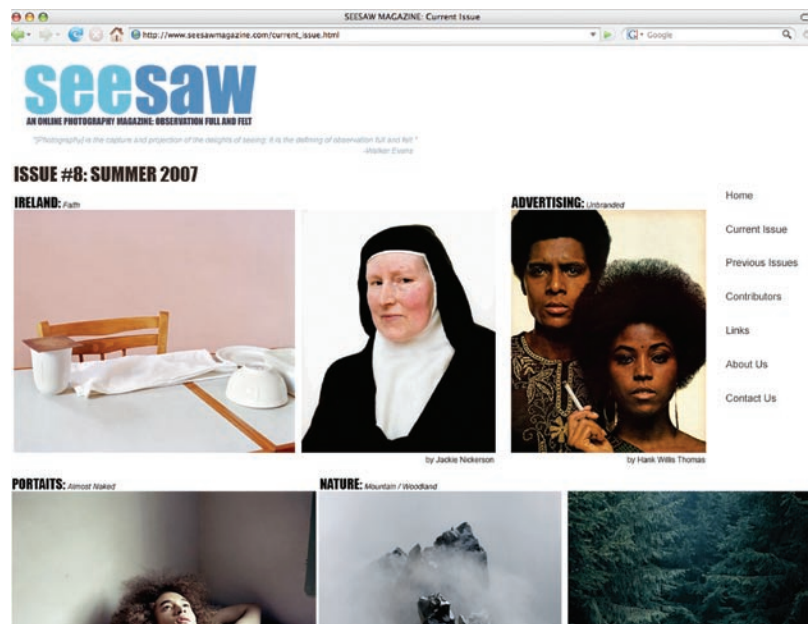
The age of the digital Brownie Camera has arrived. We churn out thousands of images and stuff iPhoto software with shots of family vacations, dogs, and children's bare bottoms in the kiddie pool. Like all good collectors, we file away the valuable moments in folders with names like "Christmas 05." With computers and digital cameras, we seem to take pictures less and spend more time filing, sorting, bookmarking, resizing and resending. Despite our best efforts, though, our computers and websites become just as messy as an old shoebox full of photos: they may be *digital* shoeboxes, but they are still musty and disorganized.

And with an estimated 29.7 billion pages on World Wide Web¹, we face a new problem: how to keep up with a relentlessly accumulating photographic record. In her essay "The Dematerialization of Screen Space," Jessica Helfand speaks about how Internet "space" is still confined to the frame of the monitor and the definitions of programming language – and yet constantly changes its identity and technical boundaries to adapt to new economies.² This adaptation is particularly relevant in relationship to photography because of the proliferation of webzines, blogs and virtual galleries that showcase photography.

To cope with the explosion of imagery, we, like a good mixed cocktail drink, are now one part artist mixed with one part curator. In a world where parents buy children URLs for their birthdays, the debate is not if a shift in how we digest the photographic image has occurred, but simply how to keep up with a relentlessly compounding photographic record. We bookmark our "faves," e-mail images to our friends, and upload pictures of our children to our blogs – we are certain the world is waiting to see. The unwieldy barrage of unfiltered images makes it difficult to manage any digital shoebox. This is compounded by the fact that simply placing an image on the Internet gives it credence. Everyone on the Internet becomes an expert. In an age of *Flickr*, *Wikipedia* and *Blogger*, where value and worth are measured in "hits," Stephan's secret fan blog to Lindsey Lohan is clearly outpacing Mary's fan blog to Edward Weston. Internet entrepreneurs, such as *del.icio.us* (<http://del.icio.us/>) the online social bookmarking system, even capitalize on the idea that there is so much information out there that it is necessary to refer to other people's bookmarks to help manage your own.

Here we provide our own list of bookmarks and favorite ways to navigate through the "digital shoebox" of websites that present photography in innovative ways. As with all shoeboxes stuffed with photographs, some are familiar, some are unknown, but all have a place. The online spaces that do actually cross the line from hoarder to curator are the ones that have captured our virtual eye.

Humble Arts Foundation (<http://humbleartsfoundation.org>) began as a website in 2005 to showcase friends' photography and



has quickly expanded to a non-profit organization offering online exhibitions, on-site exhibitions and grants. Asked to comment on the impact of the Internet on photography, curatorial director Jon Feinstein replied: "...the online venue has significantly accelerated the way I absorb photographic information. By sourcing so many young photographers, I have had the opportunity to examine shifts in general photographic ideas/trends. Correspondingly, this has also allowed me to closely examine how older, more established photographers have influenced this newer generation."³

seesaw (www.seesawmagazine.com), created in 2004, is an online photography magazine with a traditional print format. This website is directed and edited by Aaron Schuman and has a simple design that is easy to navigate and posts lots of photographs and a featured interview. The summer issue has seven photographers with 10-15 additional images on their own page. We like this site because it gives not just one photograph, but several, so that it is possible to get a sense of the body of work from each artist.

Zero Degrees Art (<http://www.zerodegreesart.com>) a website is based in LA, seeks to become "the online presence of our art community" inviting visitors to "join our discussion, discover new emerging artists, and network with each other."⁴ It provides listings of gallery openings and events but also includes a thoughtful artist-driven webzine/blog component. Regular features include Noah Simblis's *Lone Star Report*, a Texas art digest, and Mery Lynn Corkle's *Travelogue*, which provides opinions and observations about art as well as studio visits with artists. We

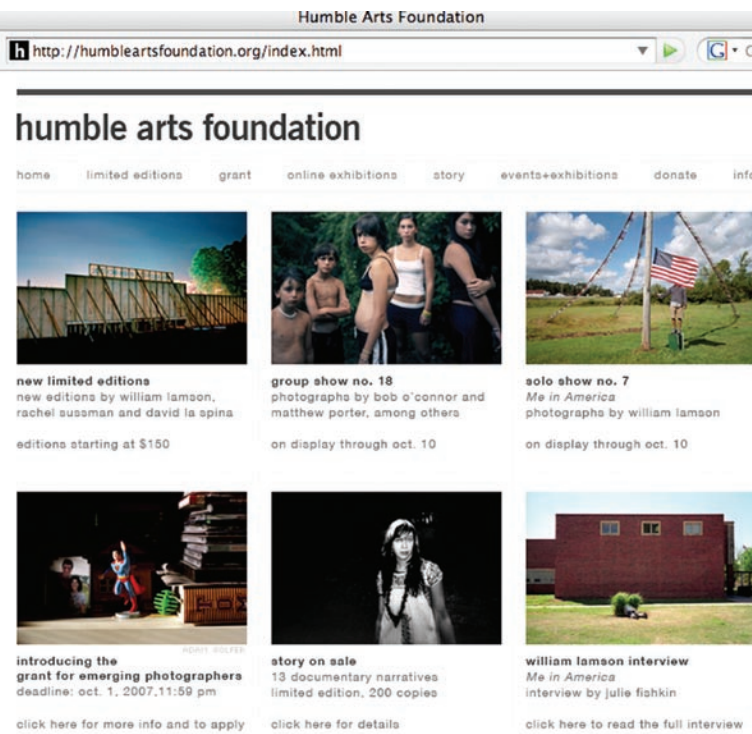
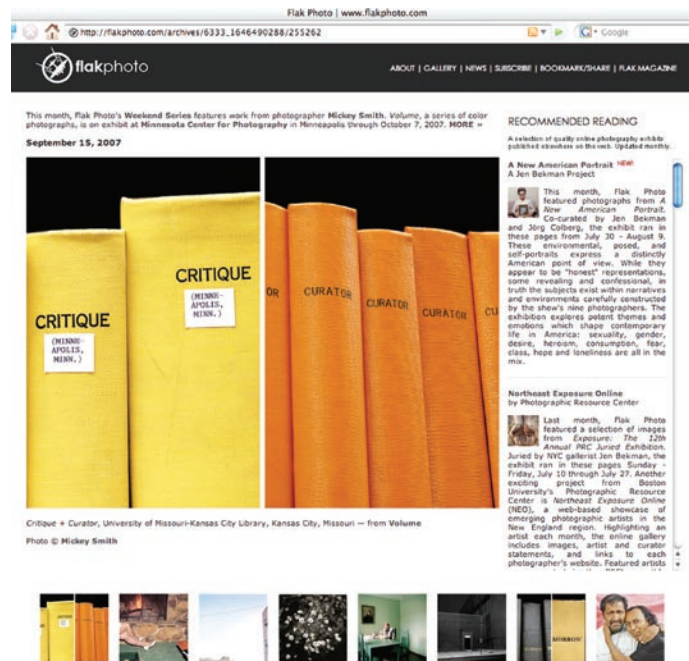
particularly enjoy the studio visits because it is fun to see inside someone's studio and observe the different environments people work in, although studio-envy may ensue.

Artkrush (<http://www.artkrush.com>), a twice-monthly e-mail magazine published by Flavorpill Productions, is not limited solely to photography. Covering all genres of art, their features are categorized as News, Features, One to Watch and Media. One thing we do not like about this site is that it feels a bit corporate, due in part to the advertisements that break up the sections on the website. They do, however, feature some unusual artists and have thorough reviews of exhibitions.

The Internet allows for an expanded freedom of information, promoting refreshing new conversations among people: you can voice your opinion and be heard by many or a few. This is the appeal behind blogs, where the daily journaling of thoughts presents ideas and attitudes free from commercial aim. We particularly like the blog of Shane Lavalette, an art student at The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (<http://www.shanelavalette.com/journal/>); he posts favorite artists' work as well as books, reviews, films, gallery shows and anything else that strikes his fancy.

Another blog that has a simple layout with a beautiful selection of photographs and insightful commentary is muse-ings (<http://photo-muse.blogspot.com>). Created in December 2006 by Tim Atherton, it presents "[t]houghts on photography and what inspires it – books, poetry, film, art. And various other ramblings."⁵

Flak Photo (www.flakphoto.com) is a blog that pushes the boundaries of how we use the Internet to look at art. It was launched in December 2003 and uploads new posts Monday through Friday, with curated virtual exhibits on the weekends. You can even sign up for an art daily digest and receive an e-mail with photographs and special section highlights. For Andy Adams,



a photographer based in Madison, Wisconsin and the editor of this site, "*Flak Photo* is part web photography magazine, part photoblog. It aims to promote interesting visual approaches to seeing the world and celebrates the art of exhibiting quality photography on the web."⁶ We thought he summed it up well when he said, "I continue to be fascinated by the editor/curator end of things and also the ongoing development of the web/print/gallery hybrid, so it's been a fun way to explore the possibilities of what I consider to be an endlessly entertaining medium. The world of photography is just ripe with publishing possibilities these days, no?"⁷

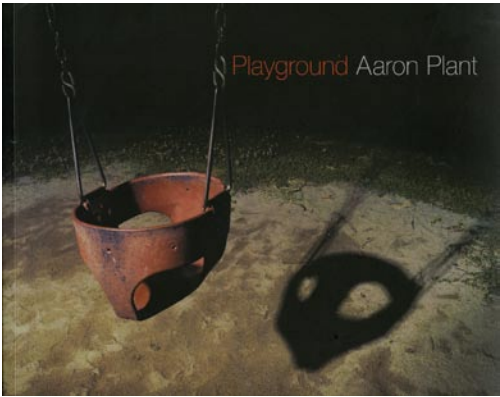
Simply Photo (<http://simplyphoto.blogspot.com>) is a blog that has "inspirations about photography, design, food and fashion."⁸ We like that the author, known only as Jen, not only posts beautiful images, but also lets us in on non-photography aspects of her life – it really feels like we have gained access to her personal journal. She links her own images to *Flickr* and highlights other photographers from *Flickr* as well.

We include *Flickr* (<http://flickr.com/>) and *YouTube* (<http://youtube.com/>) on our list because they function much like blogs, allowing anyone to upload his or her photographs and videos without an overlying administrative agenda. Many artists link to *Flickr* and *YouTube* from their personal websites as a way of easily managing their content.

The websites we have featured here represent a tiny fraction of art-related sites, but they are ones that excel at expressing a photographic voice or vision. While our daughter's dance recital page on *Flickr* may only have four hits, we are sure that you will enjoy visiting our favorite websites – and that perhaps they will end up on *your* bookmark list. ☞

1. <http://www.boutell.com/newfaq/misc/sizeofweb.html> (September, 2007).
2. Jessica Helfand, *Screen Essays on Graphic Design, New Media, and Visual Culture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), p. 39.
3. Jon Feinstein, personal e-mail, 11 September, 2007.
4. <http://www.zerodegreesart.com> (September, 2007).
5. <http://photo-muse.blogspot.com/> (September, 2007).
6. Andy Adams, personal e-mail, 16 September, 2007.
7. Andy Adams, personal e-mail, 16 September, 2007.
8. <http://simplyphoto.blogspot.com/> (September, 2007).

Books



Recent Library Acquisitions

A Book of Books: Photographs by Abelardo Morell. New York: Bulfinch Press, 2002.

Allen, Stuart. Mapping Delight. San Antonio, Texas: Lopez Printing Inc., 2007.

Angier, Roswell. Train Your Gaze: A Practical and Theoretical Introduction to Portrait Photography. Switzerland: AVA Publishing SA, 2007.

Baharav, Aviva. Compositions: Photographic Works. Drive Productions Ltd., 2006.

Baillargeon, Claude. Ed. Imaging a Shattering Earth: Contemporary Photography and the Environmental Debate. Rochester, Michigan: Meadow Brook Art Gallery, 2005.

Bernhard, John. Drift. Houston, Texas: Elite Editions, 2006.

Bourke-White, Margaret. Margaret Bourke-White: Photographer. Ed. Maryann Kornely and Debra Cohen. Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1998.

Brynjolfsson, Ivar. Specimina Commercii. Self-published, undated.

Donaggio, Franco. Station. Self-published, 2006.

Enfants de Cartier: Photographie Canadienne Contemporaine. Ville de Nice, 2007.

f&d Cartier, Roses. Sulgen: Niggli, 2006.

Gayford, Martin. The Yellow House: Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Nine Turbulent Weeks in Arles. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006.

Hambourg, Maria Morris, et al. Walker Evans. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Hayeur, Isabelle. Inhabiting Habiter. Montreal, Quebec: ABC Art Books Canada, 2006.

Israel, Kobi. Promised Lands. London: Hamiltons, 2007.

Mimran, Patrick. Car Parks in New York. Self-published, undated.

Padula, William, American Trilogy. Sag Harbor: Ghost Editions, 2007.

Passing Through, Settling In: Contemporary Photographs of the Desert. El Paso, Texas: Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts, 2006

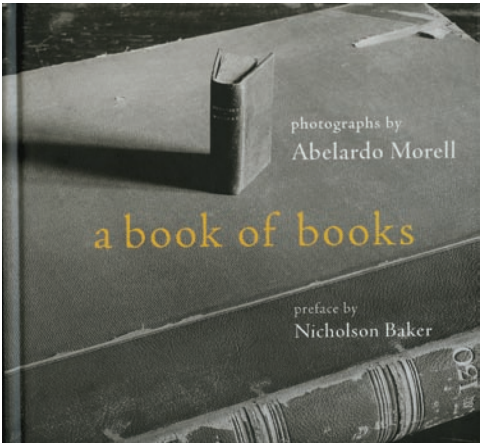
Plant, Aaron. Playground. Self- published, 2006.

Pirrwitz, Andrej. Andrej Pirrwitz. France: Imprimerie de Pithiviers, 2006.

Rand, Glenn and Richard Zakia. Teaching Photography: Tools for the Imaging Educator. New York: Focal Press, 2006.

Re, Elena. Ed. Luigi Ghirri E L'Architettura. Calenzano: Grafica Lito, 2006.

reGeneration: 50 Photographers of Tomorrow. New York: Aperture, 2005.



Smith, Steven B. The Weather and a Place to Live: Photographs of the Suburban West. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Sudek, Josef. Josef Sudek: Poet of Prague, A Photographer's Life. New York: Aperture Foundation Inc., 1990(?)

Tanguy, Sarah. Curator. Taken for Looks: Imaging Food in Contemporary Photography. Daytona Beach: Daytona Beach Community College, 2006

Tucker, Anne Wilkes, et al. Brassai: The Eye of Paris. Bedford, Massachusetts: W.E. Andrews Company, 2000

Williams, Harold A. Bodine: A Legend in his Time. Baltimore: Bodine & Associates, Inc., 1971.

Wittliff, Bill. La Vida Brinca. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2006.

Wood, Robert. Texas Zydeco/ Photography by James Fraher. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006.

Name Name
Title Title, 0000
Info Info Info Info

SAVE THE DATE! HCP's 26th Anniversary Print Auction

Friday, February 15, 2008 Starting at 5:30 pm at the Junior League of Houston Auctioneer: Rick Wester

Tickets:
\$60 advance, \$75 at the door

Visit www.hcponline.org to preview the auction and purchase tickets.

Related Events
Opening reception, Thursday, January 17, 6 - 8 pm

Auction Exhibition Friday, January 12 – Wednesday, February 13, 2008

MFAH Photo Forum Tour with curators Anne Wilkes Tucker and Clint Willour
6 pm, Monday, January 21, 2008

All Related Events are free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.hcponline.org.



QUE IMAGING



©Keith Carter



©Gay Block



©Kimberly Gremillion

*Thoughtful Observations
Careful Execution*



P 713.781.8090 F 713.781.3443
www.queimaging.com

Houston Center for Photography
1441 West Alabama
Houston, Texas 77006



Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1115
Houston, TX